

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **4944**



Introduced by **Representative AGATHA PAULA "AGAY" A. CRUZ**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Nations are not defined only by the borders on a map, but by the courage with which they defend them. On 12 July 2016, the Philippines did what may be considered impossible: it brought a superpower before the world's highest tribunal for the seas, asserted its maritime entitlements, and triumphantly secured a ruling that unequivocally upheld our sovereign rights in the West Philippine Sea.

The Award by Permanent Court of Arbitration is more than a legal victory. It is a cornerstone of our foreign and security policy, a milestone in the history of the law of the sea, and a solemn vindication that the oceans are governed not by might, but by right. Yet, despite its significance, almost a decade after the Award, public understanding remains uneven, and official observance is episodic. We commemorate our wars and revolutions, but we have no regular day to honor our triumph in law.

Beyond a moment of judicial triumph, the Award represents a chapter in our enduring struggle for sovereignty, one that must be remembered, taught, and retold by every generation of Filipinos.

This bill corrects that omission. It declares 12 July of every year as "National West Philippine Sea Victory Day", a special working holiday to institutionalize remembrance of this historic legal triumph, educate future generations of Filipinos about our maritime entitlements, and enjoin government and citizens alike to defend our rights through peaceful and lawful means. It engraves in our civic life the lesson that sovereignty is defended not only by arms but also by courage, knowledge, vigilance, unity, and adherence to the rule of law.

By passing this measure, Congress will do more than simply marking a date on the calendar. It will strengthen the nation's commitment to uphold our sovereign rights, ensure continuity of policy across administrations, and proclaim to the world that the Philippines stand unbowed before any power.

In steadfast defense of our national dignity, sovereign rights, and lawful maritime entitlements, the immediate passage of this bill is most earnestly sought.


AGATHA PAULA "AGAY" AGUILAR CRUZ
Representative, Fifth Legislative District of Bulacan



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AN ACT
DECLARING JULY 12 OF EVERY YEAR AS “NATIONAL WEST PHILIPPINE SEA
VICTORY DAY” IN COMMEMORATION OF THE PHILIPPINES’ TRIUMPH
BEFORE THE PERMANENT COURT OF ARBITRATION

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

1 **Section 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “National West Philippine
2 Sea Victory Day Act.”
3

4 **Section 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
5 uphold and defend the sovereign rights and territorial integrity of the Republic of the
6 Philippines, to foster national awareness of the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal Award in the West
7 Philippine Sea case before the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), and to
8 commemorate through peaceful and lawful means, this historic affirmation of the
9 country’s maritime entitlements under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the
10 Sea (UNCLOS).
11

12 **Section 3. National West Philippine Sea Victory Day.** – To commemorate the
13 Philippines’ landmark triumph on the West Philippine Sea dispute before the Permanent
14 Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague, Netherlands, July 12 of every year is hereby
15 declared as “National West Philippine Sea Victory Day.” It shall be observed nationwide
16 as a special working holiday to honor the Awards and its continuing significance to the
17 Filipino people.
18

19 **Section 4. Lead Agency and Inter-Agency Committee.** – The Department of Foreign
20 Affairs (DFA) shall lead the observance of the National West Philippine Sea Victory Day,
21 in coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher
22 Education (CHED), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), National
23 Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), and such other relevant government
24 agencies and instrumentalities.

1 Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DFA, together with the
2 aforementioned agencies, shall issue the implementing guidelines to ensure the effective
3 observance of the Day.

4
5 **Section 5. Commemorative Activities.** – The DFA, in coordination with partner
6 agencies and local government units, shall organize nationwide activities that:

- 7 (a) Highlight the importance of the historic PCA decision upholding the
8 Philippines' sovereign rights in the West Philippine Sea;
9 (b) Inspire and instill a sense of patriotism and pride in every Filipino and remind
10 government and citizens alike of the duty to uphold the nation's sovereign
11 rights and territorial integrity; and
12 (c) Promote peaceful, diplomatic, and lawful means of dispute settlement
13 consistent with Constitution, international law, and the Philippines' foreign
14 policy objectives.

15
16 Such activities may include, but shall not be limited to, educational campaigns,
17 seminars, forums, and cultural events to emphasize the historical, economic, and
18 ecological significance of the said ruling. The campaign shall utilize various media
19 platforms, including television, radio, print, and online channels. DepEd and CHED shall
20 encourage the inclusion of relevant topics on the West Philippine Sea and the PCA Award
21 in curricular and extra-curricular activities during this period. Local government units are
22 likewise enjoined to participate and may organize their own commemorative events in
23 accordance with the guidelines to be issued by the DFA.

24
25 **Section 6. Appropriations.** – This Act will be implemented initially within the
26 framework of the budget of the DFA for the year it is enacted into law. As far as
27 practicable, the funds required will be drawn from its line budget appropriations for
28 policy formulation, development, conduct of personnel development, technical research,
29 publication and dissemination of studies on Philippine foreign policy. Thereafter, the
30 amounts as may be necessary for the implementation of this Act will be included in the
31 budget of the DFA in the annual General Appropriations Act.

32
33 **Section 7. Separability Clause.** – If any part or provision of this Act is held
34 unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder thereof not otherwise affected shall remain in
35 full force and effect.

36
37 **Section 8. Repealing Clause.** – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules, and
38 regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby
39 repealed or modified accordingly.

40
41 **Section 9. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following the
42 completion of its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

43
44 *Approved,*