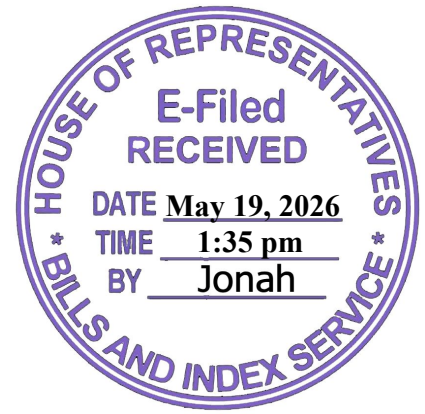


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 9308



Introduced by **REP. ALFREDO “ALBEE” B. BENITEZ**

**AN ACT STRENGTHENING PUBLIC OFFICE ACCOUNTABILITY AND
TRANSPARENCY, MANDATING FOR THE PURPOSE THE DIGITALIZATION
AND VERIFICATION OF THE STATEMENTS OF ASSETS, LIABILITIES, AND
NET WORTH, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

“Public office is a public trust. Public officers and employees must at all times be accountable to the people, serve them with utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty, and efficiency, act with patriotism and justice, and lead modest lives.”

Nowhere can a clearer mandate for transparency and accountability be found other than in Article XI, SECTION 1 of the 1987 Constitution.

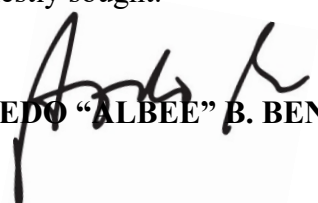
The filing of the Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth (SALN) has long been enshrined in Philippine law as a cornerstone of public accountability. Under existing rules, government officials and employees are required to annually disclose their financial standing to deter illicit enrichment and promote transparency in public service.

SALN declarations, however, remain unverified unless acted upon in the course of an investigation, falling short of its promise to promote greater transparency within the government.

Under this proposed legislation, the digitalization of SALN filing and publication shall be mandatory, and cross-agency verification mechanisms shall be established to ensure that high officials cannot hide behind any veil of discretion.

By deploying artificial intelligence-assisted analytics and a flagging system, the SALN transforms from a passive disclosure requirement into an active instrument of detection and accountability. Equally important, the bill requires interim disclosure of high-value transactions occurring between annual filing periods, closing a loophole long exploited to obscure the movement of assets.

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


ALFREDO “ALBEE” B. BENITEZ

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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 “SALN Digitalization and Verification Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The regular filing of Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth (SALN) of all public officials and employees has produced limited effectivity in promoting transparency and accountability.

It shall be the policy of the State to subject SALNs to digitalization and verification of government agencies capable of verifying and cross-checking SALN declarations. Upon finding of the existence of inconsistencies in the declaration upon verification, verifying agencies shall be given the power to proactively flag and report to the Civil Service Commission and/or the Ombudsman for further investigation and action.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – The following terms used herein this Act shall be defined as follows:

a) “*Digitalization*” refers to the use of digital technologies to convert processes, records, or services into digital form and improve them through digital systems.

a) “*Politically Exposed Person*” refers to a natural person who is or has been entrusted with prominent public positions in the Philippines, whether in the national or local government or as executives of government or state owned or controlled corporations.

SEC. 4. *Scope.* – The provisions of this Act shall only apply to all government officials and employees classified as politically exposed persons.

SEC. 5. *Digitalization of SALN filing.* – The filing of SALNs shall be made through digital means. The Civil Service Commission (CSC) shall provide for the guidelines in relation to the

template, format, and procedures to be uniformly adopted across all government agencies and instrumentalities and. In consultation with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), the CSC shall ensure that the digital document or data reflecting the SALN shall be interoperable across all relevant agencies mentioned in this Act herein.

SEC. 6. *Mandatory Digital Publication of SALNs.* – SALNs disclosing the financial status, including assets, liabilities and business interests shall be posted in the website of the Civil Service Commission and across all websites of the government and its instrumentalities within ten (10) working days from the time of filing within their respective repository agencies.

Personal information such as but not limited to home addresses, signatures, children's details and government IDs shall not be disclosed pursuant to Republic Act No. 10173 or the Data Privacy Act.

SEC. 7. *Verification of SALN Declaration.* – All declarations made under the SALN shall be verified as truthful and factual by the following agencies:

- a) For real properties – Land Registration Authority (LRA);
- b) For vehicle assets – Land Transportation Office (LTO), Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP), and the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA);
- c) For business and financial interests – Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR); and
- d) For declared cash-in bank – Respective depository bank.

Verification for the purposes of this Act shall not be construed as applicable only to the information declared in the SALN, but shall be performed as a cross-checking mechanism to detect any under- or non-declaration of any assets possessed by the politically exposed person.

For the purposes of the scope of this Section, all assets or accounts belonging to the subject politically exposed person, owned through sole proprietorship, partnership, or corporate ownership, including ownership as the ultimate beneficial owner under SEC guidelines, shall be assessed.

SEC. 8. *Declaration of Select Interim Assets and Liabilities.* – Assets and liabilities acquired, disposed, or incurred in the interim period or the period between the filing of the SALN at the end of each year shall be declared and annexed to the latest SALN filed within thirty (30) days of such transaction, and shall be reflected within the same period as provided under Section 6 of this Act: *Provided*, That the covered transactions shall be limited to the following:

- a) Acquisition and/or disposal of real property and vehicles;
- b) Business and financial interests, including but not limited to shareholdings, acquisitions, mergers, and dissolution; and
- c) Acquisition and disposal of other high-value assets exceeding One million pesos (P1,000,000.00).

Verification of interim assets and liabilities under (a) and (b) of this Section shall likewise be conducted.

SEC. 9. *SALN Analytics and Flagging System*. – The Ombudsman shall, in coordination with the DICT and the CSC, develop and maintain an interoperable and artificial intelligence-assisted digital system with the agencies and entities enumerated under Section 7 of this Act, subject to the secure data-sharing protocols, which shall automatically flag the following:

- a) Sudden net worth increases;
- b) Under- or non-declaration of real properties or other personal properties;
- c) Non-declaration of business and financial interests; and
- d) Inconsistencies between declared sources of income vis-à-vis declared net worth.

Provided, That the data sharing between the Ombudsman and the other agencies and government entities shall be limited to data or information germane to the respective agency's verification processes: *Provided, further*, That data sharing shall also be enabled between the digital system established under this Act and Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System under Republic Act No. 12009, for the purpose of flagging any potential conflict of interest.

SEC. 10. *Flagged Activities or Transactions*. – Flagged activities or transactions shall be automatically subjected to an investigation by the Civil Service Commission and the Ombudsman while ensuring that due process is accorded to flagged individuals. Should *prima facie* evidence with reasonable certainty of conviction be found in relation to any violation of prevailing laws, the Ombudsman shall within a period of not more than sixty (60) days file the necessary and relevant charges for prosecution, without prejudice to other pertinent administrative charges that may be filed.

SEC. 11. *Appropriations*. – The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 12. *Separability Clause*. – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remainder not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 13. *Repealing Clause*. – All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

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

Approved,