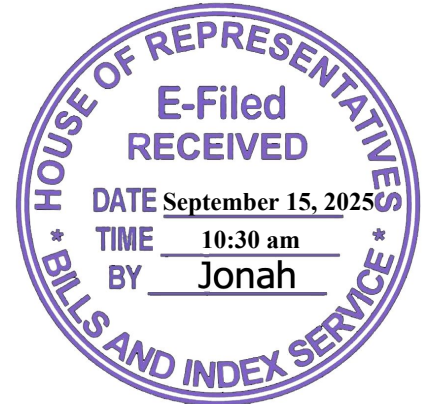


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4559



Introduced by Representative **MARLYN L. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Cockfighting, or sabong, is a longstanding cultural practice in the Philippines, traditionally regulated and confined to licensed cockpit arenas. However, the rapid advancement of information and communication technology has given rise to e-sabong, the online, remote, or off-site betting on live cockfighting matches streamed over the internet. This new mode of gambling has outpaced existing regulatory frameworks, creating significant challenges for law enforcement, public policy, and the protection of vulnerable sectors.

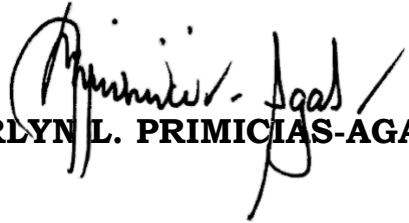
While *Act No. 480* has long penalized unlawful cockfighting and gambling in cockpits, it does not contemplate the realities of online betting platforms, which now enable widespread, unregulated participation in gambling activities far beyond the physical confines of licensed arenas. The Supreme Court in *Byung vs. PAGCOR*¹ has held that, as a rule, all forms of gambling are illegal except as expressly authorized by law, and that such activities undermine the social, moral, and economic fabric of the nation.

The proliferation of e-sabong has also raised grave concerns regarding its use as a conduit for money laundering and other financial crimes. *Republic Act No. 9160*, otherwise known as the "*Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2001*," as amended, empowers Congress to designate additional unlawful activities as predicate offenses for money laundering, in order to protect the integrity of the financial system and prevent the Philippines from being used as a haven for illicit funds.

This bill seeks to address these urgent concerns by expressly prohibiting and penalizing all forms of online, remote, or off-site betting on live cockfighting matches, events, and activities, regardless of whether the underlying cockpit is licensed or unlicensed. It likewise criminalizes the operation and maintenance of e-sabong betting platforms and designates such acts as unlawful activities for purposes of the *Anti-Money Laundering Act*.

By enacting this law, Congress reaffirms the State's commitment to uphold public morals, protect the welfare of families and communities, and safeguard the Philippine

financial system from abuse. The immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



MARLYN L. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **4559**

Introduced by Representative **MARLYN L. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS**

AN ACT
PROHIBITING AND PENALIZING WAGERING OR BETTING ON LIVE
COCKFIGHTING MATCHES, EVENTS, AND ACTIVITIES, DECLARING THE
OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF E-SABONG BETTING PLATFORMS
UNLAWFUL, AND DESIGNATING SUCH ACTS AS UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES FOR
PURPOSES OF THE ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING ACT, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. It is unlawful for any person to commit any of the following prohibited acts:

- (1) Any online, remote, or off-site wagering or betting on live cockfighting matches, events, and activities streamed or broadcasted live from cockpit arenas or premises where the activity is being held;
- (2) Place, receive or transmit a bet or wager on live-streaming or broadcasting of live cockfighting matches, events or activities through online or other remote mode of betting; or
- (3) Operate or maintain *e-sabong* betting platform.

For purposes of this Act, *e-sabong* refers to the online, remote or off-site wagering and betting on live cockfighting matches, events, and activities streamed or broadcasted live by, through, and with the use of Information and Communication Technology from cockpit arenas or at any other place, whether licensed/authorized or unlicensed/unauthorized by the local government units having jurisdiction thereof; and *e-sabong* betting platform refers to the system that allows the live-streaming or broadcasting of cockfight feeds through the internet, which is then processed for wagering or betting on the outcome of each fight, match or events through the use of

a remote electronic device or an off-site betting station.

The prohibited acts under this section hereof are designated as associated unlawful activities to money laundering, as defined under Republic Act No. 9160, otherwise known as the “Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2001,” as amended.

SEC. 2. Any person who violates Section 1 of this Act shall be punished by imprisonment of not less than one (1) year but not more than twenty (20) years, or a fine of not less than Five hundred thousand pesos (₱500,000.00) but not more than Five million pesos (₱5,000,000.00), or both, at the discretion of the court. If the offender is an operator of *e-sabong* betting platform, or a recidivist, or the owner of a cockpit arena whether licensed/authorized or unlicensed/unauthorized, who shall knowingly allow the conduct of *e-sabong* related activities within the premises, the maximum penalty prescribed shall be imposed.

If the offender is a corporation or an association, the president, manager, managing partner, or any officer of the corporation or association who directly participated in the violation of Section 1 of this Act shall be held liable.

If the offender is a public officer, the public officer shall be dismissed from the service and perpetually disqualified from holding public office. In addition, the public officer shall also be held administratively liable under existing laws, rules and regulations.

SEC. 3. All permits and licenses of *e-sabong* operators issued by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) are declared invalid and the PAGCOR shall make an accounting of any financial obligation due to and from *e-sabong* operators. No permits or licenses for the operation of *e-sabong* may be issued by PAGCOR upon the effectivity of this Act.

The National Telecommunications Commission, Cybercrime Division of the National Bureau of Investigation, Anti-Cybercrime Group of the Philippine National Police, Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center of the Department of Information and Communications Technology, and other law enforcement agencies shall monitor and block all existing and emerging *e-sabong* websites.

SEC. 4. Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Chairperson of the PAGCOR, shall, in coordination with the Secretary of the Interior and Local Government, Chief of the Philippine National Police and Director of the National Bureau of Investigation, issue the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 5. All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, issuances, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

SEC. 6. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,