

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

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House Bill No. _____

Introduced by **Kabataan Party-List Rep. Raymond V. Palatino**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Republic Act No. 7743, otherwise known as “An Act Providing for the Establishment of Congressional, City and Municipal Libraries and Barangay Reading Centers throughout the Philippines, Appropriating the Necessary Funds Thereof and for Other Purposes” was enacted into law in 1993. RA No. 7743 mandated the National Library, in coordination with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), to “undertake the establishment of additional public libraries to serve all congressional districts cities and municipalities in the Philippines and reading centers in every barangay except in cities or municipalities where there are existing public libraries or in barangays where there are existing reading centers.”

However, the National Library’s report for the second quarter of 2009 – fifteen years after the enactment of RA No. 7743 – reveals that only a total of 1,231 public libraries have so far been established in the country. This figure is broken down as follows: one (1) regional library out of a possible 17; four (4) congressional district libraries out of a possible 219; 101 city libraries out of a possible 136; 576 municipal libraries out of a possible 1,495; and 500 barangay reading centers out of a possible 42,008. Such proportions clearly illustrate the inaccessibility of public libraries and the need to step up efforts to meet the objectives of RA No. 7743.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of libraries and reading centers, most especially given the fact that the country’s Department of Education has consistently fallen short in terms of providing adequate textbooks and reading materials for millions of children and youth in public schools. Also, the many exposes regarding the factually erroneous contents of the textbooks being distributed in public schools only contribute to the disappointing state of education and learning be made available by the State to young Filipinos.

Another issue on library services that needs to be addressed is censorship that comes in the form of exclusion of reading materials for general circulation based on the origin, background and views of the creator or author of a book or any other kind of publication. Although the reported cases of library censorship in the country have been few so far, it pays for RA No. 7743, as amended, to ensure that covert practices which violate the public's rights to information and freedom of expression are explicitly prohibited by law.

Given these points, this bill seeks to amend RA No. 7743 to achieve the following goals: ensure the speedy establishment of additional libraries in the remaining regions, districts, cities, municipalities, provinces and barangays in the country; equip all public libraries with the latest electronic library facilities to enable users to have easy access to the relevant and timely resource materials; stress the central role of the National Library in providing adequate resource materials, including textbooks being used in schools, to all libraries nation-wide; and to uphold the public's right to information and freedom of expression by prohibiting the exclusion of reading materials based on the origin, background and views of the creator or author.



Hon. Raymond V. Palatino
Representative, Kabataan Party-List

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AN ACT
AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7743, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CONGRESSIONAL, CITY AND
MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES AND BARANGAY READING CENTERS
THROUGHOUT THE PHILIPPINES," AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. *Establishment of Public Libraries and Reading Centers.* - Section 2 of Republic Act No. 7743 is hereby amended to read as follows:

SECTION 2. *Establishment of Public Libraries and Reading Centers.* - The National Library in coordination with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) shall undertake the establishment of additional public libraries to serve all congressional districts, cities and municipalities in the Philippines and reading centers in every barangay except in cities or municipalities where there are existing public libraries or in barangays where there are existing reading centers: Provided, That the establishment of such libraries and reading centers shall be based on the development program of the National Library **BASED ON THE LATEST AVAILABLE COMPUTER AND ELECTRONIC LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY** in coordination with the development council of each city or municipality under Sec. 106 of the Local Government Code and in the case of the barangay reading centers, in coordination with the respective barangay councils **AND SANGGUNIAN KABATAAN**: Provided, further, That where these public libraries and reading centers already exist, the National Library shall continue to upgrade the facilities thereof **[.] WITH COMPLETE STANDARD SETS OF BOOKS AND OTHER MATERIALS AS PROVIDED UNDER SEC. 3 OF THIS ACT AS WELL AS THE LATEST ELECTRONIC LIBRARY SYSTEM USING COMPUTERS FOR STORING, CATALOGING, AND FILING OF**

DATA AND MATERIAL: PROVIDED, FINALLY, THAT BY THE YEAR 2011, ALL THE CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES OF THE PHILIPPINES WILL BE PROVIDED WITH ELECTRONICALLY-OPERATED LIBRARY SYSTEM.

SECTION 2. *Role of the National Library.* – Sec. 3 of Republic Act No. 7743 is hereby amended to read as follows:

SECTION 3. *Role of the National Library.* — The National Library shall provide the standard set of reference books and other materials such as but not limited to encyclopedias, dictionaries, maps and globes upon the establishment of the libraries. The National Library shall continue to supply the public libraries with the other books, non-book materials, equipment supplies and other appropriate and relevant reference and reading materials taking into consideration the needs of the community concerned. THE NATIONAL LIBRARY SHALL ENSURE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF ALL KINDS OF READING MATERIALS AND CHALLENGE CENSORSHIP IN LIBRARIES IN FULFILLMENT OF ITS RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE INFORMATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT TO THE PUBLIC.

SECTION 3. *Functions of the Public Libraries and Barangay Reading Centers.* – Sec. 6 of Republic Act No. 7743 is hereby amended to read as follows:

SECTION 6. *Functions of the Public Libraries and Barangay Reading Centers.* — The public libraries and barangay reading centers shall have the following functions:

(a) to make available to the members of the community reading materials of wide array SUCH AS BUT NOT LIMITED TO reading materials prescribed by the Department of Education Culture and Sports and national newspapers of general circulation and others;

(b) to be used as a venue for audio-visual presentation in the community and other kinds of exhibitions and activities aimed at increasing the literacy rate by government agencies, non-governmental organizations or private entities in the dissemination of information of general interest; [and]

(c) to offer such other related services in the furtherance of this Act[.];
AND

(D) TO UPHOLD THE PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO INFORMATION BY PROHIBITING THE EXCLUSION OF READING MATERIALS BECAUSE OF THE ORIGIN, BACKGROUND OR VIEWS OF THOSE CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR CREATION.

SECTION 4. *Appropriations.* – Sec. 7 of Republic Act No. 7743 is hereby amended to read as follows:

SECTION 7. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the General Appropriations Act of the year following its enactment into law and for the next five (5) years: thereafter, the local government units shall undertake the maintenance of public libraries and reading centers while the National Library shall continue to provide reading materials and supplies to said libraries and reading centers]. IN ORDER TO PROVIDE FUNDS NECESSARY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ELECTRONIC LIBRARY SYSTEM, THE BUDGET OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY SHALL BE INCREASED IN THE AMOUNT OF TWENTY MILLION PESOS (P20,000,000.00) PER YEAR UNTIL ALL CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES ARE PROVIDED FOR AND HAVE ACCESS TO FULLY ELECTRONIC LIBRARY FACILITIES.

SECTION 5. *Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

SECTION 6. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,