



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4544

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

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The free flow of ideas is the foundation of democracy. Our Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and of the press. Any legislative response to the digital information crisis must preserve these rights while protecting citizens from deception and manipulation.

The Philippines today faces the harmful effects of disinformation, misinformation, malinformation, and coordinated inauthentic behavior. Troll farms, fake accounts, bot-driven engagement, and covertly funded campaigns distort public opinion, erode trust in institutions, and weaken social cohesion.

The problem lies not in unpopular opinions, which are constitutionally protected, but in fraudulent and manipulative conduct that abuses platform systems to mislead the public.

The proposed Truth and Integrity in Digital Communications Act addresses this challenge through accountability, transparency, and citizen empowerment, without censoring content or restricting press freedom. The measure is aligned with global best practice, notably the European Union's Digital Services Act, but is tailored to the Philippine context. The key features of the proposed measure include:

1. **Clear platform obligations** – Platforms must maintain a local presence; disclose political ads and paid campaigns; report takedowns of fake accounts; publish transparency reports; operate user-friendly notice-and-action systems; issue statements of reasons for moderation decisions and file anonymized copies to a Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) transparency portal; provide internal redress and access to certified out-of-court dispute settlement; maintain a public ad repository; avoid targeting minors or using sensitive personal information for targeting; explain recommender systems and offer a non-profiled feed; and avoid dark patterns.
2. **Systemic risk duties for Very Large platforms (VLP-PH)** – Annual risk assessments, including disinformation and harms to minors, mitigation plans, independent audits, a designated compliance officer, and privacy-safe researcher data access via National Privacy Commission and DICT protocols.

3. **Data access with safeguards** – Platforms must provide anonymized, aggregate, non-personal data necessary for ethical audits, subject to strict privacy and cybersecurity rules. Any access beyond aggregate and/or anonymized data requires DICT pre-approval and, if personal/content data is involved, judicial authorization.
4. **Graduated penalties for non-compliance** – Warnings, monetary penalties, and public naming by DICT; VLP-PH may face penalties of up to 6% of Philippine annual gross revenue for grave or repeated violations. Individuals or entities running troll farms, fake accounts, or selling inauthentic engagement face proportionate fines, community service, and suspension of licenses.
5. **Recognition of the Digital Media Standards Coalition (DMSC)** – An independent, multi-sectoral ethical body (inspired by the Ad Standards Council and the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas) that accredits fact-checkers, issues advisories, and imposes reputational sanctions. Advisories are not binding censorship, but platforms must engage in good faith and provide reasoned explanations if they decline an advisory, ensuring accountability without prior restraint.
6. **Education and open government** – Department of Education (DepEd) and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) integrate media and digital literacy; agencies maintain open data portals and promptly correct erroneous statements.

This measure targets conduct, not content. It empowers citizens, requires transparency from platforms, and holds accountable those who deliberately deceive the public, while preserving free expression.

In view of the urgency of combating digital deception while safeguarding democratic rights, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



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AN ACT
STRENGTHENING TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND DIGITAL LITERACY TO COMBAT DISINFORMATION, MISINFORMATION, MALINFORMATION, AND COORDINATED INAUTHENTIC BEHAVIOR ONLINE, RECOGNIZING AN INDEPENDENT MULTI-SECTORAL ETHICAL BODY, WITHOUT INFRINGING ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND THE PRESS, 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 “Truth and Integrity in Digital Communications Act of 2025.”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is the policy of the State to uphold the constitutional guarantees of free speech, free press, and the free flow of information, while protecting the people from deceptive, manipulative, or fraudulent practices online. The State shall promote transparency, accountability, and digital literacy, and shall regulate conduct and systems in addressing the harms of disinformation, misinformation, malinformation, and coordinated inauthentic behavior.

Governance of digital platforms shall be a shared responsibility among government, industry, and civil society, ensuring that ethical standards are enforced without censorship or political interference.

SECTION 3. Definition of Terms. – For the purposes of this Act, the following terms are defined as follows:

- a. *Disinformation* refers to false information deliberately created or disseminated with the intent to mislead or cause harm.
- b. *Misinformation* refers to false information shared without intent to mislead or cause harm.
- c. *Malinformation* refers to accurate information shared with the intent to cause harm by taking it out of context or using it maliciously.

- d. *Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior (CIB)* refers to the organized use of fake accounts, impersonation, bots, or deceptive networks to manipulate public discourse, spread falsehoods, or interfere with democratic processes.
- e. *Digital Platforms* refer to online services such as social media networks, search engines, and content-sharing platforms that reach or influence a significant number of users in the Philippines.
- f. *Digital Media Standards Coalition (DMSC)* refers to a multi-sectoral, non-governmental, non-partisan, and self-governing body composed of associations of content creators, advertisers, media institutions, fact-checkers, academe, and civil society, recognized under this Act as an independent ethical authority.
- g. *Directive* refers to a formal advisory, resolution, or recommendation issued by the DMSC pursuant to content disputes or ethical reviews.
- h. *Sanction* refers to any non-criminal, industry-standard, reputational, or remedial measure such as public notices, content-labeling advisories, or delisting from ethical registries.
- i. *Very Large Online Platform in the Philippines (VLP-PH)* refers to a digital platform designated by the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) as reaching at least ten percent (10%) of the national population in average monthly active users, or such threshold and methodology as the DICT may publish annually.
- j. *Notice-and-Action Mechanism* refers to a standardized electronic system operated by platforms that enables users to submit notices of allegedly illegal content and requires platforms to act upon and communicate the result of such notices.
- k. *Statement of Reasons (SoR)* refers to a written notification provided by a platform to an affected user explaining a moderation decision. The statement must include: (a) the action taken, (b) the legal or policy basis, (c) the facts relied upon, (d) whether automated tools were used, and (e) available remedies or redress.
- l. *Certified Out-of-Court Dispute Settlement (ODR) body* refers to an independent institution accredited by the DICT to provide accessible, impartial, and non-binding dispute resolution services for user appeals of platform decisions.
- m. *Ad Repository* refers to a searchable, publicly accessible database maintained by platforms that includes information on all paid advertisements, including the content, sponsor identity, payor, targeting criteria, expenditure, and dates of display.
- n. *Recommender System* refers to an automated system used by platforms to determine the ranking, ordering, or prioritization of information displayed to users, based on profiling, engagement, or other algorithmic criteria.
- o. *Non-Profiled Feed* refers to a content display option offered by platforms that does not rely on profiling or user-specific data, but uses chronological or context-based ordering.

- p. *Dark Patterns* refer to deceptive, manipulative, or coercive interface designs that materially distort or impair a user's ability to make free, informed, and autonomous choices, such as misleading consent flows, hidden settings, or default opt-ins.
- q. *Vetted Researchers* refer to academics, journalists, or civil society organizations accredited by the DICT or the National Privacy Commission (NPC) to access platform data for the purpose of studying systemic risks, subject to strict privacy, cybersecurity, and confidentiality safeguards.
- r. *Risk Assessment* refers to a structured evaluation conducted annually by VLP-PH to identify, measure, and document systemic risks related to disinformation, manipulation, civic discourse, protection of minors, and election integrity.
- s. *Independent Audit* refers to an assessment carried out by an external, qualified, and independent auditor to evaluate a platform's compliance with its obligations under this Act, including transparency, risk assessment, and mitigation measures.
- t. *Compliance Officer* refers to a senior employee of a platform, based in the Philippines, designated to ensure compliance with this Act and act as the contact point for regulators, the DMSC, and stakeholders.

SECTION 4. Platform Obligations. – All digital platforms operating in the Philippines shall:

- a. Establish and maintain a legal entity or permanent representative office in the Philippines for regulatory and ethical accountability;
- b. Disclose publicly and in real time sponsored content, political advertisements, and paid campaigns, and significant takedowns of networks or accounts engaged in CIB;
- c. Submit annual transparency reports to the DICT, detailing actions taken against CIB, bot networks, and impersonation;
- d. Provide anonymized and aggregate data necessary for oversight, consistent with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173), the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 (RA 10175), and internationally accepted cybersecurity standards; any access beyond aggregate/anonymized data shall require DICT pre-approval and, where personal or content data are involved, judicial authorization;
- e. Maintain an accessible Notice-and-Action mechanism for users to report allegedly illegal content;
- f. Provide a Statement of Reasons (SoR) to affected users for any restriction, suspension, or removal of content or accounts, stating the decision taken, the legal or policy basis, the facts relied upon, whether automation was used, and available redress; anonymized SoRs shall be transmitted to a DICT Transparency Portal within twenty-four (24) hours;
- g. Provide users with an internal complaint-handling system and access to certified out-of-court dispute settlement (ODR) bodies under the DICT for unresolved disputes;

- h. Maintain a public ad repository that is searchable and contains, at minimum, the ad creative, sponsor, payor, targeting criteria, spend, and dates of display;
- i. Ensure that advertisements are not targeted at minors and are not targeted using sensitive personal information as defined by RA 10173;
- j. Provide transparency on recommender systems and offer users a clearly accessible option to view content feeds not based on profiling; and
- k. Refrain from deploying manipulative interface designs (“dark patterns”) that materially distort or impair user autonomy, decision-making, or choice.

SECTION 5. Platform Obligations of Very Large Online Platforms in the Philippines (VLP-PH) – VLP-PHs designated by DICT, in addition to Section 4 of this Act shall:

- a. Conduct and publish annual systemic risk assessments addressing, at minimum, disinformation, manipulation, civic discourse, protection of minors, and election integrity;
- b. Publish and implement risk-mitigation plans;
- c. Undergo an independent annual audit, filing full results with DICT and a public summary;
- d. Appoint a senior compliance officer responsible for obligations under this Act; and
- e. Provide vetted researchers, accredited by the NPC or DICT, with secured access to data necessary for studying systemic risks, subject to strict privacy and cybersecurity safeguards.

SECTION 6. Data Access and Technical Cooperation – In connection with Section 5(c) and 5(e), platforms shall provide reasonable technical cooperation, including access to application programming interfaces (APIs), metadata, and transparency dashboards, to support oversight and audits, subject to privacy and cybersecurity safeguards.

SECTION 7. Penalties for Non-Compliance by Platforms – After due notice and hearing, any platform that, without lawful excuse, fails or refuses to comply with obligations under Sections 4, 5, and 6, shall be subjected to the following penalties:

- a. First offense – written warning and compliance order from the DICT; and
- b. Second and subsequent offenses – penalty of not less than one million pesos (₱1,000,000) but not more than ten million pesos (₱10,000,000), depending on gravity.

For VLP-PHs, the DICT may additionally impose an administrative penalty of up to six percent (6%) of Philippine annual gross revenue for grave or repeated violations.

The DICT shall publish an annual list of non-compliant platforms for public transparency.

SECTION 8. Prohibited Conduct and Penalties for Bad Actors. – The following acts are unlawful for natural persons and juridical entities:

- a. Operating or financing coordinated inauthentic behavior, including troll farms, bot networks, or fake accounts intended to deceive the public;
- b. Fraudulent misrepresentation of identity for the purpose of spreading disinformation or manipulating online discourse; and
- c. The sale or purchase of inauthentic engagement (likes, shares, followers, comments) through automated or deceptive means.

Any person found guilty of violating this Section shall be subjected to the following penalties:

- a. Natural Persons — fine of one hundred thousand pesos (₱100,000) to one million pesos (₱1,000,000) and/or community service of at least six (6) months, at the discretion of the court; and
- b. Juridical entities — fine of five hundred thousand pesos (₱500,000) to ten million pesos (₱10,000,000) and possible suspension of licenses or permits for repeat offenses.

SECTION 9. Transition Period. – Platforms shall have a two-year transition period from effectivity to fully comply with reporting, ad repository, and systemic-risk audit obligations. DICT may phase requirements by platform size and risk.

SECTION 10. Promotion of Media and Digital Literacy. – The Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), in partnership with civil society, shall integrate media and digital literacy into curricula at all levels. Such programs shall emphasize critical thinking, fact-checking, responsible online behavior, and verification of information and images. Teacher training and assessment systems shall be developed to ensure proper implementation.

SECTION 11. Government Communication Standards. – All government agencies shall maintain open data portals containing verifiable public information. They shall also correct erroneous or misleading public statements within a reasonable time upon discovery, indicating the nature of the error and the corrected information.

SECTION 12. Digital Media Standards Coalition (DMSC). – The DMSC is hereby recognized as the independent ethical authority for digital media standards, modeled after the Ad Standards Council (ASC) and the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP).

SECTION 13. Functions of the DMSC. – The DMSC shall:

- a. Accredite independent, non-partisan fact-checking organizations;
- b. Issue ethical directives, advisories, and resolutions for platforms to consider in good faith;
- c. Impose non-criminal sanctions such as public notices, ethical labeling, or delisting from ethical registries;

- d. Maintain a transparent appeals mechanism where platforms, content creators, or users may contest advisories, resolved within thirty (30) days;
- e. Collaborate with international fact-checking and oversight institutions; and
- f. Receive from DICT the anonymized Statements of Reasons (SoRs) transmitted by platforms and publish annual reports analyzing systemic trends and platform responses.

SECTION 14. Obligation of Platforms to Engage. – Digital platforms shall:

- a. Give due consideration to DMSC advisories; and
- b. Issue a reasoned written explanation within thirty (30) days if they decline to adopt an advisory.

Failure to engage in good faith with the DMSC, including ignoring advisories or failing to provide a written explanation, constitutes a violation of this Act and shall be penalized under Section 7.

Nothing in this Act shall make DMSC advisories legally binding content decisions. Platforms retain editorial discretion under their community standards. The DMSC's role remains advisory, ethical, and reputational. The DMSC shall not exercise sovereign regulatory powers.

SECTION 15. Enforcement. – The DICT shall oversee platform compliance with the obligations set out in Sections 4, 5, and 6, and maintain the DICT Transparency Portal.

The Department of Justice (DOJ), through the National Bureau of Investigation Cybercrime Division (NBI-CD), shall investigate and prosecute prohibited conduct under Section 8 and other applicable laws.

The DICT, DOJ, and DMSC shall coordinate through a Digital Integrity Stakeholders Council to monitor implementation, evaluate emerging risks, and recommend policy updates.

SECTION 16. Funding and Independence. – The DMSC shall not receive direct government appropriations. It may secure project-based grants from non-partisan sources, which must be disclosed annually in audited transparency reports, in order to safeguard its independence.

SECTION 17. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DICT, in consultation with the DOJ, DepEd, CHED, the DMSC, the NPC, academe, civil society, and independent media, shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations.

The rules shall include templates for statements of reasons, the structure of the ad repository, requirements for notice-and-action and out-of-court dispute settlement, methodology for designating VLP-PH, protocols for vetted researchers, and cybersecurity safeguards.

SECTION 18. Separability Clause. – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 19. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, rules, or regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 20. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,