

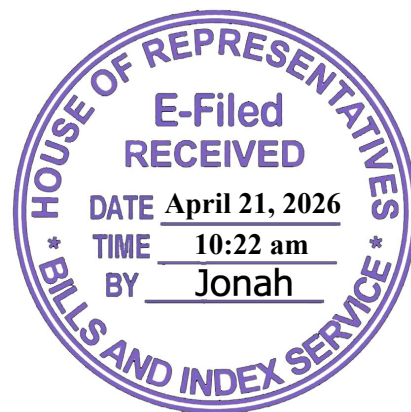


Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS

First Regular Session

House Bill No. **8899**



Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez and Jude A. Acidre

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING THE BARANGAY JUSTICE SYSTEM BY
EXPANDING TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR THE LUPONG
TAGAPAMAYAPA, ESTABLISHING A BARANGAY LEGAL AID
FUND, CREATING A PARALEGAL TRAINING PROGRAM,
PRESCRIBING PENALTIES FOR MISUSE OF FUNDS AND ABUSE OF
AUTHORITY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The *Katarungang Pambarangay* (Barangay Justice System) plays a central role in decongesting courts and promoting peaceful, community-based resolution of disputes. Yet, many barangays face gaps in training, resources, and access to legal assistance. These weaknesses undermine the ability of the *Lupong Tagapamayapa* to deliver fair, effective, and timely justice.

The bill strengthens the Barangay Justice System through:

1. The Barangay Legal Aid Fund, ensuring free legal assistance for indigent residents;
2. The Paralegal Training Program, capacitating barangay officials and volunteers with essential legal knowledge;
3. Expanded *Lupong Tagapamayapa* training, covering alternative dispute resolution, human rights, gender sensitivity, and restorative justice; and

4. Institutional support structures, including barangay justice support units and focal points of the Department of Justice.

In addition, this proposed measure introduces penalties and accountability mechanisms to prevent corruption, misuse of funds, and abuse of authority, thereby protecting the integrity of the Barangay Justice System.

This bill also advances the country's commitments under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, which promotes inclusive access to justice and the strengthening of accountable institutions.

By enacting the Barangay Justice System Strengthening Act, we reinforce the role of barangays as the foundation of peace and order, while ensuring that justice remains accessible, fair, and community-driven.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is earnestly requested.



FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ



YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ



ANDREW JULIAN K. ROMUALDEZ



JUDE A. ACIDRE

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Barangay Justice System Strengthening Act.*”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote access to justice at the grassroots level by strengthening the Barangay Justice System, enhancing the capacity of the *Lupong Tagapamayapa*, and providing legal assistance to communities. In line with the constitutional mandate to ensure a just and humane society, the State shall institutionalize mechanisms that empower barangays to resolve disputes fairly, efficiently, and peacefully.

SEC. 3. *Barangay Legal Aid Fund.* — There is hereby established a Barangay

Legal Aid Fund, to be administered by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) in coordination with the Department of Justice (DOJ), to support:

- (a) Free legal assistance for indigent barangay residents in disputes brought before the *Lupong Tagapamayapa*;
- (b) Access to legal advice and documentation for barangay-level cases;
- (c) Honoraria for accredited volunteer lawyers and paralegals who provide community-based legal services.

SEC. 4. *Paralegal Training Program.* — The DILG, in coordination with the DOJ and the Philippine Association of Law Schools, shall establish a Paralegal Training Program to capacitate barangay officials, *Lupong Tagapamayapa* members, and community volunteers in basic legal concepts, mediation, and conflict resolution.

Graduates of the program shall be accredited as Barangay Paralegals and may assist in barangay conciliation proceedings, subject to supervision of the *Lupong Tagapamayapa*.

SEC. 5. *Expansion of Lupong Tagapamayapa Training* – The DILG shall develop and implement an expanded training curriculum covering:

- (a) Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR);
- (b) Human rights and gender sensitivity;
- (c) Child protection and anti-violence laws;
- (d) Restorative justice practices; and
- (e) Basic paralegal and legal aid services.

Continuing education programs shall be conducted at least once every two (2) years.

SEC. 6. *Institutional Support.* — The DILG shall establish a Barangay Justice Support Unit (BJSU) at the provincial and city levels to provide technical, legal, and administrative assistance to barangays in implementing this Act.

The DOJ shall designate focal persons in every province to coordinate referrals from barangays and facilitate access to formal courts when necessary.

SEC. 7. *Appropriations.* — The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the DILG and DOJ. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 8. *Penalties and Accountability.* —

(a) Misuse of Barangay Legal Aid Fund — Any barangay official, employee, or any person who misappropriates, diverts, or improperly utilizes the Barangay Legal Aid Fund for purposes other than those provided under this Act shall be:

1. Administratively liable under the Local Government Code and Civil Service rules;
2. Criminally liable under existing laws, including but not limited to the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act (R.A. 3019), and the Revised Penal Code provisions on malversation of public funds; and
3. Required to return or reimburse the misused funds, without prejudice to other penalties.

(b) Failure to Implement. — Barangay Captains, *Lupong Tagapamayapa* members, or other responsible officials who, without justifiable reason, fail to implement the provisions of this Act, including the establishment of

legal aid programs or participation in mandated training, shall be subject to:

1. First Offense – Written reprimand and mandatory corrective training;
2. Second Offense – Suspension of one (1) to three (3) months from office;
3. Third Offense – Administrative and criminal liability, including possible removal from office, subject to due process.

(c) Volunteer Lawyers and Paralegals. — Any accredited volunteer lawyer or barangay paralegal who is found to have committed gross negligence, misconduct, or abuse of authority in providing legal services under this Act shall:

1. Be delisted from accreditation by the DILG and DOJ;
2. Be barred from re-accreditation for a period of three (3) years; and
3. Be referred to the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) or the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), as appropriate, for disciplinary proceedings.

(d) Reporting Mechanism. — The DILG shall establish a confidential complaint and reporting mechanism for citizens to report misuse of funds, abuse of authority, or non-compliance with this Act at the barangay level.

SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).* — Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DILG and DOJ, in consultation with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP), civil society organizations, and other stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason, any part or provision of this Act shall be held unconstitutional or invalid, other parts of provisions thereof not affected shall thereby continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, proclamations, rules and regulations, and other issues or parts thereof contrary to or inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 12. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,