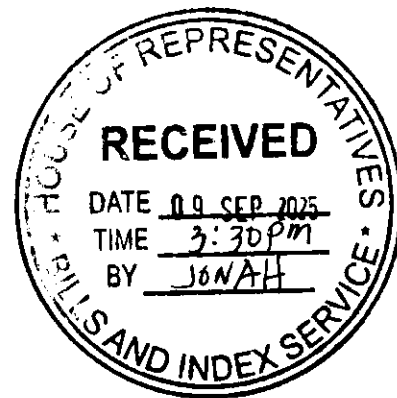


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4471



Introduced by **Representative RAYMOND ADRIAN SALCEDA**

AN ACT
PROMOTING CHEAPER AND MORE ACCESSIBLE INTERNET SERVICES,
EXPANDING INFRASTRUCTURE, STRENGTHENING COMPETITION, AND
SUPPORTING MISSIONARY INTERNET ACCESS PROGRAMS, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Access to the internet is no longer a luxury but a necessity. It underpins education, commerce, healthcare, governance, disaster response, and even food security by linking farmers and fisherfolk to markets. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted this reality, as millions of students, workers, and small businesses relied on internet connectivity for survival. Yet, despite this urgency, the Philippines continues to rank among the countries in Asia with the most expensive and least reliable internet services.

According to international benchmarks, Philippine internet users pay significantly more per megabit compared to neighbors such as Vietnam and Thailand, while average broadband speeds remain below global standards. These connectivity gaps reinforce inequality, leaving students in rural areas at a disadvantage, cutting off communities from opportunities in digital work, and limiting the ability of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to scale up through e-commerce.

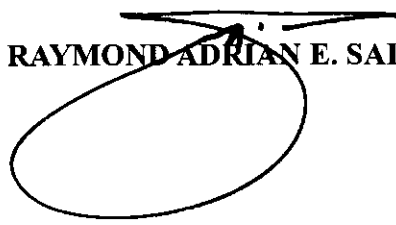
The present policy framework has left critical gaps. Permitting bottlenecks at the local government level slow down the rollout of infrastructure. Market concentration limits competition, leaving consumers with high costs and few choices. Investment in missionary areas is weak, leaving geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs) underserved.

This bill seeks to address these challenges by creating a comprehensive framework for **cheaper and more accessible internet access** without imposing additional charges on consumers. Its core features are:

1. **Missionary Internet Access Program.** The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) will deliver internet access to GIDAs and underserved communities, prioritizing public schools, libraries, health centers, and government service hubs.
2. **Infrastructure Expansion.** The National Broadband Program will be accelerated, with emphasis on fiber, satellite, and submarine cable facilities. Infrastructure sharing among telecommunications companies will be mandated to lower deployment costs.
3. **Streamlined Permitting.** All internet-related permits and rights-of-way shall be processed by government agencies and LGUs within thirty (30) days, with automatic approval for failure to act.
4. **Competition and Open Access.** The National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) will set benchmarks for speed and cost per Mbps and ensure open and non-discriminatory leasing of backbone capacity to encourage smaller ISPs and promote competition.
5. **Public-Private Partnerships.** The DICT may co-invest with private firms to expand internet coverage in remote areas, with incentives such as tax deductions and duty-free ICT equipment importation.
6. **Digital Inclusion.** Community Wi-Fi hubs will be established in every municipality, and digital literacy programs will be rolled out for students, teachers, farmers, fisherfolk, women, and micro-entrepreneurs.
7. **Transparency and Accountability.** The DICT shall publish annual Internet Access Scorecards, detailing coverage, costs, and performance by region, while Congress exercises oversight.

By passing this bill, Congress will establish a clear framework for internet as a **public good** and a **strategic enabler of national competitiveness**. It will ensure that no Filipino student, worker, farmer, or entrepreneur is left behind in the digital economy.

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


RAYMOND ADRIAN E. SALCEDA

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

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **4471**

Introduced by **Representative RAYMOND ADRIAN SALCEDA**

AN ACT
PROMOTING CHEAPER AND MORE ACCESSIBLE INTERNET SERVICES,
EXPANDING INFRASTRUCTURE, STRENGTHENING COMPETITION, AND
SUPPORTING MISSIONARY INTERNET ACCESS PROGRAMS, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

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 “Cheaper and More Accessible Access to Internet Act.”

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is the policy of the State to recognize access to the internet as an essential service for education, commerce, health, governance, and social inclusion. The State shall ensure affordable, reliable, and universal access to the internet by expanding infrastructure, promoting competition, supporting missionary access in underserved areas, and strengthening accountability of service providers.

SEC. 3. Missionary Internet Access Program. – The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) shall establish and expand a Missionary Internet Access Program to deliver affordable and reliable connectivity in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs) and other underserved communities.

The Program shall prioritize public schools, state universities and colleges, public libraries, barangay health centers, and local government service hubs. The Program shall be funded through the General Appropriations Act (GAA) and may also receive official development assistance, grants, and partnerships with the private sector.

SEC. 4. Infrastructure Expansion. – The DICT shall accelerate the rollout of the National Broadband Program and may use fiber, satellite, submarine cable landing stations, and other technologies.

All internet service providers (ISPs), telecommunications companies, and infrastructure firms shall be required to practice infrastructure sharing for backbone facilities such as towers, poles, ducts, and rights-of-way, subject to reasonable cost recovery mechanisms to reduce deployment costs.

SEC. 5. Streamlined Permitting. – All national government agencies, government-owned and -controlled corporations, and local government units shall process applications for internet-related permits and rights-of-way within a period not exceeding thirty (30) days. Failure to act within such period shall result in automatic approval of the application.

SEC. 6. Competition and Open Access. – The National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) shall establish rules ensuring open and non-discriminatory access to backbone and wholesale internet capacity. Large telecommunications operators shall be required to lease capacity to smaller ISPs at fair and cost-oriented rates to encourage market entry and competition.

The NTC shall also publish annual benchmarks for minimum broadband speed and maximum allowable cost per Mbps for retail internet, based on regional and global standards.

SEC. 7. Public-Private Partnerships. – The DICT may enter into public-private partnerships (PPPs) to accelerate the rollout of internet infrastructure in underserved areas. Private firms investing in missionary access projects may be entitled to incentives, including tax deductions and duty-free importation of ICT equipment, subject to existing laws.

SEC. 8. Digital Inclusion. – The DICT shall establish at least one community Wi-Fi hub in every municipality, giving priority to remote barangays and disaster-vulnerable areas. The DICT shall also coordinate with the Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority for digital literacy training programs targeting students, teachers, farmers, fisherfolk, women, and micro-entrepreneurs.

SEC. 9. Transparency and Accountability. – The DICT shall publish an annual Internet Access Scorecard, reporting the cost per Mbps, coverage, speed, and service quality by region.

The NTC shall enforce compliance by ISPs with reporting requirements, subject to fines and penalties for misrepresentation or failure to disclose accurate data.

Congress shall exercise oversight by requiring the DICT and NTC to submit an annual joint report on the status of internet affordability and accessibility nationwide.

SEC. 10. Appropriations. – The amounts necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the appropriations of the DICT and the NTC. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 11. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DICT and the NTC, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation.

SEC. 12. Separability Clause. – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 13. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 14. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,