

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

Third Regular Session
HOUSE BILL No. 8792



Introduced by
BEN P. EVARDONE (LD-Eastern Samar).
RAUL A. DAZA (1st Dist., Northern Samar), and
VICTORIA ISABEL G. NOEL (An Waray PL)

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Balangiga Bells finally arrived on December 11, 2018.

Hence, this bill seeks to declare December 11 of every year a special nonworking national holiday not only to remember the date when the said Balangiga bells were finally returned to the Philippines, but more importantly, to dedicate such date to International Friendship, Cooperation and Diplomacy, in recognition of the decades-long friendly, cooperative, and diplomatic initiatives for the return of the Balangiga Bells.

Per the Commission on Filipino Overseas' policy briefing paper "Migration Standpoint" issued last August 2017, the Philippine Government, religious organizations and various groups, especially war veterans, and individuals (both in the Philippines and the US) have made initiatives for the return of the bells since 1950s. In fact, the earliest recorded friendly and diplomatic move was in 1958 when a certain Filipino priest and historian, Fr. Horacio de la Costa, wrote to Mr. Chip Wards, an American military historian of the 13th Air Force in San Francisco, California, for help in securing the release of the bells by the US Air Force.

Since then, for more than 60 years, the diplomatic initiatives further gained traction, getting stronger and louder each year, the strongest and loudest, perhaps, was that made by no less than His Excellency President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, in his July 24, 2017 State of the Nation Address (SONA), when he specifically asked the United States Government, to quote:

"Give us back those Balangiga Bells. They are ours. They belong to the Philippines. They are part of our national heritage. Those bells are reminders of the gallantry and heroism of our forebears who resisted the American colonizers and sacrificed their lives in the process."

While the Balangiga bells left the country during a dark period in Philippine history, and 'imprisoned' for more than a century on foreign shores as *war trophies*, their return to the Philippines, made possible thru community cooperation, friendly communications, and persistent diplomatic initiatives, is something else to cherish and remember by.

The return of the Balangiga bells would finally close that dark period in Philippine history, erase the last vestiges of the atrocities brought about by the American-Philippine War in the 1900s, and strengthen further the alliance between the United States of America (USA) and the Republic of the Philippines, which has, since then, flourished into a more dependable partnership for growth and development.

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


REP. BEN P. EVARDONE
Lone District, Eastern Samar


REP. RAUL A. DAZA
1st District, Northern Samar


REP. VICTORIA ISABEL G. NOEL
An Waray Partylist

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AN ACT
DECLARING DECEMBER 11 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING
NATIONAL HOLIDAY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES, TO BE KNOWN
AS THE “INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP, COOPERATION AND DIPLOMACY DAY
IN THE PHILIPPINES”

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

1
2 **SECTION 1.** December 11th of every year is hereby declared a special nonworking
3 national holiday of the Republic of the Philippines to be known as the “International Friendship,
4 Cooperation and Diplomacy Day in the Philippines”, to encourage every person, natural and
5 juridical, in the private and public sector of society, to further inculcate upon oneself and others
6 the importance of diplomacy, cooperation and friendship, and to remember the date of arrival of
7 the three (3) bells of Balangiga.

8
9 **SECTION 2.** The Office of the President shall spearhead in the conduct of appropriate
10 and relevant activities for the successful observance of the holiday.

11
12 **SECTION 3.** All laws, decrees, orders, circulars, rules and regulations, which are
13 inconsistent with this Act is hereby deemed repealed or modified accordingly.

14
15 **SECTION 4.** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official
16 Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

17 **Approved,**