

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 8852



Introduced by **REP. JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The creation of the Negros Island Region (“NIR”) under Executive Order No. 183 in 2015 was a recognition of the unique geographic, economic, and socio-cultural context of Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental. By bringing the two provinces under a single administrative setup, the NIR sought to enhance coordination in governance, planning, and service delivery. However, the dissolution of the region in 2017 due to budgetary constraints left the island without a permanent institutional framework to pursue integrated development.¹

Due to the continuous support of legislators and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., Republic Act No. 12000 (2024), also known as the Negros Island Region Act, has officially taken effect. This landmark legislation reestablishes the NIR, uniting Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, and Siquijor under one administrative region to enhance governance, streamline public service delivery, and promote sustainable socio-economic development across the island.

Negros Island is one of the most economically and demographically significant areas in the Philippines. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2024 Census), it is home to more than 4.904 million Filipinos.² Negros Occidental alone contributes over 65% percent of the country’s sugarcane output, firmly establishing its role as the “sugar bowl of the Philippines.”³ Beyond sugar, the island sustains diverse agricultural production,

¹ Philippine News Agency (2017). Duterte Abolishes Negros Island Region Retrieved from: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1005417> on Aug. 14, 2025

² Philippine Statistics Authority (2025, August 1) Highlights of the Negros Island Region (NIR) Population 2024 Census of Population (2024 POPCEN). Retrieved from: <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/population-and-housing/node/1684077886> on Aug. 15, 2025

³ Delilan, E. (2024). Former SRA chief sees 2-month sugar milling downtime in Negros. *Rappler*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rappler.com/philippines/visayas/former-sra-chief-rafael-coscolluela-sees-two-month-sugar-milling-downtime-negros/> on Aug. 14, 2025

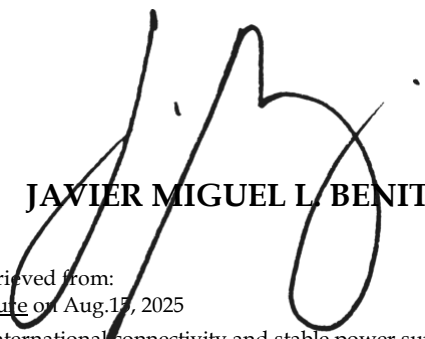
including rice, corn, coconut, and livestock, ensuring national food security and rural livelihoods. Complementing its agricultural base is the island's growing tourism sector.⁴

Despite these strengths, the absence of a central coordinating body has led to fragmented planning and service delivery. Infrastructure development remains uneven, with transportation systems, seaports, and airports planned and implemented separately by two provincial governments, resulting in inefficiencies and missed opportunities for integration.⁵ Negros Island is also highly disaster-prone, lying within the typhoon belt and atop active fault systems and volcanic zones such as Mt. Kanlaon. The need for a unified framework for disaster risk reduction and climate resilience is urgent, as the impacts of natural hazards increasingly transcend provincial and municipal jurisdictions.⁶

In this light, the establishment of the Negros Island Region Development Authority ("NIRDA") is both timely and necessary. Its mandate will encompass infrastructure and transportation planning, environmental and disaster risk management, tourism promotion, investment facilitation, and other cross-boundary programs essential for inclusive and sustainable growth. The authority will not only institutionalize continuity in governance but also ensure equitable development by addressing disparities among local government units and maximizing economies of scale in resource allocation and project implementation.

The creation of the NIRDA aligns with established national policy precedents, such as the Mindanao Development Authority ("MinDA"), which demonstrate the effectiveness of region-specific agencies in addressing unique socio-economic and cultural contexts. With permanent institutional support, Negros Island will be able to harness its strategic advantages, unlock new opportunities for investment and innovation, and better integrate into the broader development framework of the Visayas and the Philippines as a whole.

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



JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ

⁴ Invest Negros Occidental (2016). Negros Occidental Agriculture. Retrieved from: <https://www.investnegrosoccidental.com/negros-occidental-agriculture> on Aug. 15, 2025

⁵ The ASEAN Daily (2024). Negros businesses outline key priorities: International connectivity and stable power supply. Retrieved from: <https://theaseandaily.com/negros-businesses-outline-key-priorities-international-connectivity-and-stable-power-supply/> on Aug. 15, 2025

⁶ Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies (2022). Community Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Activities for Volcanic Eruption in Central Negros. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/366349907_Community_Disaster_Risk_Reduction_and_Management_Activities_for_Volcanic_Eruption_in_Central_Negros on Aug. 18, 2025

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Introduced by **REP. JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ**

**AN ACT CREATING THE NEGROS ISLAND REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
(NIRDA), DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, PROVIDING FUNDS
THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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

SECTION 1. *Declaration of Policy* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote balanced regional development by establishing a special development and administrative authority for the Negros Island Region (“NIR”), composed of the provinces of Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, and Siquijor including all component cities and municipalities. The State recognizes that certain basic services and development programs affecting or involving the NIR can be more efficiently and effectively planned, coordinated, and implemented through a unified regional body without prejudice to the autonomy of the local government units (“LGUs”) concerned.

SEC. 2. – *Creation of the Negros Island Region Development Authority* – The affairs of the NIR shall be administered by the Negros Island Region Development Authority (“NIRDA”).

The NIRDA shall perform planning, monitoring and coordinative functions, and in the process exercise regulatory and supervisory authority over the delivery of region-wide services within NIR without diminution of the autonomy of the local government units concerning purely local matters.

SEC. 3. *Scope of NIRDA Services* – Region-wide services under the jurisdiction of the NIRDA are those services which have region-wide impact and transcend local political boundaries or entail huge expenditures such that it would not be viable for said services to be provided by the individual local government units (“LGUs”) comprising the NIR. These services shall include:

(a) Development planning which includes the preparation of medium and long-term development plans, the development, evaluation and packaging of projects, investments programming; and coordination and monitoring of plan, program and project implementation.

(b) Transport and traffic management which include the formulation, coordination, and monitoring of policies, standards, programs and projects to rationalize the existing transport operations, infrastructure requirements, the use of thoroughfares, and promotions of sale and convenient movement of persons and goods; provision for the mass transport system and the institution of a system to regulate road users; administration and implementation of all traffic enforcement operations, traffic engineering services and traffic education programs, including the institution of a single ticketing system in Negros Island Region.

(c) Solid waste disposal and management which include formulation and implementation of policies, standards, programs and projects for proper and sanitary waste disposal. It shall likewise include the establishment and operation of sanitary land fill and related facilities and the implementation of other alternative programs intended to reduce, reuse and recycle solid waste.

(d) Flood control and sewerage management which include the formulation and implementation of policies, standards programs and projects for an integrated flood control, drainage and sewerage system.

(e) Urban renewal, zoning, and land use planning, and shelter services which include the formulation, adoption and implementation of policies, standards, rules and regulations, programs and projects to rationalize and optimize urban land use and provide direction to urban growth and expansion, the rehabilitation and development of slum and blighted areas, the development of shelter and housing facilities and the provision of necessary social services thereof.

(f) Health and Sanitation, urban protection and pollution control which include the formulation and implementation of policies, rules and regulations, standards, programs and projects for the promotion and safeguarding of the health and sanitation of the region and for the enhancement of ecological balance and the prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution.

(g) Public safety which includes the formulation and implementation of programs and policies and procedures to achieve public safety, especially preparedness for preventive or rescue operations during times of calamities and disasters such as conflagrations, earthquakes, flood and tidal waves, and coordination and mobilization of resources and the implementation of contingency plans for the rehabilitation and relief operations in coordination with national agencies concerned.

SEC. 4. *Negros Island Region Council* – The governing board and policy making body of the NIRDA shall be the Negros Island Region Council, composed of the three (3) provincial governors, mayors of the nineteen (19) cities and forty four (44) municipalities.

The heads of the Department of Transportation (“DOTr”), Department of Information and Communications Technology (“DICT”), Department of Public Works and Highways (“DPWH”), Department of Tourism (“DOT”), Department of Budget and Management (“DBM”), Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (“DHSUD”), and Philippine National Police (“PNP”) or their duly authorized representatives, will attend meetings of the council as non-voting members.

The council shall be headed by a chairman, who shall be appointed by the President and who shall continue to hold office at the discretion of the appointing authority. He shall be vested with rank, rights, privileges, disqualifications, and prohibitions of a cabinet member.

The chairman shall be assisted by a general manager, an assistant general manager for finance and administration, an assistant general manager for planning and assistant general manager operations, all of whom shall be appointed by the resident with the consent and concurrence of the majority of the council, subject to civil service laws, rules and regulations. They will enjoy security of tenure and may be removed for cause in accordance with law.

The assistant general manager for planning must have not less than five (5) years extensive experience in development and planning or must hold a master’s degree in urban planning or scholar disciplines.

The chairman and members of the council shall be entitled allowance and per diems in accordance with existing policies, rules and regulations on the matter.

SEC. 5. *Functions and Powers of the Negros Island Region Development Authority* – The NIRDA shall:

(a) Formulate, coordinate and regulate the implementation medium and long-term plans and programs for the delivery of region-wide services, land use and physical development within the NIR, consistent with national development objectives and priorities;

(b) Prepare, coordinate and regulate, the implementation of medium-term investment programs for region-wide services which shall indicate sources and uses of funds for priority programs and projects, and which shall include the packaging of projects and presentation of funding institutions;

(c) Undertake and manage on its own region-wide programs and projects for the delivery of specific services under its jurisdiction, subject to the approval of the Council. For this purpose, NIRDA can create appropriate project management offices;

(d) Coordinate and monitor the implementation of such plans, programs and projects in NIR; identify bottlenecks and adopt solutions to problems of implementation;

(e) The NIRDA shall set policies concerning traffic in NIR, and shall coordinate and regulate the implementation of all programs and projects concerning traffic management, specifically pertaining to enforcement, engineering and education. Upon request, it shall be extended assistance and cooperation, including but not limited to, assignment of personnel, by all other government agencies and offices concerned;

(f) Install and administer a single ticketing system, fix, impose and collect fines and penalties for all kinds of violations of traffic rules and regulations, whether moving or non-moving in nature, and confiscate and suspend or revoke driver's licenses in the enforcement of such traffic laws and regulations, the provisions of RA 4136 to the contrary notwithstanding. For this purpose, The Authority shall enforce all traffic laws and regulations in NIR, through its traffic operation center, and may deputize members of the PNP, traffic enforcers of local government units, duly licensed security guards, or members of non-governmental organization to whom may be delegated certain authority, subject to such conditions and requirements as the Authority may impose; and

(g) Perform other related functions required to achieve the objectives of the NIRDA, including the undertaking of delivery of basic services to the local government units, when deemed necessary subject to prior coordination with and consent of the local government unit concerned.

SEC. 6. *Functions of the Negros Island Region Council* –

(a) The Council shall be the policy-making body of the NIRDA.

(b) It shall approve region-wide plans, programs and projects and issue rules and regulations deemed necessary by the NIRDA to carry out the purposes of this Act.

(c) It may increase the rate of allowances and per diems of the members of the Council to be affective during the term of the succeeding Council. It shall fix the compensation of the officers and personnel of the NIRDA, and approve the annual budget thereof for submission to the Department of Budget and Management ("DBM").

(d) It shall promulgate rules and regulations and set policies and standards for-wide application governing the delivery of basic services, prescribe and collect service and regulatory fees, and impose and collect fines and penalties.

SEC. 7. *Functions of the Chairman* - The Chairman shall:

(a) Appoint, subject to civil service laws, rules and regulations, all subordinate officers and employees, who shall enjoy security of tenure and may be removed only for cause in accordance with law. The chairman is hereby authorized to engage the services of experts/consultants either on full time or part-time basis, as may be required in the performance of his functions and duties as may be determined by him;

(b) Execute the policies and measures approved by the NIRC and be responsible for the efficient and effective day-to-day management of the operations of the NIRDA;

(c) Prepare the annual budget for the operations of the NIRDA for the submission to the Council;

(d) Submit for consideration of the Council such other duties and measures as he may deemed necessary to carry out the purposes and provisions of this Act;

(e) Subject to the guidelines and policies set by the Council, are the staffing pattern and fix the number of subordinate officials and employees of the NIRDA; and exercise the power to discipline subordinate officials and employees under the provisions of law;

(f) Prepare an annual report on the accomplishments of the NIRDA at the close of each calendar year for submission to the Council and to the President of the Philippines; and

(g) Perform such other duties as may be assigned to him by the President or by the Council.

SEC. 8. *Functions of the General Manager* - The General Manager shall:

(a) Assist the chairman in the administration of the NIRDA and supervision of subordinate personnel;

(b) Assist the chairman in the supervision of the operation of the various operating centers and units of NIRDA;

(c) Assist the chairman in the review of plans and programs for the NIRDA and for the NIR in the preparation of the annual report of activities and accomplishments of the NIRDA; and

(d) Perform such other duties and functions as may be lawfully delegated or assigned by the chairman from time to time.

SEC. 9. *Institutional Linkages of the NIRDA* - The NIRDA shall, in carrying out its functions, consult, coordinate and work closely with the LGUs, the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (“DEPDev”) and other national government agencies mentioned in Section 4 hereof, and accredited people’s organization (“POs”), nongovernmental organizations (“NGOs”), and the private sector operating in NIR. The NIRDA chairman or his authorized representative from among the Council members, shall be ex officio member of the boards of government corporations and committees of the departments and offices of government whose activities are relevant to the objectives and responsibilities of the NIRDA which shall include but not limited to DOTC, DPWH, HUDCC and Department of the Interior and Local Government (“DILG”).

The NIRDA shall have a master plan that shall serve as the framework for the local development plans of the component LGUs.

The NIRDA shall submit its development plans and investments programs to the NEDA for integration into the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (“MTPDD”) and public investment program.

The implementation of the NIRDA’s plans, programs, and projects shall be undertaken by the LGUs, the concerned national governments agencies, the POs, NGOs and the private sector and the NIRDA itself where appropriate. For this purpose, the NIRDA may enter into contracts, memoranda of agreement and other cooperative agreements with these bodies for the delivery of the required services within NIR.

The NIRDA shall, in coordination with the NEDA and the Department of Finance, interface with the foreign, assistance agencies for purposes of obtaining financing support, grants and donations in support of its programs and projects.

SEC. 10. *Sources of Funds and the Operating Budget of NIRDA* -

(a) To carry out the purposes of this Act, the amount needed to operationalize this Act is hereby authorized to be appropriated from the National Treasury for the initial organizational and operational requirements of the NIRDA.

(b) The annual expenditures of the NIRDA, including personnel services, maintenance and other operating expenses, and capital outlays, shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (“GAA”).

(c) The NIRDA may, upon approval of the Council and in accordance with existing laws, contract loans or enter into financial arrangements with government financial institutions or international funding agencies for programs and projects within its mandate.

SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause* – All other laws, decrees, executive order, rules and regulations, or parts or provisions thereof which are not affected shall continue to remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 12. *Separability Clause* – If any part or provision of this Act is held unconstitutional or invalid, other parts or provisions thereof which are not affected shall continue to remain in full force and effect.

Approved,