

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **4645**



Introduced by Representative ANA CRISTINA SIQUIAN-GO

AN ACT
CREATING A PASSPORT PROCESSING AND ISSUANCE CENTER FOR EVERY
PROVINCE, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE, REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8239 OR
THE PHILIPPINE PASSPORT ACT OF 1996

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article III, Section 6 of the 1987 Constitution guarantees that the right to travel of every citizen shall not be impaired except in the interest of national security, public safety, or public health, as may be provided by law.

By this principle, it is the duty of the government to issue passport to any individual or citizen of the Philippines who complies with the requirements under Republic Act No. 8239, the Philippine Passport Act of 1996, which established the guidelines for the application and issuance of passports by the government through the Department of Foreign Affairs.

By the number of Filipinos wanting to travel abroad mostly for overseas job deployment, the DFA has been swamped through the years with a huge number of passport applications. The endless lines in the DFA Consular Offices is a demonstration of the failings of the department to meet the escalating applications for regular passports. The delay in the processing which in most times takes at least two months from appointment to the issuance of the passport, has practically impaired the right of many Filipinos to travel and for most to secure employment abroad.

The DFA has been pursuing measures time and again to mitigate the situation but the delays and the backlogs in passport applications have continued to hound the consular offices. The DFA has proven however that with additional frontline personnel and locations of service providers, delays and backlogs can be drastically reduced. The present system created regional processing centers to inhibit the number of applicants from flocking to Metro Manila. It decentralized the system allowing those from the provinces to apply and secure passports without having to travel to Metro Manila, a costly trip for all, while de-clogging the DFA processing centers in Metro Manila.

As it has been shown, a regional processing center is a welcome development for those in the provinces as they do not have to travel to Metro Manila anymore for their passport application. But for a hopeful OFW in San Mariano, Isabela, his appointment to the regional passport processing center would still require him to take a three-hour trip to Tuguegarao City, Cagayan.

This bill seeks to extend the decentralized approach in passport processing to the provincial level. It will enable everybody particularly those in the provinces equal opportunity to apply and secure his or her regular passport in the most efficient and speedy manner. Locating passport processing and issuance center in the capital city or municipality of every province removes the difficulty of travelling far for one's passport application.

In view of the foregoing, I urge the timely approval of this bill.



ANA CRISTINA SIQUIAN-GO
2nd District, Isabela

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

SECTION 1. Section 6 of Republic Act No. 8239, the Philippine Passport Act of 1996, is hereby amended to read as follows:

SEC. 6. Application. – The application may be filed by:

- a) The applicant himself or herself; or
- b) The parent or legal guardian on behalf of an applicant who is below the age of majority.

In case of first time applicants, the applicant must present himself/herself in person to prove that he or she is the same person and of the age claimed in the application form. In case of renewal the application may be filed by any licensed travel agency duly accredited by the

Department of Foreign Affairs: *Provided*, That the agent shall be responsible for the authenticity or *bona fide* of the supporting documents being presented to meet the requirements for the application of passports.

THERE SHALL BE CREATED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS A PASSPORT PROCESSING AND ISSUANCE CENTER IN EVERY PROVINCE LOCATING IT AS MUCH AS PRACTICABLE IN THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT CENTER, WHERE ALL APPLICATIONS FOR PASSPORT BY A RESIDENT OF THE PROVINCE CAN BE PROCESSED AND RELEASED UPON ITS ISSUANCE.

SECTION 2. *Repealing Clause* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, letters of instructions, rules and regulations, or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 3. *Effectivity Clause* – This act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in two (2) newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.