

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7635



Introduced by Representative LEILA M. DE LIMA

**AN ACT CREATING THE JOINT CONGRESSIONAL COMMISSION ON JUSTICE
SYSTEM REFORM, DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, PROVIDING
FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

A justice system that is slow, inaccessible, and vulnerable to undue influence erodes the very foundations of democracy and rule of law. When truth-seeking and exacting accountability are delayed or obstructed, especially in cases of corruption of public officials, the social contract between the state and its citizens weakens, corroding public trust in government.

In 2025, there was an explosion of a major corruption scandal involving flood-control projects. Allegations came out that billions of pesos in public funds were diverted through “ghost” projects, substandard construction, and irregular procurement arrangements, implicating contractors, lawmakers, and high-ranking government officials.¹ The controversy triggered mass protests demanding transparency and justice, and has become a central issue eroding confidence in public institutions.

Protests, including several massive, multi-day rallies led by civic groups, drew hundreds of thousands of citizens who demanded greater transparency in public spending and the immediate prosecution of corruption in mega-projects². Those protests exposed deep anger at years of mismanagement and misuse of public money, along with weak enforcement of laws to prevent their occurrence. The

¹ Calimbahin, C.A (02 December 2025). Accountability washed away in Philippine flood control corruption. Retrieved from: <https://eastasiaforum.org/2025/12/02/accountability-washed-away-in-philippine-flood-control-corruption/>

² Calupitan, J & Gomez, J (16 November 2025). Hundreds of thousands rally in Manila against flood-control corruption scandal. <https://apnews.com/article/philippines-flood-control-corruption-protests-d390012c4eb5c37fc906b4fdc53e14fb>

magnitude of these allegations are manifestations of institutional weaknesses in our criminal justice and public procurement systems, supported by systemic weaknesses including gaps in oversight, judicial delays, and a politicized process that has enabled impunity. Without substantive reforms, similar cycles of scandal and public outcry are likely to recur, undermining not only governance but also economic climate and social stability.

This bill, therefore, seeks to address these challenges by establishing the Joint Congressional Commission on Justice System Reform (JCCJSR), an independent, time-bound body mandated to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the justice sector's institutional capacity, procedural rules, and enforcement mechanisms. The Commission shall identify structural bottlenecks that delay the investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of cases, including those involving public officials and large-scale corruption, and recommend legislative and administrative reforms to improve efficiency, accountability, and transparency.

The JCCJSR's mandate includes the conduct of nationwide consultations with stakeholders and experts from the judiciary, law enforcement, civil society, and private sector, ensuring that the voices of marginalized sectors are included in reform proposals that promote equitable access to justice for all.

By institutionalizing a coordinated reform mechanism between the Senate and the House of Representatives and leveraging the expertise of independent specialists, this bill aims to produce actionable recommendations that will modernize justice institutions, strengthen anti-corruption frameworks, reduce case backlog, and restore public confidence in the rule of law.

This measure is inspired by Senate Bill No. 1547, filed by Senator Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan in the 20th Congress.

The early approval of this measure is earnestly sought.



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*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 “*Joint Congressional*
2 *Commission on Justice System Reform Act of 2026.*”
3

4 SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
5 strengthen democracy by upholding the rule of law, ensuring transparent and strict
6 public accountability in all branches of government, and guaranteeing timely and equal
7 access to justice. The State recognizes that comprehensive, structural reform of the
8 justice sector is imperative to regain public trust and ensure the integrity and efficiency
9 of its institutions.
10

11 SEC. 3. *Creation of the Congressional Commission.* - There is hereby created
12 a body to be known as the Joint Congressional Commission on Justice System Reform
13 (JCCJSR), hereinafter referred to as the “Commission.”
14

15 SEC. 4. *Composition.* – The Commission shall be composed of nine (9)
16 members, with three (3) members from the Senate, three (3) members from the House
17 of Representatives, and three (3) experts from the private sector and academe to be
18 appointed jointly by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of
19 Representatives. These experts shall possess proven competence in constitutional
20 law, criminal justice, public administration, judicial reform, or human rights, and shall
21 not be currently employed in government service. *Provided, That* out of three (3)
22 experts, at least one (1) member shall be a retired Justice of the Supreme Court,
23 Sandiganbayan, Court of Appeals, or Court of Tax Appeals. They shall be entitled to
24 appropriate per diems and allowances.
25

1 The Chairpersons of the Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights and
2 the House Committee on Justice shall serve as the Co-Chairpersons of the
3 Commission. The remaining two (2) members, each from the Senate and the House
4 of Representatives, shall be designated by the Senate President and Speaker of the
5 House, respectively, with at least one (1) member coming from the Minority. To ensure
6 gender representation, the House of Representatives and the Senate shall each have
7 at least one woman member. They shall not receive compensation except for
8 travelling, communications, and other expenses as may be allowed by law.

9
10 SEC. 5. *Mandate and Powers.*- The Commission shall have the following
11 specific mandate and powers:
12

- 13 a. Adopt its own internal rules of procedure;
- 14 b. Conduct hearings and receive testimonies, reports, and technical/legal
15 advice;
- 16 c. Invite or summon by subpoena *ad testificandum* any public official, private
17 citizen, or any other person to appear and testify before it, or require any
18 person by subpoena *duces tecum* to produce before it such records,
19 reports, documents, or other materials as it may require;
- 20 d. Conduct a comprehensive and independent assessment of the entire
21 criminal justice system's current organizational structure, methodology,
22 procedure, and technological infrastructure;
- 23 e. Identify and evaluate systemic bottlenecks and weaknesses in the
24 enforcement of laws;
- 25 f. Assess the effectiveness of current judicial and quasi-judicial rules of
26 procedure in ensuring the prompt disposition of cases, fairness in legal
27 processes, and preventing abuse of process and delay;
- 28 g. Study the barriers preventing marginalized and vulnerable sectors from
29 accessing effective legal redress and recommend mechanisms for equitable
30 public legal assistance;
- 31 h. Conduct nationwide public consultations, expert panel discussions, and
32 stakeholder dialogues with civil society organizations, the Integrated Bar of
33 the Philippines (IBP), and academic institutions;
- 34 i. Request the assistance of relevant officials from government agencies,
35 including, but not limited to the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Office of
36 the Ombudsman, the Philippine National Police (PNP), and the Supreme
37 Court (SC) and request said officials to grant the Commission full access to
38 all necessary public documents, reports, and data, subject to full compliance
39 with the provisions of Republic Act (RA) No. 10173 or the Data Privacy Act;
- 40 j. Recommend the appropriate and necessary legislative measures, executive
41 action, and administrative reforms to improve the rules of procedure,
42 expedite judicial processes, strengthen public accountability, and enhance
43 the overall efficiency of the criminal justice system;
- 44 k. Report to Congress its accomplishments periodically, its findings and
45 recommendations on actions to be taken by Congress and relevant
46 government agencies, and provide a comprehensive final report at the end
47 of its term to the President of the Philippines, the Senate President, and the
48 Speaker of the House of Representatives containing the following:

- 49
50 (i) A detailed analysis of the structural and systemic issues identified;

- 1 (ii) Specific recommendations for legislative interventions, including the
2 drafting of proposed bills and amendments to existing laws; and
3 (iii) Actionable recommendations for executive action and administrative
4 reforms necessary to strengthen accountability and efficiency.
5

6 SEC. 6. *Standing Committees.* - The members of the Commission shall
7 establish among themselves standing committees, to be chaired by such members or
8 experts from multisectoral groups, and engage resource persons from the public and
9 private sectors as may be needed.
10

11 SEC. 7. *Staffing and Administration.* - The Commission shall be assisted by a
12 Secretariat to be composed of personnel who may be seconded from the Senate and
13 the House of Representatives and may retain consultants. The Secretariat shall be
14 headed by an Executive Director who has sufficient background and competence on
15 the policies and issues relating to the criminal justice system reforms as provided in
16 this Act.
17

18 SEC. 8. *Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS).* - The PIDS shall
19 serve as the research arm of the Commission. During the course of the Commission's
20 existence, it shall produce data-based research and provide analysis to contribute to
21 the formulation of recommendations on the necessary reforms to the justice sector.
22

23 Sec. 9. *Term.* - The Commission shall commence its work immediately upon
24 the effectivity of this Act and shall exist for a period of three (3) years, unless extended
25 by a Joint Resolution of Congress.
26

27 SEC. 10. *Appropriations.* - The amount necessary for the initial implementation
28 of this Act shall be charged against the available appropriations of the Senate and the
29 House of Representatives, subject to the approval of the respective heads of the two
30 chambers. Thereafter, the amount necessary for its continuous implementation shall
31 be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA), subject to existing
32 budgeting, accounting, and auditing rules and regulations.
33

34 SEC. 11. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision of this Act is declared invalid
35 or unconstitutional, the provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force
36 and effect.
37

38 SEC. 12. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees,
39 presidential proclamations, letters of instruction, rules and regulations, or parts thereof
40 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, modified, or amended
41 accordingly.
42

43 SEC. 13. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its
44 publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the
45 Philippines.

Approved,