

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

Second Regular Session

House Bill No. **4966**

Introduced by **Hon. Rodolfo G. Biazon**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill aims to improve the plight of one of the unsung heroes of our country – the farmers. It seeks to ease their burden by stopping the collection of irrigation service fees (ISFs) and such other similar or related fees from them. According to the National Irrigation Administration, it collected around P1.3 Billion in 2011, P1.4 Billion in 2012 and P1.6 Billion in 2013 in irrigation service fees. The NIA further reports that for 2013, its collection efficiency in the collection of ISFs is only around sixty-five percent (65%).

Obviously, our farmers are having a hard time paying these fees being charged from them because many of them remain shackled by poverty as they fall prey to the heartless activities of loan sharks, otherwise known as “5-6 operators” in the local parlance. They are victims of these “5-6 operators” in every step of the production process. Our farmers run to them when they need money to buy seeds, fertilizers or pesticides and even money to pay for the irrigation services that they receive. This results in their being heavily-indebted to these loan sharks. They, who produce the food we eat, end up with almost nothing to eat as their products have already been promised to the loan sharks as payment for their debts even before they are harvested. It is an irony that is unconscionable and must therefore stop.

Our farmers play a very important role in the security of this nation as they provide our basic food requirements. However, despite their crucial role to our national survival, they remain to be one of the most neglected sectors of our society. The assistance that this bill would offer our farmers is an affirmation that we acknowledge their situation and ready to act to alleviate their plight.

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

RODOLFO G. BIAZON
Representative
Lone District, Muntinlupa City

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AN ACT
TO STOP THE COLLECTION OF IRRIGATION SERVICE FEES AND SUCH
OTHER SIMILAR OR RELATED FEES FROM BENEFICIARIES OF IRRIGATION
SYSTEMS FUNDED AND CONSTRUCTED BY, OR UNDER THE
ADMINISTRATION OF THE NATIONAL IRRIGATION ADMINISTRATION

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

Section 1. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and promote the welfare of farmers in the country. Towards this end, it shall endeavor to undertake efforts geared towards providing them the necessary assistance to increase the yield of their farms such as inputs to production, post-production facilities and irrigation.

Sec. 2. *Stoppage of the Collection of Fees.* – The collection of irrigation service fees (ISFs) and such other similar or related fees from beneficiaries of irrigation systems funded and constructed by, or under the administration of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA), shall be stopped after the enactment of the General Appropriations Act in the succeeding year following the approval of this Act.

Sec. 3. *Repair and Maintenance of National Irrigation Systems.* – In order to ensure the repair and maintenance of these irrigation systems, the NIA shall include the necessary amounts for the repair and maintenance of such irrigation systems as a specific item in its budget for the succeeding year following the approval of this Act. Henceforth, the repair and maintenance of irrigation systems constructed by, or under the administration of the NIA, shall be treated in the same manner as the repair and maintenance of roads which is included as a specific item in the annual budget of the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Sec. 4. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days after the effectivity of this Act, the Administrator of the NIA, in consultation with other government agencies and stakeholders, shall formulate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act to be published in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Sec. 5. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act or any part hereof is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

Sec. 6. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, proclamations, rules and regulations, and other issuances, or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Sec. 7. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in a newspaper of nationwide circulation.

Approved,