

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2960

Introduced by: **HON. RAUL V. DEL MAR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

It is acknowledged that Republic Act No. 53, as amended, otherwise known as the "The Sotto Law," has been the journalist's privilege statute by which he can refuse to reveal the source of a confidential news report or information except when the court or a House or Committee of Congress finds that the revelation is demanded by the security of the state.

The reason for the rule is that the identity of sources of a confidential news report or information must be protected, otherwise the spring of data for news or commentary dries up and the mission of the press to check and balance and expose wrongdoing is impeded.

Oddly, however, the privilege applies only to the publisher, editor, columnist or duly accredited reporter of any newspaper, magazine or periodical of general circulation. The law is silent about journalists from broadcast stations, news or wire agencies, and internet newspapers, magazines and other publications.

The explanation is that when the law was passed, electronic journalism was virtually non-existent (broadcast stations played music or drama and gave the news but did not hire news reporters), the news or wire agencies still had to be developed and recognized, and the internet was not even a dream.

It is an omission that must be filled, an anomaly that must be corrected. The journalists envisioned by Sotto Law cannot be confined to print practitioners.

In this context, the attached bill seeks to include within the coverage of the Sotto Law, as amended, journalists from broadcast, news agencies and internet publications as a matter of duty and necessity. The proposed amendment will not only strengthen confidence in these other journalists but will also recognize the important role that they, together with print practitioners, play in the building of community and nation.

The approval of the proposed bill is thus strongly recommended.


RAUL V. DEL MAR

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AN ACT
AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 53, AS AMENDED, BY INCLUDING
WITHIN ITS COVERAGE JOURNALISTS FROM BROADCAST, NEWS
AGENCIES AND INTERNET PUBLICATIONS.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in
Congress assembled:*

SECTION 1. Section 1 of Republic Act No. 53, as amended, is hereby amended
as follows:

“SECTION 1. Without prejudice to his liability under the civil and criminal laws,
a duly accredited journalist of any print, broadcast, internet, or wire service organization,
including the publisher, station owner/manager, bureau chief, editor, news editor, writer
or reporter, correspondent, opinion columnist or commentator, cartoonist, photographer,
or any other practitioner involved in the writing, editing or commenting on the news for
mass circulation, cannot be compelled to reveal the source of any news item, news report
or information appearing or being reported or disseminated in any of the said media,
which was related in confidence to such journalist unless the Court or a House or
committee of Congress finds that such revelation is demanded by the security of the
State.”

SECTION 2. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, and rules
or regulations, or parts thereof, inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby
repealed or modified.

SECTION 3. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days
after its complete publication in at least two national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,