



Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Quezon City  
**NINETEENTH CONGRESS**  
Third Regular Session



**House Bill No. 10868**

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Introduced by CIBAC Party-List Representative  
**EDUARDO "BRO. EDDIE" C. VILLANUEVA**

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The proposed "Abogado Para sa Bayan Act" seeks to establish a Legal Scholarship and Return Service Program (LSRS) to provide financial support for deserving students pursuing legal education while addressing the need for legal services in government offices. This initiative aligns with the constitutional mandate to ensure free access to courts and adequate legal assistance, especially for the underprivileged.

The LSRS Program offers benefits such as free tuition, allowances for books, review fees, and licensure fees for students pursuing a Juris Doctor or Bachelor of Laws degree in state universities and colleges (SUCs) or partner private higher education institutions (HEIs) in regions without SUC law programs. To qualify, students must be Filipino citizens, have completed an undergraduate degree, and pass entrance exams for legal education programs. The conditions for maintaining the scholarship include signing an agreement with the Legal Education Board (LEB), carrying a full course load, and completing the degree within the prescribed timeframe. Scholars must also take the bar exam within one year of graduation and commit to return service.

Disqualifications include failing to meet academic requirements or gross misconduct, which would result in repaying the full cost of the scholarship. The Act mandates a two-year return service in various government agencies within five years of passing the bar, with provisions for those unable to secure government positions to either repay the

scholarship or comply with an alternative program formulated by the LEB.

The LEB will determine the number and geographic allocation of scholars based on the shortage of legal practitioners in the public sector, reviewed every five years. The Act ensures harmonization with the Clinical Legal Education Program, enhancing access to justice for marginalized sectors and preparing law students for practice. Sanctions are imposed on lawyers who fail to fulfill the mandatory return service, requiring them to pay twice the scholarship amount, with exemptions for cases of force majeure.

This Act aims to support aspiring lawyers financially while ensuring that legal assistance reaches those most in need, promoting social responsibility among law graduates. The swift passage of this bill is crucial to uphold the right to legal aid and enhance the public sector's legal services.

  
**EDUARDO "BRO. EDDIE" C. VILLANUEVA**  
Representative, CIBAC Partylist



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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  
2       *Para sa Bayan Act*".  
3

4       **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy** – It is hereby declared the policy of  
5       the State to uphold the right to free access to the courts and quasi judicial  
6       bodies and ensure that adequate legal assistance shall not be denied to  
7       any person by reason of poverty. Towards this end, and in cognizance of  
8       the constitutional directive to provide for preventive measures and legal  
9       aid services to the underprivileged whose human rights have been  
10      violated or need protection, the State shall establish a legal scholarship  
11      and return service program to assist deserving students pursue legal  
12      education who shall eventually render legal services in government  
13      offices.  
14

15      **SEC. 3. Legal Scholarship and Return Service Program.** - There  
16      shall be established a Legal Scholarship and Return Service (LSRS)  
17      Program for deserving students who intend to pursue a Juris Doctor or  
18      Bachelor of Laws degree in state universities and colleges (SUCs) or in

1 partner private higher education institutions (HEIs) in regions where there  
2 are no SUC offering Juris Doctor or Bachelor of Laws degree. The LSRS  
3 Program shall provide the following benefits to qualified legal education  
4 students:

- 5
- 6 (a) Free tuition and other school fees, including but not limited to:
- 7 student registration fees, library fees, and publication fees;
- 8 (b) Allowance for prescribed books and supplies;
- 9 (c) Allowance for review fees for government-mandated bar exams;
- 10 and
- 11 (d) Allowance for licensure fees.
- 12

13 **SEC. 4. Qualifications and Requirements.** - In order to qualify for  
14 the grant of scholarship under the LSRS Program, a prospective or current  
15 legal education student must satisfy the following requirements:

- 16
- 17 (a) Must be a Filipino Citizen residing in the Philippines;
- 18
- 19 (b) Must not have completed a Bachelor of Laws or Juris Doctor
- 20 degree from any Hel offering legal education;
- 21
- 22 (c) Must be a graduating student or a graduate of an undergraduate
- 23 degree program; and
- 24
- 25 (d) Must have passed the entrance examination and complied with
- 26 other requirements for admission into the Juris Doctor or Bachelor of Laws
- 27 degree program offered by the SUC or private HEI where the student
- 28 intends to enroll.
- 29

30 **SEC. 5. Conditions for the Grant of Legal Scholarship.** -  
31 Qualified students accepted into the LSRS Program shall be subject to  
32 the following conditions:

- 33
- 34 (a) Must sign an agreement stating the terms and conditions of the
- 35 scholarship which shall be prescribed by the Legal Education Board
- 36 (LEB);
- 37
- 38 (b) Must carry full load of subjects prescribed per semester by the
- 39 SUC or private HEI concerned, and shall not, under any
- 40 circumstance, drop a course which would result in underloading;
- 41
- 42 (c) Must finish the Juris Doctor or Bachelor of Laws degree program
- 43 within the prescribed time frame of the SUC or private HEI where

1 the scholar is enrolled in, subject to the retention policies of the SUC  
2 or private HEI concerned: Provided, That a scholar who is already  
3 enrolled, may be allowed, for valid and justifiable reasons, to file a  
4 leave of absence;

5  
6 (d) Must take the bar examination within a maximum period of one  
7 (1) year after completion of the Juris Doctor or Bachelor of Laws  
8 degree;

9  
10 (e) Must render return service as provided under Section 7 of this  
11 Act.

12  
13 **SEC. 6. Disqualifications.** - The scholarship grant shall terminate,  
14 and the recipient of legal scholarship shall repay the full cost of  
15 scholarship and related benefits received, including all the expenses  
16 incurred during the participation in the LSRS program, in case of the  
17 following circumstances:

18  
19 (a) If the scholar fails to meet the academic requirements or to  
20 complete the course within the prescribed period without valid cause as  
21 may be determined by the SUC or private HEI concerned;

22  
23 (b) If the scholar commits gross misconduct in a manner that would  
24 bring significant damage to the SUC or private HEI concerned or to the  
25 community as a whole.

26  
27 **SEC. 7. Mandatory Return Service.** - Within five (5) years from  
28 admission to the practice of law, a scholar shall render mandatory return  
29 service for two (2) years in government agencies, including, but not limited  
30 to: the Public Attorney's Office, National Prosecution Service, Department  
31 of Education, Department of Environment and Natural Resources,  
32 Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Health,  
33 Department of Justice, Department of National Defense, Department of  
34 Social Welfare and Development, the Courts, or in government agencies  
35 and instrumentalities that provide legal services to: (i) poor and  
36 marginalized individuals and communities, and (ii) public school teachers,  
37 public health workers, and military and uniformed personnel involved in  
38 cases arising from or in connection with the performance of their duties  
39 and functions: Provided, That the mandatory return service shall be  
40 separate and distinct from the Clinical Legal Education Program as  
41 provided under Rule 138-A of the Rules of Court: Provided, further, That  
42 beneficiaries of LSRS Program appointed to plantilla positions shall  
43 receive the appropriate salaries, benefits and other emoluments for

1 services rendered under the mandatory return service; Provided,  
2 furthermore, That beneficiaries of LSRS Program who, after three (3)  
3 years from admission to the practice of law, fails to secure appointment in  
4 government shall have the option to: \*) pay the full cost of scholarship and  
5 related benefits received, including all the expenses incurred during the  
6 participation in the LSRS Program; or (ii) undertake alternative  
7 compliance program to be formulated by the LEB pursuant to the  
8 provisions of this Act and Republic Act (RA) No. 9999, otherwise known  
9 as the Free Legal Assistance Act of 2010: Provided, finally, That in the  
10 application of Republic Act No. 9999, the allowable deduction from the  
11 gross income shall be the amount that could have been collected from the  
12 actual free legal services rendered or up to twenty percent (20%) of the  
13 gross income derived from the actual performance of the legal profession,  
14 whichever is lower.

15  
16 **SEC. 8. Number and Allocation of Students to be Admitted in**  
17 **the Program.** - Prior to the implementation of this Act and every five (5)  
18 years thereafter, the LEB shall, in consultation with Philippine Association  
19 of Law Schools and participating Hls and upon the assessment of the  
20 shortage of legal practitioners in the public sector, determine the  
21 appropriate number and geographic allocation of scholars to be admitted  
22 in the LSRS Program.

23  
24 **SEC. 9. Harmonization with the Clinical Legal Education**  
25 **Program.** - Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 5, subsection 5, of the  
26 Constitution, the Legal Education Board shall adopt the policy on the  
27 Revised Law Student Practice Rule, ensure that law students participate  
28 in the clinical legal education programs in all legal education institutions,  
29 define the scope of service to be rendered by law students in the said  
30 program, contribute to access to justice of the marginalized sectors,  
31 enhance learning opportunities of law students, instill among them social  
32 responsibility and awareness, and prepare them for the practice of law.

33  
34 **SEC. 10. Sanctions** - Any lawyer who has availed of the benefits  
35 under the LSRS Program but fails or refuses to comply with the mandatory  
36 return service as provided under this Act shall be required to pay twice the  
37 amount of scholarship, including other benefits received by reason of  
38 participation in the LSRS Program: Provided, That the penalty imposed  
39 herein shall not apply to lawyers who fail to comply with the required return  
40 service by reason of force majeure or not due to their fault or negligence.

1       **SEC. 11. Appropriations.** - The amount necessary for the  
2 implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General  
3 Appropriations Act.  
4

5       **SEC. 12. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** - Within sixty (60)  
6 days from the effectivity of this Act, the LEB shall, in consultation with the  
7 Philippine Association of Law Schools, Philippine Association of State  
8 Universities and Colleges and Commission on Higher Education,  
9 promulgate the rules and regulations to effectively implement the  
10 provisions of this Act.  
11

12       **SEC. 13. Separability Clause.** - If any provision or part hereof is  
13 held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provision  
14 not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.  
15

16       **SEC. 14. Repealing Clause.** - All laws, presidential decrees,  
17 executive orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof which are  
18 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended,  
19 or modified accordingly.  
20

21       **SEC. 15. Effectivity.** - This Act shall take effect immediately  
22 following its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general  
23 circulation.  
24

25       Approved,