

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. **6515**

**Introduced by Representative JB BERNOS
And Representative CHING BERNOS**

**AN ACT INCREASING THE CAPITALIZATION OF THE NATIONAL IRRIGATION
ADMINISTRATION TO PROMOTE RURAL DEVELOPMENT, ACCELERATE THE
CONSTRUCTION OF IRRIGATION PROJECTS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article II, Section 9 of the 1987 Constitution mandates the State to promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation and free the people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social services, promote full employment, and improve the quality of life for all. Likewise, Article XII, Section 1 directs the State to promote industrialization and full employment based on sound agricultural development and agrarian reform.

In recent years, the Philippines has faced increasingly severe climate changes from prolonged droughts and recurring El Niño events to erratic rainfall patterns that have devastated farmlands across the country. In 2024, several provinces in Northern and Central Luzon experienced drastic declines in rice and corn yields, with irrigation shortfalls identified as one of the most critical causes. These challenges have exposed the urgency of upgrading and expanding irrigation systems to ensure water security, protect rural livelihoods, and sustain the nation's food supply.

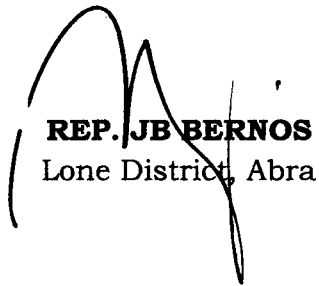
The National Irrigation Administration (NIA), as the primary government agency responsible for irrigation development, remains constrained by limited capitalization and outdated infrastructure. As of 2025, roughly 1.5 million hectares of potentially irrigable lands remain unserved. Without timely government intervention, these areas will continue to suffer from low agricultural productivity and vulnerability to climate-related disruptions.

This measure therefore seeks to increase the capitalization of the National Irrigation Administration and establish a continuing, accelerated program for irrigation construction and rehabilitation nationwide. The proposed funding will

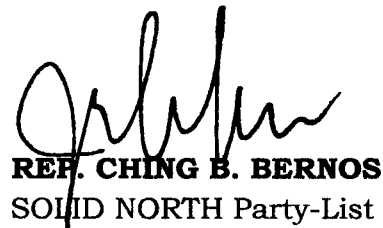
prioritize communities most affected by drought and water scarcity, particularly in fifth and sixth class municipalities, upland farming areas, and agrarian reform communities. It will also encourage participatory planning with farmer-irrigators associations and local governments to promote transparency and equitable access to irrigation benefits.

Through strengthened and sustained investment in irrigation, this bill aims to enhance agricultural resilience, secure food production, and uplift the economic conditions of rural Filipino families, and ensure that no farmer is left behind in the country's pursuit of inclusive and climate-resilient development.

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



REP. JB BERNOS
Lone District, Abra



REP. CHING B. BERNOS
SOLID NORTH Party-List

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the “Tulong-Tubig Act.”

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote sustainable agricultural productivity and rural development by providing adequate and equitable irrigation infrastructure. The State shall strengthen the capacity of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) to implement irrigation programs and services that enhance food security and economic resilience.

SEC. 3. Capitalization and Program Implementation. – To achieve the objectives of this Act, the authorized capitalization of the NIA is hereby increased by Five Billion Pesos (₱5,000,000,000.00). The NIA shall utilize these funds exclusively for the planning, design, and construction of new irrigation systems nationwide, prioritizing:

- (a) Communal irrigation projects, which shall receive at least fifty percent (50%) of the total funds;
- (b) Beneficiaries of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program;
- (c) Members of indigenous cultural communities
- (d) Farmer-irrigators associations; and
- (e) Fifth and sixth class municipalities without existing irrigation systems.

SEC. 4. Participatory and Equitable Implementation. – The NIA shall coordinate with provincial and municipal development councils in identifying priority areas.

Farmer-beneficiaries shall be involved in project planning, design, management, and monitoring to ensure equitable participation and local empowerment.

SEC. 5. Terms and Responsibilities of Beneficiaries. – Beneficiaries of communal irrigation projects shall shoulder fifty percent (50%) of the project cost, payable without interest for a period of fifty (50) years. In the event of death or transfer of land ownership, the succeeding legal heirs or landowners shall assume the remaining balance.

The operation and maintenance of communal irrigation systems shall be managed by duly organized irrigators associations or cooperatives, with NIA providing training and technical assistance.

SEC. 6. Appropriations. – The amount of Five Billion Pesos (₱5,000,000,000.00) shall be included in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of the year following the enactment of this Act. Additional funding shall be sourced from grants, concessional loans, or other financial assistance from foreign governments and multilateral institutions, as determined by the President and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).

SEC. 7. Oversight and Reporting. – The NIA shall submit periodic reports on the progress and outcomes of the program to Congress. An independent review panel composed of experts, to be appointed by the President every three (3) years, shall evaluate NIA's policies and performance and recommend improvements to both Houses of Congress.

SEC. 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Administrator of the National Irrigation Administration, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, Department of Budget and Management, and other relevant agencies, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for its implementation.

SEC. 9. Separability Clause. – If any portions or provisions of this Act are declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining portions or provisions not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SEC. 10. Repealing Clause. – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, memoranda, circulars, and other issuances, or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of 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 two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,