



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7945



**Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez,
Yedda Marie K. Romualdez and Andrew Julian K. Romualdez**

AN ACT
PROMOTING DIGITAL RESPONSIBILITY, PROHIBITING MALICIOUS
ONLINE ACTIONS THAT CAUSE HARM TO PUBLIC FIGURES,
REGULATING FALSE INFORMATION, AND FOSTERING A TRUTHFUL
AND ETHICAL DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The rapid growth of digital platforms has transformed communication, public discourse, and economic activity, creating an interconnected world with unprecedented opportunities for engagement and innovation. However, this digital transformation has also introduced significant challenges, including the proliferation of false information, malicious online actions, and harmful digital practices. These issues threaten individual dignity, institutional stability, and societal cohesion, necessitating a legislative response.

The “Digital Responsibility and Online Protection Act” or DROP Act seeks to address these challenges by fostering a digital environment that balances freedom of speech with accountability, ethical behavior, and the collective good. This proposed legislation underscores the importance of protecting citizens, public figures, and institutions from the detrimental impacts of disinformation, cyber

harassment, and other harmful online activities while preserving democratic values and safeguarding human dignity.

Key provisions of the Act include:

- (a) Safeguarding Citizens and Institutions. - The bill establishes measures to protect individuals and institutions from malicious online actions and false information that harm reputations, incite panic, or destabilize societal harmony.
- (b) Strengthening Governance and Oversight. - The creation of the National Digital Content Oversight Board (NDCOB) under the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) ensures independent oversight, transparent content moderation, and responsive governance of digital spaces.
- (c) Notice-and-Takedown Mechanisms. - A clear and efficient process for addressing harmful content is institutionalized, providing timely actions against disinformation, cyber harassment, and other malicious activities while ensuring procedural fairness and accountability.
- (d) Digital Literacy and Public Education. - The bill mandates the integration of digital ethics into education systems and promotes nationwide campaigns to enhance critical thinking and responsible online behavior among citizens.
- (e) Responsibilities of Stakeholders. - Recognizing the shared responsibility of all actors in the digital ecosystem, the bill outlines specific duties for social media users, public figures, and digital platforms to uphold truth, respect, and ethical online behavior.
- (f) Proportional Penalties and Restorative Justice. - Provisions for penalties, rehabilitation programs, and restorative justice mechanisms ensure both deterrence and constructive engagement for offenders, promoting long-term adherence to ethical digital standards.

This legislation represents a proactive step toward creating a safe, ethical, and inclusive digital environment. By addressing the harms posed by false information and malicious online actions, the DROP Act not only protects citizens and public figures but also fosters a culture of responsibility, truth, and accountability in digital spaces.

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



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

TITLE I
GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 1. Title. - This Act shall be known as the “Digital Responsibility and Online Protection (DROP) Act”.

Section 2. Declaration of Policy. - The State acknowledges the rapid growth of digital platforms as essential tools for communication, public discourse, and economic activity. However, it recognizes the urgent need to address the negative impacts of unchecked online behavior, including the proliferation of false information, malicious online actions, and harmful digital practices. It is hereby declared the policy of the State to:

- a) Safeguard citizens from the detrimental effects of disinformation, cyber harassment, and other malicious online activities;
- b) Promote ethical digital behavior, fostering accountability and respect for human dignity;
- c) Support public figures in navigating the challenges of heightened scrutiny while balancing the public's right to access information;
- d) Strengthen mechanisms for transparency, fairness, and proportionality in regulating online content;
- e) Build a digitally literate society empowered to discern truth, critically assess information, and engage responsibly;
- f) Encourage collaborative efforts among government agencies, private sector actors, civil society, and academia to enhance digital governance; and
- g) Preserve democratic values and protect institutions from destabilization due to online falsehoods or malicious activities.

This Act envisions a digital landscape where freedom of speech is protected, but aligned with truth, responsibility, and the collective good.

Section 3. Objectives of the Act. - This Act seeks to:

- a) Create regulatory mechanisms to monitor and address malicious online actions, false information, and harmful content;
- b) Empower government agencies to collaborate with private platforms in enhancing content moderation;
- c) Establish a robust framework for the ethical governance of digital spaces, ensuring both accountability and user empowerment;
- d) Provide a clear legal basis for penalizing individuals and platforms that engage in harmful online practices; and
- e) Institutionalize digital literacy programs to strengthen critical thinking and responsible online behavior.

Section 4. Definition of Terms. - For the purposes of this Act, the following terms are defined as follows:

- a) *Amplification* refers to methods used to increase the visibility and reach of content, such as bots, paid promotions, or coordinated campaigns;
- b) *Cyber Harassment* refers to persistent or deliberate actions intended to intimidate, harm, or degrade an individual online;
- c) *Digital Literacy* refers to the ability to effectively find, evaluate, use, and create information in a responsible, ethical, and safe manner in digital spaces;
- d) *Disinformation* refers to false or misleading content deliberately created to deceive or manipulate the public;
- e) *Doxxing* refers to the intentional disclosure of personal or sensitive information without consent, often with malicious intent;

- f) *Fact-Checking Organizations* refer to independent entities accredited for their role in verifying online content based on evidence-based criteria;
- g) *False Information* refers to content that is demonstrably inaccurate or misleading and is likely to cause harm;
- h) *Harmful Content* refers to any content that causes or is likely to cause societal division, public panic, reputational harm, or threats to safety;
- i) *Malicious Online Actions* refer to intentional acts designed to harm individuals, organizations, or societal institutions using digital means;
- j) *Misinformation* refers to false or misleading content shared without intent to harm but which may nonetheless cause damage; and
- k) *Public Figure* refers to any individual whose actions or statements are of public interest due to their societal roles or prominence.

Title II

NATIONAL DIGITAL CONTENT OVERSIGHT BOARD (NDCOB)

Section 5. Establishment of the National Digital Content Oversight Board. -

There is hereby created the National Digital Content Oversight Board (NDCOB), also referred herein as the Board, attached to the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) to oversee the implementation of this Act.

Section 6. Composition. - The Board shall be composed of a Chairperson and six (6) Members, who shall all be appointed by the President of the Philippines. The Chairperson shall have the rank and privileges of a department undersecretary, and the Members shall have the rank and privileges of assistant secretaries of a department.

Section 7. Term of Office. - The Chairperson and Board Members shall have a term of office of six (6) years, without prejudice to reappointment by the President. Of those first appointed, the Chairperson and two (2) Board Members shall hold office for six (6) years, two (2) Board Members shall hold office for four (4) years, and two (2) Board Members shall hold office for two (2) years. Appointment to any vacancy shall only be for the unexpired term of the predecessor.

Section 8. Qualifications. - The Chairperson and the Members of the NDCOB must possess the following qualifications:

- a) Must be citizens and residents of the Philippines;
- b) At least ten (10) years of professional experience in law, information technology, public administration, media, or digital ethics;
- c) A proven track record of upholding democratic principles and human rights;
- d) Have not been convicted by a final judgment of a crime involving moral turpitude;
- e) No prior affiliation with platforms or entities that could lead to conflicts of interest.

Section 9. Powers and Functions. - The NDCOB shall have the following powers and functions in accordance with its mandate to regulate, oversee, and promote responsible digital content governance in the Philippines:

- a) Develop and implement national standards for identifying and mitigating harmful digital content, ensuring a balance between content regulation and the protection of fundamental rights, including freedom of expression;
- b) Promulgate rules and regulations necessary for the implementation of this Act, including guidelines on production, distribution, advertising, and labeling of digital content, which shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in newspapers of general circulation;
- c) Prescribe internal and operational procedures for the exercise of its powers and functions, including the creation of specialized sub-committees for digital content review, compliance monitoring, and emerging online challenges;
- d) Issue Notice-and-Takedown Orders against harmful, misleading, or unlawful online content, ensuring procedural fairness and due process;
- e) Monitor and audit compliance of digital platforms, media entities, and online content creators with established standards, guidelines, and ethical policies;
- f) Cause the investigation and prosecution of violators of this Act, including offenses related to online disinformation, cyber exploitation, digital consumer fraud, and violations of ethical content regulations;
- g) Collaborate with private digital platforms in enhancing content moderation tools, policies, and reporting mechanisms to ensure a safer online environment for all users;
- h) Facilitate partnerships with academic institutions to conduct research on the impact of false information, algorithmic influence, and digital ethics on public discourse;
- i) Engage with international and regional regulatory bodies in adopting best practices for digital governance, platform accountability, and misinformation management;

- j) Provide recommendations to the President of the Philippines and to Congress on emerging trends in online harm, digital misinformation, and evolving content regulation policies;
- k) Review and recommend amendments to existing laws and regulations on digital content oversight to address new challenges posed by emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, and evolving digital landscapes; and
- l) Exercise such other powers and functions as may be necessary or incidental to the attainment of the purposes of this Act and to perform such other duties and responsibilities as may be directed by the President of the Philippines.

Section 10. Executive Director, Secretariat and Organizational Structure. - The Board shall organize a Secretariat to be headed by an Executive Director.

The Executive Director shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines upon the recommendation of the NDCOB, for a fixed term of three (3) years, and may be reappointed for another term. The Executive Director shall possess the qualifications, rank, and privileges equivalent to that of a bureau director. He shall be responsible for the effective implementation of policies issued by the Board and shall have overall authority over the day-to-day operations of the agency.

The staffing pattern and compensation schedule of the Secretariat shall be drawn up in accordance with existing laws, rules and regulations.

The NDCOB shall have the power to suspend or dismiss for cause any employee and/or approve or disapprove the appointment, transfer or detail of employees. The NDCOB and its officers and employees shall be subject to the

pertinent civil service laws, rules and regulations; Provided, That technical personnel shall be selected on the basis of merit and fitness to be determined in accordance with such policies and guidelines as may be approved by the Board.

Section 11. Assistance in the Enforcement Functions of the NDCOB. - The NDCOB may solicit the direct assistance of other agencies and units of the government, and deputize, for a fixed and limited period, the heads or personnel of such agencies and units to perform enforcement functions for the Board. The government agencies and units exercising the enforcement functions for the NDCOB shall, insofar as such functions are concerned, be subject to the direction and control of the Board.

Title III

INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Section 12. Establishment of the Independent Oversight Committee. - An Independent Oversight Committee is hereby established to monitor the actions, decisions, and overall performance of the NDCOB, ensuring transparency, accountability, and adherence to constitutional guarantees.

Section 13. Composition. - The Independent Oversight Committee shall consist of five (5) members, appointed by the President upon recommendation by the Secretary of Justice, with the following representation:

- a) One (1) representative from the human rights sector;
- b) One (1) representative from the private sector;

- c) One (1) representative from civil society organizations;
- d) One (1) legal expert specializing in digital governance; and
- e) One (1) member from the media sector with experience in ethical journalism.

The Committee shall elect a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson from among its members.

Section 14. Functions. - The Committee shall perform the following functions:

- a) Conduct annual audits of the NDCOB's decisions, policies, and actions;
- b) Review all Notice-and-Takedown Orders issued by the NDCOB to ensure compliance with the principles of proportionality and transparency;
- c) Recommend corrective measures or sanctions in cases of abuse of power by NDCOB members;
- d) Submit an annual report to Congress and the Office of the President detailing its findings, including recommendations for policy improvements or reforms; and
- e) Ensure public participation by conducting forums, consultations, and stakeholder engagements.

Title IV

PROHIBITED ACTS AND MECHANISMS FOR ADDRESSING HARMFUL CONTENT

Section 15. Prohibited Acts. - The following acts shall be prohibited under this Act:

- i. Creation and Dissemination of False Information. - It shall be unlawful for any person to deliberately create, publish, or share false or misleading information that may cause harm to individuals, groups, or society, including but not limited to disinformation and misinformation;
- ii. Cyber Harassment. - It shall be unlawful for any person to engage in persistent or deliberate online actions intended to intimidate, harm, degrade, or defame an individual or group;
- iii. Doxxing. - It shall be unlawful for any person to intentionally disclose personal or sensitive information about another person or group without their consent, particularly when done with malicious intent;
- iv. Use of Malicious Digital Tools. - It shall be unlawful for any person to employ bots, fake accounts, or other automated methods to amplify harmful content, manipulate public discourse, or deceptively influence public perception;
- v. Use of Fake Social Media Accounts. - It shall be unlawful for any person to create, use, or maintain fake social media accounts with the intent to deceive or manipulate individuals or the public, spread false or misleading information, engage in cyber harassment, doxxing, or other malicious online activities or avoid accountability for harmful digital actions;
- vi. Non-Compliance with Notice-and-Takedown Orders. - It shall be unlawful for any digital platform to fail to comply with a Notice-and-Takedown Order issued by the National Digital Content Oversight Board (NDCOB) to remove verified harmful or false content within the prescribed timeframes;
- vii. Amplification of Harmful Content. - It shall be unlawful for any person or entity to knowingly promote or amplify content deemed harmful, false, or malicious under this Act through any digital platform or tool;

- viii. Obstruction of Content Moderation and Enforcement. - It shall be unlawful for any person or entity to hinder, obstruct, or interfere with the NDCOB, fact-checking organizations, or authorized entities in performing their duties under this Act;
- ix. Retaliatory Actions by Public Figures. - It shall be unlawful for any public figure to use their influence or platforms to intimidate, harass, or retaliate against individuals who express legitimate criticism or scrutiny;
- x. Platform Misconduct. - It shall be unlawful for any digital platform to fail to implement systems to detect and mitigate harmful or false content effectively, amplify harmful content through algorithms or recommendation systems; or withhold or falsify transparency reports required under this Act;
- xi. Misrepresentation as Fact-Checking Entities. - It shall be unlawful for any organization or individual to falsely claim to be an accredited fact-checking entity for personal gain, to manipulate public perception, or to undermine regulatory processes;
- xii. Inaction on Imminent Threats. - It shall be unlawful for any digital platform to neglect acting within the prescribed timeframe to address content posing imminent threats, such as risks to public safety, violence, or large-scale disinformation campaigns;
- xiii. Abuse of Reporting Mechanisms. - It shall be unlawful for any person to maliciously or repeatedly file false reports against content or users without basis, with the intent to suppress legitimate speech or harass individuals or groups.
- xiv. Unauthorized Access and Manipulation. - It shall be unlawful for any person to engage in hacking, unauthorized access, or manipulation of digital systems or content to cause harm or spread disinformation.

Section 16. Mechanism for Addressing Harmful Content. - In accordance with its mandate to promote a safe, ethical, and rights-based digital environment, the NDCOB shall establish and implement a clear and responsive mechanism for the identification, verification, and removal of harmful content arising from any of the prohibited acts outlined in this Act. Such mechanisms shall be continuously reviewed and updated to adapt to evolving digital threats, emerging technologies, and best practices in content governance.

Section 17. Identification and Reporting. - The NDCOB shall receive reports of harmful, false, or unlawful digital content through its official online portal. Said portal shall be user-friendly and publicly accessible, designed in compliance with accessibility standards for persons with disabilities, and made available in the local language. The Board shall likewise coordinate with digital platforms and service providers for the seamless integration of content reporting mechanisms into their respective moderation systems, subject to data privacy and interoperability standards. Reports shall be assessed promptly and fairly, ensuring due process and protection of rights.

Section 18. Verification and Assessment. - Upon receiving a report, the NDCOB shall, without delay, conduct a preliminary assessment to determine whether the report falls within the jurisdiction of the Board and contains sufficient information for verification. Verified reports shall be subject to a formal review process by the Board, in collaboration with duly accredited fact-checking organizations and relevant subject-matter experts. The review shall evaluate the reported content in

light of context, intent, factual accuracy, and its potential to cause physical, psychological, reputational, or societal harm.

Section 19. Content Moderation and Removal. - If, after verification, the content is determined to be harmful, false, or violative of existing laws, ethical guidelines, or regulations issued pursuant to this Act, the NDCOB shall issue a Notice-and-Takedown Order to the digital platform hosting the content. Such order shall specify the nature of the violation, the legal or regulatory basis for the takedown, and the timeframe for compliance. Platforms shall be required to remove the verified harmful content within forty-eight (48) hours from receipt of the order. In cases where the content poses an imminent risk to life, public safety, national security, or public order, removal shall be effected within twenty-four (24) hours.

Verified harmful content shall be subject to proportionate and justified action, including removal, restriction, or correction, in accordance with legal and regulatory frameworks. Any action taken must respect freedom of expression, due process, and relevant digital rights protections.

Section 20. Appeals and Redress Mechanism. - Affected parties may file an appeal any decision on content moderation with the NDCOB within fifteen (15) calendar days from receipt of notice. Appeals shall be reviewed by the Independent Oversight Committee, which shall resolve appeals within fifteen (15) calendar days from filing. The decision of the Committee shall be final and immediately executory, without prejudice to further remedies available under existing laws.

Section 21. Procedural Rules. - The NDCOB shall adopt procedural rules for the filing, investigation, resolution, and appeal of harmful content reports. It shall ensure that all actions taken under this Section are guided by the principles of due process, transparency, proportionality, and respect for freedom of expression, in accordance with the Constitution and international human rights standards. The NDCOB shall submit an annual report to Congress on the implementation of this Section, including statistical data on takedown requests, resolutions, appeals, and enforcement outcomes.

Title IV

RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS

Section 22. Guiding Principles. - The implementation of this Act shall be guided by the following principles:

- i. Proportionality. - Regulatory measures shall be commensurate with the harm caused by false information and narrowly tailored to address specific threats;
- ii. Accountability. - Both individuals and platforms shall be held accountable for their roles in creating, disseminating, or amplifying false information;
- iii. Transparency. - All government actions under this Act shall be transparent and subject to public scrutiny, with mechanisms for oversight and redress.
- iv. Digital Literacy. - Empowering citizens to critically assess information and engage responsibly in the digital space is central to combating misinformation.

- v. Collaborative Governance. - Addressing false information requires a whole-of-society approach, involving partnerships with private sector stakeholders, civil society organizations, and international allies.

Section 23. Responsibilities of Social Media Users. - All social media users shall have the following responsibilities:

- a) Verify the accuracy and credibility of information before sharing or amplifying content;
- b) Refrain from creating, sharing, or amplifying harmful content, including false information, cyber harassment, and doxxing;
- c) Report malicious or harmful online behavior through the official reporting mechanisms of digital platforms or the NDCOB portal;
- d) Engage in respectful online discourse, avoiding language or actions that intimidate, harm, or degrade others; and
- e) Participate in digital literacy initiatives aimed at fostering critical thinking and responsible online behavior.

Section 24. Responsibilities of Public Figures. Public figures, by virtue of their societal roles, shall:

- a) Recognize and tolerate reasonable public scrutiny, criticism, and discourse inherent in a democratic society;
- b) Avoid engaging in retaliatory online behavior or weaponizing their influence to intimidate, harass, or harm individuals or groups;

- c) Refrain from disseminating false or misleading information, upholding the principles of truth and accountability;
- d) Use their platforms responsibly to foster public trust, transparency, and respectful digital engagement; and
- e) Support initiatives promoting digital responsibility and ethical online behavior, particularly among their followers.

Section 25. Responsibilities of Digital Platforms. - Digital platforms operating in the Philippines shall:

- a) Develop and maintain robust systems for detecting, flagging, and removing harmful or false content, including disinformation, doxxing, and malicious online actions;
- b) Provide accessible and transparent mechanisms for users to report violations and appeal content moderation decisions;
- c) Comply promptly with Notice-and-Takedown Orders issued by the NDCOB, ensuring removal of harmful content within the prescribed timeframe;
- d) Submit biannual transparency reports to the NDCOB, detailing flagged content, actions taken, and outcomes of user appeals;
- e) Ensure algorithms and recommendation systems do not amplify harmful content or false information;
- f) Partner with accredited fact-checking organizations to improve content verification processes;
- g) Conduct regular training for moderation teams to adhere to ethical content governance standards; and

- h) Promote digital literacy by integrating awareness campaigns and educational resources into their platforms.

Section 26. Public Awareness and Capacity Building – The NDCOB shall actively promote digital literacy, responsible content creation, and ethical online behavior, raise awareness about the risks of online falsehoods and malicious online actions and provide tools and resources to empower citizens to engage responsibly in digital spaces through educational programs, public campaigns, and collaboration with digital platforms, media partners and civil society organizations. It shall engage with social media platforms, internet service providers, and law enforcement agencies to facilitate the effective enforcement of regulations, ensure compliance with ethical standards, and uphold users' rights in addressing harmful content.

Section 27. National Digital Literacy Program. - The NDCOB, in collaboration with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), shall implement a National Digital Literacy Program aimed at:

- i. Educating citizens on identifying and combating false information;
- ii. Promoting responsible online behavior and respect for diverse viewpoints;
and
- iii. Integrating digital ethics modules into the K-12 curriculum and higher education programs.

Title V

PENALTIES

Section 28. Penalties for Violations. - The following penalties shall be imposed on violators of this Act:

- i. For individuals engaging in malicious content creation or dissemination: fines ranging from Two Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱200,000) to Five Million Pesos (₱5,000,000) and/or Imprisonment of one (1) year to ten (10) years, depending on the gravity of the offense.
- ii. For individuals engaging in doxxing: fines ranging from One Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱100,000) to Two Million Pesos (₱2,000,000); and/or imprisonment of one (1) year to five (5) years, depending on the intent and resulting harm;
- iii. For social media platforms failing to comply with Notice-and-Takedown Orders: fines ranging from Five Million Pesos (₱5,000,000) to Fifty Million Pesos (₱50,000,000) per instance of non-compliance. Repeated violations may result in operational restrictions, including suspension or prohibition of operations within the Philippines, upon the recommendation of the NDCOB;
- iv. For repeated offenders: Both individuals and platforms engaging in repeated violations shall face escalating penalties, including maximum fines, longer imprisonment, and stricter operational sanctions for platforms.

Section 29. Rehabilitation and Training Programs. - First-time individual offenders may, in addition to penalties, be required to attend mandatory workshops on digital ethics, online responsibility, and critical thinking skills to prevent repeat offenses.

Section 30. Restorative Justice Measures. - Individuals or platforms found guilty of violations may be required to:

- i. Issue public corrections, apologies, or clarifications for disseminated false or harmful content; and
- ii. Fund awareness campaigns on responsible online behavior and digital ethics.

Section 31. Civil Liability. - In addition to the criminal penalties provided herein, the offender shall be civilly liable for moral and exemplary damages as provided under existing laws.

Title VI

FINAL PROVISIONS

Section 32. Appropriations. - The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Section 33. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - The DICT, in coordination with the NDCOB and other relevant agencies, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act within 90 days from its effectivity.

Section 34. Separability Clause. - If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions shall not be affected and shall continue to be in full force and effect.

Section 35. Repealing Clause. - All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules, and regulations inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 36. Effectivity Clause. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,