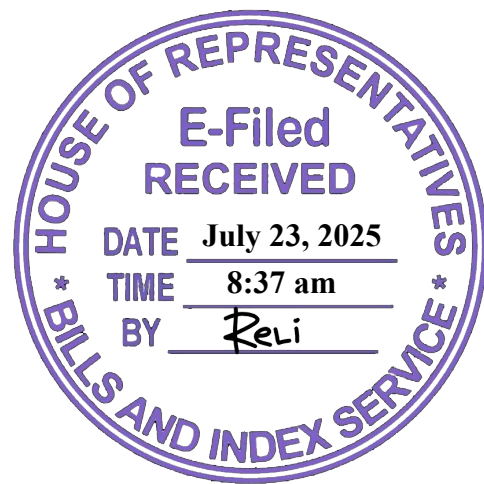




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2203



Introduced by Representative **ANTONINO B. ROMAN III**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

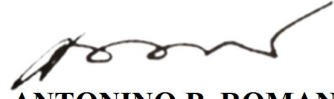
Across the country, floods have become more intense and frequent -- from the plains of Cagayan Valley to the low-lying towns of Eastern Visayas, from urban esteros in Metro Manila to riverbanks in Butuan, Marikina, and Davao, and from the floodplains of Albay, Isabela, Leyte, Capiz, and Agusan del Sur to coastal settlements in BARMM. One major reason is that natural water retention systems -- like wetlands, mangroves, and river easements -- are disappearing. Illegal settlements, unregulated construction, and lack of enforcement have turned natural flood buffers into bottlenecks that worsen inundation.

This bill empowers Local Government Units (LGUs) to enforce existing laws requiring easements along waterways and to inventory and rehabilitate degraded wetlands. It gives local governments not just the mandate, but the means -- by allowing them to use Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) funds, access national assistance, and receive priority infrastructure support. By restoring natural drainage paths and maintaining legal buffer zones, we reduce the need for expensive engineering solutions and protect both lives and property.

The measure reinforces, rather than duplicates, existing mandates under the Water Code (PD 1067), Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (RA 10121), and the Climate Change Act (RA 9729). It provides LGUs with tools and incentives, not penalties. And it uses current institutional capacities and funding channels.

This measure is part of the Flood Resilience Legislative Package of 2025, a three-part reform strategy designed to transform how the Philippines anticipates, funds, and prevents flooding. Alongside this bill, the package includes: the National Flood Risk Governance and Data Integration Act, which consolidates flood-related data and mandates coordinated governance; and the Flood Resilience Incentive and Performance Fund Act, which provides targeted and accountable funding support to LGUs. Together, these bills aim to modernize flood governance, empower LGUs, and restore natural defenses across all regions of the country.

Immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Antonino B. Roman III', with a stylized, flowing script.

ANTONINO B. ROMAN III



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2203

Introduced by Representative **ANTONINO B. ROMAN III**

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING THE PROTECTION, RESTORATION, AND
SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF URBAN WETLANDS, COASTAL
FLOOD BUFFERS, AND WATERWAY EASEMENTS TO REDUCE FLOOD
RISK, PROVIDING MECHANISMS AND FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES

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

Section 1. Title. -- This Act shall be known as the “Urban Wetlands and Easement Protection Act of 2025.”

Section 2. Declaration of Policy. -- It is the policy of the State to protect and restore natural water retention systems such as wetlands, riverbanks, mangroves, and urban drainage easements as a first line of defense against urban flooding. The State shall ensure that these natural and legal buffers are preserved, rehabilitated, and integrated into land use and infrastructure planning.

Section 3. Objectives. -- This Act aims to:

- a. Prevent encroachment into wetlands, river easements, and urban floodways;
- b. Mandate the inventory and mapping of natural flood retention areas within all urban Local Government Units (LGUs);
- c. Support the restoration and rehabilitation of degraded wetlands and easements;
and
- d. Provide LGUs with clear legal authority and tools to enforce easement and buffer zone regulations.

Section 4. Definition of Terms. –

- a. “Urban Wetlands” refer to natural or semi-natural areas such as ponds, lakes, floodplains, marshes, and mangroves in or adjacent to urban and peri-urban areas that temporarily or permanently hold water.
- b. “Easement” refers to the mandatory clearance zones along rivers, esteros, creeks, and other waterways, as defined in the Water Code of the Philippines (PD 1067): 3 meters in urban areas, 20 meters in agricultural areas, and 40 meters in forested areas.
- c. “Encroachment” means the unauthorized occupation, fencing, or construction of any structure within the legally required easement or flood buffer zone.

Section 5. Urban Wetlands and Easement Inventory. -- All cities and municipalities shall, within one year from the effectivity of this Act:

- a. Conduct an inventory and mapping of wetlands, easements, and natural floodways within their jurisdictions;
- b. Identify areas for protection, rehabilitation, or reforestation; and
- c. Submit the inventory to Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), and the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) for integration into national planning.

In coastal urban areas, the inventory shall also include mangroves and tidal wetlands, with corresponding restoration and protection plans, in partnership with barangays and coastal communities.

Section 6. Easement Enforcement Mechanism. -- LGUs shall be empowered to:

- a. Issue notices of violation to encroachers;
- b. Order summary removal of informal or illegal structures, subject to due process, including notice, consultation, and compliance with applicable laws, such as the Urban Development and Housing Act (RA 7279), where applicable;
- c. Where informal settlements are affected, coordinate with the DHSUD, National Housing Authority (NHA), and other concerned agencies to facilitate relocation or on-site upgrading consistent with RA 7279;
- d. Use their local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) funds for clearing, fencing, or greening of easements; and
- e. Partner with national agencies or civil society for rehabilitation projects.

Section 7. Incentives for Compliance. -- LGUs that submit inventories and enforce easement protection shall be prioritized in the allocation of national infrastructure and resilience funds. They shall also be eligible for technical assistance grants through the DENR and DILG.

Section 8. Appropriations. -- The amount of One Billion Pesos (Php 1,000,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated as initial funding for the implementation of this Act, to be administered by the DENR and DILG.

The fund shall be allocated equitably across regions based on flood vulnerability, degree of easement degradation, and LGU capacity to implement. A portion of the fund shall be earmarked for technical assistance to low-capacity LGUs.

Section 9. Implementing Rules and Regulations. -- Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DENR and DILG shall, in coordination with the DHSUD and the Climate Change Commission, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act.

The DENR and DILG shall ensure compliance monitoring and assist LGUs in enforcement, including technical and legal support. The DHSUD shall incorporate wetlands and easement guidelines into housing site planning and subdivision approvals.

This Act shall be implemented in harmony with existing laws, including the Water Code (PD 1067), Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (RA 10121), and the Climate Change Act (RA 9729). LGUs shall incorporate wetlands and easement protection into their Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAPs), Comprehensive Land Use Plans (CLUPs), and Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plans (LDRRMPs).

Section 10. Reporting Requirements. -- The DENR and DILG shall submit an annual joint report to Congress on the implementation of this Act, including compliance rates, restoration accomplishments, fund utilization, and challenges encountered. Reports shall be made publicly available online.

Section 11. Separability Clause. -- If any part or provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 12. Repealing Clause. -- All laws, decrees, executive orders, and rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 13. Effectivity. -- This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,