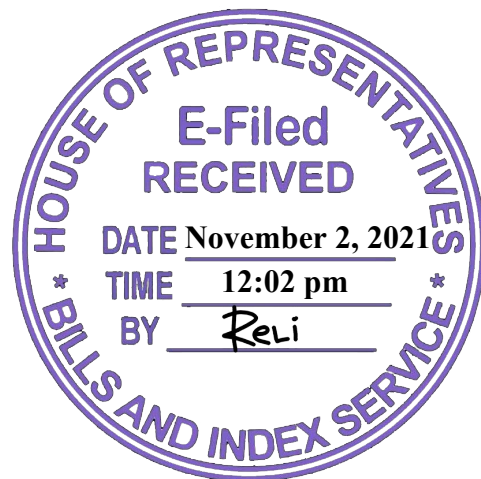


Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

House Bill No. **10434**



INTRODUCED BY
REP. ALFRED VARGAS

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING THE WITNESS PROTECTION, SECURITY AND
BENEFIT PROGRAM BY INCREASING THE RIGHTS AND BENEFITS OF
WITNESSES AND THEIR FAMILIES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE
REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6981, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE
"WITNESS PROTECTION, SECURITY AND BENEFIT ACT",
AND PROVIDING ADDITIONAL FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article 2, Section 5 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution provides:

“The maintenance of peace and order, the protection of life, liberty, and property, and promotion of the general welfare are essential for the enjoyment by all the people of the blessings of democracy.”

Article 2, Section 27 of the Constitution also provides:

“The State shall maintain honesty and integrity in the public service and take positive and effective measures against graft and corruption.”

In 2008, the United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Professor Philip Alston, recommended reforms to the Witness Protection Program (WPP) of the Philippines through possible amendments to improve Republic Act No. 6981 or the Witness Protection, Security and Benefit Act.¹

¹ Reforms required to protect witnesses in the Philippines.
<<http://www.humanrights.asia/resources/journals-magazines/article2/1001/appendix-reforms-required-to-protect-witnesses-in-the-philippines>>.

Currently, the law only provides a lamentable amount, as a minimum, of Ten Thousand Pesos (P10,000.00) to families of witnesses under the WPP if their family member is killed during his participation in the program.

This bill seeks to address some of the deficiencies in the current Witness Protection Program by proposing amendments to RA 6981. It is the hope of this measure to provide greater protection, rights, and benefits, to witnesses and their families against high-ranking government officials from political interference and control. This can be done by increasing the financial assistance for heirs of murdered witnesses who were under the WPP.

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



ALFRED VARGAS

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

SECTION 1. The Section 8 of Republic Act No. 6981, otherwise known as the Witness Protection, Security and Benefit Act is hereby amended to read as follows:

“Sec. 8. Rights and Benefits. – The witness shall have the following rights and benefits:

....

(f) If a Witness is killed, because of his participation in the Program, his heirs shall be entitled to a burial benefit AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE of not less than ~~[Ten thousand pesos (P10,000.00)]~~ FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND PESOS (P500,000.00) from the Program exclusive of any other similar benefits he may be entitled to under other existing laws.

(g) ~~[In case of death or permanent incapacity, his minor or dependent children shall be entitled to free education, from primary to college level in any state, or private school, college or university as may be determined by the Department, as long as they shall have qualified thereto.]~~ IF A WITNESS IS KILLED, BECAUSE OF HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM, HIS DEPENDENT CHILDREN, UP TO THE FOURTH CHILD, SHALL

BE ENTITLED TO EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE OF UP TO A MAXIMUM OF FIFTY THOUSAND PESOS (P50,000.00) PER SEMESTER, UNTIL THE DEPENDENT FINISHES FROM TERTIARY EDUCATION.

THE DEPARTMENT SHALL REVIEW THE AMOUNTS EVERY FIVE YEARS, AND SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT TO CONGRESS AT THE END OF THE FIFTH YEAR, ON WHETHER ADJUSTMENTS SHOULD BE MADE TO SUCH FINANCIAL AIDS.”

SECTION 2. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, Implementing Rules and Regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 3. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,