

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS

HOUSE BILL NO. 316



Introduced by REP. JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ

The 1987 Philippine Constitution affirms the State's obligation to uphold every Filipino's right to the timely delivery of justice. This guarantee, articulated under Article III, Section 16 of the Bill of Rights, extends beyond the judiciary to encompass all judicial, quasi-judicial, and administrative bodies:

"All persons shall have the right to a speedy disposition of their cases before all judicial, quasi-judicial, or administrative bodies."

Despite this constitutional safeguard, the reality on the ground tells a different story. Court congestion, systemic inefficiencies, and resource limitations continue to undermine the swift resolution of cases. These issues were brought to the fore during the Justice Sector Coordinating Council's ("JSCC") National Decongestion Summit on December 6, 2023, which underscored how delays in judicial proceedings exacerbate docket backlogs and jail overcrowding.

Data from the Summit revealed that a significant number of persons deprived of liberty ("PDLs") remain incarcerated for extended periods while awaiting trial, an outcome that runs counter to the principle of justice being both humane and expeditious. As Chief Justice Alexander G. Gesmundo emphasized, addressing the overwhelming caseloads of our trial courts is critical to restoring faith in the justice system and fulfilling the Constitution's promise of timely justice.¹

In the Third District of Negros Occidental, the Regional Trial Court ("RTC") serving the cities and municipalities is located in Silay City, under the Sixth

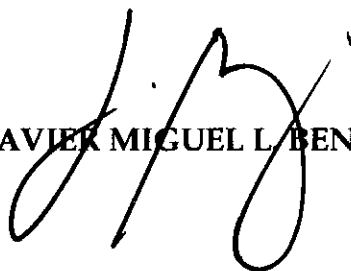
¹ Supreme Court of the Philippines. (2023, December 6). *National Decongestion Summit: All Three Gov't Branches Unite to Find Solutions to Jail and Prison Overcrowding*. <https://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/national-decongestion-summit-all-three-govt-branches-unite-to-find-solutions-to-jail-and-prison-overcrowding/>

Judicial Region.² This RTC currently comprises three branches: Branch 40, Branch 69, and Branch 12, the latter designated as a Family Court.

Establishing this new branch will help decongest the courts, decentralize judicial services, improve accessibility, and accelerate both professional and judicial processes across the Third District of Negros Occidental.

This legislative initiative is vital to strengthening public service delivery and ensuring the constitutional right of every Filipino to a speedy, humane, and effective administration of justice.

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



JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ

² Batas Pambansa Blg. 129, An Act Reorganizing the Judiciary, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes (1981). <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1981/08/14/batas-pambansa-blg-129/>

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HOUSE BILL NO. **316**

Introduced by REP. JAVIER MIGUEL "JAVI" L. BENITEZ

AN ACT CREATING AN ADDITIONAL REGIONAL TRIAL COURT BRANCH TO BE STATIONED IN THE CITY OF VICTORIAS, PROVINCE OF NEGROS OCCIDENTAL, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 14, PARAGRAPH (G) OF BATAS PAMBANSA BLG. 129, AS AMENDED, OR "THE JUDICIARY REORGANIZATION ACT OF 1980", AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. *Creation of an Additional Regional Trial Court Branch in the City of Victorias, Province of Negros Occidental* – One (1) additional Regional Trial Court branch is hereby created in the Sixth Judicial Region with seat at the City of Victorias, Province of Negros Occidental.

The Supreme Court shall assign the branch number of the newly-created branch of the Regional Trial Court in the Sixth Judicial Region.

SEC. 2. *Operationalization and Funding of the Newly-Created Court Branch* – The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, in coordination with the Secretary of the Department of Justice, shall immediately include in the Court's program the operationalization of one (1) additional branch of the Regional Trial Court to be stationed in the City of Victorias, Province of Negros Occidental. The funds necessary for the operation of the court herein created shall be appropriated and released only upon the actual organization of the Court and the appointment of its personnel.

SEC. 3. *Repealing and Amending Provisions* – Section 14 (g) of Batas Pambansa Blg. 129, or "The Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980", as amended, and all other laws, rules and regulations which are inconsistent with this Act are hereby amended, repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 4. *Effectivity* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,