

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

16TH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2749



Introduced by **REP. EVELINA G. ESCUDERO**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippines is a country which is greatly dependent on agriculture for its gross domestic product (GNP). It is unfortunate, therefore, that the livestock and poultry sectors which have constantly contributed positively to the GNP, have been perennially besieged by outbreaks of communicable animal diseases, causing great economic losses to the agricultural industry and the country.

Protecting our livestock and poultry industries from the onslaught of domestic and foreign communicable animal diseases will enable these sectors to continually contribute to the livestock development and food security program of the government.

One of the most effective means of animal disease control is the strict implementation of inter-provincial, inter-regional, national and international border control measures in the movement of animals, animal products and by-products, animal effects and other related commodities. The office which is principally mandated to prevent and control the entry and spread of animal diseases in the country is the Veterinary Quarantine Unit of the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI-VQU).

In recognition of the need to strengthen the veterinary quarantine services and thereby help ensure food security, food safety and the global competitiveness of Philippine agriculture, the BAI-VQU was reorganized into an *ad hoc* National Veterinary Quarantine Services (BAI-NVQS) pursuant to the Department of Agriculture (DA) Special Order No. 240, series of 2000, dated April 27, 2000. This is in line with the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) under Republic Act No. 8435, as amended.

For the benefit of the livestock and poultry industries, a specific law must be enacted that will strengthen the veterinary quarantine service, institutionalize the NVQS under the BAI and allow it to retain a certain percentage of its collection from regulatory fees to help support its operation.

This will also put the veterinary quarantine service at par with the Plant Quarantine Service of the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) and the Fisheries Quarantine Service of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), both of the DA, which already have their own laws, PD 1433 and the Fisheries Code of 1998 respectively.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


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AN ACT
TO STRENGTHEN THE VETERINARY QUARANTINE SERVICES OF THE BUREAU
OF ANIMAL INDUSTRY, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. This act shall be known as the Veterinary Quarantine Act of 2007.

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. It shall be the policy of the Government that activities of national and international significance shall be undertaken by the central government in accordance with international covenants and agreements for the protection of the domestic livestock and poultry industry as well as that of other countries. While some functions relative to the protection of animals against communicable animal diseases have been devolved to the Local Government Units under the Local Government Code and have been decentralized to the various Regional Field Units (RFUs) of the Department of Agriculture (DA), the overall control and supervision of veterinary quarantine activities at the international, national and inter-regional levels shall remain under the BAI, with veterinary quarantine activities at the level of the local government units and the DA RFUs directly under its technical supervision to provide for a unified system of providing better and efficient protection to the animal industry.

SEC. 3. Statement of Objectives. This act shall have the following objectives.

1. To establish a strong, responsive and dynamic veterinary quarantine service of the country in order to protect our livestock and poultry industry against foreign communicable animal diseases;
2. To establish a mechanism/procedure where outbreak of animal disease in one province/region will not spread to other provinces/region of the country.;
3. To provide an inspection system for the inter-provincial and international movement of animals, animal products, animal by-products, animal effects, animal feeds, veterinary drugs/products and biologics including documentation and issuance of permit and commodity clearance in relation thereto;
4. To provide policies and guidelines for the importation and exportation of animals, animal products, animal by-products, animal effects, animal feeds, veterinary drugs/products and biologics in accordance with international commitments and agreements entered into by the Republic of the Philippines;
5. To provide a mechanism whereby a portion of the collection of the veterinary quarantine services from regulatory fees will be retained by the National Veterinary Quarantine Service (NVQS) as herein-after established, to augment its operational expenses and afford flexibility in times of animal disease emergencies.

SEC. 4. Definition of Terms.

1. Animals - means livestock, poultry, and all other members of the animal kingdom including birds, whether domesticated or wild, but not including man;
2. Animal By-product – any article derived from animal origin which can be used for other purposes except as human food;
3. Animal Effects - means litter or manure, hay, fodder or the like, used as blankets, chains, harnesses, ropes, buckets, boxes or crates and the like used by animal;
4. Animal Feeds/Feeding Stuff – shall embrace all such articles to be used as feeds for animals purporting to supply proteins, carbohydrates, fats, mineral, vitamins, antibiotics, growth promoting factors whether identified or unidentified, and/or correcting nutritional disorders;
5. Animal Product - any article that can be used as human food, which is made wholly or in part from any meat or other portion of the carcass of any cattle, carabao, sheep, swine, goat or any other animals;
6. BAI - refers to the Bureau of Animal Industry;
7. Communicable Animal Diseases - refers to diseases which are transmissible from one animal to another or from animal to human beings or vice versa;
8. Crew Provision - refers to the food supplies of the crew members of the vessels or airplane or any person on board the vessel or airplane;
9. DA - refers to the Department of Agriculture;
10. Director - means the Director of the Bureau of Animal Industry;
11. Domestic Movement - refers to the movement of animals from one province/region to another within the country;
12. Exportation – as used in this act refers to the Act of transporting commodities such as live animals, animal products, animal by-products, animal effects, animal feeds, veterinary drugs/products and biologics from the Philippines to another country;
13. Exotic Animal Disease – shall refer to any disease known to exist in other countries which is likely to be introduced in the country through importation of animals, animal products, animal by-products or animal effects, animal feeds, veterinary drug/products and biologics;
14. Importation – as used in this act refers to the bringing in into the country foreign commodities such as live animals, animal products, animal by-products, animal effects, animal feeds, veterinary drugs and biologics;
15. Import Permit – is a document issued by the BAI authorizing an entity/individual to import a particular animal or product and other commodities. It contains SPS pre-conditions within which the animal or product to be imported is subjected to by the Veterinary Government Authorities at the country of origin before shipment to the Philippines;
16. In-Transit - refers to any cargo of the vessel or airplane that is not intended for the port or airport where it has docked/anchored or landed but to another port or airport of its final destination;
17. Illegal Importation – as used in this Act refers to any importation of animal, animal

products, animal by-products, animal effects, animal feeds, veterinary drugs/products and biologics which were imported/landed without a priorly issued Authority to Import by the BAI and other valid SPS documents duly issued by the country of origin;

18. Illegal Shipment – as used in this Act refers to any shipment of animal, animal products, animal by-products, animal effects, veterinary drugs/products and biologics which are not covered by a priorly issued authority to ship duly issued by the Bureau or his duly authorized representative;
19. Person - refers to any natural or juridical person such as corporation, partnerships, societies, associations, firms and other legal entities;
20. Quarantine Station - refers to the place designated by the Director of the Bureau of Animal Industry or his duly authorized representative where the animals are to be kept for isolation and observation in order to determine their disease freedom;
21. Risk Management Measures and Policy (RMMP) – refers to the overall risk management measures being applied by DA based on OIE and codex standards, which are deemed necessary (ALOP). Each measure required by DA herein is an integral part of the whole RMP which guarantees protection of the country from the entry, establishment and spread of foreign diseases and contaminations associated with the importation of meat and/or meat products into the country. The RMP includes all measures which have the effect of verifying controls at the country of origin, the country's customs areas, and post-entry areas, which take the form of, but not limited to, documentation requirements, certifications by appropriate bodies, packing and labeling requirements, transportation and handling conditions, marketing, advertising, and distribution requirements, risk communication measures, and disease and contamination control measures;
22. Secretary - refers to the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture;
23. Shipping Permit - refers to the document issued by the BAI or VQS authorizing the person indicated therein to ship or transport the items stated therein to the specified destination. The document also states the health worthiness among others of the animal or product to be shipped/transported;
24. Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures – defined as measures applied (a) to protect human or animal life from risks arising from additives, contaminants, toxins or disease-causing organisms in their food; (b) to protect human life from plant-or animal-carried diseases; (c) to protect animal or plant life from pests, diseases, or disease-causing organisms; and (d) to prevent or limit other damage to a country from the entry, establishment or spread of pests. This also includes SPS measures taken to protect the health of fish and wild fauna, as well as of forests and wild flora;
25. Veterinary Biologics/Biological Products – refers to all viruses, bacteria, live microorganisms, killed microorganisms, components or products of microorganism, anti-sera and other homologous substances whether of natural and synthetic origin, intended for use in the diagnosis, treatment and prophylaxis of diseases of animals or for the identification of the causative organisms of a disease of animals;
26. Veterinary Drugs/Products – shall refer to any substance other than food used to improve the condition of an animal such as antibiotics, vitamins, minerals, hormones, feed additives and other related products;
27. Veterinary Health Certificate - refers to the certificate issued by the Veterinary Quarantine Services specifying among others therein that the animals, animals products, animal by-products or animal effects are free from any communicable animal diseases or are not carriers thereof;

28. Veterinary Quarantine - refers to the isolation and observation of animals to determine their disease freedom within a definite period as determined by the Director or his duly authorized representative;
29. Veterinary Quarantine Clearance (VQC)/SPS Clearance – refers to the document being issued by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) prior to importation indicating that based on readily available information: (a) the source's of meat and/or meat products are free from relevant diseases/contaminations; and (b) the accreditations of both the importer and the FME (exporter) are in 'good standing'. The VQC also prescribes the conditions and risk management measures necessary in the conduct of importation that are to be observed by the importer, exporter, and the NVA at the country of origin;
30. Veterinary Quarantine Service Officer- refers to any licensed veterinarian duly appointed and/or designated by the Director of the Bureau of Animal Industry to perform veterinary quarantine functions pursuant to this Act.

SEC.5. Organizational Structure.

1. A National Veterinary Quarantine Service (NVQS) is hereby created to implement animal quarantine laws, policies, and rules and regulations. It shall be headed by a Chief National Veterinary Quarantine Officer (CNVQO) and a Deputy Chief National Veterinary Quarantine Officer (DCNVQO). The Director and Assistant Director of BAI shall serve as ex-officio CNVQO and DCNVQO, respectively;
2. The NVQS shall perform its various activities through the NVQS Directorate, which shall be headed by an executive staff composed of one (1) Director with a salary grade of 26, one (1) Deputy Director with a salary grade of 25, and a sufficient number of technical and administrative support staff;
3. In each DA-RFU, there shall be a Regional Veterinary Quarantine Service (RVQS), which shall be headed by the Regional Veterinary Quarantine Service Officer (RVQSO) with a rank equivalent to a Division Chief, and assisted by a Supervising Veterinary Quarantine Service Officer (SVQSO) with a salary grade of 22;
4. The RVQS shall be under the Technical Supervision of the BAI, but under the Administrative Supervision of the RFU Regional Director or his equivalent;
5. The BAI and the various RFUs are hereby authorized to reorganized, create, upgrade, and reclassify incumbent positions necessary to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 6. Appointment of Veterinary Quarantine Officers and Staff –

1. The Secretary of Agriculture shall appoint the Director and Deputy Director of the NVQS Directorate. The technical and administrative support staff shall be appointed by the Director of BAI;
2. The appointment of the RVQSO and SVQSO shall be made by the Regional Director;
3. The Director of the BAI shall prescribe the duties and responsibilities of the personnel of the NVQS. The technical and operational designation and assignment of RVQS personnel in the various intra-regional/national and international air and seaports shall be subject to the recommendation of the Regional Director, concurrence of the Director of BAI and approval of the Secretary of Agriculture.

SEC. 7. Powers and Functions of the National Veterinary Quarantine Service Office.

The NVQS shall have the power and functions to:

1. To prevent the entry of animal diseases into the country in accordance with internationally accepted standards and procedures;
2. To constitute an effective inspection system for the inter-provincial, inter-regional and international movement of animals, animal products, animal by-products, animal effects, animal feeds, veterinary drugs/products and biologics including documentation and issuance of permit and commodity clearance in relation thereto;
3. To prevent the spread of any communicable animal disease from one province or region of the country to another;
4. To establish a monitoring and surveillance system to determine the presence of emerging animal diseases;
5. To take an active role in the prevention, control and eradication of communicable animal diseases;
6. To maintain and operate quarantine stations, holding corals and other facilities/infrastructure for domestic and imported animals, animal products, animal by-products, animal effects, animal feeds, veterinary drugs/products and biologics in such strategic places as may be determined by the Bureau;
7. To maintain and operate veterinary quarantine units in seaports and airports throughout the country or in other strategic places as determined by the Bureau of Animal Industry;
8. To regulate the importation or exportation of animals, animal products, animal by-products, animal effects, animal feeds, veterinary drugs/products and biologics;
9. To regulate domestic movement of animals, animal products, animal byproducts, animal effects, animal feeds, veterinary drugs/products and biologics;
10. To conduct researches/studies such as risk analysis and the like, necessary for the formulations of veterinary quarantine rules and regulations;
11. To declare areas under quarantine;
12. To recommend to the Secretary of Agriculture, such rules and regulations relative to the above powers and functions.

SEC. 8. Duties and Responsibilities of Veterinary Quarantine Service Officers.

1. To inspect all animals, animal products and by-products and animal effects arriving by boat, plane, truck or any other means of transportation in ports, airports, railways, bus terminals or in such places as he may deem necessary and to perform such examination and tests as necessary for the purpose of preventing the introduction and spread of dangerous communicable animal diseases within the Philippines;
2. To board and inspect all ships, vessels, airplane from international or domestic port or airport whether it be the first port of entry or not, for the purpose of determining the presence therein of animals, animal products and by-products, and animal effects which may introduce exotic and infectious diseases of animals into the Philippines, and to dispose of in any manner deemed appropriate, animals, animal products and by-products and animal effects found or showing signs of dangerous communicable animal diseases; and to order the disposal of any spoiled or otherwise unsafe food articles of

animal origin found on board such ship, vessels, or aircraft;

3. The master or skipper, other officers and crew members, and agent of such ship, vessel or airplane concerned, shall render such assistance as the VQSO or his agent may reasonably request to facilitate discharge and disposal of such articles;
4. To enter, inspect and take specimen samples for laboratory analysis in any animal project, establishment, farm, zoo, pet shop, kennel or any other place where animals are raised, bred or sheltered when there is reasonable ground to believe that a dangerous communicable animal disease is present among the animals therein for the purpose of controlling the said infection and preventing its spread;
5. To enter, inspect and take specimen samples for laboratory analysis in any store, plant, factory or any industrial ground where animal meat, products and by-products, animal effects and animal feeds, and veterinary biologics are being handled, stored, processed, manufactured or produced when there is reasonable ground to believe that said articles are infected or contaminated with a dangerous communicable animal disease for the purpose of controlling the disease if actually found to be present;
6. To require during an outbreak of an infectious animal disease the inspection, examination, test or vaccination of susceptible animals in the area of infection and to adopt necessary measures for the proper disposition of positive cases after examination or test. The person having custody of the animal to be inspected, examined shall render such assistance as the VQSO or his representative may reasonably request to facilitate such inspection, examination, testing, vaccination or disposal as the case may be;
7. To require mass vaccination of all susceptible animals against any communicable animal disease in areas of outbreaks or in places found to be endemic;
8. To require the disposal in any manner of expendable material such as litter, bedding, feed bags, chick cartoon, animal crates, cage, feed, etc; suspected of being contaminated with or exposed to dangerous communicable animal disease which are found in any animal project, farm, pet shop, kennel or any place where animals are raised, bred, kept or sheltered;
9. To supervise the quarantine of newly introduced domestic animals and birds whether local or imported;
10. To perform such other related duties which may be assigned to the VQSO, from time to time.

SECTION 9. Importation of Animals, Animal Products, Animal By-Product, Animal Effects, Animal Feed, Veterinary Drugs and Biologics.

1. All importation of animals, animal products, animal by-products, animal effects, animal feeds, veterinary drugs/products and biologics must be accompanied by a Veterinary Quarantine Clearance duly issued by the BAI, and secured prior to the importation;
2. All importation must also be accompanied by a Veterinary Health Certificate and or SPS or its equivalent and such other documents as may be required by the BAI to be obtained from the proper authorities of the country of origin;
3. All imported animals, animal products, animal by-products, animal effects, animal feeds, veterinary drugs/products and biological must be subject to

quarantine inspection and documentation by the NVQS at the Port of Entry and may be subject to such quarantine and test as may deem appropriate and necessary;

4. The Bureau of Customs or its representative shall not allow the release of animals, animal products, animal by-products, animal effects, animal feeds, veterinary drugs/products and biologics unless the NVQS has issued a certification there that said cargo has complied with the requirements;
5. It shall be unlawful to accept for loading at the country of origin and transport and unload at any Philippine airport or seaport any animals, animal products, animal by-products, animal effects, animal feeds, veterinary drugs/products and biologics that were not priorly issued a Veterinary Quarantine Clearance by the BAI;
6. All Imported animals, animal products, animal by-products and animal effects shall be put under quarantine at a designated or accredited quarantine site for a period fixed under the rules and regulations of the NVQS under the direct supervision of the VQSO in charge;
7. No importation of animals, animal products, animal by-products and animal effects shall be allowed from countries known to be infected with a dangerous communicable animal disease or diseases which has been banned for export to the Philippines and where there is danger of spreading/ introducing such disease or diseases into the Philippines by the importation of such items.

SEC. 10. Exportation of Animals, Animal Products, Animal By-Products, Animal Effects, Animal Feeds, and Veterinary Drugs and Biologics.

1. No exportation of animals, animal products, animal by-products animal effects, animal feeds, veterinary drugs/products and biologics shall be allowed unless it is accompanied by a Veterinary Health Certificate and or Commodity Clearance issued by the NVQS and or has complied with the quarantine requirements of the country of destination;
2. The above cargoes shall not be loaded for export without the necessary Veterinary Health Certificate and or Commodity Clearance duly issued by the NVQS or RVQS concerned.

SEC. 11. Domestic Movement of Animals, Animal Products, Animal By-Products, Animal Effects, Veterinary Drugs and Biologics.

Shipment of animals, animal products, animal by-products, animal effects, Veterinary Drugs/products and biologics from one province/ region to another shall be accompanied by the Veterinary Health Certificate or Shipping Permit issued by any VQSO.

SEC. 12. Declaration of Areas or Farms under Quarantine.

In cases of an outbreak of communicable animal diseases, the Secretary of Agriculture, upon recommendation of the BAI, has the power to declare the area, region, province or specific farm or establishment under quarantine. However, the Regional Director upon the recommendation of the NVQS or RVQS may declare a farm, an area, establishment, municipality, city or province under quarantine whose declaration shall not exceed seven (7) days, unless revoked or extended by the Secretary upon the recommendation of the BAI and due coordination with the local government units concerned.

It shall be the duty of local government veterinarians, animal inspectors, and local officials to extend assistance to any quarantine measure initiated pursuant to this provision.

SEC. 13. Registration of Commercial Livestock and Poultry Shippers.

All commercial livestock shippers or handlers who are engaged in the inter-provincial and regional shipment/transportation of livestock shall register with the Veterinary Quarantine Services of the Region concerned in order to maintain disease free areas and achieving safe, clean and orderly handling of commodities through the various stages of marketing or distribution channels.

SEC. 14. Collection of Regulatory Fees and Charges and Establishment of a Revolving Fund.

The BAI shall have the power to impose charges and fees for the services rendered subject to the approval of the Secretary such as farm accreditation, laboratory test, import permit fee, export permit/commodity clearance fee, landing permit fee, quarantine inspection fee and other fees and charges which are payable to the BAI under a continuing special trust fund that is heretofore created for the purpose subject to government accounting and auditing regulation.

Provided that Fifty (50%) Percent of the collections mentioned-above shall be retained by the NVQS to constitute as its revolving fund to augment the existing appropriations thereof for the establishment of its various offices, if necessary, and the modernization of veterinary quarantine services.

SEC. 15. Prescribing Standard Operating Procedures for Veterinary Quarantine Services in all Seaports and Airports.

1. The BAI shall establish a standard operating procedure of the Veterinary Quarantine Services at the different seaports and airports in the country for a well defined and smooth operation of the office;
2. Veterinary Quarantine Service Officers/Inspectors are authorized to render overtime work when the interest of the service so requires and the services performed outside office hours and other expenses shall be chargeable to the party or parties served, at the rates to be prescribed by the Secretary;
3. The BAI shall have the power to promulgate rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this section, subject to the approval by the Secretary of Agriculture.

SEC. 16. Confiscation and Destruction of Animals, Animal Products, Animal By-products, Animal Effects, Animal Feeds, Veterinary Drugs/Products and Biologics Illegally Imported and or found to be Infected with Communicable Animal Disease.

The VQSO or his duly deputized Inspector on duty shall have the power to confiscate and destroy animals, animal products, animal by-products, animal feeds, veterinary drugs/products and biologics found to be infected with communicable animal disease or refuse entry of animal and animal products involved in prohibited importation subject to such rules and regulations promulgated by the Department of Agriculture.

SEC.17. Non-Liability Clause.

1. All charges for storage, demurrage, cartage, labor and delays incident to the inspection, cost of disinfection and disposition and other post entry requirement shall be paid by the importer, exporter, shipper or consignee, as the case may be;
2. The VQSO or any other authorized personnel of the Veterinary Quarantine Service/Bureau/Department shall not be held liable for damages to the commodity or any other damages in the course of implementation of the provisions of this Act, as well as its implementing rules and regulations.

SEC. 18. Entrance and Clearance of Carrier.

The owner, operator, agent or master of carriers plying international and/or domestic routes, are hereby required to serve notice of arrival and departure and to provide inward and outward cargo manifests and other declaration of said carriers to the Veterinary Quarantine Service at the port. Prior to departure, the agent or master of said carrier must secure a clearance from the assigned VQSO thereat.

The collector of Customs or his authorized agents shall require the owner, agent or master of the international carrier, vessel, or airplane to secure and submit a copy of the clearance from the VQS as a pre-requisite to the issuance of Customs Clearance.

The Philippine Ports Authority (PPA), Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA) and other agencies/entities managing fishports, and other ports shall likewise require the owner, agent or master of carrier, or vessel to secure and submit a copy of clearance from the VQS as a prerequisite to issuance of clearance to depart from the port.

SEC. 19. Food Provisions of Vessels and Airplanes.

No food provisions or garbage shall be unloaded from vessels or airplanes if there is danger that such provision may introduce any communicable animal disease into the country, especially if such provisions originated from areas known to be infected with any communicable animal disease.

SEC. 20. Animal and Animal Products In-Transit.

Animals, animal products, animal products, animal by-products shall not be allowed to be unloaded from vessels or airplanes unless an authority from the VQS is secured. The VQS may refuse its unloading if there is reasonable ground to believe that such animal or animal products may introduce any communicable animal disease into the country.

SEC. 21. The Role of the Bureau of Customs, Philippine Ports Authority and Other Port Authorities in the Enforcement of this Act.

The Bureau of Customs, Philippine Ports Authority, Air Transportation Office and other seaport and airport authorities shall cooperate with the veterinary quarantine service in the enforcement of this act or any rules and regulations issued in the implementation thereto, and shall give effect to the same in so far as they are connected with matters of shipping, navigation and transportation, or shipment/transport of animals, animal products, animal by-products, animal effects, animal feeds, and veterinary drugs/products and biologics.

SEC. 22. Penalty.

Any violation of the provisions of Sections 7 -9, 16 and 20 of this Act and its implementing rules and regulations shall be penalized by imprisonment of six (6) months and one (1) day to one (1) year, and/or a fine of P6,000.00 to 20,000.00, depending upon the seriousness of the offense committed, and subject to the sound discretion of the court.

Any violation of the provisions of Sections 10, 11, 13 and 19 of this Act and its implementing rules and regulations shall be penalized by imprisonment of one (1) month to six (6) months, and/or a fine of P1,000.00 to P5,000.00, depending upon the seriousness of the offense committed, and subject to the sound discretion of the court.

SEC. 23. Appropriation.

The amount necessary for the implementation of this act shall be included in the budget of the Department of Agriculture, under the General Appropriations Act of each year, which shall be specifically designated, in addition to the amount retained from its collection from regulatory fees.

SEC. 24. Implementing Rules and Regulations.

The Secretary of Agriculture shall issue rules and regulations necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the provisions of this Act and impose appropriate penalties thereof.

SEC. 25. Repealing Clause.

Provisions of laws, orders, regulations and issuances inconsistent with any provisions of this act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 26. Separability Clause.

If any portion or provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other portions or provisions hereof, which are not affected thereby shall continue in full force and effect.

SEC. 27. Effectivity - This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,