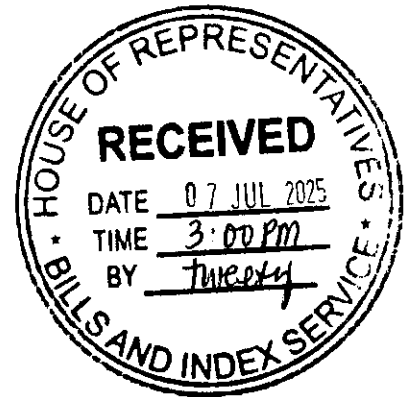


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **1455**



Introduced by Representative
ROLANDO M. VALERIANO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Cockfighting, also known as '*sabong*', is a traditional sport and cultural phenomenon in the Philippines. It is not only a form of entertainment but also a way of life for many people. It is a source of income for breeders, trainers, and cockfighters themselves. In addition, cockfighting provides a sense of camaraderie and community for those who participate, with many enthusiasts forming close relationships with their fellow cockfighters.

Despite its popularity, cockfighting in the Philippines is a controversial issue. Through the years, there have been efforts to regulate it with the government cracking down on related illegal gaming activities. Presidential Decree No 449, also known as the 'Cockfighting Law of 1974', governs the establishment, operation and ownership of cockpits in the Philippines and prohibits holding of cockfights in unlicensed cockpits and other gambling activities during a cockfight. Moreover, Republic Act No. 7160, or the 'Local Government Code of 1991', authorizes local government units (LGUs) to issue licenses for the establishment, operation and maintenance of cockpits and to regulate cockfighting in their respective jurisdictions.

But just recently, cockfighting in the Philippines has made a 'game-changing' shift to the online space. With online cockfighting or *e-sabong*, *afficionados* place their bets online using certain apps and websites, instead of at the cockpit arena, and then watch the cockfight derby via their laptops, mobile phones or similar electronic devices. The Philippine Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) by virtue of its authority and mandate under its charter issues permits to operate *e-sabong* to cockpit and off-cockpit operators and betting stations.

Admittedly, with their accreditation, these *e-sabong* firms provided huge revenues to the country's coffers through PAGCOR. However, notwithstanding, despite regulatory policies and controls, certain sectors have expressed their concern on the increasing patronization by the Filipino

public of *e-sabong*. Its evil effects on people's lives was undeniable. A lot of Filipinos, including the youth and underaged, who have easy internet access, fell prey to this online gambling activity. This led to gambling addiction, bankruptcy, personal health issues, family conflicts, and the commission of crimes. The most prominent controversy blamed on *e-sabong* is the case of the missing *sabungeros* which to date remains unsolved. These are the social costs of allowing the proliferation of online cockfighting or *e-sabong* in the country. A cost that may be too high for the people to pay, belittling any amount of revenue the government can generate from it.

Other than *sabong*, it is anticipated that the purveyors of gambling would come up with alternative online gaming and gambling activities. These could include horse racing, dog racing, *pula puti*, online casino, sports betting and all other related online gambling games and activities. As with the experience with *e-sabong*, it is expected that this would have the same negative results.

This bill seeks to prohibit and penalize *e-sabong* and other online gaming or gambling activities specifically:

- a) Live-streaming or broadcasting of live cockfights outside the cockfighting arenas or premises, regardless whether the cockfights are authorized or not, or the arenas are licensed or not.
- b) Placing, receiving or transmitting, and processing of a bet or wager on live-streaming or broadcasting of live cockfighting matches or activities through online betting platforms.
- c) Operating or maintaining an *e-sabong* betting platform.
- d) All forms of online gambling, including but not limited to include horse racing, dog racing, *pula puti*, online casino and sports betting.

The proposed measure also mandates that all permits and licenses of *e-sabong* operators and other forms of online gambling issued by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) shall declared invalid and revoked. And that no permits or licenses for the operation of *e-sabong* and online gambling shall be further issued by PAGCOR upon its effectivity.

Indeed the future of this country depends on the State. The choice of whether the government should continue to tolerate its source of income or protect the welfare of the people, should be resolved in favor of the people, for whom, in the first place, the State exists.

For the following reasons, the immediate consideration and approval of this bill is earnestly urged.



ROLANDO M. VALERIANO
Representative

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

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First Regular Session

House Bill No. 1455

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE
ROLANDO M. VALERIANO

AN ACT
PROHIBITING AND PENALIZING ONLINE
COCKFIGHTING OR E-SABONG, AND OTHER FORMS
OF ONLINE GAMBLING, PROVIDING PENALTIES
FOR VIOLATION THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

*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 ‘Anti Online
2 Cockfighting and Gambling Act’.

3 **Section 2. *Declaration of Policy*** – The State recognizes the traditional
4 and cultural significance of cockfighting in the Philippines which has become
5 an integral part of the nation’s cultural heritage associated with religious
6 festivals and social bonding. Considered as a national pastime and sport,
7 cockfighting plays an important role in the social and economic fabric of
8 communities, providing entertainment, camaraderie and a medium to preserve
9 their cultural identity.

10 However, with the advent of internet technology, online cockfighting
11 has emerged allowing audiences to engage in online betting and wagering
12 through online video streaming with the use of electronic mobile devices. This

1 mode of gambling has been demonstrated to cause addiction, corruption,
2 bankruptcy, neglect of work or studies, and other negative social impacts,
3 becoming a social menace that the State is duty-bound to proscribe and
4 penalize.

5 Other than cockfighting, any online gambling would yield the same
6 negative effect on the general population, and thus should be prohibited.

7 **Section 3. *Definition of Terms*** – For purposes of this Act:

8 a) *E-sabong* refers to the online, remote or off-site wagering and betting
9 on live cockfighting matches streamed or broadcasted in real time from
10 cockpit arenas or any other place, licensed or otherwise.

11 b) *E-sabong betting platform* refers to a digital service or system that
12 facilitates the live-streaming or broadcasting of cockfight feeds via the
13 internet, including the betting or wagering on the outcome of fights
14 through the use of remote electronic devices or off-site betting stations.

15 c) *Online Gambling* refers to the online wagering and betting conducted
16 on the internet.

17 **Section 4. *Unlawful and Prohibited Acts*** – It shall be unlawful for any
18 person to commit any of the following prohibited acts:

19 a) Live-streaming or broadcasting of live cockfights outside the
20 cockfighting arenas or premises, regardless whether the cockfights are
21 authorized or not, or the arenas are licensed or not;

22 b) Placing, receiving or transmitting, and processing of a bet or wager on
23 live-streaming or broadcasting of live cockfighting matches or
24 activities through online betting platforms;

25 c) Operating or maintaining an *e-sabong* betting platform;

1 d) All forms of online gambling, including but not limited to include horse
2 racing, dog racing, *pula puti*, online casino and sports betting.

3 **Section 5. Penalties** – Any person who commits any of the prohibited
4 acts in Section 4 of this Act shall be punished by imprisonment of not less
5 than six (6) years but not more than twenty (20) years, or a fine of not less
6 than Five hundred thousand pesos (P 500,000.00) but not more than Five
7 million pesos (P 5,000,000.00), or both at the discretion of the court. If the
8 offender is an operator of an *e-sabong* betting platform, the maximum
9 penalties prescribed shall be imposed.

10 If the offender is a corporation or an association, the president,
11 manager, managing partner, or any officer of the corporation or association
12 who directly participated in the commission of the prohibited act shall be held
13 liable.

14 If the offender is a public officer, the public officer shall be dismissed
15 from the service and perpetually disqualified from holding public office. The
16 public officer shall also be held administratively liable under existing laws,
17 rules and regulations.

18 **Section 6. Existing E-Sabong and Online Gambling Permits and**
19 ***Licenses Revoked*** – All permits and licenses for operators of *e-sabong* and all
20 other forms of online gambling issued by the Philippine Amusement and
21 Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) are hereby declared invalid and revoked. No
22 permits or licenses for the operation of *e-sabong* or all other forms of online
23 gambling shall be issued by PAGCOR upon the effectivity of this Act.

24 **Section 7. Implementing Rules and Regulations** – Within ninety (90)
25 days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of the Interior and Local

1 Government (DILG), in coordination with the PAGCOR, the Philippine
2 National Police (PNP) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) shall
3 issue the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of
4 this Act.

5 **Section 8. *Repealing Clause*** – All laws, decrees, executive orders,
6 presidential issuances and other administrative rules and regulations or parts
7 thereof which are inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or
8 modified accordingly.

9 **Section 9. *Separability Clause***. – If any provision of this Act is
10 declared unconstitutional or otherwise invalid, the validity of the other
11 provisions shall not be affected thereby.

12 **Section 10. *Effectivity*** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after
13 its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

APPROVED.