

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City



SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1035

Introduced by: Gabriela Women's Party Reps. **LUZVIMINDA C. ILAGAN** and **EMMI A. DE JESUS**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill was first filed in the 13th Congress and filed again successively in the 14th and 15th Congress. It was finally heard and deliberated by the Committee on Women and Gender Equality of the 15th Congress, resulting in Committee Report No. 907 which approved the bill without amendments.

The International Women's Day (IWD) has gone a long way since it was first observed by militant women textile workers in New York in 1909. Spreading across the continents, especially in countries with rapidly growing women workers, it had become by the first decade of the previous century a truly international event that women observed it even during the two world wars. Through sustained observance by militant women, IWD has become emblematic of the women's role in society and their vital contributions to history and human progress as well as of their fight against violence against women and their struggles for the right to vote, equal rights and employment opportunities, and liberation from patriarchy.

In 1975, it was finally recognized by the United Nations which set March 8 of every year as the date for its worldwide observance. In countries like Great Britain, China, Australia and many countries in continental Europe, the IWD is considered to have the same significance as the Labor Day and is celebrated as a non-working holiday.

In the Philippines, the IWD was first commemorated in 1971. Its observance hereabouts had focused a shining light on the role of women in fighting the Marcos dictatorship, establishing a tradition of militant social involvement with its own long gallery of women martyrs in the fight for national freedom and democracy and dignity for Filipino women. About a half of the multitudes that made up the People's Power that ousted Marcos in 1986 were women. And they have sustained such tradition even in the post-Marcos era.


It is therefore just fitting that on March 8, 1988, President Corazon C. Aquino signed Proclamation No. 224 declaring every first week of March as 'Women's Week' and every March 8 as 'Women's Rights and International Peace Day'. She supplemented this with Proclamation No. 227, declaring March as 'Women's Role in History Month'. In 1990, she signed into law Republic Act No. 6949 that declared March 8 of every year as a special working holiday to be known as National Women's Day.

Decades after the IWD was first observed in the country, more and more women in the country have entered the formal labor force, contributing to the national economy as workers in agricultural plantations, factories, in the service sector, and as OFWs. Women also constitute half of the employees in the public sector, including in the government financial institutions (GFIs) and government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs).

With the increasing number of women in our labor force, many of them are not even aware that there is a date in every year that is dedicated to them because, the IWD being merely a working holiday in this country, they have to report for work. Moreover, the private sector does not have any elaborate program of activities to make the day truly significant and meaningful, making the IWD as just another day's work for working women.

It is because of this that this bill proposes to declare March 8 of every year as a non-working holiday to allow our working women to celebrate the IWD in a truly meaningful way.

Having been approved without amendments by the Committee on Women and Gender Equality of the 15th Congress, it is humbly requested of this 16th Congress that this bill be considered a priority and passed without delay.


LUZVIMINDA C. ILAGAN
Gabriela Women's Party


EMMI A. DE JESUS
Gabriela Women's Party

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**AN ACT
AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT 6949, 'AN ACT TO DELARE MARCH EIGHT OF EVERY YEAR
AS A WORKING HOLIDAY TO BE KNOWN AS NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY', TO MAKE THE
NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY A NON-WORKING HOLIDAY**

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

SECTION 1. The National Women's Day, declared as March 8 of every year in the Philippines as provided under Republic Act 6949 is hereby declared a *non-working holiday* in recognition of the contribution of women in all aspects of national development and in consonance with the International Women's Day celebrated around the world.

SECTION 2. Further to the provisions of R.A. 6949, all government agencies at all levels, including attached agencies and Local Government Units, and government-owned and controlled corporations, through their GAD Focal Persons, shall prepare and implement a program in the observance of the National Women's Day on March 8 of every year, commemorating the role of women in the history of the country and promoting awareness on women's rights and participation in national development.

SECTION 3. Pursuant to the Magna Carta of Women, the Philippine Commission on Women, as the government's primary policy-making body on women and gender equality concerns, shall coordinate, monitor, and ensure the implementation of this Act.

SECTION 4. Funds for the implementation of this Act shall be taken out of the 5 % Gender and Development budget allotted ton all government agencies and local government units.

SECTION 5. If, for any reason, any section or provision of this Act is held to be unconstitutional or invalid, the validity of other sections herein shall not be affected thereby.

SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in two national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,