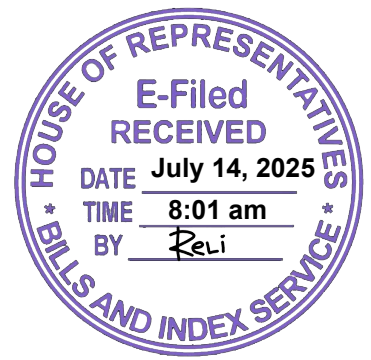


TWENTIETH CONGRESS)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Introduced by Representative Rufus B. Rodriguez and
Representative Maximo B. Rodriguez, Jr.*

House Bill No. **1797**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill was approved by the House of Representatives during the 19th Congress.

This bill seeks to prohibit any activity related to online cockfighting or *e-sabong* operations in the country and provide penalties for violation thereof.

Cockfighting, referred to locally as "*sabong*," is a customary, traditional and popular activity in the country. It is usually a part of recreation and celebration during fiestas and other local fairs and occasions. The cockfights ideally involve two roosters in an arena, with bets on the outcome. However, with the advent of electronic technology, online cockfighting, also known as electronic *sabong* or *e-sabong* emerged.

E-sabong allowed people to engage in this alluring online activity to watch and bet on cockfights remotely from licensed arenas through online video streaming. Distinct from the traditional *sabong*, which involves crowd gatherings, the *e-sabong* captured the interests of virtual audiences who placed bets from their homes using laptops or mobile devices. It has become a platform for uncontrolled online gambling that facilitates corruption and gambling addiction. This new form of gambling has become a social menace due to its damaging social impact.

On May 3, 2022, former President Rodrigo Roa Duterte ordered the suspension of *e-sabong* operations, because of the disappearance of at least 30 people allegedly linked to online cockfighting. The Senate directed an investigation on the matter which paved the way for its suspension.

On December 28, 2022, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. issued Executive Order (EO) No. 9, directing the continued suspension of *e-sabong* operations nationwide. EO 9 prohibits live-streaming cockfights outside designated areas and online betting on live matches, irrespective of the betting platform's location. This mandate is grounded on public health, moral integrity, safety, and social welfare.

Corollary to prohibiting the operation of *e-sabong*, all permits and licenses of *e-sabong* operators issued by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) are declared invalid. PAGCOR is directed to account any financial obligation due to and from *e-sabong* operators. Likewise, the Cybercrime Division of the National Bureau of Investigation, Anti-Cybercrime Group of the Philippine National Police and other law enforcement agencies are directed to monitor and block any existing and emerging *e-sabong* websites.

In view of the foregoing and to save the public from the serious ill effects of heavy online gambling, the immediate approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


RUFUS B. RODRIGUEZ


MAXIMO B. RODRIGUEZ, JR.

TWENTIETH CONGRESS)
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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Introduced by Representative Rufus B. Rodriguez and
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House Bill No. 1797

AN ACT

PROHIBITING ANY ACTIVITY RELATED TO ONLINE COCKFIGHTING OR E-SABONG OPERATIONS AND PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION THEREOF

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

SECTION 1. It is unlawful for any person to commit any of the following prohibited acts:

- 1) Any online, remote, or off-site wagering or betting on live cockfighting matches, events, and activities streamed or broadcasted live from cockpit arenas or premises where the activity is being held;
- 2) Place, receive or transmit a bet or wager on live-streaming or broadcasting of live cockfighting matches, events or activities through online or other remote mode of betting; or
- 3) Operate or maintain *e-sabong* betting platform.

For purposes of this Act, *e-sabong* refers to the online, remote or off-site wagering and betting on live cockfighting matches, events, and activities streamed or broadcasted live by, through, and with the use of Information and Communication Technology from cockpit arenas or at any other place, whether licensed/authorized or unlicensed/unauthorized by the local government units having jurisdiction thereof; and *e-sabong* betting platform refers to the system that allows the live-streaming or broadcasting of cockfight feeds through the internet, which is then processed for wagering or betting on the outcome of each fight, match or events through the use of a remote electronic device or an off-site betting station.

The prohibited acts under this section hereof are designated as associated unlawful activities to money laundering, as defined under Republic Act No. 9160, otherwise known as the "Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2001," as amended.

SEC. 2. Any person who violates Section 1 of this Act shall be punished by imprisonment of not less than one (1) year but not more than twenty (20) years, or a fine of not less than Five hundred thousand pesos (P500,000.00) but not more than Five million pesos (P5,000,000.00), or both, at the discretion of the court. If the offender is an operator of *e-sabong* betting platform, or a recidivist, or the owner of a cockpit arena whether licensed/authorized or unlicensed/unauthorized, who shall knowingly allow the conduct of *e-sabong* related activities within the premises, the maximum penalty prescribed shall be imposed.

If the offender is a corporation or an association, the president, manager, managing partner, or any officer of the corporation or association who directly participated in the violation of Section 1 of this Act shall be held liable.

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

SEC. 3. All permits and licenses of *e-sabong* operators issued by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) are declared invalid and the PAGCOR shall make an accounting of any financial obligation due to and from *e-sabong* operators. No permits or licenses for the operation of *e-sabong* may be issued by PAGCOR upon the effectivity of this Act.

The National Telecommunications Commission, Cybercrime Division of the National Bureau of Investigation, Anti-Cybercrime Group of the Philippine National Police, Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center of the Department of Information and Communications Technology, and other law enforcement agencies shall monitor and block all existing and emerging *e-sabong* websites.

SEC. 4. Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Chairperson of the PAGCOR, shall, in coordination with the Secretary of the Interior and Local Government, Chief of the Philippine National Police and Director of the National Bureau of Investigation, issue the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 5. All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, issuances, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

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

Approved,