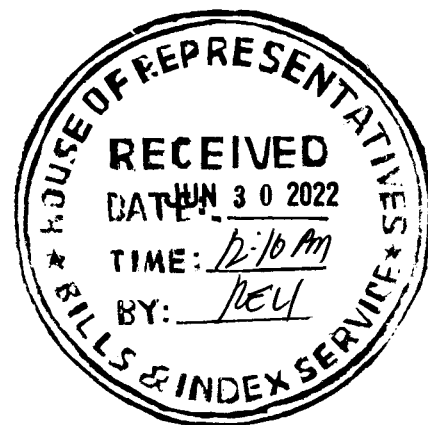




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 25



**Introduced by Representatives FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ,
YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ and JUDE A. ACIDRE**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Eastern Visayas is located at the very heart of the Philippines, with the islands of Samar and Leyte serving as island bridges between the country's northern island of Luzon and the southern region of Mindanao. One of the most ecologically diverse regions of the country, the three islands of Samar, Leyte and Biliran are blessed with land, mineral, energy, and marine resources, making it favorable for agricultural, fishery, and industrial potentials. Its geothermal resources have also been tapped, producing electricity for the national power grid. Its coconut, abaca, and other agricultural produce have contributed toward increasing the national economic supply. But in spite of its immense potentials and vast resources, Eastern Visayas remains one of the poorest regions in the country today.

In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan, one of the strongest typhoons in recorded human history, flattened parts of Eastern Visayas, leaving behind a trail of devastation that has tragically resulted in loss of lives, livelihood, and property. But even as it rises from the typhoon, the region continues to be caught up in the vicious cycle of poverty.

Even before Typhoon Haiyan struck, the incidence of poverty has already been worsening. While the nation's overall economic situation has been improving on the average, poverty in the region worsened from 2006 to 2012. In 2014, poverty incidence was at 54.9 percent; more than half of the region's population of 4.10 million is now extremely poor and unable to earn the minimum amount necessary to address their basic needs.

The recent typhoon has aggravated this already deplorable situation, with the poor becoming desperately poorer. Following the recent latest Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES) conducted in 2015, four of the six provinces in Eastern Visayas are among the country's top twenty poorest provinces: Leyte (ranked 17th at 46.7% poverty incidence), Western Samar (ranked 14th at 49.5%), Eastern Samar (ranked 11th at 50%) and Northern Samar (ranked 4th at 61.6%).

Our post-Haiyan situation has already revealed the vulnerability of the poor to long-term poverty as a result of major natural disasters. This is particularly the case for the poor residing in Eastern Visayas. This vulnerability to poverty arises because many of the poor are living just above the poverty line and mainly rely on income from agriculture. Income inequality, especially in Eastern Visayas is very high. Incomes of the poor are low and they have minimal savings to provide a buffer from the disaster. Remittances will be an important part of families coping strategies, however, the poorest have lower access to remittances compared to the better off families.

Given this situation in Eastern Visayas, there is a need to establish an effective institutional mechanism to be exercised through a unified responsive agency. This will address the need for a coordinated and integrated approach in the formulation and implementation of the plans, programs and projects geared towards economic growth and development in the region, including the establishment, among others, of special economic zones and support of the required social innovations.

This measure seeks to enact a creation of the Eastern Visayas Development Authority, a proposed development agency mandated to promote, coordinate and facilitate the active and extensive participation of all sectors to effect the socioeconomic development of Eastern Visayas.

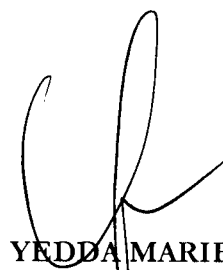
By providing an integrated and coordinated direction to the agricultural, industrial, economic and social development, EVDA will serve as the lead agency tasked to steer the sound and balanced industrial, economic and social growth of Eastern Visayas and carry on with the speedy rehabilitation in the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan. To this end, EVDA will craft and implement programs and projects that will increase trade, tourism and investments in the region, encourage private enterprise and advance efforts towards progress and development.

Once the promise of a resilient economy is fulfilled, the right economic and social conditions will be realized – one that will provide jobs to the people, especially those in rural areas, increase their productivity and their individual and family income, and thereby improve the level and quality of their living conditions.

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



FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ
Representative
First District, Leyte



YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ
Representative
Party-List, Tingog Sinirangan



JUDE A. ACIDRE
Representative
Party-List, Tingog Sinirangan



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Introduced by Representatives **FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ,**
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AN ACT
CREATING THE EASTERN VISAYAS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (EVDA),
DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, AND PROVIDING FUNDS
THEREFOR

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

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “Eastern Visayas
2 Development Authority (EVDA) Act”.

3 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote
4 and accelerate the sound and balanced industrial, economic and social growth of Eastern Visayas
5 and ensure its speedy rehabilitation in the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan by increasing trade,
6 tourism, and investments, encouraging private enterprise, and advancing efforts towards progress
7 and development within the context of national plans and policies in order to provide jobs to the
8 people, especially those in rural areas, increase their productivity and their individual and family
9 incomes, and thereby improve the quality of their living conditions.

10 Towards this end, an effective institutional mechanism shall be established in order to
11 address the need for a coordinated and integrated approach in the formulation and
12 implementation of plans, programs, and projects geared towards economic growth and
13 development in the Eastern Visayas region, including the establishment, among others, of special
14 economic zones.

15 **SEC. 3. Creation** - The Eastern Visayas Development Authority, hereinafter referred to
16 as the Authority, is hereby created, which shall promote, coordinate and facilitate the active and
17 extensive participation of all sectors in the socioeconomic development of Eastern Visayas.

1 **SEC. 4. Coverage** - The Authority shall cover all the provinces of Northern Samar,
2 Eastern Samar, Western Samar, Leyte, Biliran and Southern Leyte, the independent City of
3 Ormoc and the highly urbanized City of Tacloban.

4 **SEC. 5. Main Office.**- The Authority shall have its main office in Tacloban City. It
5 may establish other satellite offices in Metro Manila and in other provinces within Eastern
6 Visayas, if necessary, to achieve the objectives of this Act. The Authority shall have a term of
7 fifty (50) years from the effectivity of its Act, renewable for the same period unless otherwise
8 provided by law.

9 **SEC. 6. Purpose.**— The Authority shall have the following purposes and objectives:

- 10 (a) To promote the development of Eastern Visayas by initiating or undertaking, by itself
11 or otherwise, development and business projects of corporate, economic nature
12 whether in agriculture, power, infrastructure, energy, public utilities, land development,
13 manufacturing, exploration or utilization of natural resources and other fields or
14 projects;
15
16 (b) To integrate government and private sector efforts and resources in the pursuit of
17 sustainable development and balanced growth of Eastern Visayas, as proposed in the
18 post-Haiyan rehabilitation plan and other relevant development plans, programs and
19 projects;
20 (c) To facilitate investments in any field as would enhance the economic development of
21 the region;
22
23 (d) To provide a model for the full implementation of a comprehensive regional
24 industrialization and agricultural modernization policy.

25 **SEC. 7. Powers and Functions of the Authority.** —The Authority shall have the
26 following powers and functions:

- 27 (a) Formulate an integrated development framework for Eastern Visayas that is, as far as
28 practicable, consistent with the peace and development initiatives of the national
29 government;
30
31 (b) Provide strategic direction for the long-term economic development of Eastern
32 Visayas;
33
34 (c) Integrate, prioritize, program, and implement, whenever allowed and authorized by
35 applicable laws, specific programs, activities and projects within Eastern Visayas,
36 including Official Development Assistance (ODA) projects, subject to such limitations
37 prescribed by existing laws, rules, and regulations;
38
39 (d) Recommend to and, whenever necessary, call upon the appropriate agencies of the
40 national government and any of its instrumentalities, to lend the necessary technical
41 support for, assistance and prioritization in the implementation of agricultural,

- 1 industrial, commercial, infrastructure, environmental, tourism and technological
2 programs and projects;
3
- 4 (e) Advocate to the constituents of Eastern Visayas, their elected representatives in
5 Congress, and the national government, policies that will foster the integrated and
6 balanced development of Eastern Visayas;
7
- 8 (f) Promote and facilitate investments in any field that would enhance the socioeconomic
9 development of Eastern Visayas and uplift the living standards of the people in close
10 coordination with agencies primarily mandated to undertake such functions;
11
- 12 (g) Explore sources for financing priority programs, projects, and activities that are critical
13 to the development of Eastern Visayas;
14
- 15 (h) Coordinate and facilitate the extension of necessary planning, management, and
16 technical assistance to prospective and existing investors, to complement the efforts
17 of agencies primarily mandated to execute such functions;
18
- 19 (i) Establish a comprehensive and integrated database on Eastern Visayas to support
20 planning and decision making;
21
- 22 (j) Perform prior screening functions, as a condition precedent to the approval by any
23 national, provincial, or municipal government agency, of any permit, license, lease,
24 franchise, or concession for the operation of any business or the exploitation,
25 development, or utilization of natural resources within Eastern Visayas;
26
- 27 (k) Negotiate and enter into management or consulting contracts with local or foreign
28 management consulting firms for the management of the Authority or the planning
29 and implementation of agricultural, tourism, and industrial development projects in
30 Eastern Visayas;
31
- 32 (l) Avail of the expertise of any particular employee, technician, or group of persons in
33 any bureau, office, or department of the national government whose services are
34 deemed urgently needed for the attainment of the goals of the Authority, with the
35 consent and approval of the department head concerned;
36
- 37 (m) Conduct scientific experiments, investigation, and research to discover economical and
38 practical methods of increasing agricultural and industrial production and other related
39 endeavors;
40
- 41 (n) Encourage, and organize cooperative ventures in agriculture, agri-business, industry,
42 tourism and commerce and assist them by arranging appropriate financing schemes,
43 for their plans and projects;
44

- (o) Monitor, evaluate, and formulate recommendations in the implementation of Eastern Visayas-wide development programs, activities and projects;
- (p) Establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure the timely implementation of Eastern Visayas-wide projects, whenever necessary, including public-private partnership;
- (q) Review and recommend for approval by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Board programs, projects, and plans by the national government and donor agencies for implementation in Eastern Visayas, subject to existing laws, rules and regulations;
- (r) Recommend the creation and supervise the development and operation of special economic zones according to the principles and provisions set forth in this Act and Republic Act No. 7916, or the Special Economic Zone Act of 1995, as amended ;
- (s) Interface with foreign assistance agencies and international aid organizations, in coordination with the NEDA and other relevant national government agencies, for the purposes of obtaining financing support, grants and donations for its programs and projects;
- (t) Receive and administer donations, contributions, grants, bequests or gifts, in cash or in kind, from foreign governments, international agencies, private entities and other sources, including ODA, to be used in the development of Eastern Visayas, subject to existing laws, rules and regulations;
- (u) To sue and be sued, enter into contracts, acquire, purchase, hold, lease, transfer, and dispose of property of any kind or nature to carry out the purposes of this Act; and
- (v) Discharge other functions that may be deemed necessary or as may be provided by law.

In the discharge of its functions, the Authority shall ensure appropriate consultation and coordination with the Regional Development Council Eastern Visayas (RDC-EV) and other local development councils as well as with national government agencies, local government units, accredited people's organizations, non-government organizations and the private sector operating in Eastern Visayas.

The Authority, through the EVDA Chairperson, shall submit to the President of the Philippines and both Houses of Congress annual reports on its accomplishments and activities.

SEC. 8. Board of Directors. – The Authority's overall directions and thrusts shall be provided and approved, unless provided otherwise in this Act, by the EVDA Board of Directors, hereinafter referred to as the Board. It shall be composed of the following members:

- (a) The EVDA Chairperson as head;

- (b) The Chairperson of the Regional Development Council of Eastern Visayas (RDC-EV) as *ex officio* member;
- (c) A member of the Senate, upon designation by the Senate President, who shall be an *ex officio* member;
- (d) A member of the House of Representatives, chosen by the District Representatives of the legislative districts comprising Eastern Visayas, who shall be an *ex officio* member;
- (e) The Regional President of the League of Municipalities-Eastern Visayas Chapter;
- (f) Three (3) private sector representatives to be appointed by the President, upon the recommendation of the Board comprising of one (1) representative each from the:
1. Eastern Visayas business sector;
 2. Eastern Visayas academic sector; and
 3. Eastern Visayas non-government sector.

The term of office of the three (3) representatives from the private sector shall be six (6) years: *Provided*, That at the initial appointment of such members, the second member to be appointed shall only serve a term of four (4) years and the third member to be appointed shall only serve a term of two (2) years: *Provided, further*, That they shall continue to hold office until their successors shall have been appointed. All vacancies, prior to the expiration of the term, shall be filled for the unexpired term only.

The members of the Board shall be entitled to reimbursements for actual and necessary expenses incurred, either for their attendance in the meetings of the Board or in connection with other official business authorized by resolution of the Board, subject to existing laws and regulations.

The term of the *ex officio* members including the Senator and the Member of the House of Representatives shall correspond to their term as elected officials.

SEC. 9. Functions of the Board of Directors. – The Board shall have the following functions:

- (a) Provide direction and guidance for the Authority's work and thrusts for Eastern Visayas;
- (b) Ensure that the goals and policies of the Authority are consistent with the overall national development goals and objectives;
- (c) Ensure that the programs of the Authority are consistent with regional and local development plans, programs and projects and vice versa;
- (d) Explore sources for financing of priority Eastern Visayas-wide development;

- 1 (e) Create committees or task forces as may be deemed necessary ~~in~~ for the
2 accomplishment of the plans, programs, projects and activities of the Authority;
3
4 (f) Determine schedules, establish voting procedures, criteria for the constitution of a
5 quorum and other rules and regulations in the conduct of Board meetings; and
6
7 (g) Perform such functions as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act.

8 **SEC. 10. *Executive Committee.*** – The Board shall constitute an Executive
9 Committee from among its membership to act, for and on its behalf when the Board is not in
10 session, on urgent matters as may be deemed necessary by the Chairperson.

11 The following shall comprise the Executive Committee:

- 12 (a) The EVDA Chairperson as head;
13
14 (b) The Eastern Visayas Regional Development Council (RDC) Chairperson;
15
16 (c) The Private Sector Representative from the business sector;
17
18 (d) The Private Sector Representative from the academic sector; and
19
20 (e) The Private Sector Representative from the non-government sector.

21 **SEC. 11. *Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer.*** – The EVDA Chairperson
22 shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines with the rank of Undersecretary and
23 shall act as Chief Executive Officer of the Authority. The Chairperson and Chief Executive
24 Officer shall serve a term of six (6) years from the date of appointment unless removed for
25 cause: *Provided*, That the person who shall be appointed as Chairperson must be a Filipino
26 citizen, of good moral character, of proven probity and integrity and a holder of a degree in
27 economics, business, public administration, law, management or related fields, and with at least
28 five (5) years relevant experience preferably in the field of management or public
29 administration: *Provided, further*, That the appointee for Chairperson shall have been a resident
30 of Eastern Visayas for at least (5) years before the appointment.

31 The Chairperson shall have the following duties and functions:

- 32 (a) Call and preside over meetings of the Board and see to it that the policies, programs
33 and rules and regulations are implemented properly;
34
35 (b) Call on technical experts in the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive
36 and integrated development plan for Eastern Visayas, investment programs and the
37 preparation of investment programming priorities, annual reports and other pertinent
38 documents approved by the Authority;
39
40 (c) Identify solutions to key issues and concerns, taking into account related risks, relative
41 impact, and affected parties in coordination with the Board and key stakeholders;

- 1
2 (d) Advocate the Authority's work among the various concerned sectors and stakeholders;
3
4 (e) Call on any agency, group, individual member of the Board, local government unit,
5 and host community to address issues and concerns relating to implementation of
6 major programs, projects and activities;
7
8 (f) Supervise the monitoring and timely implementation of Eastern Visayas-wide
9 programs, projects and activities;
10
11 (g) Endorse to the Board all policy recommendations, plans and programs for approval;
12
13 (h) Accept, on behalf of the Authority, donations, contributions, grants and bequests or
14 gifts, in cash or in kind, from members, foreign governments, international agencies,
15 private entities or any individual for purpose that will realize the functions of the
16 Authority;
17
18 (i) Supervise administrative operations including disbursement of any fund of the
19 Authority, subject to the usual accounting and auditing procedures, and submit reports
20 thereon;
21
22 (j) Execute and administer the policies and measures approved by the Board;
23
24 (k) Appoint, remove, dismiss or otherwise discipline for cause, all employees of the
25 Authority in accordance with the standard guidelines for recruitment, employment,
26 and discipline in the Civil Service Code;
27
28 (l) Represent the Authority in all dealings with other offices, agencies, and
29 instrumentalities of the government and with all persons and entities, public or private;
30
31 (m) Sign agreements and/or contracts on behalf of the Authority, including those for
32 expert and consultancy services and other reports of accountabilities emanating from
33 the Authority;
34
35 (n) Serve as *ex officio* member of the Board of Directors of the NEDA and the TIEZA;
36 and
37
38 (o) Perform such other functions that the Board may direct to carry out the provisions of
39 this Act.

40 **SEC. 12. Deputy Chairperson.** – The EVDA Chairperson shall be assisted by one
41 Deputy Chairperson, who shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines with the rank
42 of Assistant Secretary upon the recommendation of the EVDA Chairperson. The Deputy
43 Chairperson shall have the same qualifications as the Chairperson and shall perform such
44 duties and functions as may be assigned by the Chairperson or as provided for by law.

1 **SEC. 13. Executive Director.** – An Executive Director shall be appointed by the
2 President of the Philippines upon recommendation by the Chairperson: *Provided*, That no
3 person shall be appointed as Executive Director unless one is a Filipino citizen, of good moral
4 character, of proven probity and integrity and a holder of a degree in economics, business,
5 public administration, law, management or other related fields, and have at least five (5) years
6 relevant experience in said fields: *Provided, further*, That the appointee to the position of
7 Executive Director shall have been a resident of Eastern Visayas for five (5) years prior to
8 appointment, and has the requisite eligibilities for third level career service position, pursuant
9 to the career executive rank system: *Provided, finally*, that the appointee shall reside in Eastern
10 Visayas during while serving in such office.

11 The Executive Director shall assist the Chairperson in carrying out the functions of
12 the Authority and shall, likewise, serve as the Secretary of the Board.

13 **SEC. 14. EVDA Advisory Council.** – There is hereby constituted an EVDA
14 Advisory Committee to be composed of the following:

- 15 (a) EVDA Chairperson as head;
16
17 (b) The Eastern Visayas RDC Chairperson;
18
19 (c) The District Representatives of the legislative districts comprising Eastern Visayas;
20
21 (d) The Provincial Governors of the provinces comprising Eastern Visayas;
22
23 (e) The City Mayors of the independent cities in Eastern Visayas;
24
25 (f) The Regional Directors of the national line agencies with regional offices in Eastern
26 Visayas.

27 The EVDA Advisory Council shall convene at least once every six (6) months, or as
28 often as necessary, upon the call of the EDVA Chairperson, advise or be consulted by the
29 Authority on important matters related to Eastern Visayas.

30 **SEC. 15. Organizational Structure.** – The Board of Directors, upon the
31 recommendation of the Chairperson shall determine the organizational structure, staffing
32 pattern and compensation of the Authority subject to Civil Service laws, rules and regulations
33 and Republic Act No. 11466, otherwise known as “Salary Standardization Law of 2019”, and
34 the Position Classification and Compensation System. The Chairperson may reorganize the
35 Authority and may create or abolish divisions, units or branches therein as the exigencies of
36 the affairs of the Authority may require.

37 **SEC. 16. Merit System.** – All officials and employees of the EVDA shall be selected
38 and appointed on the basis of merit and fitness in accordance with civil service law, rules and
39 regulations. The recruitment, transfer, promotion, and dismissal of all its personnel including

temporary workers shall be governed by a merit system that will be established by the EVDA in compliance with existing laws, rules and regulations.

SEC. 17. Appropriations. – The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act: *Provided*, That the operating expenses of the Authority should not exceed fourteen percent (14%) of the annual appropriation: *Provided further*, That at least eight-six percent (86%) of said annual appropriation shall be disbursed for the programs, projects, and activities of the Authority.

SEC. 18. Transfer of Post-Haiyan Rehabilitation Funds.– The authority, control and administration of funds, equipment and properties donated by foreign governments, foreign and local non-profit agencies and foundations and private entities to the National Government for the purpose of the rehabilitation of areas in Eastern Visayas that were affected by Typhoon Haiyan, as well as all other funds received or appropriated by the National Government for the same purpose are hereby transferred to the Authority. Hereafter, the Authority shall exercise the sole power of disposition and control of the rehabilitation funds, in accordance with the provisions of this Act or until the purposes for which the said funds had been donated are accomplished.

SEC. 19. Formulation of the Eastern Visayas Development Master Plan.– Upon its organization, the Authority shall formulate and submit its development master plan to NEDA for integration into the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan and public investment program. The Eastern Visayas Development Master Plan shall serve as the framework for the accelerated and balanced development of Eastern Visayas in accordance with the aims and purposes of this Act.

SEC. 20. Administrative Supervision.– The Authority shall be under the direct supervision of the President of the Philippines.

SEC. 21. Interpretation.– The powers, authorities and functions that are vested in the Authority are intended to decentralize governmental functions and authority and promote an efficient and effective working relationship between the EVDA, the national government, and the local government units.

SEC. 22. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – The EVDA shall adopt rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act within sixty (60) days from the date of its approval.

SEC. 23. Separability Clause. – If any part or provision of this Act is held unconstitutional or invalid, other parts or provisions hereof which are not affected shall continue to remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 24. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

1 **SEC. 25. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication
2 in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,