

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2934



Introduced by **HON. JERRY E. PEREZ**

**AN ACT
DECLARING ZAMBOANGA CITY AS THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT CENTER OF
REGION IX AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

On October 12, 1990, President Corazon C. Aquino issued Executive Order No. 429, entitled "*Providing for the Reorganization of the Administrative Regions in Mindanao and for Other Purposes.*" This directive designated Pagadian City as the regional center of Region IX while maintaining Zamboanga City as the commercial and industrial hub of the region. This reorganization was undertaken in line with Republic Act No. 6734, enacted on August 1, 1989, which created the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and required adjustments in the regional administrative structure of Mindanao.

Under EO 429, Region IX initially comprised the following provinces and cities::

Provinces:

- a. Zamboanga del Norte
- b. Zamboanga del Sur
- c. Basilan
- d. Misamis Occidental
- e. Lanao del Norte

Cities:

- a. Zamboanga
- b. Pagadian
- c. Dipolog
- d. Dapitan
- e. Oroquieta
- f. Tangub
- g. Ozamis
- h. Iligan
- i. Marawi

The designation of Pagadian City as the regional center under Executive Order No. 429 (October 12, 1990) was primarily justified by the geographic adjustments that followed the creation of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) under Republic Act No. 6734 (August 1, 1989). With Sulu and Tawi-Tawi joining ARMM, and the provinces of Misamis Occidental and Lanao del Norte temporarily placed under Region IX, the government sought to position the regional center in a more central location within the enlarged region.

However, this basis no longer holds. Under Executive Order No. 36 (September 19, 2001), Misamis Occidental and Lanao del Norte were reassigned to Region X (Northern Mindanao), leaving Region IX composed solely of Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, and Zamboanga Sibugay. Consequently, the original rationale for relocating the regional center from Zamboanga City to Pagadian City was substantially diminished.

In subsequent years, various issuances sought to implement the transfer of regional offices to Pagadian City. Memorandum Circular No. 75 (November 12, 2004) directed the transfer of all regional offices from Zamboanga City to Pagadian City, except for the DTI, DOLE, and DOT, which were to remain in Zamboanga City in recognition of its role as a commercial and industrial hub. This directive was later suspended by Memorandum Circular No. 11 on December 22, 2010, citing logistical and

financial challenges. The suspension was eventually lifted under Memorandum Circular No. 78 on March 22, 2019, reinstating the transfer order.

Most recently, a significant development occurred when the Supreme Court ruled in 2024 that the Province of Sulu is not part of BARMM, affirming its earlier plebiscite stance. To address this and ensure continuity of governance, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. issued Executive Order No. 91 on July 30, 2025, officially declaring Sulu as part of Region IX (Zamboanga Peninsula). EO 91 provides the legal and administrative framework for this transition, including the creation of a Technical Working Group to oversee a seamless integration and safeguard uninterrupted delivery of government services.

Provinces:

- a. Zamboanga del Norte
- b. Zamboanga del Sur
- c. Zamboanga Sibugay
- d. Sulu

Cities:

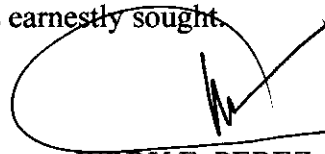
- a. Zamboanga
- b. Dipolog
- c. Dapitan
- d. Isabela
- e. Pagadian

It is important to emphasize that Zamboanga City is not only historically the center of governance and trade in Western Mindanao but also strategically positioned as the region's natural hub. Established as a chartered city by Commonwealth Act No. 39 on October 12, 1936, long before the creation of the Province of Zamboanga del Sur on June 6, 1952 under Republic Act No. 711, Zamboanga City has served as the focal point for regional administration, commerce, and connectivity. Its subsequent classification as a Highly Urbanized City (HUC) underscores its administrative and fiscal independence from any province and reinforces its role as the principal gateway to the Zamboanga Peninsula, the Sulu Archipelago, and neighboring ASEAN markets. Its geographic location, coupled with its well-developed infrastructure and accessibility, makes it the most efficient and practical site for regional offices.

Relocating regional offices to Pagadian City would entail enormous financial costs, logistical difficulties, and serious disruption to public service delivery. Such a move would displace thousands of employees and compromise operational efficiency at a time when fiscal prudence and continuity of governance are paramount. By contrast, retaining Zamboanga City as the primary hub ensures regional efficiency, optimal use of existing resources, and strategic connectivity, while enabling Pagadian City to continue functioning as a vital sub-regional access point for neighboring provinces.

In light of these considerations, the immediate passage of this measure is earnestly sought to preserve administrative efficiency, uphold sound fiscal management, and strengthen the strategic role of Zamboanga City as the core governance and economic center of Region IX.

In view of the foregoing approval of this bill is earnestly sought.



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

SEC. 1. It is the policy of the State, consistent with the Constitution, to promote efficient governance and ensure accessible public services to all citizens. In line with this, and pursuant to the **Supreme Court ruling of September 2024** affirming that a province which voted against inclusion in an autonomous region cannot be compelled to join such region, the Province of Sulu was declared not part of BARMM.

To implement this decision and restore administrative order, **Executive Order No. 91, series of 2025**, issued by the President, formally integrated Sulu into Region IX. To effectively serve the people of Zamboanga Peninsula and the reintegrated Province of Sulu, there is an urgent need to designate the most strategic and historically established center of governance as the regional seat.

Accordingly, this Act declares **Zamboanga City as the official Regional Government Center of Region IX**, ensuring regional efficiency, strategic connectivity, and continuity of public service.

SEC. 2 Zamboanga City is hereby declared as the Regional government Center for Region IX. All regional offices of departments and agencies whose offices were established in Pagadian City are hereby directed to transfer to Zamboanga City within 2 years from effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 3 Sub-Regional Office in Pagadian City. Existing regional offices currently based in Pagadian City shall be retained and converted into sub-regional offices, serving as satellite hubs for provinces in the eastern and inland areas of Region IX. These sub-regional offices shall be headed by an Assistant Regional Director or equivalent official designated by each department or agency.

SEC. 4 Transition and Funding. The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) shall provide the necessary funding and guidelines to ensure a phased, efficient, and non-disruptive transfer of offices, personnel, and resources from Pagadian City to Zamboanga City within the prescribed period.

SEC. 5 *Separability Clause* – If for any reason, any provision of this Act is declared to be unconstitutional or invalid, the other sections or provisions hereof which are not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 6 *Repealing Clause* – Executive Order No. 429, series of 1990, and all related provisions thereof are hereby amended or modified to conform with this Act, subsequent organic laws, and the Supreme Court decision on the status of Sulu. All other laws, executive orders, rules, regulations, and issuances or parts thereof, including that of Executive Order No. 429, series of 1990, inconsistent with this Act are likewise repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SEC. 7. *Effectivity Clause* – This Act shall take effect upon completion of its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved.