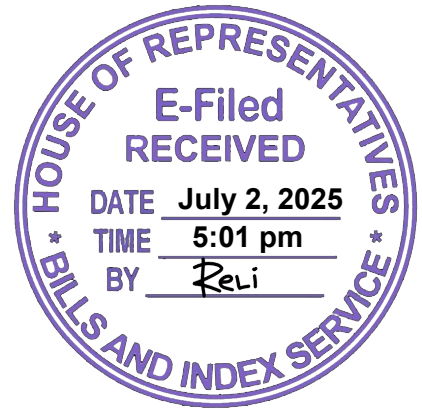




Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila



20th Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **1155**

Introduced by Representatives Caroline B. Agyao and Maximo Jr. Y. Dalog

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to provide medical assistance and special incentives and benefits to forest fire responders.

Forest fire responders, as defined in this proposed measure, are the persons who render assistance during the suppression, containment and extinguishment of forest fires. These forest fire responders do not belong to the personnel of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), nor are they trained and certified employees of the different government agencies that coordinate and work together with the BFP in the prevention, suppression, containment and extinguishment of all kinds of fires.

In the Philippines, there are only around 36,000 firefighters. The ideal ratio of firefighter per population size is one firefighter per 2,000 people. With a population of 120 million which ideally needs 60,000 firefighters, the country is short by around 24,000 firefighters to meet the ideal ratio. Further, out of 1,485 municipalities all over the country, there are still 123 municipalities without fire trucks and stations.

Thus, in cases where forest fires are situated in the rugged, isolated or mountainous topographies, the arrival of firefighters and firetrucks are delayed, and a number of local government units are left with no choice but to utilize the services of persons in the vicinity to

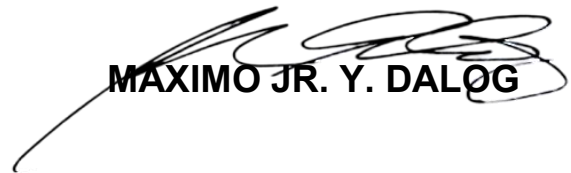
render assistance in containing and extinguishing forest fires despite the lack of proper and adequate training, equipment and gears.

Republic Act No. 11589, otherwise known as the “*Bureau of Fire Protection Modernization Act*” was enacted to close the disproportionate gap in the adequate number of firefighters for our population, along with the other modernization objective of acquiring new and modern equipment, vehicles, personnel protective equipment in time with the phase out of uneconomical and obsolete major equipment and systems in the BFP inventory.

However, while the law encourages and promotes volunteerism and eventual enlistment and training of forest fire responders into the BFP fold, this bill finds it fitting to acknowledge the selfless contribution of forest fire responders as force multiplier in the abatement of forest fires, and deserve special incentives and benefits.

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


CAROLINE B. AGYAO


MAXIMO JR. Y. DALOG



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HOUSE BILL NO. **1155**

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AN ACT
PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE AND SPECIAL INCENTIVES
AND BENEFITS TO FOREST FIRE RESPONDERS, AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION I. ***Short Title.*** – This Act shall be known as the “*Forest Fire Responders Act.*”

SEC. 2. ***Declaration of Policy.*** – It is the policy of the State to encourage and promote the practice of volunteerism as a strategy to ensure public safety. Towards this end, the State shall implement programs towards the abatement of destructive forest fires, and recognition of the selfless acts of forest fire responders for their invaluable contribution in the prevention, suppression, containment and extinguishment of forest fires.

1 SEC. 3. **Definition of terms.** – As used in this Act:

2 (a) *Forest* refers to mass of lands which includes public forest,
3 grazing lands, permanent forest or forest reservations, mineral lands,
4 and national parks with an area of more than 0.5 hectare and tree
5 crown of more than ten percent (10%) of the area, and the trees are
6 able to reach a minimum height of five (5) meters at maturity *in situ*.

7 (b) *Forest fire* refers to an unenclosed and freely spreading
8 combustion which consumes the natural fuels of forest lands usually
9 caused either by natural phenomenon like lightning, spontaneous
10 ignition during high atmospheric temperatures and dryness, volcanic
11 eruption, and sparks from falling rocks, or by human-related activities
12 like unattended or out-of-control campfires, discarding of burning
13 cigarette, arson, or slash and burn farming or *kaingin*.

14 (c) *Forest fire responders* refer to persons who render
15 assistance during the suppression, containment and extinguishment of
16 forest fires, and who do not belong to the trained and certified
17 employees of the different government agencies that work together in
18 the prevention, suppression, containment and extinguishment of all
19 kinds of fires.

20 SEC. 4. **Forest Fire Responders.** – In the event of the delay in
21 the arrival or inadequacy of the responding firefighters, firetrucks and

1 equipment of the government agencies that work together in the
2 suppression, containment and extinguishment of the forest fire, the
3 barangay captain, municipal or city mayor, or provincial governor of any
4 forested local government unit dealing with forest fire shall, in
5 coordination with the respective local disaster risk reduction and
6 management council, immediately call in volunteers living at the vicinity
7 for reinforcement and facilitate the listing of forest fire responders from
8 the initial detection of forest fires until its extinguishment to provide
9 proof of participation and basis for the provision of special incentives,
10 medical assistance, and dismemberment and death benefits.

11 SEC. 5. ***Special Incentive.*** – Forest fire responders who render
12 assistance during the suppression, containment or extinguishment of
13 forest fires shall receive a special incentive in the amount of not less
14 than One thousand pesos (P1,000.00) for each day of assistance
15 rendered during and after a forest fire, the funding of which shall be
16 sourced from the quick response fund or the local disaster risk
17 reduction and management fund of the local government units affected
18 by the forest fire.

19 SEC. 6. ***Medical Benefit.*** – Forest fire responders who sustain
20 injuries while participating in the activities to extinguish a forest fire may
21 receive free medical assistance including medicines, consultation,

1 hospitalization, and medical procedures in any government hospital or
2 institution.

3 SEC. 7. ***Dismemberment or Death Benefit.*** – In case of the
4 forest fire responder’s dismemberment which includes loss of a limb,
5 partial or permanent paralysis, or the loss of use of specific body parts,
6 such as the loss of sight, hearing, or speech, the forest fire responder
7 shall receive financial assistance in the amount of not less than Fifty
8 thousand pesos (P50,000.00).

9 In case of death of the forest fire responder, the beneficiary of
10 such forest fire responder shall receive financial assistance in the
11 amount of One hundred thousand pesos (P100,000.00).

12 SEC. 8. ***Appropriation.*** – The amount necessary for the
13 implementation of Sections 6 and 7 of this Act shall be charged to the
14 Bureau of Fire Protection Modernization Trust Fund created under
15 Republic Act No. 11589, otherwise known as the “*Bureau of Fire*
16 *Protection Modernization Act.*” Thereafter, such sums as may be
17 necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the
18 budget of the BFP in the annual General Appropriations Act.

19 SEC. 9. ***Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within sixty
20 (60) days from the approval of this Act, the Bureau of Fire Protection
21 shall, in coordination with the Department of the Interior and Local
22 Government, Office of the Civil Defense and the National Disaster Risk

1 Reduction and Management Council, issue the necessary rules and
2 regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

3 SEC. 10. **Repealing Clause.** – All laws, presidential decrees,
4 rules, regulations, and other issuances or parts thereof which are
5 inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

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

9 Approved,