

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4276



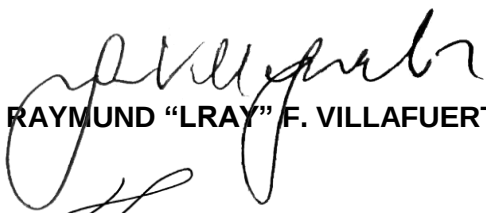
Introduced by **HON. LUIS RAYMUND “LRAY” F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.,**
HON. MIGUEL LUIS R. VILLAFUERTE, HON. TSUYOSHI ANTHONY G.
HORIBATA AND HON. NICOLAS “NICK” C. ENCISO VIII

EXPLANATORY NOTE

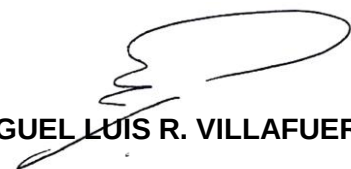
Each year, a large amount of the country’s agricultural land is irrevocably converted from actual or potential agricultural use to non-agricultural use. This is further aggravated by conflicting government programs and policies regarding land use and development.

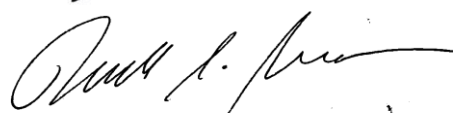
The continued decrease in the country’s agricultural land base threatens the ability of the country to produce food and fiber in sufficient quantities to meet domestic needs. In addition, the extensive use of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes undermines the economic base of many rural areas. Yet there is no law which requires the Secretary of Agrarian Reform and the Secretary of Agriculture to report to Congress data relative to the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.

This bill provides for a reporting requirement on the rate at which agricultural land is converted to non-agricultural uses, and a review of existing government policies and procedures on agricultural land conversion, including an evaluation of the compatibility of government policies on land conversion with development plans at the national and local levels. The ultimate objective of this bill is not only to protect agricultural land, but to minimize graft and corruption in agricultural land conversion due to conflicting laws, policies and administrative activities of government agencies.


LUIS RAYMUND “LRAY” F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.


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AN ACT
PROVIDING STRONGER MEASURES TO PRESERVE AGRICULTURAL LAND
AND REGULATE ITS CONVERSION FOR NON-AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Agricultural Land Preservation Act.*”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to minimize the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses, and ensure that national government policies and programs administered and implemented for the protection of agricultural land are compatible with the development plans of the local government units (LGUs).

SEC. 3. *Conversion of Agricultural Land for Non-Agricultural Uses.* – The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) shall, in coordination with the national government agencies (NGAs) and LGUs, develop criteria for identifying the effects of government programs on the conversion of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes and undertake the following measures:

- (a) Identify the adverse effects of government policies and programs and programs on the preservation of agricultural land;
- (b) Consider alternative actions, as appropriate, to lessen such adverse effects; and

- (c) Ensure that the policies and programs of the National Government for the preservation of agricultural lands are practicable and compatible with the development plans of the LGUs.

For purposes of this Act, *agricultural land* refers to land devoted to the cultivation of the soil, planting of crops, growing of fruit trees, raising of livestock, poultry or fish, and other farm activities and practices performed by a farmer in conjunction with farming operations done by persons whether natural or juridical.

SEC. 4. Availability of Restorative Information. – The DAR and the DA shall provide other NGAs, LGUs, organizations, and individuals all the necessary and available information that are pertinent to the restoration, maintenance and improvement of the quantity and quality of agricultural land.

SEC. 5. Review of Existing Policies and Procedures. – The DAR and the DA shall, in coordination with the NGAs and LGUs, conduct a regular review of existing laws and policies, administrative rules and regulations to determine whether the existing provisions are in accordance with the provisions of this Act and, whenever necessary, develop proposals and take appropriate action to bring government policies, programs and administrative activities into conformity to the purpose of this Act.

SEC. 6. Technical Assistance. – The Secretary of Agrarian Reform and the Secretary of Agriculture and other department secretaries shall, whenever appropriate, provide technical assistance to LGUs which intend to develop policies or programs that regulate the conversion of prime agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.

SEC. 7. Agricultural Land Resource Information. – The Secretary of Agrarian Reform and the Secretary of Agriculture shall, in cooperation with other departments and agencies of the government, design and implement educational programs and materials emphasizing the importance of prime agricultural land to the country's well-being and distribute educational materials through mass media, schools, organizations, and other government agencies.

SEC. 8. *Reportorial Requirement.* – The Secretary of Agrarian Reform and the Secretary of Agriculture shall submit an annual report to the Congress of the Philippines, through the Committee on Agrarian Reform of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform of the Senate of the Philippines, on the progress and its compliance with the provisions of this Act on or before January 31 of every year.

The annual report shall include an update and information on the effects, if any, of government programs and administrative activities relevant to the preservation of agricultural land; results of the reviews on existing policies and procedures required under Section 5 of this Act and action taken to ensure its observance; and statistical data on agricultural land conversion to non-agricultural uses.

SEC. 9. *Limitations.* – This Act does not authorize the government to regulate the use of private agricultural land and affect the property rights of owners of such land; none of the provisions or other requirements of this Act shall apply to the acquisition or use of agricultural land for national defense purposes.

SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.* – If any part or provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 11. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,