

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **7212**



Introduced by **Rep. FERDINAND L. HERNANDEZ**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to designate the 17th day of January as a special non-working holiday in the City of Olongapo to be known as the "James L. Gordon Day".

The Philippine Congress has, on several occasions, recognized the achievements of outstanding Filipinos for their valuable service to the government and for serving as an exemplary model for the people. James Leonard Tagle Gordon ("James L. Gordon") a staunch crusader against crime and corruption, was born on January 17, 1917 of an American father, John Jacob Gordon, and a Filipina mother, Veronica Tagle Gordon. He was the Mayor of Olongapo City from December 30, 1963 to February 20, 1967. Instead of electing American Citizenship and residing in the United States like his four brothers, he chose to stay in the Philippines as a Filipino Citizen. He raised his children as Filipino Citizens and brought them up according to Filipino values.

As a family-oriented man, James L. Gordon established an institution that would take care of orphans and abandoned children of Filipino-American parents. Together with his friends, he put up the Olongapo Boys Town and Girls Home in 1969. Consistent with his belief in social action and civic work, he was one of the organizers of the Olongapo Civic Action Group that worked on beautification projects and general improvements in the city. He was among those who founded the Olongapo Rotary Club, Olongapo Knights of Columbus, and the Olongapo Businessmen's Association.

As a patriot with an undying commitment to fight for the right of every Filipino to live a life of dignity, James L. Gordon led the move to make Olongapo free from U.S. rule. Unable to stand the military regulations that limited the movements of people in Olongapo, he exposed the abuses and harassment suffered by Olongapo residents under U.S. military rule. He was also part of the Philippine panel that negotiated with and compelled the U.S. Authorities to relinquish Olongapo to the Philippine Government.

Imbued with a strong advocacy for a transparent and accountable government, James L. Gordon resigned from the post of Deputy Governor when he saw how Olongapo was marginalized – the government hospital was reduced in category and its equipment was carted off to Zambales. He stood against rampant illegal logging, cigarette smuggling and proliferation of land problems. He opposed anomalous transactions of newly appointed officials when they tried to lease out the electrical utility for only P5,000 a month. He led

inquiries when heavy equipment like bulldozers which had been acquired from the U.S. Navy could not be accounted for.

James L. Gordon answered the call of the people of Olongapo to run for Municipal Mayor during its first election four years after Olongapo's turnover to the Philippine Government and won on December 30, 1963. As chief executive par excellence, he led the City of Olongapo in one of its most trying times. He lobbied in Congress for the passage of a bill to convert the municipality into a city. Amidst strong opposition from the provincial government but to the triumphant rejoicing of the people of Olongapo, Republic Act No. 4645, the Charter of the City of Olongapo, was signed by President Ferdinand Marcos on June 1, 1966, and was then inaugurated on September 1 of the same year.

As an untiring fighter of graft and corruption, he fought well-entrenched politicians against widespread corruption. He won the case, albeit posthumously, returning the electrical system to the Olongapo Government. He exposed the anomalies that bedeviled the new municipal government. Understandably, his crusade earned for him enemies who tried all manner of harassment, including threats of suspension, hand grenade attacks and planned ambushes. Three cowardly attempts on his life, involving grenades and arson, were made by prisoners allowed to escape by high-ranking officials. On February 20, 1967, while talking with a constituent on the first floor of City Hall, he was gunned down by an escaped inmate of the National Penitentiary bringing inconsolable loss to the people of Olongapo.

James L. Gordon served only for three years as Mayor, but his life was dedicated to quelling crime, specifically illegal logging, and smuggling of firearms, cigarettes and contraband from the military base. He is especially remembered for his fight to block an unconscionable attempt to transfer the public utilities of Olongapo inherited from the Americans for a paltry amount, and for removing a murdering police chief, as part of his crusade against corrupt members of the Philippine Constabulary.

For his invaluable service to uplift the lives of the people of Olongapo through his exemplary leadership providing hope and inspiration to future generations, Mayor James Leonard Tagle Gordon deserves to be commemorated from the time of his birth anniversary on January 17 until his death anniversary on February 20 to be known as James L. Gordon Month.

Likewise, in recognition of achievements and contributions of James L. Gordon to the City of Olongapo, this bill seeks the declaration of January 17 of every year as a special non-working holiday in the City of Olongapo to be known as the James L. Gordon Day.

Approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


HON. FERDINAND L. HERNANDEZ

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AN ACT
DECLARING JANUARY 17 OF EVERY YEAR AS JAMES L. GORDON DAY, A
SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF OLONGAPO, AND
JANUARY 17 TO FEBRUARY 20 OF EVERY YEAR AS JAMES L. GORDON
MONTH IN THE CITY OF OLONGAPO IN RECOGNITION OF THE
ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF JAMES LEONARD TAGLE
GORDON TO SAID CITY ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 100TH BIRTH
ANNIVERSARY.

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

SECTION 1. January 17 of every year is hereby declared a special non-working holiday in the City of Olongapo in recognition of the achievements and contributions of James Leonard Tagle Gordon to said city to be known as "James L. Gordon Day". In the event that the holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the holiday shall be observed on the Monday that follows.

SECTION 2. January 17 to February 20 of every year is hereby declared to be "James L. Gordon Month" in the City of Olongapo, in commemoration of the achievements and contributions of James Leonard Tagle Gordon to the said City, on the occasion of the centenary of his birth anniversary.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.