

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1446



Introduced by **REP. JOSE FRANCISCO “KIKO” B. BENITEZ,**
REP. JOSEPH STEPHEN S. PADUANO, REP. GERARDO P. VALMAYOR JR.,
REP. EMILIO BERNARDINO L. YULO, REP. MERCEDES K. ALVAREZ,
REP. GREG G. GASATAYA, REP. JOCELYN SY-LIMKAICHONG,
REP. MANUEL T. SAGARBARRIA, REP. ARNOLFO A. TEVES JR.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article X, Section 14 of the 1987 Constitution promotes 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 and accelerate social and economic development. In 2015, the Negros Island Region was created by virtue of Executive Order (“EO”) No. 183. However, in 2017, due to the substantial funding requirement for the full operation of regional offices in the Negros Island Region, EO No. 183 (s. 2015) was revoked, and the transfer of functions, personnel, assets and responsibilities was reversed pursuant to EO No. 38 (s.2017).

The dream of consolidating the two Negros provinces – Oriental and Occidental – 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 were governed as a single province. It was only in 1890 when Negros was 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 was 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.

Thus, the challenge 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 provinces is most crucial. Re-unifying the two Negros provinces under one administrative region therefore becomes necessary.


Finally, in view of its proximity and cultural similarities, the inclusion of Siquijor Province to the proposed Region VI-B is logical and practical.

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

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


REP. JOSE FRANCISCO "KIKO" B. BENITEZ

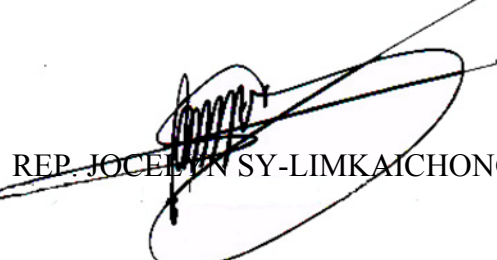

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GERARDO F. ALMAYOR, JR.
Representative
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AN ACT CREATING REGION VI-B AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. *Title* – This Act shall be known as the “Region VI-B Act”.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy* – 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. *Creation of Region VI-B* – The Region VI-B is hereby created to be composed of the following provinces, including the component cities, municipalities and barangays located therein, and independent city:

Provinces	Independent City
Negros Occidental	Bacolod City
Negros Oriental	
Siquijor	

SEC 5. *Reconstitution of Region VI-A* – The Provinces of Antique, Capiz, Guimaras and Iloilo, and Iloilo City shall now form part of Region VI-A.

SEC. 6. *Reconstitution of Region VII* – As the Provinces of Negros Oriental and Siquijor are hereupon transferred from Region VII to the Region VI-B, Region VII shall now be composed of the Provinces of Cebu and Bohol, and Cebu City.

SEC. 7. *Application of existing rules and regulations* – The same privileges under the rules and regulations covering the regions shall remain in force.

SEC. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations* – 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 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. *Repealing* – All laws, decrees, orders, issuances, and rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby amended, repealed, or modified accordingly.

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

APPROVED,