

**Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City
Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session**



House Bill No. 1625

**Introduced by Honorable Representatives
JOSE MANUEL TADEO "CHEL" I. DIOKNO (Akbayan Partylist)
PERCIVAL V. CENDAÑA (Akbayan Partylist)
LEILA NORMA EULALIA JOSEFA "LEILA" M. DE LIMA
(Mamamayang Liberal)
ARLENE "KAKA" J. BAG-AO (Dinagat Islands)
DADAH KIRAM ISMULA (Akbayan Partylist)
CIELO KRISEL B. LAGMAN (Albay, 1st District)**

**AN ACT PROMOTING NATIONAL AWARENESS THROUGH THE
MANDATORY STUDY OF THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA IN
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The West Philippine Sea dispute is one of the most pressing foreign policy and national security issues facing the Philippines. At its core is the conflict between the Philippines' maritime entitlements and the People's Republic of China's sweeping claim over almost the entire West Philippine Sea (WPS), represented by the so-called "nine-dash line".

The Philippines' claim over the WPS is grounded not only in modern international law but also in a well-documented history of territorial ownership, effective administration, and recognition by foreign powers. Historical records and ancient maps support the assertion that parts of the disputed waters and features belong to the Philippine territory. Spanish-era maps from as early as the 1700s, including Pedro Murillo Velarde's 1734 map depicting parts of the West Philippine Sea within the territory of the Spanish-ruled Philippine Islands.¹ The colonial government of Spain used these maps in governing the archipelago and later passed on to the United States under the Treaty of Paris of 1898. The 1900 Treaty of Washington further added that "all islands belonging to the Philippine Archipelago,

¹ Jarius Bondoc, *Panatang Is Proven PH Territory; China Claims It by Bogus History*, *The Philippine Star*, Mar. 27, 2024, <https://www.philstar.com/the-freeman/opinion/2024/03/27/2343536/panatang-proven-ph-territory-china-claims-it-bogus-history> (last accessed July 6, 2025)

lying outside the lines described in Article III" were also ceded to the United States as part of the territory of the Philippines.²

Despite these strong legal and historical foundations, China continues to pursue aggressive methods to solidify its "nine-dash" claim. It has deployed military vessels within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and constructed military facilities and other structures on reefs within the Philippine continental shelf. Filipino fisherfolk continue to be harassed and denied access to their traditional fishing grounds.

Thus, in response to China's aggression, in 2013, the Philippine Government instituted arbitration proceedings before the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague, Netherlands, asking for China's "nine-dash line" claim to be invalidated for nonconformity to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). On July 12, 2016, the PCA concluded that China's claims to historic rights over most of the South China Sea had no legal basis under the UNCLOS. The ruling also affirmed the Philippines' sovereign rights over its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and continental shelf in the West Philippine Sea.

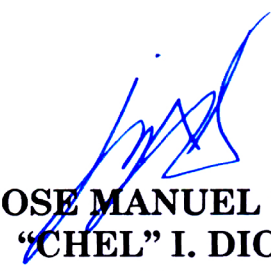
In confronting this challenge, the Constitution provides clear guidance. It affirms the country's commitment to pursue an independent foreign policy and a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation.³ The Constitution also mandates that the State must "give priority to education, science and technology, arts, culture, and sports to foster patriotism and nationalism, accelerate social progress, and promote total human liberation and development".⁴ These constitutional principles emphasize that defending Philippine sovereignty requires not only legal and diplomatic action, but also a sustained effort to build awareness, and civic responsibility, especially among the youth.

Given the enduring importance of this legal victory and the continuing challenges posed by China's refusal to honor the PCA ruling, this bill seeks to integrate the history of the West Philippine Sea dispute and the Philippines' legal victory in The Hague into the curricula of public and private schools. This will ensure that students fully understand the significance of the PCA ruling, the Philippines' right to protect its territorial jurisdiction, and the implications of China's refusal to recognize the ruling.


² Janvic Mateo, *China Has Backed Philippine Maritime Zone – Carpio*, *The Philippine Star*, June 7, 2024, <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/06/07/2361015/china-has-backed-philippine-maritime-zone-carpio> (last accessed July 6, 2025).

³ Article II, Section 7 and 9 of the 1987 Constitution.


⁴ *Ibid.*, Section 17.




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PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

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

1 **Sec. 1. Short Title.** - This Act will be known as the “*West Philippine*
2 *Sea Mandatory Education Act of 2025.*”
3

4 **Sec. 2. Declaration of Principles and State Policies.**

- 5 (a) The national territory of the Philippines comprises the Philippine
6 archipelago and all other territories over which the Philippines has
7 sovereignty or jurisdiction.
8 (b) The State shall pursue an independent foreign policy. In its relations
9 with other states, the paramount consideration shall be national
10 sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interest, and the right to
11 self-determination.
12 (c) The State must give priority to education, science and technology,
13 arts, culture, and sports to foster patriotism and nationalism,
14 accelerate social progress, and promote total human liberation and
15 development.
16 (d) The State must inculcate in the youth patriotism and nationalism,
17 and encourage their involvement in public and civic affairs. To this
18 end, the State must instill and nurture awareness among young
19 Filipinos of the West Philippine Sea, its rich history, the incursions

1 by China into the West Philippine Sea in violation of Philippine
2 national sovereignty and the United Nations Convention on the Law
3 of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the legal significance of the ruling
4 (“Award”) promulgated by the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the
5 West Philippine Sea in 2016.
6

7 ***Sec. 3. Inclusion in the Curriculum*** - All public and private
8 educational institutions at the primary and secondary levels are directed to
9 include in their curricula the history and legal basis of the Philippines’
10 jurisdiction over the West Philippine Sea, including but not limited to the
11 following:

- 12 (a) The meaning and significance of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and
13 continental shelf, as well as the Philippine laws that define the
14 Philippines’ rights and jurisdiction over the West Philippine Sea;
- 15 (b) The significance of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the
16 Sea (UNCLOS) and the ratification of UNCLOS by the Philippines
17 and by China;
- 18 (c) The Philippines’ sovereignty rights over the EEZ, for the purpose of
19 exploration and exploitation, conservation and management of the
20 natural resources, whether living or non-living, both renewable and
21 non-renewable, of the sea-bed, including the subsoil and the
22 superjacent waters, and with regard to other activities for the
23 economic exploitation and exploration of the resources of the zone,
24 such as the production of energy from the water, currents and winds;
- 25 (d) The Philippines’ exclusive rights and jurisdiction with respect to the
26 establishment and utilization of artificial islands, off-shore
27 terminals, installations and structures, the preservation of the
28 marine environment, including the prevention and control of
29 pollution, and scientific research, in the EEZ;
- 30 (e) The rich history of the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea, its use
31 as traditional fishing grounds by Filipino fisherfolk, and the cultural
32 and economic importance of these waters to Philippine coastal
33 communities;
- 34 (f) The environmental and economic importance of the marine resources
35 within the West Philippine Sea;
- 36 (g) The significance of the Permanent Court of Arbitration’s Award in
37 favor of the Philippines dated July 12, 2016;
- 38 (h) The incursions and activities of China in the West Philippine Sea and
39 their impact on the Philippines’ food security, marine resources, and
40 the environment.;
- 41 (i) The rights and maritime entitlements of the Republic of the
42 Philippines and the Filipino people, especially in light of the lived
43 experiences of Filipino fisherfolk in the affected areas;

1 (j) All other matters the Department of Education (DepEd) may deem
2 necessary.

3
4 **Sec. 4. Development of the Curriculum.** - The DepEd, as the
5 implementing agency, is mandated to develop age-appropriate curricula,
6 instructional materials, and teaching modules, in coordination with the
7 National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), the Department
8 of Foreign Affairs (DFA), relevant academic institutions, and civil society
9 organizations, consistent with Section 3 of this Act.

10
11 **Sec. 5. Appropriations.** - This Act will be implemented initially within
12 the framework of the budget of the DepEd for the year it is enacted into law.
13 As far as practicable, the funds required will be drawn from its
14 appropriations for policy formulation, program planning, standards
15 development, and instructional materials development. Thereafter, the
16 amounts as may be necessary for the implementation of this Act will be
17 included in the budget of the DepEd in the annual General Appropriations
18 Act.

19
20 **SEC. 6. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** - Within sixty (60)
21 days after the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd is directed to promulgate
22 the rules and regulations needed for the implementation of this Act.

23
24 **Sec. 7. Separability Clause.** - If, for any reason, any part or provision
25 of this Act is held unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining parts or
26 provisions not affected will continue in full force and effect.

27
28 **Sec. 8. Repealing Clause.** - All laws, decrees, executive orders,
29 proclamations, rules and regulations, and other issuances, or parts thereof,
30 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed, amended,
31 or modified accordingly.

32
33 **Sec. 9. Effectivity.** - This Act takes effect fifteen (15) days after its
34 publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,