



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



House Bill No. 8987

Introduced by CIBAC Party-List Representative
EDUARDO “BRO. EDDIE” C. VILLANUEVA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The right to travel is a fundamental liberty afforded to every Filipino citizen under Section 6, Article III of the 1987 Constitution. It is an essential component of personal freedom, economic participation, and global engagement. However, in recent years, concerns have been raised regarding the inconsistent, opaque, and at times arbitrary implementation of outbound immigration procedures, particularly in cases involving the denial of departure or so-called “offloading” of Filipino travelers.

While the State has a legitimate interest in preventing human trafficking, enforcing immigration laws, and safeguarding national security, these objectives must be pursued within the bounds of due process, transparency, and respect for individual rights. Reports of travelers being denied departure based on unclear standards, discretionary profiling, or undocumented suspicions highlight the urgent need to establish clear legal parameters and institutional safeguards governing such actions.

This proposed measure seeks to institutionalize a rights-based and rule-bound framework for outbound immigration control. It clearly defines the lawful grounds upon which a Filipino citizen may be denied departure, limiting such authority to verifiable and documented bases, including court-issued orders, active warrants of arrest, and formally endorsed investigations related to trafficking or national security concerns.

The bill further mandates the adoption of intelligence-driven, risk-based screening protocols that move away from subjective profiling and toward data-informed and inter-agency coordinated approaches. By aligning immigration practices with international best practices, the measure ensures that the presumption of good faith remains the default, and that heightened scrutiny is grounded in legitimate and defensible indicators.

To strengthen accountability, the measure requires the written documentation of all denial-of-departure decisions and guarantees affected individuals the right to administrative review. It also mandates public transparency in travel requirements and

provides for regular training of immigration officers on human rights and anti-trafficking standards.

Ultimately, this bill seeks to restore public confidence in immigration processes by ensuring that the power to restrict travel is exercised lawfully, consistently, and with full respect for the rights and dignity of every Filipino. Lastly, it affirms that the protection of the national security on one hand, and that of individual liberties on the other hand, are not mutually exclusive but must be pursued together within a framework of accountability and justice.

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


EDUARDO "BRO. EDDIE" C. VILLANUEVA



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AN ACT
PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO TRAVEL OF FILIPINO CITIZENS BY INSTITUTING
RIGHTS-BASED SAFEGUARDS IN OUTBOUND IMMIGRATION PROCEDURES,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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 "*Filipino Travelers'*
2 *Rights Act.*"

3
4 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is the policy of the State to uphold the
5 constitutional right of Filipino citizens to travel, as guaranteed under Section 6, Article
6 III of the 1987 Constitution. The State shall ensure that outbound immigration
7 procedures are clear, fair, and free from arbitrary or discriminatory implementation,
8 while remaining consistent with national security, anti-trafficking, and law enforcement
9 objectives. In formulating and enforcing outbound travel protocols, the State shall draw
10 upon international best practices among similarly situated countries that ensure the
11 right to travel is regulated through institutional coordination, legal safeguards, and
12 data-driven risk assessment rather than arbitrary discretion.

13
14 **SEC. 3. Grounds for Denial of Departure.** – No Filipino citizen shall be
15 prevented from departing the country unless there exists a lawful and clearly
16 established ground to do so. These grounds shall be limited to the following:

- 17 (a) A Hold Departure Order, Watchlist Order, or Precautionary Hold Departure
18 Order issued by a court of competent jurisdiction;
19 (b) A verified inclusion in an Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT)-
20 endorsed list of persons under active investigation for human trafficking or
21 related transnational crimes, supported by intelligence or case referral;
22 (c) A pending criminal case in the Philippines with an active warrant of arrest;
23 and
24 (d) A formal referral from an appropriate government agency pursuant to anti-
25 trafficking, child protection, or national security protocols, subject to the
26 safeguards in Sections 4 and 5 of this Act.

1 No person shall be denied departure solely on the basis of discretion, profile, or
2 suspicion, without a documented and verifiable basis in accordance with this section.

3
4 **SEC. 4. International Best Practices in Implementation.** – In implementing
5 the provisions of this Act, the Bureau of Immigration and relevant agencies shall take
6 into account international norms and practices adopted by countries with comparable
7 development status, particularly in Southeast and South Asia. These include:

- 8
9 (a) Reliance on inter-agency coordination and referral mechanisms instead of
10 discretionary interviews;
11 (b) The presumption of good faith in the absence of specific legal or intelligence-
12 based indicators of trafficking or fraud;
13 (c) Maintenance of transparent documentation and public information
14 campaigns on departure procedures and rights; and
15 (d) The avoidance of socioeconomic, gender-based, or occupational profiling
16 as grounds for heightened scrutiny or denial of departure.
17

18 The Department of Justice shall incorporate these standards into the
19 implementing rules and regulations of this Act.
20

21 **SEC. 5. Risk-Based Screening Protocols.** – The Bureau of Immigration shall
22 adopt standardized, intelligence-driven risk profiling procedures developed in
23 consultation with IACAT, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Justice,
24 and civil society stakeholders. Screening protocols shall not be based solely on gender,
25 age, financial status, travel history, or occupation.
26

27 **SEC. 6. Documentation of Offloading Decisions.** – All instances of denial of
28 departure shall be documented in writing, with the specific legal or factual basis
29 indicated. Affected individuals shall be given a copy of the denial slip and advised of
30 their right to appeal.
31

32 **SEC. 7. Right to Administrative Review.** – A traveler who is denied departure
33 shall have the right to file an appeal before a special administrative review board to be
34 created by the Department of Justice, which shall resolve the case within ten (10)
35 working days from filing.
36

37 **SEC. 8. Public Transparency.** – The Bureau of Immigration, in coordination with
38 the Department of Tourism and the Department of Foreign Affairs, shall publish and
39 update outbound travel requirements on its official website and through airport
40 advisories. No travel requirement may be imposed unless publicly posted at least thirty
41 (30) days in advance.
42

43 **SEC. 9. Training and Human Rights Orientation.** – Immigration officers
44 assigned to departure areas shall undergo periodic training on human rights, gender
45 sensitivity, and anti-trafficking procedures. The Commission on Human Rights and the
46 Civil Service Commission shall assist in designing these modules.
47

48 **SEC. 10. Penalties.** – Any immigration officer who violates this Act shall, after
49 due process, be subject to the following administrative sanctions, depending on the
50 gravity of the offense

- 1
2 (a) For simple abuse of authority such as unjustified offloading or departure
3 denial without lawful or factual basis - the penalty shall be suspension without
4 pay for a period of thirty (30) to ninety (90) days for the first offense; and
5 dismissal from service for the second offense; and
6 (b) For gross misconduct or repeated violations, including falsification of records
7 or abuse of power involving multiple travelers, the penalty shall be immediate
8 dismissal from service, without prejudice to the filing of civil, criminal, or
9 administrative charges under existing laws.

10
11 The Bureau of Immigration shall maintain a formal record of all complaints filed
12 under this Act, including their resolution status, for purposes of performance review
13 and institutional accountability.
14

15 **SEC. 11. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within sixty (60) days from
16 the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Justice shall, in coordination with the
17 Bureau of Immigration, IACAT, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of
18 Labor and Employment, and other relevant agencies, promulgate the necessary
19 implementing rules and regulations.
20

21 **SEC. 12. Separability Clause.** – If any portion or provision of this Act is declared
22 unconstitutional, the remainder hereof or any provisions not affected thereby shall
23 remain in force and effect.
24

25 **SEC. 13. Repealing Clause.** – Any law, presidential decree or issuance,
26 executive order, letter of instruction, rule, or regulation inconsistent with the provisions
27 of this Act is hereby repealed or modified accordingly.
28

29 **SEC. 14. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
30 complete publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.
31

32 *Approved,*