

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives

Sixteenth Congress
2nd Regular Session

House Bill No. **4879**



Introduced by Rep. Lawrence Lemuel H. Fortun

Explanatory Note

The Philippines is an archipelagic country and seafaring is in the blood of the Filipino. As a testament to, and symbol of, the country's rich ancient maritime history, this bill seeks to proclaim the Balangay, otherwise known as the Butuan Boat, as the National Boat of the Philippines.

The Balangay was the first-ever wooden watercraft to be excavated in Southeast Asia demonstrating early Filipino boat-building genius and seamanship expertise during the pre-colonial times. Found only in the Philippines where a flotilla of such ancient boats exists, the Butuan Boat was utilized by our ancestors to maintain trade relations with neighboring islands around the country and empires around Southeast Asia. The extensive utilization of the boat for this purpose confirms the active involvement of our forefathers in robust commercial activities in Asia as early as the 10th and 11th centuries.

The technology used in building this boat is unique to the Balangay. The vessel is a plank boat adjoined by carved-out planks edged through pins and dowels. It is a finely built boat designed for long-distance navigation made without the use of blueprints and was taught to be made from one generation to another using an ancient technique that has been preserved and is still employed by boat makers of Sibutu Island. The boat was first mentioned in the 16th Century in the Chronicles of Pigafetta, and is known as the oldest watercraft found in the Philippines.

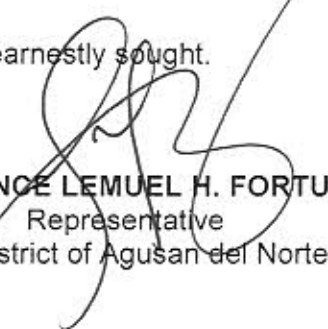
As demonstrated by our ancestors, building a Balangay and sailing it in the high seas entail solidarity and harmony among boat builders and seafarers. It is for this reason that it is now used by the Philippine Government as a term to refer to the smallest political unit, now popularly known as the **barangay**. The Balangay is a symbol of the Filipino community's character of unity, cooperation, determination and resilience.

As official recognition of the significance of the Balangay boats and the sites where these boats were found to our history and progress, on March 9, 1987, then President Corazon C. Aquino, issued Presidential Proclamation No. 86, entitled "*DECLARING THE BALANGAYS IN THE VICINITIES OF BUTUAN CITY, NATIONAL CULTURAL TREASURES; AND THE SITES WHERE THESE BALANGAYS ARE FOUND, ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTIONS 3 (c) AND 3 (j), RESPECTIVELY, OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 4846, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "CULTURAL PROPERTIES PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION ACT"*".

The Balangay deserves its rightful place, not only in the museums, but also more importantly, in the consciousness of every Filipino. Declaring it the country's national boat will ensure that future generations of Filipinos will recognize the invaluable contribution of our forefathers in shaping our maritime tradition and passing on the values of solidarity, harmony, determination, courage and bravery.

The Balangay is a source of true national pride that should not be forgotten. It is time to formally include it in our roster of national symbols.

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


LAWRENCE LEMUEL H. FORTUN
Representative
1st District of Agusan del Norte

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Sixteenth Congress
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House Bill No. 4879

Introduced by Rep. Lawrence Lemuel H. Fortun

AN ACT
DECLARING THE BALANGAY, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS
THE BUTUAN BOAT, AS THE NATIONAL BOAT OF THE PHILIPPINES

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

Section 1. It is the policy of the State to promote and inculcate nationalism, appreciation and pride in the cultural and historical heritage of the nation. Furthermore, the State shall instill and foster nationalism, appreciation and pride in the country's National Symbols that embody the ideals and traditions of the nation.

Section 2. The Balangay, otherwise known as the Butuan Boat, is hereby declared as the National Boat of the Philippines.

Section 3. The Balangay, or the Butuan Boat, shall refer to the prehistoric edged-pegged plank type of boat discovered and excavated in the City of Butuan. There are nine (9) Balangay boats known to be in existence, the oldest of which has been carbon-dated 320 A.D. Utilized by early Filipinos to maintain relations with neighboring islands and empires in Southeast Asia, the boat is a testament to the ingenuity of the Filipino, his/her ancient boatbuilding craftsmanship and the sophisticated maritime industry in the country in the pre-colonial times. It is a symbol of the solidarity, harmony, determination, courage, bravery and resilience of the Filipino community.

Section 4. The National Historical Commission of the Philippines, in coordination with the National Cultural Commission for Culture and the Arts, the National Museum, the Department of Education and other concerned government agencies, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this Act.

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

Section 6. Any portion or provision of this Act that may be declared unconstitutional shall not have the effect of nullifying other portions or provisions hereof as long as such remaining provisions can still subsist and be given effect.

Section 7. This Act shall be effective fifteen (15) days from the date of its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in at least two newspapers of general circulation.

Approved.