

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City
Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session



House Bill No. **7305**

Introduced by Honorable Representatives
JOSE MANUEL TADEO “CHEL” I. DIOKNO (Akbayan Partylist)
PERCIVAL V. CENDAÑA (Akbayan Partylist)
DADAH KIRAM ISMULA (Akbayan Partylist)
KAKA BAG-AO (Dinagat Islands)

AN ACT
CREATING A JOINT CONGRESSIONAL COMMISSION ON
JUSTICE SYSTEM REFORM TO CONDUCT A
COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATION
OF THE PHILIPPINE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND PROVIDE
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFORMS, DEFINING ITS
POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

A fair justice system affects every aspect of the people’s lives. From public order and safety to economic development, our administration of justice has a direct impact on every Filipino citizen. An effective justice system protects the marginalized, disadvantaged, and exploited sectors. It also promotes growth and development, enhancing investor confidence and expanding developmental opportunities for Filipinos.

Unfortunately, our country’s administration of justice is in crisis. The World Justice Project (WJP)¹ ranked the Philippines 97th out of 143 countries in its

¹ World Justice Project, The Philippines Ranks 97 Out of 143 in the WJP Rule of Law Index (Oct. 28, 2025), https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/Philippines_3.pdf

Rule of Law index worldwide. This marked a decline of three places from 2024 and resulted in our country's lowest placement. This index examines 44 subfactors in its assessment of a country's justice system, including criminal justice administration and absence of corruption. In our region, we placed 13th out of 15 countries and scored the lowest in terms of administration of civil and criminal justice.

These findings echo a myriad of problems in our justice system. As of 2022, there were 113,144 persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) awaiting the resolution of their cases.² Moreover, based on a survey, only 20 percent of Filipinos with legal problems are able to access any form of legal assistance.³ In addition, it has been observed that there is a direct correlation between our country's ineffective justice system and the continuous decline of foreign direct investments.⁴ Not to mention the problem of impunity for human rights violations and corruption.

While bodies such as the Justice Sector Coordinating Council exist to promote coordination among justice institutions, their mandate is primarily operational and executive in nature, resulting in reforms that are fragmented and incremental.⁵ What remains lacking is a dedicated body mandated to undertake a comprehensive, independent, and legislative-led assessment of the justice sector as a whole, as well as to generate evidence-based policy recommendations for structural and statutory reform.

On this point, the Constitution provides clear guidance. Article III, Section 11 of the 1987 Constitution mandates the provision of free access to the courts

² Joseph Clyde Famularcano, EXPLAINER | The Philippine Prison Problem, Explained PH (Aug. 2022), <https://explained.ph/explainer-philippine-prison-problem/>

³ World Justice Project, *Global Insights on Access to Justice: Findings from the World Justice Project General Population Poll in 101 Countries* (2019), <https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP-A2J-2019.pdf> last accessed on 12 December 2025.

⁴ Ted Cordero, *US State Department Flags Corruption as Barrier to Investment in PH*, GMA News Online, Oct. 8, 2025, <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/961736/us-state-department-flags-corruption-barrier-to-investment-in-ph/story/>.

⁵ *Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028: Subchapter 13.2 — Enhance Administration of Justice* (Department of Economy, Planning, and Development. 2023), <https://pdp.depdev.gov.ph/philippine-development-plan-2023-2028>, p. 313

and adequate legal assistance to any person. Article III, Section 16 also upholds the right of all persons to a speedy disposition of their cases.

Hence this proposed measure, which establishes the Congressional Commission on Justice System Reform (JUSTCOM). This measure seeks to address the crisis in our justice system through rigorous policy analyses, extensive research, and stakeholder engagement.

This bill adopts the framework of Republic Act No. 11899 or the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) Act. With its impactful studies, policy outputs, and inter-agency coordination, EDCOM II has been able to surface the deep-seated problems in our education system.

This measure intends to establish a similar congressional body that will conduct broad-based research, institutional analysis, and policy recommendations to address the problems in our justice system. JUSTCOM will be mandated to conduct an audit of existing policies and programs to propose needed reforms for the four key pillars of our justice administration system:⁶

- a) Law Enforcement, which involves the Philippine National Police and other law enforcement agencies;
- b) Prosecution, which involves the Department of Justice, the Office of the Ombudsman, and the National Prosecution Service;
- c) Corrections, which involve the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology and the Bureau of Corrections; and
- d) Community, which involves the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Commission on Human Rights, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, the Public Attorney's Office, the academe, nongovernment organizations, people's organizations, and other civil society organizations.

⁶ Office of the Ombudsman, Republic of the Philippines, CJS Capacity Assessment Final Report (Feb. 2013), Office of the Ombudsman UNDP-4, at 8, 9 pages, <https://www.ombudsman.gov.ph/UNDP4/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/CJS-Cap-Assmnt-FINAL.pdf> (last visited Nov. 18, 2025).

JUSTCOM will be composed of members from both the House of Representatives and the Senate. This enables policymakers to be at the forefront of identifying and addressing solutions to these deep-seated problems. JUSTCOM's technical output will directly facilitate the crafting of legislation or congressional inquiries that can address these concerns.

Finally, JUSTCOM will produce annual reports, policy papers, and policy recommendations for agencies. These coordinated efforts will serve as the foundational bases for institutionalizing a fully functional and humane justice system for the Filipino people.



JOSE MANUEL TADEO
“CHEL” I. DIOKNO
Akbayan Representative



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

1 **Sec. 1. Short Title.** - This Act will be known as the “Joint Congressional
2 Commission on Justice System Reform (JUSTCOM) Act.”

3 **Sec. 2. Declaration of Policies.** –

- 4 a. It is the declared policy of the State to protect and promote the right of all
5 citizens to a swift, fair, accessible, and humane administration of justice.
- 6 b. The State recognizes that an effective justice system is a critical
7 component of national security, economic stability, human rights
8 protection, and human capital development.

1 c. The State must establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate,
2 and integrated system of justice that is relevant to the needs of the people
3 and society.

4 d. The State recognizes that comprehensive structural reforms of the justice
5 sector are necessary to regain public trust and ensure the integrity and
6 efficiency of its institutions.

7 ***Sec. 3. Creation of the Congressional Commission.*** - There is hereby
8 created a joint Congressional entity to be known as the Joint Congressional
9 Commission on Justice System Reform (JUSTCOM), hereinafter referred to as
10 the "Commission."

11 ***Sec. 4. Composition.*** – The Commission will be composed of nine (9) members,
12 with three (3) members from the Senate, three (3) members from the House of
13 Representatives, and three (3) experts from civil society to be appointed jointly
14 by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The
15 experts must possess proven competence in constitutional law, criminal justice,
16 public administration, judicial reform, or human rights and should not be
17 currently employed in government service.

18 The Chairpersons of the Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights and
19 the House Committee on Justice shall serve as Co-Chairpersons of the
20 Commission. The remaining two (2) members each from the Senate and the
21 House of Representatives will be designated by the Senate President and
22 Speaker of the House, respectively, with at least one (1) member each coming
23 from the Minority. The members of the Commission will not receive
24 compensation except for travel, communications, and other expenses as may be
25 allowed by law.

26 ***Sec. 5. Mandate and Powers*** – The Commission will have the following

mandates and powers:

- a) Conduct a comprehensive and independent assessment of the entire justice system's current organizational structure, methodology, procedure, and technological infrastructure;
- b) Identify and evaluate systemic bottlenecks and weaknesses in the enforcement of laws, particularly concerning the expeditious investigation and resolution of cases involving public officials;
- c) Conduct a detailed assessment and evaluation of the systemic issues contributing to prolonged pre-trial detention, correctional facility overcrowding, and severe case backlogs, including the efficiency of the application of existing laws on bail, plea bargaining, and community corrections;
- d) Study the barriers preventing marginalized and vulnerable sectors from accessing effective legal redress and recommend mechanisms for equitable public legal assistance and support for developmental, social change, and alternative lawyering;
- e) Conduct nationwide public consultations, expert panel discussions, and stakeholder dialogues with nongovernment organizations, people's organizations, civil society organizations, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP), and academic and research institutions;
- f) Require the assistance of relevant officials from government agencies, including but not limited to the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Office of the Ombudsman, and the Philippine National Police (PNP), and direct these officials to grant the Commission full access to all necessary public documents, reports, and data, subject to existing laws on confidentiality;
- g) Request the assistance and cooperation of the Judiciary, including

1 access to such documents, reports, records, and data as may be
2 necessary for the performance of its functions, subject to
3 constitutional limitations and existing laws on privacy and
4 confidentiality;

5 h) Formulate and recommend transformative, concrete, and targeted
6 policy and legislative reforms that enable the justice sector to
7 uphold accountability, transparency, and human rights, strengthen
8 access to justice, and enhance the overall efficiency of the justice
9 system;

10 i) Prepare and submit to Congress a proposed National Justice
11 Development Plan and an Omnibus Justice Reform Act, based on
12 the Commission's findings and consultations. The National Justice
13 Development Plan should articulate a medium- to long-term, whole-
14 of-justice-sector reform framework, including strategic objectives,
15 priority reforms, resource requirements, and coordination
16 mechanisms aimed at improving accountability, access to justice,
17 efficiency, and respect for human rights across the justice system.
18 The Omnibus Justice Reform Act must consolidate necessary
19 legislative reforms to address the systemic deficiencies identified by
20 the Commission; and

21 j) Perform such other acts as may be necessary to carry out the
22 provisions of this Act.

23 **Sec. 6. Technical Secretariat** – A Technical Secretariat, to be headed by an
24 Executive Director, will be established to provide the necessary research,
25 administrative, technical, and logistical support to the Commission. The
26 Technical Secretariat will co-exist and be coterminous with the Commission.

27 **a. Executive Director:** An Executive Director, with advanced degrees

1 and extensive experience in justice or public sector reform, will head the
2 Secretariat. The Executive Director shall work full-time and have the rank,
3 privileges, and emoluments of an Executive Director IV (Salary Grade 29).

4 **b. Staffing:** The Secretariat will consist of high-level technical personnel,
5 policy analysts, legal researchers, and administrative staff necessary to
6 carry out the functions of the Commission, ensuring expertise in law,
7 governance, and data analytics.

8 **Sec. 7. Term.** – The Commission shall commence its work immediately upon
9 the effectivity of this Act and will exist for a period of three years, unless
10 extended by a Joint Resolution of Congress.

11 **Sec. 8. Reporting Requirements.** – The Commission will submit
12 comprehensive reports to Congress and the President of the Philippines:

13 **a. Periodic Reports.** – The Commission will submit an annual report
14 detailing its accomplishments, preliminary findings, and legislative
15 recommendations to the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of
16 Representatives on or before the opening of the regular session each year.
17 These reports must detail budgetary usage and any policy
18 recommendations implemented or adopted by concerned agencies.

19 **b. Final Report.** – Within ninety (90) days after the expiration of its three-
20 year term, the Commission will submit its Final Report. This report shall
21 contain the comprehensive assessment of the justice system, the proposed
22 National Justice Development Plan, and the complete draft of the Omnibus
23 Justice Reform Act for immediate filing and deliberation by Congress.

24 **Sec. 9. Appropriations.** – The amount necessary for the initial implementation
25 of this Act shall be charged against the available appropriations of the Senate
26 and the House of Representatives. Thereafter, the amount necessary for its

1 continuous implementation, including any deficiency in the current year, shall
2 be included in the annual General Appropriations Act subject to existing
3 budgeting, accounting, and auditing rules and regulations.

4 ***Sec. 10. Separability Clause.*** – If any provision or part of this Act is declared
5 invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provisions not affected
6 thereby will remain in full force and effect.

7 ***Sec. 11. Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, decrees, orders, rules, regulations, and
8 other issuances or parts thereof which are inconsistent with this Act are hereby
9 repealed or amended accordingly.

10 ***Sec. 12. Effectivity.*** – This Act takes effect fifteen (15) days after its publication
11 in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

12 **Approved,**