

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City

Sixteenth Congress
Second Regular Session



House Bill No. **5429**

Introduced by Representative Alfredo D. Vargas III

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The internet, as a technology, has been very helpful to every Filipino. The archipelagic geography of our country somehow distanced the Philippines from the rest of the world. But because of the internet, each and every Filipino may now use an array of information through the World Wide Web. Not only does it provide access to resources, it has also been a very good means of communication between and among Filipinos here and abroad.

Data shows that around forty five per cent of the Philippine population has access to the web¹. Facebook alone has about thirty million Filipino registrants. Of the 30 million, 40% are young adults (18 to 24 years old) and 15% are teenagers (13 to 17 years old)². Evidently, as the population of the country increases, the number of Filipinos gaining internet access also increases.

Albeit useful, the internet also has its perils. Because of its accessibility, many risks are also being confronted by the users—minors and adults alike. A very alarming phenomenon is the so-called computer addiction. This has ruined many lives resulting to broken families, compromised jobs, and disrupted education, among others³. Because of the prevalence of internet cafes in all types of neighborhoods, children of school age engulf themselves with too much gaming—mostly online. This has believably affected the mental well-being of the young and is tantamount to alcohol and drug addiction.⁴

¹ Asia Marketing Research, *Internet Usage, Population Statistics and Facebook Information* <http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm>

² Facebook Reaches 30M Users in the Philippines <http://www.gethooked360.com/facebook-reaches-30-million-users-in-the-philippines/>

³ PNP CIDG: Online Gaming is a Disease <http://gameshogan.ws/philippines-ppnp-cidg-online-gaming-is-a-disease>

⁴ Ibid.

Pornography is also a major issue when discussing the internet. A number of perpetrators prey on children as subjects of their sexual innuendos. According to the Philippine National Police, about 20,000 photos of sexually exploited children are being posted online every week⁵. The Department of Justice further exclaimed that about 46% of the reported cybercrimes are related to online child abuse. In an experiment conducted by international humanitarian organization Terres des Hommes Netherlands, about 1,000 pedophiles were caught around the world using a virtual Filipina girl named Sweetie⁶. The information of these pedophiles have been conveyed to the Interpol for further surveillance. In such a short span, numerous abusers were identified. There is surely a lot more than the thousand that has been tracked. Aside from these harm, children are also susceptible to cyberbullying, cyberstalking, and cybertrafficking ultimately leading to child exploitation.

Children are not the only victims of internet misuse. Adults may also experience perils such as trafficking (e.g. mail order spouse scheme). They are also exposed to hazards of identity theft, extortion, fraud, scams, harassments, and libel⁷. Looking at the agenda of the exploiters, it can be summed up to the following factors: (a) easy access to internet; (b) increased number of internet users yearly; (c) high profitability of internet maliciousness; and (d) heightened mobility of the culprits, et cetera.

More and more transactions are made through online means. Each transaction may mean money gained or money lost. What better way to safeguard our lives and resources than to start an awareness campaign among every Filipino. Approving this bill shall stress the importance of doing our share in ensuring every user's safety while exhausting the benefits of the internet. I earnestly solicit the support of my colleagues in the House of Representatives for the speedy approval of this measure.



ALFREDO D. VARGAS III
Representative
Fifth District of Quezon City

⁵Local Cybercrime Landscape: Scanning the cyber environment in the Philippines <http://aseanfic.org/Hanoi2014/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Philippine-Cybercrime-Landscape-ASEANFIC.pdf>

⁶Virtual girl 'Sweetie' helps track thousands of online sexual predators <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SeKPJ3Yi6I>

⁷Philippine Cyberspace Facts and Figures from Anti-Cybercrime Group of the Philippine National Police, Oct 2014

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AN ACT
DECLARING EVERY 10th OF FEBRUARY OF EACH YEAR
AS NATIONAL SAFER INTERNET DAY IN THE PHILIPPINES

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

Section 1. *Short Title.* This Act shall be known as the Safer Internet Day (SID) Act of 2015.

Section 2. *Declaration of Principles.* The State recognizes the vital role of information and communications technology in nation-building and the importance of providing an environment conducive to the development, acceleration, and rational application and exploitation of these technologies to attain free, easy, and intelligible access to exchange and/or delivery of information. Thus, it is the obligation of the State to promote safer and more responsible use of online technology and mobile phones, especially amongst children and young people across the country.

Section 3. *National Safer Internet Day.* Every 10th day of February of each year is hereby declared as National Safer Internet Day to be observed across the country especially in government offices, higher education institutions, technical vocational institutions, high schools, and elementary schools.

Section 4. *Implementing Agency.* The Department of Transportation and Communications in close coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development shall plan, design, and implement programs and activities in celebration of the National Safer Internet Day every year. Other national government

agencies, local government units, and other government instrumentalities shall actively participate in the activities of this celebration.

Section 5. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation or the Official Gazette.

Approved,