

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

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
3rd Regular Session

House Bill No. **10863**



INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVES JOCELYN P. TULFO, ERWIN T. TULFO, RALPH WENDEL P. TULFO, EDVIC G. YAP AND ERIC GO YAP

This bill seeks to grant deserving and qualified individuals a chance to pursue further studies specifically legal studies and a framework for the return of their legal services for the country.

As of May 14, 2023, there is a total of 91,958 lawyers registered in the Roll of Attorneys since the first Philippine Bar Exams took place in 1901¹. Meanwhile, according to the 2020 Census of Population and Housing conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority, the Philippines had a total population of 109,035,343². The comparison of these numbers would readily show the low lawyer-to-population ratio in the country leaving majority of Filipinos still without access to legal services.

Pursuing legal education in the Philippines, however, remains elusive to most Filipinos. Tuition fees in law school range from 25,000.00 to as high as 130,000.00 per semester excluding the costs of books, reading materials, accommodation, and other miscellaneous expenses of students.

This proposed measure seeks to bridge the gap in the administration of justice in the country by providing support to deserving students in their pursuit of legal education and increasing the number of lawyers in government service. Through this measure, qualified students shall be given the opportunity to pursue their legal education with free tuition fee and allowances. As a condition, these students shall within five (5) years from admission to the practice of law, render mandatory return service for two (2) years in government agencies such as the Public Attorneys Office and the National Prosecution Service.

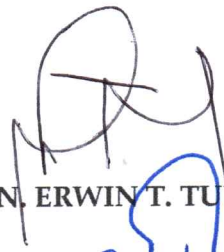
Thus, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

¹ <https://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/lawyers-list-2/> (Accessed on May 14, 2023)

² <https://www.psa.gov.ph/content/age-and-sex-distribution-philippine-population-2020-census-population-and-housing#:~:text=Based%20on%20the%202020%20Census,total%20population%20of%20109%2C035%2C343%20persons.>



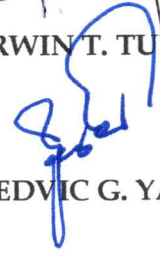
HON. JOCELYN P. TULFO



HON. ERWIN T. TULFO



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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A LEGAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RETURN SERVICE
PROGRAM FOR DESERVING STUDENTS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR

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

1 Section 1. **Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “*Abogado Para sa Bayan*
2 *Act*”.

3
4 Sec. 2. **Declaration of Policy.** – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
5 uphold the right to free access to the courts and quasi-judicial bodies and ensure that
6 adequate legal assistance shall not be denied to any person by reason of poverty.
7 Towards this end, and in cognizance of the constitutional directive to provide for
8 preventive measures and legal aid services to the underprivileged whose human rights
9 have been violated or need protection, the State shall establish a legal scholarship and
10 return service program to assist deserving students pursue legal education who shall
11 eventually render legal services in government offices.

12
13 Sec. 3. **Legal Scholarship and Return Service Program.** – There shall be
14 established a Legal Scholarship and Return Service (LSRS) Program for deserving
15 students who intend to pursue a Juris Doctor or Bachelor of Laws degree in state
16 universities and colleges (SUCs) or in partner private higher education institutions
17 (HEIs) in regions where there are no SUC offering Juris Doctor or Bachelor of Laws
18 degree. The LSRS Program shall provide the following benefits to qualified legal
19 education students:

- 20
21 (a) Free tuition and other school fees, including but not limited to: student
22 registration fees, library fees, and publication fees;
23 (b) Allowance for prescribed books and supplies;
24 (c) Allowance for review fees for government-mandated bar exams; and
25 (d) Allowance for licensure fees.

1
2 Sec. 4. ***Qualifications and Requirements.*** – In order to qualify for the grant of
3 scholarship under the LSRS Program, a prospective or current legal education student
4 must satisfy the following requirements:

- 5
6 (a) Must be a Filipino Citizen residing in the Philippines;
7 (b) Must not have completed a Bachelor of Laws or Juris Doctor degree from any
8 HEI offering legal education;
9 (c) Must be a graduating student or a graduate of an undergraduate degree
10 program; and
11 (d) Must have passed the entrance examination and complied with other
12 requirements for admission into the Juris Doctor or Bachelor of Laws degree
13 program offered by the SUC or private HEI where the student intends to
14 enroll.

15
16 Sec. 5. ***Conditions for the Grant of Legal Scholarship.*** – Qualified students
17 accepted into the LSRS Program shall be subject to the following conditions:

- 18
19 (a) Must sign an agreement stating the terms and conditions of the scholarship
20 which shall be prescribed by the Legal Education Board (LEB);
21 (b) Must carry full load of subjects prescribed per semester by the SUC or private
22 HEI concerned, and shall not, under any circumstance, drop a course which
23 would result in underloading;
24 (c) Must finish the Juris Doctor degree program within the prescribed time frame
25 of the SUC or private HEI where the scholar is enrolled in, subject to the
26 retention policies or private HEI concerned; Provided, That a scholar who is
27 already enrolled, may be allowed, for valid and justifiable reasons, to file a
28 leave of absence;
29 (d) Must take the bar examination within a maximum period of one (1) year after
30 completion of the Juris Doctor degree; and
31 (e) Must render return service as provided under Section 7 of this Act.

32
33 Sec. 6. ***Disqualifications.*** – The scholarship grant shall terminate, and the
34 recipient of legal scholarship shall repay the full cost of scholarship and related benefits
35 received, including all the expenses incurred during the participation in the LSRS
36 program, in case of the following circumstances:

- 37
38 (a) If the scholar fails to meet the academic requirements or to complete the
39 course within the prescribed period without valid cause as may be
40 determined by the SUC or private HEI concerned;
41 (b) If the scholar commits gross misconduct in a manner that would bring
42 significant damage to the SUC or private HEI concerned or to the community
43 as a whole.

44
45 Sec. 7. ***Mandatory Return Service.*** – Within five (5) years from admission to the
46 practice of law, a scholar shall render mandatory return service for two (2) years in
47 government agencies, including, but not limited to: the Public Attorney's Office,

1 National Prosecution Service, Department of Education, Department of Environment
2 and Natural Resources, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department
3 of Health, Department of Justice, Department of National Defense, Department of Social
4 Welfare and Development, the Courts or in government agencies and instrumentalities
5 that provide legal services to: (i) poor and marginalized individuals and communities;
6 and (ii) public school teachers, public health workers, and military and uniformed
7 personnel involved in cases arising from or in connection with the performance of their
8 duties and functions: *Provided*, That the mandatory return service shall be separate and
9 distinct from the Clinical Legal Education Program as provided under Rule 138-A of the
10 Rules of Court: *Provided, further*, That beneficiaries of LSRS Program appointed to
11 plantilla positions shall receive the appropriate salaries, benefits and other emoluments
12 for services rendered under the mandatory return service; *Provided, furthermore*, That
13 beneficiaries of LSRS Program who, after three (3) years from admission to the practice
14 of law, fails to secure appointment in government shall have the option to: (i) pay the
15 full cost of scholarship and related benefits received, including all the expenses incurred
16 during the participation in the LSRS Program; or (ii) undertake alternative compliance
17 program to be formulated by the LEB pursuant to the provisions of this Act and
18 Republic Act (RA) No. 9999, otherwise known as the Free Legal Assistance Act of 2010:
19 *Provided, finally*, That in the application of Republic Act No. 9999, the allowable
20 deduction from the gross income shall be the amount that could have been collected
21 from the actual free legal services rendered or up to twenty percent (20%) of the gross
22 income derived from the actual performance of the legal profession, whichever is lower.

23
24 **Sec. 8. *Number and Allocation of Students to be Admitted in the Program.*** – Prior
25 to the implementation of this Act and every five (5) years thereafter, the LEB shall, in
26 consultation with Philippine Association of Law Schools and participating HEIs and
27 upon the assessment of the shortage of legal practitioners in the public sector, determine
28 the appropriate number and geographic allocation of scholars to be admitted in the
29 LSRS Program.

30
31 **Sec. 9. *Harmonization with the Clinical Legal Education Program.*** – Pursuant to
32 Article VIII, Section 5, subsection 5 of the Constitution, the Legal Education Board shall
33 adopt the policy on the Revised Law Student Practice Rule, ensure that law students
34 participate in the clinical legal education programs in all legal education institutions,
35 define the scope of service to be rendered by law students in the said program,
36 contribute to access to justice of the marginalized sectors, enhance learning
37 opportunities of law students, instill among them social responsibility and awareness,
38 and prepare them for the practice of law.

39
40 **Sec. 10. *Sanctions.*** – Any lawyer who has availed of the benefits under the LSRS
41 Program but fails or refuses to comply with the mandatory return service as provided
42 under this Act shall be required to pay twice the amount of scholarship, including other
43 benefits received by reason of participation in the LSRS Program: *Provided*, That the
44 penalty imposed herein shall not apply to lawyers who fail to comply with the required
45 return service by reason of force majeure or not due to their fault or negligence.

46
47 **Sec. 11. *Appropriations.*** – The amount necessary for the implementation of this

1 Act shall be included in the Annual General Appropriations Act.

2
3 Sec. 12. **Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within sixty (60) days from the
4 effectivity of this Act, the LEB shall, in consultation with the Philippine Association of
5 Law Schools, Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges and Commission
6 on Higher Education, promulgate the rules and regulations to effectively implement the
7 provisions of this Act.

8
9 Sec. 13. **Separability Clause.** – If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or
10 unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected thereby shall
11 remain in full force and effect.

12
13 Sec. 14. **Repealing Clause.** – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules
14 and regulations, or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act
15 are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

16
17 Sec. 15. **Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect immediately following its
18 publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

19
20 *Approved.*