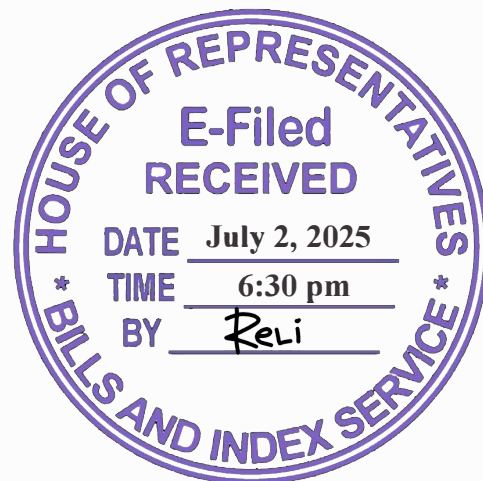


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **1172**



Introduced by Representative Arturo B. Robes

**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR CHEAPER AND MORE ACCESSIBLE INTERNET
FOR ALL**

Internet is crucial for modern society – it helps with global communication, access to knowledge and information, employment and business.

During the pandemic, the importance of the internet in learning and communicating, researching and being updated about current events has been highlighted. It also offered entertainment through gaming, streaming services and social media. Many people also obtained jobs as virtual assistants and freelance professionals – an industry that has since then, been thriving as well. Other countries have also granted digital nomad visas – longer stays for tourists who are employed through online jobs, allowing them to work, virtually, anywhere.

Even the government has started relying on the internet to deliver a more efficient and effective service to the stakeholders. Digitizing and e-governance has reduced red tape and improved turn-around time in providing the needs of Filipinos and foreigners.

However, despite the apparent and established importance of the internet, numerous places in the country, especially in the provinces still lack a workable and useful internet connection.

This bill seeks to accelerate and strengthen internet use in the country by providing ICT infrastructure and expansion of Wi-Fi technology that will be helpful across sectors – may it be for education, business or employment.

In view of the foregoing, the passage of this measure is urged.



ARTURO B. ROBES

**Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City**

**TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session**

House Bill No. 1172

Introduced by Representative Arturo B. Robes

**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR CHEAPER AND MORE ACCESSIBLE INTERNET
FOR ALL**

*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 “Internet Para Sa Lahat Act”.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State recognizes the vital role of telecommunication in nation building and as such, it shall implement measures to provide communication standards suitable to the needs and aspirations of the nation.

As a scarce public resource, the State shall manage the use of the radio frequency spectrum in the interest of the public and in accordance with international agreements and conventions to which the Philippines is a signatory. To this end, the government shall allocate the radio frequency spectrum to promote the adoption of appropriate technologies and best practices, an interference-free environment, and the highest service standards and shall assign the radio frequency spectrum to service providers capable of efficiently and effectively using it to meet public demand for telecommunications and data transmission services.

SEC. 3. *Objectives.* – This Act aims to:

- (a) Establish a policy and regulation that shall reduce to zero the spectrum user fee (SUF) paid by telecommunications entities to the national government, to enable the proliferation of the Wi-Fi technology usage and facilitate infrastructure development, and eventually lower the cost of delivering telecommunications services to end users;
- (b) Promote the acceleration of internet use in the country and the expansion of Wi-Fi technology and infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas so the poor and underprivileged shall have access to reliable, accessible, and affordable connectivity;
- (c) Encourage and empower the small players in the industry to provide affordable internet services, especially in the unserved and underserved areas; and

(d) Adopt a license-free, zero SUF policy in accordance with international best practices, and protect public interest by limiting the use of Wi-Fi frequency fixed links to the government and duly enfranchised public telecommunications entities.

SEC. 4. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:

(a) Internet refers to the biggest worldwide global computer network providing a wide variety of information and communication facilities, consisting of interconnected networks using standardized communication protocols;

(b) Open and unprotected frequency refers to the frequencies at 2.4-2.4835 GHz, 5.150-5.350 GHz, and 5.470-5.850 GHz. of the radio spectrum. Any frequency outside of the aforementioned is licensed especially if it is included in the list of frequencies in the NTC Memorandum Circulars and issuances which are part of the National Radio Frequency Allocation Table;

(c) Public telecommunications entity or PTE refers to any person, firm, partnership or corporation, government or private, engaged in the provision of telecommunications services to the public for a fee;

(d) Radio frequency spectrum refers to the part of the electromagnetic spectrum with frequencies from 30Hz to 300GHz, used for communications which includes frequencies for wireless telecommunications technologies such as radio, television, and radar;

(e) Spectrum user fee (SUF) refers to the fee imposed by the government regulator in the use of a particular frequency; and

(f) Wi-Fi or Wireless fidelity refers to a type of wireless local access network technology that is based on the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers or IEEE's wireless communication standard 802.11 family and uses the 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz frequency band.

SEC. 5. *Coverage.* – This Act shall cover Wi-Fi frequencies at 2.4-2.4835 GHz, 5.150-5.350 GHz, and 5.470-5.850 GHz, and any other frequency band that the NTC may deem open and unprotected after due notice and hearing. This Act shall in no way amend or repeal Republic Act No. 10929, otherwise known as "The Free Internet Access in Public Places Act".

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the NTC is hereby authorized to add in the list of the frequencies enumerated under this Act, should there be in the future, pursuant to internationally agreed standards, changes in technologies, and as public safety and security may require any new frequency that may fall or be included into the definition of open and unprotected spectrum.

SEC. 6. *Establishing a Zero Spectrum User Fee.* – The State, through the DICT and the NTC, shall not impose a levy, charge, or collect fees from PTEs and other users for their use of the frequencies as specified in this Act: *Provided, That* PTEs shall not interfere with each other's Wi-Fi airwaves or with any licensed radio stations in the course of their operations, thereby effectively establishing a zero SUF. The zero SUF shall be without prejudice to the authority of the State, through the NTC, to collect fees for registration and authorization permits and licenses provided that such fees do not substantially deviate from traditional fees and charges that it becomes onerous to PTEs.

SEC. 7. *Devices and Equipment.* – Devices and equipment used to access the frequencies enumerated under this Act shall continue to strictly adhere to the existing NTC technical conditions and regulatory standards.

SEC. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the NTC shall, together with the DICT and representatives from the telecommunications sector, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 9. *Joint Congressional Oversight Committee (JCOC).* – There is hereby created a Joint Congressional Oversight Committee to monitor the effective implementation of this Act, recommend the necessary remedial or administrative measures, and perform such other duties and functions as may be necessary to attain the objectives of this Act.

The oversight committee shall be composed of eight (8) members, with the Chairpersons of the Senate Committee on Public Services and the House of Representatives' Committee on Information and Communications Technology as Co-Chairpersons. The three (3) members from each House shall be designated by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, respectively: *Provided*, That at least one (1) member from each House shall be nominated by their respective Minority Leaders. The secretariat of the JCOC shall be the existing secretariat personnel of the concerned Committees of both Houses of Congress.

SEC. 10. *Suppletory Application.* – The provisions of Republic Act No. 10844, otherwise known as the “Department of Information and Communications Technology Act of 2015” and other laws consistent with this Act shall have suppletory application.

SEC. 11. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, other parts or provisions hereof not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, issuances, rules, and regulations which may be inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act, are hereby deemed repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SEC. 13. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,