

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **10642**

Introduced by Representative Joseph Gilbert F. Violago



EXPLANATORY NOTE

The role of communication and information is recognized by the State in the 1987 Constitution (Art. II, Sec. 24). Our media workers and practitioners serve as the society's frontliners in delivering vital information to the public.

Statistics reveal that more than 300 thousand Filipinos are working in media publishing and printing as of 2023.¹ While the actual data on the number of media workers as of 2024 is not yet available, one can surmise that hundreds of thousands of individuals rely on news media practice for a living. This is bolstered by the fact that most media entities or outlets are engaging in new ways of media practices, i.e., digital media, aside from traditional print and broadcasting.

For this reason, the State shall ensure that media workers are protected from exploitation, properly compensated for the corresponding hazards due to the nature of their work and covered by social security and welfare benefits.

This measure seeks to institutionalize minimum compensation for media workers in the private sector, i.e., who shall not receive less than the applicable minimum wage rate prescribed by the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board and shall be entitled to overtime pay and night shift premiums, in accordance with existing rules and regulations.

Upon employment, they shall be covered by the Social Security System (SSS), the Home Development Mutual Fund or the Pag-IBIG Fund, and the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), and entitled to retirement benefits. Likewise, they shall be entitled to hazard pay of Php500/day for those physically reporting for work in dangerous areas, as well as provided with protective equipment, and other necessities. Employers shall periodically provide safety seminars to their employees, including media workers.

¹ "Number of workers in media publishing and printing Philippines 2018-2023". *Statista*. Published by C. Balita, Apr 5, 2024. Accessed thru <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1459933/philippines-number-of-workers-in-media-publishing-and-printing/#:~:text=As%20of%202023%2C%20the%20total,with%20a%20workforce%20of%20311%2C000>>

Media workers, under this proposed measure shall also be covered with additional insurance for risks in the line of duty, i.e., death benefits, disability, and medical benefits. Another salient feature is providing them with security of tenure, which means that a media worker cannot be terminated from employment, except for just or authorized causes under the Labor Code of the Philippines, and with the observance of procedural due process.

A similar version of the bill was filed in the 18th Congress by Rep. Rowena Niña Taduran, among others, where it was approved by the House of Representatives on Third and Final Reading, and transmitted to the Senate; however, it was not enacted into law due to lack of material time. The present proponent acknowledges the hard work and wisdom of his predecessors.

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



JOSEPH GILBERT F. VIOLAGO

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AN ACT
PROVIDING ENHANCED PROTECTION, SECURITY, AND BENEFITS FOR
MEDIA WORKERS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

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 “Media Workers’ Welfare and Benefits Act”.

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State affirms labor as a primary social economic force. It shall protect the rights of workers and promote their welfare. The State shall afford full protection to labor and promote full employment and equality of employment opportunities for all. They shall be entitled to security of tenure, humane conditions of work, and a living wage.

Towards this end, the State shall ensure that media workers are protected from exploitation, properly compensated for the corresponding hazards due to the nature of their work, and covered by social security and welfare benefits.

SECTION 3. *Coverage and Definition.* – This Act shall apply to media workers and media entities in the private sector.

Media workers refer to those persons legitimately engaged in news media practice, directly or indirectly, whether as a principal occupation or not.

Media entities refer to persons or organizations, including media networks and operators that gather information of possible public interest and publishes it to the public using any one or more of a variety of media including text in print and digital format, photographs, videos and sound recordings.

SECTION 4. *Minimum Compensation.* – Media workers shall not receive less than the applicable minimum wage rate prescribed by the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board, and shall be entitled to overtime pay and night shift premiums, as well as other forms of compensation provided by Presidential Decree No. 442, as

amended, otherwise known as the "Labor Code of the Philippines", and other related laws and issuances.

SECTION 5. *Social Security and. Welfare Benefits.* – Media workers shall be covered by the Social Security System (SSS), the Home Development Mutual Fund or the Pag-IBIG Fund, and the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) upon employment. The payment of monthly contributions shall be jointly shared by the media worker and the employer, when applicable, in accordance with existing rules and regulations. Media workers shall also be entitled to retirement benefits as provided under Republic Act No. 11199, otherwise known as the "Social Security Act of 2018".

SECTION 6. *Hazard Pay.* – Media workers required to physically report for work in dangerous areas such as strife-torn or embattled areas, distressed or isolated stations, disease-infested areas or in areas declared under a state of calamity or emergency for the duration thereof which expose them to great danger, contagion, radiation, volcanic activity or eruption, occupational risks or perils to life as determined by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), shall be compensated with a hazard pay in the minimum amount of Five hundred pesos (Php500.00) per day, with no diminution, which shall be computed as follows:

$$\text{Hazard pay} = \text{Php}500 \times \text{number of days physically reporting for work in dangerous areas}$$

The base amount of the hazard pay of media workers may be increased as decided upon by the concerned agencies.

Employers shall also provide media workers covering events in dangerous areas with basic safety gear and equipment such as bulletproof vests and helmets, first aid kits, fire protection jackets, face shields, medical grade protective equipment, harnesses, safety shoes, and life vests.

Employers shall periodically provide safety seminars to their employees, including media workers.

SECTION 7. *Mandatory Additional Insurance Benefits.* – Employers shall provide additional insurance coverage to media workers as follows:

- a. Death benefit of Three hundred thousand pesos (Php300,000.00) for each media worker who shall perish in the line of duty;
- b. Disability benefit of up to Three hundred thousand pesos (Php300,000.00) for each media worker who shall suffer total or partial disability, whether permanent or temporary, arising from any injury sustained in the line of duty; and
- c. Medical insurance benefit for each media worker of up to One hundred thousand pesos (Php100,000.00).

SECTION 8. *Security of Tenure.* – Media workers shall be deemed as regular employees after six (6) months from the start of employment, regardless of the nature of employment. However, the said six (6) months period shall be computed

cumulatively if a media worker is repeatedly engaged for shorter periods. An employer shall not terminate the services of a media worker except for just or authorized causes under the Labor Code of the Philippines, and with the observance of procedural due process.

SECTION 9. *Settlement of Disputes.* – All labor-related disputes shall be elevated to the DOLE regional office which has jurisdiction over the workplace.

SECTION 10. *Liability of Media Entities.* – Media entities shall be responsible for all content released under their name. Owners of media entities or franchise holders shall be liable for claims arising from gross negligence, malicious acts, and violation of laws in connection with the work of block timers and media workers, regardless of the nature of engagement, except when the owners of the media entities or the franchise holders are able to prove that due diligence was exercised or that the fault is attributable solely to the concerned block timer or media worker. Any agreement to the contrary shall be void.

SECTION 11. *Compliance.* – The DOLE shall monitor compliance with the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 12. *Administrative Penalties.* – Violations of the provisions of this Act shall be subject to applicable penalties provided in Presidential Decree No. 442, as amended, and other related laws and issuances

SECTION 13. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the approval of this Act, the Secretary of Labor and Employment shall, in coordination with media groups, associations, publishers, guilds and other concerned groups, issue the necessary rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 14. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 15. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, issuances, rules, and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 16. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,