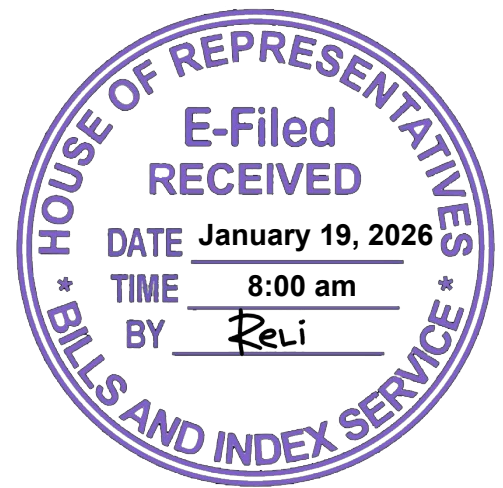




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



House Bill No. 7163

Introduced by CIBAC Party-List Representative
EDUARDO “BRO. EDDIE” C. VILLANUEVA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill applies, in maritime context, the Biblical principle revealed in the Parable of the Good Samaritan – that humanity has the moral duty to render help to those in need.¹

The Philippines is a maritime nation whose economy, security, and daily life are inextricably linked to the sea. As an archipelagic State and a party to major international maritime instruments, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the Philippines is bound by clear obligations to ensure the protection of life at sea and the rendering of assistance to persons and vessels in distress.

While the duty to render assistance at sea is well established under international law and maritime custom, the absence of a comprehensive domestic statute expressly defining, enforcing, and penalizing non-compliance has resulted in gaps in accountability. Incidents involving collisions, abandonment of persons in distress, and failure to provide timely assistance have highlighted the need to translate international obligations into clear, enforceable national law.

This bill seeks to institutionalize the duty to render assistance at sea by codifying the responsibilities of shipmasters and vessel operators navigating Philippine waters and Philippine-flagged vessels operating beyond national maritime zones. It provides clear standards on when and how assistance must be rendered, consistent with international conventions, while recognizing practical limitations where rendering assistance would pose serious danger to the assisting vessel, crew, or passengers.

The measure clarifies coordination mechanisms with the Philippine Coast Guard as the lead maritime search and rescue authority, ensuring that rescue efforts are orderly, efficient, and aligned with national maritime safety systems. It also establishes a requisition mechanism to allow authorities to direct the most capable vessels to

¹ Luke 10:25-37

respond during maritime emergencies, while clearly defining the circumstances under which assisting vessels are released from further obligation.

Importantly, the bill introduces proportionate penalties for unjustified failure to render assistance, particularly where such failure results from or is connected to a collision or other navigational incident. These penalties reinforce the seriousness of the obligation to save life at sea, deter abandonment or neglect, and promote a culture of maritime responsibility and professionalism.

By defining jurisdiction and venue, the measure ensures that violations can be effectively prosecuted, regardless of where the incident occurs within Philippine waters or involving Philippine-flagged vessels. The bill likewise preserves administrative and disciplinary accountability under existing maritime and licensing laws.

The enactment of this measure strengthens maritime safety, fulfills the Philippines' international commitments, and affirms the fundamental humanitarian principle that saving life at sea is a shared and enforceable duty, not a discretionary act.

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


EDUARDO "BRO. EDDIE" C. VILLANUEVA



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HOUSE BILL NO. 7163

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EDUARDO "BRO. EDDIE" C. VILLANUEVA

AN ACT
MANDATING THE DUTY TO RENDER ASSISTANCE AT SEA IN ACCORDANCE
WITH RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

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

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the "*Good Samaritan at*
2 *Sea Law.*"

3
4 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – The following are hereby declared to be the
5 policies of the State:

6
7 a) The State shall provide for the full and effective implementation and
8 enforcement of international maritime instruments ratified by the Philippine
9 Government, including, but not limited to, the United Nations Convention on
10 the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the 1974 International Convention for the
11 Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), that cover safety of life at sea and comply with
12 its duties and obligations to the international community as a State party; and
13

14 b) The State shall ensure that unlawful acts committed in waters forming part of
15 the national territory and those over which the country has sovereignty and
16 jurisdiction are prevented, detected, and penalized to ensure a safe maritime
17 environment as well as safeguard lives and properties.
18

19 **SEC. 3. Scope of Application.** – This Act shall apply to all vessels navigating in
20 the territorial sea, archipelagic waters and internal waters of the Philippines, and all
21 Philippine-flagged vessels navigating in the contiguous zone and exclusive economic
22 zone of the Philippines and the high seas.
23

24 **SEC. 4. Definition of Terms.** – As used in this Act:

25
26 a) Assistance may include, but is not limited to, search, rescue, towage or
27 medical treatment, as may be applicable;

- 1 b) Distress refers to a situation wherein there is a reasonable certainty that a
2 person, a vessel, or other craft is threatened by grave and imminent danger
3 and requires immediate assistance;
4
5 c) Master or Master of the Ship refers to a person having command of a ship;
6 and
7
8 d) Requisition refers to the temporary takeover or command of the ship, with the
9 consent of the master of a ship in distress, and the search and rescue service
10 concerned of the Philippine Coast Guard, solely for the purpose of rendering
11 assistance to a ship in distress.
12

13 **SEC. 5. Duty to Render Assistance. –**
14

- 15 a) The master of a ship, insofar as he or she can do so without serious danger
16 to the ship, the crew, or the passengers onboard, has the duty to:
17 (1) Render assistance to any person or persons found at sea in danger of
18 being lost; or
19 (2) Proceed with all possible speed to the rescue of persons in distress,
20 upon receiving a signal from any source that such persons are in
21 distress, or if otherwise informed of their need of assistance, insofar
22 as such action may reasonably be expected of him or her;
23
24 b) After a collision or other incidents of navigation, the master of a ship that
25 caused, or is involved in, the incident shall render assistance to the other ship,
26 its crew and its passengers, and where possible, to inform the other ship of
27 the name of his or her own ship, its port of registry and the nearest port at
28 which it will call;
29
30 c) If applicable, the master of a ship, and the ship's crew and passengers shall
31 accommodate embarked persons in distress at sea within the capabilities and
32 limitations of the ship. The master of a ship shall coordinate with relevant
33 authorities and arrange for the disembarkation to a place of safety of persons
34 rescued as soon as reasonably practicable.
35

36 **SEC. 6. Coordination in Rendering Assistance. –** The master of the ship
37 answering a distress signal shall, as far as possible, inform the ship in distress and
38 the appropriate search and rescue service of the Philippine Coast Guard that his or
39 her ship is proceeding with all possible speed to render assistance to the ship in
40 distress.
41

42 In case of collision or other incidents of navigation, the ship rendering assistance
43 to the other ship involved in the incident shall, as much as possible, also inform the
44 appropriate search and rescue service of the Philippine Coast Guard of the incident
45 and the status of the assistance being provided by it.
46

47 **SEC. 7. Inability or Failure to Render Assistance. –**
48

- 49 a) If the ship receiving the distress alert is unable, or in the special
50 circumstances of the case, considers it unreasonable or unnecessary to

1 proceed to their assistance, or the giving of assistance would cause serious
2 danger to the ship, the crew or the passenger, the master must enter in the
3 logbook the reason for failing to proceed to the assistance of the persons or
4 ships in distress, and accordingly inform immediately the appropriate search
5 and rescue service of the Philippine Coast Guard;
6

- 7 b) The master of the ship shall be released from the obligation to render
8 assistance provided in Section 5 of this Act upon compliance with the
9 requirement of entering in the logbook the reason for the inability or failure to
10 render assistance and informing the appropriate search and rescue service
11 of the Philippine Coast Guard of his or her ship's inability or failure to render
12 such assistance.
13

14 **SEC. 8. Requisition.** – The master of a ship in distress, the Philippine Coast
15 Guard, or the search and rescue service concerned, after consultation, so far as may
16 be possible, with the master/s of the ship/s which answers the distress alert, has the
17 right to requisition one or more of those ships as they consider best able to render
18 assistance.
19

- 20 a) It shall be the duty of the master/s of the ship/s requisitioned to comply by
21 continuing to proceed with all speed to the assistance of persons in distress
22 in accordance with this Act;
23
24 b) The master/s of a requisitioned ship/s shall be released from the obligation
25 imposed by Section 5 of this Act upon learning that their ship or ships have
26 not been requisitioned and that one or more ships have been requisitioned
27 and are complying with the requisition. This decision shall, if possible, be
28 communicated to the other requisitioned ships and to the concerned search
29 and rescue service of the Philippine Coast Guard;
30
31 c) The master of a ship shall be released from the obligation imposed under
32 Section 5 of this Act, and, if his or her ship has been requisitioned, from the
33 obligation imposed by Section 8(a) on being informed that assistance is no
34 longer necessary by the person or persons in distress, the concerned
35 search and rescue service of the Philippine Coast Guard, or the master of
36 another ship which has reached such persons.
37

38 **SEC. 9. Penalties.** –
39

- 40 a) Failure to comply with any of the obligations provided in Sections 5 and 8(a)
41 shall be punishable by a fine of not less than One Hundred Thousand Pesos
42 (Php100,000.00) but not more than One Million Pesos (Php1,000,000.00),
43 depending on the size of the vessel or ship as defined in the implementing
44 rules and regulations of this Act. If the violator is the cause or part of the
45 vessel or ship that caused the distress at sea, collision or any other incident
46 of navigation, the fine shall not be less than One Million Pesos
47 (Php1,000,000.00) but not more than Five Million Pesos (Php5,000,000.00),
48 depending on the size of the vessel or ship to be defined in the implementing
49 rules and regulations of this Act;
50

- 1 b) If the failure to render assistance as provided in Sections 5 and 8(a) is
2 committed within internal waters, archipelagic waters or territorial sea, an
3 additional penalty of imprisonment of not less than six (6) months but not
4 more than one (1) year shall be imposed solidarily on the shipowner, master,
5 and/or their representative/s. If the violator is the cause or part of the ship
6 that caused the distress at sea, collision or any other incident of navigation,
7 an additional penalty of imprisonment of not less than one (1) year and one
8 (1) day but not more than two (2) years shall be imposed;
9
- 10 c) Repeat offenders or violators shall be dealt with the maximum penalties
11 provided herein; and
12
- 13 d) No foreign national shall be deported without the payment of the fines and/or
14 service of sentence imposed by the court provided herein.
15

16 The penalties provided herein is without prejudice to the disciplinary or
17 administrative proceedings that may be conducted against the master of the ship or
18 any other person in the service of the ship, leading to either the revocation or
19 suspension of his or her license or certificate of competence, pursuant to relevant laws,
20 rules and regulations.
21

22 **SEC. 10. Jurisdiction and Venue.** – The criminal action for failure to render
23 assistance as provided in Sections 5 and 8(a) in relation to Section 8 shall be instituted
24 and tried in any of the following venues:
25

- 26 a) The Regional Trial Court of the city or municipality nearest to the place or
27 maritime zone where the crime was committed;
28
- 29 b) The Regional Trial Court of the city or municipality which is the first port of
30 entry of the ship under the command of a master or officer of the ship who
31 committed the crime; or
32
- 33 c) The Regional Trial Court of Manila.
34

35 **SEC. 11. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within thirty (30) days from
36 the effectivity of this Act, the Philippine Coast Guard, in consultation with relevant
37 government agencies and stakeholders, promulgate the necessary rules and
38 regulations to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.
39

40 Failure of the relevant government agencies to promulgate the IRR within the
41 specified period shall subject the heads of these government agencies to
42 administrative penalties under applicable civil service laws.
43

44 Should the IRR contain provisions that are contrary to this Act, the heads of the
45 government agencies responsible for such provision, when done in bad faith or with
46 gross negligence, shall be held administratively liable.
47

48 **SEC. 12. Separability Clause.** – If any portion or provision of this Act is declared
49 unconstitutional, the remainder hereof or any provisions not affected thereby shall
50 remain in force and effect.

1
2 **SEC. 13. Repealing Clause.** – Any law, presidential decree or issuance,
3 executive order, letter of instruction, rule, or regulation inconsistent with the provisions
4 of this Act is hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

5 **SEC. 14. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
6 complete publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.
7

8 *Approved,*