

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 10534



Introduced by **REP. JOSE FRANCISCO “KIKO” B. BENITEZ,**
REP. MA. LOURDES T. ARROYO, REP. LEO RAFAEL CUEVA,
REP. JULIET MARIE DE LEON FERRER, REP. GREG G. GASATAYA,
REP. JOSEPH STEPHEN S. PADUANO, REP. JOCELYN SY-LIMKAICHONG,
REP. ARNOLFO A. TEVES. JR, and REP. GERARDO P. VALMAYOR JR.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article X, Section 14 of the 1987 Constitution speaks of administrative decentralization to strengthen the autonomy of local government units and to accelerate economic and social development of the same.

Pursuant to this mandate, administrative regions are established or reorganized to promote efficient delivery of public services. In 2015, the Negros Island Region was created by virtue of Executive Order No. 183 for this purpose. However, due to the substantial funding requirement for the full operation of regional offices in the Negros Island Region, Executive Order No. 183, Series of 2015, was revoked in 2017, and the transfer of functions, personnel, assets and responsibilities was reversed pursuant to Executive Order No. 38, Series of 2017.

The dream of consolidating the two Negros provinces in one administrative region, however, continues to live on – an aspiration that is deeply grounded in their histories.

For 300 years under the Spanish colonial government, Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental had been governed as one province. Only in 1890 was Negros divided into two provinces.

The two Negros provinces united once again in establishing the cantonal government of Negros (popularly called the “Republic of Negros” but officially the *Gobierno Republicano Federal del Canton de Ysla de Negros* or Federal Republican Government of the Canton of Negros Island) in 1898, after the surrender of Spanish colonial authorities in Negros Occidental. The autonomy of the Negros Canton had been short-lived – undermined first by the establishment of a unitary government under the Malolos Constitution, then by American occupation.

Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental had henceforward taken different trajectories. Their destinies, however, converge on one commodity: sugar. The sugar industry has shaped the provinces’ history, economy and culture. Negros Island accounts for half of the country’s total sugarcane production. The island’s economic dependence on sugar, however, has made it vulnerable to price fluctuations in the world market. The decline of the sugar industry in the 1980s due to low sugar prices had stirred up labor unrest and political dissent, and turned

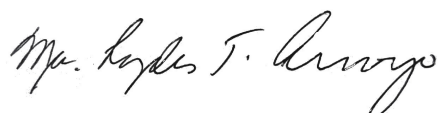
Negros Island into a hotbed of insurgency. The ideological divide that rocked Negros' sugar economy reverberates until today.

The challenge thus is to transform the economy of Negros Island to ensure that economic growth redounds to the benefit of the people. Here, the close economic coordination of the two Negros is crucial. Re-unifying the two Negros under one administrative region therefore becomes necessary.

Greater economic coordination will strengthen economies of scale in the island, and will consolidate separate development plans into a coherent, complementary roadmap for sustainable and inclusive economic growth for the two Negros provinces.

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


REP. JOSE FRANCISCO "KIKO" B. BENITEZ

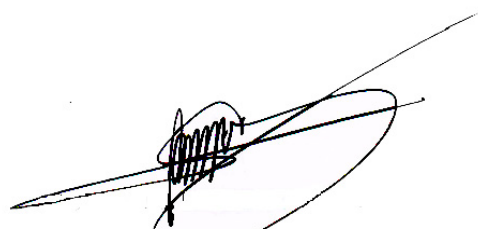

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GERARDO P. VALMAYOR, JR.
Representative
1st District Negros Occidental
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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE NEGROS ISLAND REGION AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. This Act shall be known as the “Negros Island Region Act”.

SEC. 2. It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote efficiency in the government, and accelerate social and economic development.

In consonance with this policy, the State shall provide for administrative decentralization to strengthen the autonomy of local government units, enhance the delivery of public services, and promote a more equitable distribution of opportunities and resources in the regions.

SEC. 4. The Negros Island Region, hereinafter referred to as NIR, is hereby established to be composed of the following provinces, including the component cities, municipalities and barangays therein, and independent city:

(a) Provinces:

1. Negros Occidental
2. Negros Oriental

(b) Independent city:

1. Bacolod City

SEC 5. The Provinces of Antique, Capiz, Guimaras and Iloilo, and Iloilo City shall hereupon form part of Region VI.

SEC. 6. As the Province of Negros Oriental is hereupon transferred from Region VII to the NIR, Region VII shall be composed of the Provinces of Cebu, Bohol and Siquijor, and Cebu City.

SEC. 7. The same privileges under the rules and regulations covering the regions shall

remain in force.

SEC. 8. Within sixty (60) days from the approval of this Act, the National Economic and Development Authority, in coordination with the Department of the Interior and Local Government, shall formulate and promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the establishment of the regional center. The implementing rules and regulations issued pursuant to this section shall take effect thirty (30) days after its publication in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

SEC. 9. All laws, decrees, orders and rules and regulations which are inconsistent with this Act are hereby amended, repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 10. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,