

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2531



Introduced by **REPRESENTATIVE AUDREY KAY T. ZUBIRI**

AN ACT
CREATING THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES, DEFINING ITS
POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, about 40 million Filipinos still lack access to formal sources of water which affect the health of families and have implications on poverty in communities.¹

Between 2010 and 2019, the Philippines has recorded a troubling figure of approximately 50,000² cases of waterborne diseases - a direct consequence of poor water management and the lack of adequate access to clean and safe water across the country.

Despite the abundance of water resources in the country, the foregoing data reflects the harsh reality faced by many Filipinos, especially in far-flung communities where water infrastructure is severely underdeveloped or completely absent.

The existence of overlapping policies, laws, and regulations concerning water management such as the Presidential Decree (PD) No. 1067 or the Water Code of the Philippines, Republic Act No. 9275 or the Clean Water Act of 2004, and Presidential Decree No. 198 or the Provincial Water Utilities Act of 1973 shows the lack of a comprehensive,

¹ DENR: C. Visayas, Zambo, Bangsamoro regions lack access to clean water by Marita Moaje, January 26, 2024, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1217745>

² [Water Pollution in the Philippines: Causes and Solutions](#)

responsive and unified legal framework governing the management and allocation of water in the country.

With this proposed bill, we seek to bridge a policy and institutional gap by creating the Department of Water Resources (DWR) which will serve as the lead agency for all water-related functions, ensuring centralized oversight, strong inter-agency coordination, and the harmonization of government policies and programs related to water supply, sanitation, conservation, and infrastructure.

As water scarcity, pollution, and unequal access continue to threaten health, economic growth, and national security, this bill becomes more urgent and indispensable.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


AUDREY KAY T. ZUBIRI
Representative, 3rd District of Bukidnon

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

1 **SEC. 1. Short Title.** - This Act shall be known as the "*Department of Water Resources*
2 *Act.*"

3
4 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** - It is the policy of the State to recognize protect, realize
5 and enhance the right of all Filipinos to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible drinking water,
6 sanitation and irrigation as essential to the full enjoyment of life and the protection and
7 sustainability of the environment.

8
9 **SEC. 3. The Department of Water Resources.** - There is hereby created and established
10 a Department of Water Resources, herein referred to as the "*Department*" which shall be
11 organized within one hundred twenty (120) days alter the effectivity of this Act.

12
13 **SEC. 4. Objectives, Duties and Powers of the Department of Water Resources.** –

- 14
15 a. Formulate, recommend, and implement national policies, plans, programs, that will
16 establish systematic and efficient water management and ensure the availability of
17 water for specific purposes in the country;
18 b. Integrate the different agencies of the government that have water-related functions into
19 the Department of Water Resources;

- c. Create and update a road map of river and water sources;
- d. Conduct continuing surveys and studies of the country's renewable water supply with a view towards formulating long-term policies to balance the sustainability and optimal use of water resources, defining the hydrologic boundaries of basis of the existing water supply sources, and create and implement countrywide master plans for water resources management and development;
- e. Regulate and control the utilization, exploitation, abstraction, diversion, and development of water resources, taking into account is equitable distribution, and determine the standards of beneficial and priority uses of water in times of crisis and national emergencies;
- f. Assist and provide the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) with required data and inputs from and for the water sector in the formulation of the country's short-term and long-term strategic development plans and actions;
- g. Require all private individuals, corporations and government agencies affecting water resources and the construction of hydraulic facilities in watershed or basin areas of water supply sources to obtain a permit to construct such facilities from the Department;
- h. Conduct and continue studies pertaining to water use, exploitation, development, conservation or protection of waters, water resources, and watershed or basin areas;
- i. Enter any property of public dominion or any private land or building for the purpose of conducting hydrologic surveys and investigations and to determine compliance with water laws and standards;
- j. Issue and promulgate rules, regulations, and guidelines as may be necessary to implement and enforce its powers and functions under this Act;
- k. Ensure and protect the rights and welfare of consumers;
- l. Exercise such other acts as are incident to or appropriate and necessary in connection with the creation of the Department.

SEC. 5. *Secretary of the Department of Water Resources.* - The authority and responsibility for the exercise of the mandate of the Department and for the discharge of its powers and functions shall be vested in the Secretary of Water Resources.

SEC. 6. *Office of the Secretary.* - The Office of the Secretary shall be composed of the Secretary and their immediate staff.

1 **SEC. 7. *Undersecretaries.*** - The Secretary shall be assisted by not more than five (5)
2 Undersecretaries, who shall be appointed by the President upon the recommendation of the
3 Secretary, as follows:

- 4
- 5 a. One for Finance Service;
 - 6 b. One for Administrative Service;
 - 7 c. One for Planning and Engineering Services;
 - 8 d. One for Regulatory and Financial Assistance Services; and
 - 9 e. One for Operations
- 10

11 Within their functional area of responsibility, an Undersecretary shall have the
12 following functions:

- 13
- 14 a. Advise and assist the Secretary in the formulation and implementation of Department
 - 15 policies, plans, programs, and projects;
 - 16 b. Supervise all the operational activities of the units assigned to them, for which they
 - 17 are responsible to the Secretary.
- 18

19 **SEC. 8. *Regional Director.*** - Each Regional Office shall be headed by a Regional
20 Director who shall be responsible for efficiently and effectively carrying out the duties and
21 responsibilities of the Regional Office. They shall also perform such other related duties and
22 responsibilities as may be assigned or delegated by the Secretary or as may be required by law.
23 The Regional Director shall be assisted by two (2) Assistant Regional Directors who shall
24 exercise supervision respectively over: (1) the planning, project design, evaluation, and
25 technical assistance functions of the Regional Office, and (2) the construction, maintenance and
26 works supervision functions in the region.

27

28 **SEC. 9. *Interface with Other Sector Regulators.*** - The Department is mandated to
29 coordinate with the different sector regulators as follows:

- 30
- 31 a. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) shall continue to have
 - 32 the primary authority and responsibility for protecting the environment and for the
 - 33 conservation of water and related natural resources, including protecting water bodies
 - 34 from waste and pollution and shall promulgate rules, regulations and standards in this

1 regard. The Department shall coordinate with the DENR with respect to the
2 conservation of water resources, protection from sewage and septage waste, and
3 restoration from environment damage;
4

5 b. The Department of Health (DOH) shall have the primary authority and responsibility
6 for determining and enforcing drinking water quality and sanitation standards. The
7 Department shall coordinate with the DOH to achieve an integrated approach for
8 sanitation, including toilets, collection, treatment, and evaluation of wastewater;
9

10 c. The Department shall subsume responsibility from the Department of Public Works
11 and Highways (DPWH) for wholly or primarily water-related public works projects
12 including flood control, water resources development, sewerage, sanitation, and the
13 harnessing and impounding of water. The Secretaries of each department shall
14 coordinate on the development of evaluation criteria as necessary, to determine proper
15 allocation of public works projects between the two departments; and
16

17 d. The Department shall absorb the responsibility from the Department of Interior and
18 Local Government (DILG) on the management and operation of water supply systems
19 of local government units.
20

21 **SEC. 10. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** -Within one hundred eighty (180) days
22 from the effectivity of this Act, the Department, in consultation with the concerned government
23 agencies, shall promulgate the necessary implementing rules and regulations for the
24 implementation of this Act: *Provided*, That such implementing rules and regulations shall only
25 take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in two (2) newspapers of general
26 circulation.
27

28 **SEC. 11. *Appropriations.*** - The amount necessary to carry out the initial
29 implementation of this Act shall be sourced from any available funds of the National Treasury,
30 and is hereby appropriated and authorized to be released for the organization of the Department
31 and its initial operations.
32

33 Thereafter, funds sufficient to fully carry out the objectives, powers, and functions of
34 the Department shall be appropriated every fiscal year in the General Appropriations Act.

1 The Department shall submit its annual budget, which shall include, among others,
2 detailed information on the compensation and benefits received by their employees to the
3 Office of the President for approval.

4
5 **SEC. 12. *Separability Clause.*** – If any part or provision of this Act is held invalid or
6 unconstitutional, other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in force and effect.

7
8 **SEC. 13. *Repealing Clause.*** - The provisions of any law, whether general or special,
9 rules and regulations and other issuances or parts thereof which are inconsistent with this Act
10 are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

11
12 **SEC. 14. *Effectivity Clause.*** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
13 publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) national newspapers of general
14 circulation.

Approved,