

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6786



Introduced by **HON. LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippines ranks as one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world due to its distinct location and geography. The country also lies along some of the Earth's deepest tectonic faults. Hence, typhoons, volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes are not new to Filipinos. In fact, over the past two decades, the country has endured close to 300 natural calamities which makes it the fourth most disaster-prone in the world¹.

The Department of Finance (DOF) estimates that climate vulnerable nations like the Philippines lose about 2.5% of their gross domestic product (GDP) to natural calamities annually². Along with the massive economic toll is the number of casualties lost to natural calamities. Typhoon Haiyan alone claimed some 6300 lives, with thousands still missing.

The burden weighs heavy upon the State to continuously improve its institutional capacity for disaster risk reduction and management. In line with this, the Philippines has established the National Disaster Risk Reduction & Management Council (NDRRMC), a working group of various government, non-government, civil sector and private sector organizations, to develop a holistic, comprehensive, integrated, and proactive disaster risk reduction and recovery program³. In pursuit of this, NDRRMC engages the private sector for more resources and better coordination. Volunteers are mobilized in times of disasters, and the NDRRMC expressly includes their contribution to its NDRRM program. Unfortunately, the Philippines does not have a sufficient number of trained volunteers, nor does it have the program to encourage community support and resilience through citizen trainings for specific skills.

This bill seeks to encourage the culture of volunteerism by providing the benefit of a Disaster Service Volunteer Leave to certified disaster service volunteers who are also employees of the government or the private sector. The leave grants

¹ <http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2015/11/25/philippines-fourth-most-disaster-prone-country.html>

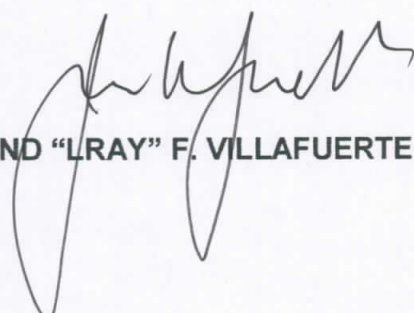
² <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2015/10/05/1507232/philippines-losing-p300-b-disasters-yearly>

³ RA REPUBLIC ACT No. 10121 AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE PHILIPPINE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, PROVIDING FOR THE NATIONAL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AND INSTITUTIONALIZING THE NATIONAL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

the employee the opportunity to participate and contribute in specialized disaster relief services for the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) in connection with any disaster, without incurring work absences.

A disaster service volunteer leave has already been institutionalized in various countries worldwide, in recognition of the need for true community effort and collective work. It is high time that the same is legislated in the Philippines, a country most hit by natural disasters.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luis Raymund F. Villafuerte, Jr.', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.

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HOUSE BILL NO. _____

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AN ACT
GRANTING DISASTER SERVICE VOLUNTEERS
PAID LEAVE DURING PERIOD OF DISASTERS

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the "Disaster Service Volunteer Leave Act of 2017".

SEC. 2. Definition of Terms. – For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- a) "Department" or "agency" refers to any of the various units of the government including a department, bureau, office, instrumentality or government-owned or controlled corporations;
- b) "Disaster" includes a local disaster designated at level I or higher in the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) Regulations and Procedures or a national disaster at level III or higher in the PRC Regulations;
- c) "Certified disaster service volunteer" or "volunteer" means any person who has completed the necessary training and has been certified as a disaster service specialist by the PRC.

SEC. 3. Disaster Service Volunteer Leave. –

- a) An employee of an agency who is a certified disaster service volunteer shall be granted leave from work with pay, for up to an aggregate of fifteen (15) days, consecutively or non-consecutively, in any twelve-month period, to participate in specialized disaster relief services for the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) in connection with any disaster, upon the request of the PRC for such employee's services and upon the approval of such employee's employing agency. An employee of any private sector business who is a certified disaster service volunteer may be granted the same benefits.

- b) An employee of an agency granted leave pursuant to Subsection (a) of this Section shall be compensated by the employing agency at the employee's regular rate of pay for those regular work hours during which the employee is absent from work, but shall not receive overtime pay, night shift differential pay, hazardous duty pay or any other form of pay or compensation in addition to the employee's regular pay. An employee who is granted leave pursuant to Subsection (a) of this Section shall not lose any seniority or any already accumulated vacation time, sick time or earned overtime due to such leave.
- c) The government shall not be liable for workers' compensation claims arising from accident or injury while an employee is on assignment as a certified disaster service volunteer for the PRC. Duties performed while on disaster leave shall not be considered to be a work assignment by any department or agency. In determining whether to grant leave to an employee, the employing agency may consider the needs of the PRC for expertise in a particular certified area. The employee's activities and Job functions while on leave, however, shall not be directed by the government but shall be determined and controlled solely by the PRC.

SEC. 4. Certification as a Disaster Service Volunteer. – No employee shall be paid during regular work hours in the completion of any training towards certification as a disaster service volunteer unless such employee uses personal or annual leave.

SEC. 5. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – The Civil Service Commission (CSC), after consultation and coordination with the government agencies and/or instrumentalities affected by this Act, including, but not limited to, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), the Philippine Red Cross (PRC), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), shall promulgate and issue the appropriate rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act.

SEC. 6. Separability Clause. – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 7. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 8. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,