

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4008



Introduced by **Representative RAYMOND ADRIAN SALCEDA**

**AN ACT
DECLARING THE SIMEON OLA CAVE LOCATED IN BARANGAY MAPACO,
MUNICIPALITY OF GUINOBATAN, PROVINCE OF ALBAY, AN ECOTOURISM
AND HISTORICAL HERITAGE SITE, PROVIDING FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT
AND PRESERVATION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Bicol Region is not only endowed with natural wonders but also with sites of great historical value that embody the struggle of Filipinos for independence. One such site is the Simeon Ola Cave in Barangay Mapaco, Guinobatan, Albay. Local accounts and historical studies identify this cave as one of the mountain hideouts of General Simeon Ola y Arboleda, the last general of the Philippine Revolutionary Army to surrender to American forces during the Philippine–American War.

General Simeon Ola, born in Guinobatan in 1865, rose to prominence as a revolutionary leader under General Vito Belarmino and was later appointed a commander in the Katipunan forces in Albay. He became known for organizing guerrilla units, ambushing enemy columns, and refusing to capitulate long after other generals had surrendered. Ola's final surrender on September 25, 1903, in Guinobatan, marked the end of the armed struggle against American occupation in the Bicol Region and is widely considered symbolic of the close of the Philippine–American War.

The Simeon Ola Cave in Mapaco served as one of his bases of operation and refuge, where he and his men planned raids, evaded capture, and sustained their resistance. Oral histories from Guinobatan recount how the cave was used as a temporary command post, supply depot, and sanctuary during the height of the conflict. Its location in the foothills of Mount Masaraga gave Ola and his men tactical advantage, allowing them to retreat into difficult terrain while remaining near population centers for support.

Recognizing the cave as both a natural and historical resource ensures that it will be preserved not only as part of Albay's ecological landscape but also as a living monument to Filipino heroism. Declaring it an ecotourism site will align with Republic Act No. 10066, or the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009, which mandates the conservation of tangible heritage linked to the nation's struggle for freedom. It will also support the implementation of Republic Act No. 9593, the Tourism Act of 2009, by promoting sustainable, community-based tourism anchored on local history and culture.

The proposed measure directs the Department of Tourism, in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, the Provincial Government of Albay, and the Municipal Government of Guinobatan, to prepare a Simeon Ola Cave Ecotourism and Heritage Management Plan. This will include:

1. ecological safeguards for the cave and surrounding forest areas;
2. conservation of historical features and interpretive markers about General Ola and the Philippine–American War in Albay;
3. regulated access and visitor safety measures; and
4. livelihood and capacity-building programs for the residents of Barangay Mapaco.

By preserving Simeon Ola Cave as both a natural heritage and historical landmark, this measure will honor the legacy of General Simeon Ola, who exemplified courage, perseverance, and patriotism. It will provide present and future generations a tangible link to the sacrifices made during the struggle for independence, while supporting sustainable development in Guinobatan and the wider Province of Albay.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage 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:

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* This Act shall be known as the “Simeon Ola Cave Ecotourism and Heritage Site Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* It is hereby declared the policy of the State to preserve and promote cultural and natural heritage consistent with the principles of sustainable development. In recognition of the historical role of General Simeon Ola y Arboleda, the last general of the Philippine Revolutionary Army to surrender during the Philippine–American War, the Simeon Ola Cave in Guinobatan, Albay shall be protected as both a historical landmark and an ecotourism site.

SEC. 3. *Simeon Ola Cave Ecotourism and Heritage Site.* The Simeon Ola Cave, located in Barangay Mapaco, Municipality of Guinobatan, Province of Albay, is hereby declared an ecotourism and historical heritage site.

SEC. 4. *Development and Management Plan.* Within one (1) year from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Tourism (DOT), in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the Provincial Government of Albay, and the Municipal Government of Guinobatan, shall prepare and implement a Simeon Ola Cave Ecotourism and Heritage Management Plan.

The plan shall include, but not be limited to:

(a) the conservation and protection of the cave’s natural features and surrounding ecosystems;

(b) the installation of historical markers and interpretive materials highlighting the life and heroism of General Simeon Ola;

(c) regulation of visitor access and tourism activities consistent with ecological carrying capacity;

(d) provision of infrastructure such as access roads, sanitation facilities, and visitor centers, designed in harmony with environmental and cultural preservation; and

(e) establishment of benefit-sharing mechanisms to ensure that local communities, particularly residents of Barangay Mapaco, directly benefit from tourism revenues.

SEC. 5. *Prohibited Acts.* The following acts shall be prohibited within the boundaries of the Simeon Ola Cave and surrounding heritage site:

(a) dumping of waste and pollutants;

(b) quarrying, illegal logging, or mining;

(c) vandalism or destruction of historical markers and cultural installations;

(d) unregulated entry into restricted or hazardous cave areas; and

(e) other activities inconsistent with heritage preservation and environmental protection.

Violators shall be subject to penalties provided under Republic Act No. 10066 (National Cultural Heritage Act), Republic Act No. 9072 (National Caves and Cave Resources Management and Protection Act), and other relevant environmental laws.

SEC. 6. *Role of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines.* The NHCP shall install appropriate historical markers and ensure that the historical interpretation of the site is accurate, contextual, and accessible to visitors and students.

SEC. 7. *Funding.* The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the appropriations of the DOT, DENR, NHCP, and DPWH. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act. The concerned agencies and local governments may also mobilize funds from tourism fees, grants, and public-private partnerships.

SEC. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOT, DENR, NHCP, DPWH, the Provincial Government of Albay, and the Municipal Government of Guinobatan shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to implement this Act.

SEC. 9. *Separability Clause.* If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 10. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 11. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,