

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Regular Session
House Bill No. **1876**



Introduced by: Congressman **BIENVENIDO M. ABANTE, JR.**

AN ACT
PROHIBITING ALL FORMS OF ONLINE AND OFF-SITE GAMBLING,
INCLUDING ONLINE COCKFIGHTING OR E-SABONG, PROVIDING
PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION THEREOF, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

"Evil triumphs when good men do nothing." - Edmund Burke

Legalized gambling, especially in its online forms such as e-sabong, has become a significant source of government revenue in the Philippines. However, this reality starkly contradicts the State's constitutional mandates. The 1987 Philippine Constitution declares it is State policy to promote a just and dynamic social order to free the people from poverty through a rising standard of living and improved quality of life for all (Sec. 9, Art. II). It also emphasizes the State's duty to support the natural and primary role of parents in the rearing of the youth for civic efficiency and the development of moral character (Sec. 12, Art. II), to promote the moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being of the youth (Sec. 13, Art. II), and mandates educational institutions to strengthen ethical and spiritual values, develop moral character, and instill personal discipline (Sec. 3, Art. XIV). Despite these clear constitutional directives, the proliferation of online gambling, enabled by licenses from the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR), has become a grave social menace.

Gambling, especially online, is not a harmless pastime but a national scourge that pollutes life, corrodes the financial stability of families, and undermines the social, moral, and economic growth of the nation. It is a social menace dissipating the energy and resources of the people. Legalization does not make it less evil or immoral. Gambling springs from the love of money, which the Bible warns against: "For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10, KJV). It leads to a culture of covetousness and greed, especially among the youth, fostering traits that all good citizens should disdain – laziness, dishonesty, fraud, and deceit. These vices

result in shattered homes, broken families, and even loss of life, as seen in the tragic case of the “missing sabungeros,” whose families continue to seek justice.

The dangers of online gambling are even more pronounced than traditional forms. With the accessibility of betting platforms via smartphones, tablets, and computers, even minors can easily participate, often without parental knowledge. The platforms are designed to be enticing and addictive, especially to the youth, with colorful and engaging interfaces. The lack of effective safeguards means that even those without bank accounts can gamble using e-wallets like GCash or PayMaya, making it nearly impossible to prevent minors from participating. This is a blatant exploitation of the youth and a direct threat to the nation’s future, undermining the constitutional mandate to develop their moral character and personal discipline.

From April 2021 to January 2022, a series of disappearances involving “sabungeros” and related individuals highlighted the criminal dangers associated with e-sabong. Whistleblower accounts have revealed that nearly 100 people were abducted and killed on the orders of e-sabong operators, with suspicions of fraud and cheating as motives. These heinous crimes occurred while some government officials appeared complicit or inactive, deepening public cynicism and eroding trust in institutions.

The Holy Writ is clear in its condemnation of gambling’s root causes and effects. It denounces the pursuit of wealth without honest labor, equating it to theft: “Thou shall not steal” (*Exodus 20:15*). The Apostle Paul instructs: “He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need” (*Ephesians 4:28*). Gambling denies the biblical work ethic, holding out the false hope of getting something for nothing and encouraging laziness, which is condemned in Scripture: “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat” (*2 Thessalonians 3:10*). Moreover, gambling is inherently addictive, robbing individuals of self-control, a virtue repeatedly emphasized in the Bible (*Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:22-23; Titus 2:11-12; 1 Peter 5:8*).

Online gambling’s addictive nature is weaponized against Filipinos, especially the youth, who are targeted by operators with little to no safeguards. The “bawi” mentality—chasing losses in hopes of recovery—leads many into deeper debt and despair, with some even ending their lives. The government, meanwhile, continues to profit from license fees and alleged kickbacks, as revealed by whistleblowers, with some law enforcement and judiciary officials implicated in syndicates.

While Philippine Offshore Gaming Operations (POGOs) previously targeted foreign bettors, the rise of Philippine Inland Gaming Operators (PIGOs) has shifted the focus to Filipinos of all ages and backgrounds. The accessibility and lack of

regulation have made online gambling a pervasive threat to the nation's social and moral well-being.

In light of these grave concerns, it is imperative to ban, prohibit, and declare illegal all forms of online and offsite gambling in the Philippines. This includes revoking the authority of PAGCOR and any other agency to grant licenses or permits for such activities, as well as rescinding any existing franchises or privileges. **The protection of the nation's moral and social well-being, especially that of its youth, must take precedence over short-term financial gain.**

The immediate passage of this Bill is, therefore, earnestly requested.



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

SECTION 1. Title – This Act shall be known as the “**Anti-Online and Anti Off-site Gambling Act of 2025**”.

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is the Policy of the State to ensure the development and protection of the spiritual, moral and social well-being of the people, especially the youth, the promotion and maintenance of peace, and order, the promotion and preservation of moral values, human dignity, and honest labor, and the promotion of a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity of the nation through honest and hard labor. Thus, the State shall adopt measures to eliminate all forms of online gambling activities and bans prohibits and declares illegal the operation of online and off-site gambling of all forms.

SEC. 3. Definitions of terms. For purposes of this Act, the following terms are hereby defined as follows:

- a. “Internet” refers to an international or global computer network providing variety of information and communication facilities, consisting of interconnected networks using standardized communication protocols.
- b. “Bet” or “Wager” refers to something that is laid, given, received, staked, or pledged typically between two parties on the outcome of a contest, sports event, game of chance, or contingent issues.
- c. “Internet Gambling” or “Online Gambling” refers to placing, taking, receiving, or otherwise knowingly transmitting a bet or wager by any means in any contest, sporting event, or game of chance, which involves the use, at least in part, of the internet.

- d. "Off-Site Gambling" refers to placing, taking, receiving, or otherwise knowingly transmitting a bet or wager by any means outside of the place where the contest, sporting event, or game of chance is actually conducted.
- e. "Person" - refers to an individual, partnership, corporation or any other business or legal entity.
- f. Social media influencer shall refer to a person who has built a large and engaged following on social media platform and has the ability to influence the opinion, behavior and decision of its audience or followers in connection with online gambling of any form.

SEC. 4. Punishable Acts. It is unlawful for any person including social media influencer to commit any of the following acts:

- a. Issuing or causing to be issued, franchise, license, permit or any other form of authority to operate online gambling of any form;
- b. Holding, conducting, engaging, operating or maintaining online gambling of any form;
- c. Creating, operating or maintaining Online or Off-site betting platforms, mobile applications or websites for online gambling that allows users to place bets or wagers through phones, tablets, computers or similar instruments or gadgets;
- d. Online or Off-site placing, receiving or transmitting of bets or wagers in contest, sporting event, or game of chance streamed or broadcasted live from the place where such contest, sporting event, or game of chance is being held;
- e. Promoting or supporting online gambling;
- f. Providing in any manner and by any means the place, materials, equipment, or instruments needed or necessary for the conduct of any act or activity prohibited or declared illegal under this Act;
- g. Promoting, influencing through print media, social media, aiding, protecting or abetting the conduct or commission of any act or activity declared illegal and punishable under this Act; and

SEC. 5. *Penalties.* - Violations of the provisions of this Act shall be punished by imprisonment and fine as follows:

- a. Issuing or causing to be issued, franchise, license, permit or other forms of authority to operate online gambling; and operating, maintaining, holding, conducting, or engaging in online gambling in any form shall be punished by imprisonment of not less than eight (8) years nor more than twelve (12) years and a fine of not less than One Million Pesos (Php1,000,000.00) nor more than Five Million Pesos (Php5,000,000.00) at the discretion of the Court.
- b. Creating, operating or maintaining online or off-site betting platforms, mobile applications or websites for online gambling; and online or off-site placing, receiving or transmitting of bets or wagers in contest, sporting event, or game of chance streamed or broadcasted live from the place where such contest, sporting event, or game of chance is being held shall be punished by imprisonment of not less than five (5) years nor more than eight (8) years and a fine of not less than Seven Hundred Thousand Pesos (Php700,000.00) nor more than One Million Pesos (Php1,000,000.00) at the discretion of the Court.
- c. Promoting or supporting online gambling of any form; providing in any manner and by any means the place, materials, equipment, or instruments needed or necessary for the conduct of any act or activity prohibited or declared illegal under this Act; and promoting, influencing, aiding, protecting or abetting the conduct of any act or activity declared illegal and punishable under this Act shall be punished by imprisonment of not less than three (3) years nor more than five (5) years and a fine of not less than Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (Php500,000.00) nor more than Seven Hundred Pesos (Php700,000.00) at the discretion of the Court.

In case the prohibited act is committed by a corporation, the President, Vice President, Chairman of the Board, and Chief Operating Officer/General Manager of the corporation shall be held liable criminally for such act. In the case of a partnership, the managing partner shall be held criminally liable. In case of a single proprietorship, the owner-proprietor shall be held criminally liable.

In case the person liable for the violation is a foreign national, he shall, in addition to the penalty of imprisonment and fine imposed, be deported immediately after service of the penalty imposed and shall forever be barred from re-entering the Country.

Any person convicted for violation of any provision of this Act shall not be qualified for parole or probation.

SEC. 6. Mandate of Internet Service Providers, Mobile Network Operators and Digital Platforms. -Internet Service Providers, Mobile Network Operators and Digital Platforms are directed and mandated to block access to gambling websites and remove related apps

within Seventy-Two (72) hours from receipt of notice from PAGCOR which is directed to serve such notice immediately upon the effectivity of this Act. The license, permit or authority of an Internet Service Provider, Mobile Network Operator or Digital Platform who violate this provision of this Act shall be revoked, cancelled, and deemed withdrawn.

SEC. 7. *Liability of Government Employees and Public Officials.* – If the prohibited act is committed by a government employee or public official, he shall, in addition to the penalties provided for in this Act, be dismissed from his employment and shall be disqualified from re-employment in any government office. In addition, all his retirement benefits shall be forfeited in favor of the government.

SEC. 8 *Immunity from Prosecution.* – Any person who serves as a witness for the government or provides evidence in a criminal case involving any violation of this Act, or who voluntarily or by virtue of a subpoena *testificandum* or *duces tecum*, produces, identifies, or gives testimony on, the documents subject of or embraced in such subpoena, shall be immune from criminal prosecution, subject to compliance with the provisions of Presidential Decree No. 1732, otherwise known as “Decree Providing Immunity from Criminal Prosecution of Government Witnesses” and the pertinent provisions of the Rules of Court;

SEC. 9. *Prosecution, Judgment and Forfeiture.* – Prosecution and/or conviction under this Act shall be without prejudice to prosecution and punishment under the Revised penal Code or other existing laws.

Upon conviction, all buildings or other structures or facilities constructed or used in violation of this Act including all instruments of the crime, real or personal, shall be confiscated and forfeited in favor of the government and may be disposed of in accordance with law.

SEC. 10. Any person who provides material, competent and relevant information, whether testimonial or documentary, necessary for the investigation and successful prosecution of cases committed in violation of this Act may be placed under the Witness Protection Program pursuant to Republic Act No. 6981.

SEC. 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOJ, DILG, PNP, PAGCOR and other concerned government agencies, shall jointly promulgate the implementing rules and regulations as may be necessary to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 12. *Separability Clause.* – If for any reason any section or provision of this Act, or any portion thereof, or the application of such section, provision or portion thereof to any person, group or circumstance is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions of this Act shall not be affected by such declaration and shall remain in force and effect.

SEC. 13. Miscellaneous provisions. All franchises, permits, licenses Agreements or any other authority issued by PAGCOR for the conduct of online gambling including online cockfighting or e-sabong are hereby declared revoked, withdrawn and of no more legal effect upon the effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 14. *Repealing Clause.* – The provisions of all laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 15. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved: