

TWENTIETH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

House Bill No. 10520

Introduced by Hon. Antonio B. Legarda Jr.

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING THE SENTRO RIZAL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR, AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10066, OR THE "NATIONAL
CULTURAL HERITAGE ACT OF 2009" AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO.
11961

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Sentro Rizal was established under Republic Act No. 10066 or the *National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009* to promote Philippine arts, culture, history, and language through Philippine embassies and consulates abroad.¹ Over the years, it has become an important link between the Philippines, overseas Filipinos, and foreign communities interested in Filipino culture.

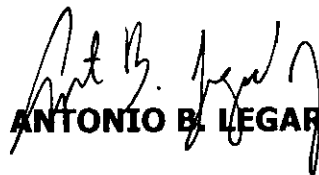
As the Philippines expands its engagements with the international community, Sentro Rizal has taken on a broader role in promoting the country's identity and strengthening cultural ties abroad. This is especially important given the millions of Filipinos living and working overseas and the growing recognition of culture as an effective tool for building international partnerships.

Despite these developments, the law governing Sentro Rizal has remained largely unchanged. It does not provide the mandate or institutional framework needed to support its expanding responsibilities.

This bill strengthens Sentro Rizal as the country's center for cultural engagement abroad. It creates the Sentro Rizal Council to provide policy direction, improve coordination among key government agencies, and support programs that promote Philippine culture alongside tourism, trade, and education. It also establishes a stronger institutional framework to enable Sentro Rizal to carry out its mandate more effectively.

¹ Sentro Rizal, accessed at: <https://sentrorizal.ncca.gov.ph/about/>

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought. This bill also serves as the counterpart measure to that filed in the Senate by Senator Loren Legarda.


HON. ANTONIO B. LEGARDA, JR.

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

CHAPTER I
GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 1. ***Short Title.*** – This Act shall be known as the "Sentro Rizal Act".

Section 2. ***Declaration of Policy and State Principles.*** – The State shall foster the preservation, enrichment, and dynamic evolution of a Filipino national culture based on the principle of unity in diversity in a climate of free artistic and intellectual expression. The State shall likewise ensure equal access to cultural opportunities through the educational system, public or private cultural entities, scholarships, grants and other rewards, community cultural centers, and other public venues.

It is thus declared the policy of the State to provide global knowledge of the Philippines and Filipino culture through cultural, historical, scientific, creative, educational, and economic programs and activities and cooperative exchanges, partnerships, and collaborations with and among foreign government agencies, non-governmental agencies, and community organizations; as well as utilize cultural

1 diplomacy as a tool to advance Philippine foreign policy through the Sentro Rizal
2 system.

3 Section 3. **Definition of Terms.** – As used in this Act:

- 4 a) *Culture* refers to a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and
5 emotional features that characterize a society or social group which includes
6 not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of
7 human beings, value systems, traditions, and beliefs. Coverage on its definition
8 may be referred to in Republic Act No. 7356.
- 9 b) *Cultural diplomacy* refers to using culture as a tool for diplomacy and an
10 instrument of foreign policy, differentiating it from promoting culture for
11 culture's sake. It is a strategic use of culture to pursue national interest, foster
12 mutual understanding and cultural relations with other countries, and protect
13 and enhance the image of the Philippines abroad.
- 14 c) *Cultural diplomacy hub* refers to the physical space for the repository of
15 materials and implementation venue of programs for cultural diplomacy.
- 16 d) *Sentro Rizal* refers to the system whose main purpose is to provide global
17 knowledge of the Philippines and promote Philippine culture, history, arts,
18 language, and creative output throughout the world through cultural diplomacy
19 and scientific, cultural, historical, creative, educational, and economic
20 programs, projects, and activities as well as cooperative exchanges and
21 partnerships with and among local and foreign government agencies, and non-
22 government organizations. The Sentro Rizal shall cater to both the Filipino
23 diaspora and foreign nationals in the host country.
- 24 e) *Sentro Rizal hubs* also referred to as "Sentros Rizal" or "Centers", refer to the
25 physical institution tasked to carry out the objectives of the Sentro Rizal System
26 through the delivery of various services and programs in other countries that
27 are carefully adapted according to the differing socio-cultural and political
28 environments of the host country.
- 29 f) *Soft power* refers to enhancing the Philippines' global standing and influence
30 through appeal, persuasion, and other non-coercive means. In the context of
31 the Sentro Rizal and its proposed cultural diplomacy hubs, it is the use of the
32 following in pursuit of cultural diplomacy objectives: culture, history, language,

Filipino content, One Town, One Product (OTOP), tourism and trade and investment, and other means related to the promotion of soft power.

Section 4. ***Strengthening the Sentro Rizal as a Cultural Diplomacy Hub.*** – The Sentro Rizal, established under Republic Act No. 10066, otherwise known as the “National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009”, is hereby converted into a cultural diplomacy hub whose main purpose, as a government instrumentality, is to promote the country’s brand and enhance the image of the Philippines throughout the world through cultural diplomacy.

Section 5. ***Functions.*** – The Sentro Rizal shall have the following duties and functions:

- a) Function as the center for Philippine cultural diplomacy and implement cultural, historical, scientific, creative, educational, and economic programs and activities;
- b) Establish and sustain cooperative exchanges, partnerships, and collaborations with and among foreign government agencies in coordination with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), creative entities, organizations, and associations, locally and overseas, whether from the public or private sector, for purposes of promoting Philippine culture, history, arts, language, and creative output in the global stage;
- c) Collaborate with the Department of Tourism (DOT), Department of Education (DepEd), Philippine Schools Overseas (PSOs), foreign academic institutions, Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev), Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Philippine Creative Industries Development Council (PCIDC), National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), National Museum of the Philippines (NMP), National Archives of the Philippines (NAP), National Library of the Philippines (NLP), Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF), Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP), Design Center of the Philippines (DCP), National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP),

Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), and other pertinent government agencies in providing tourism, educational, trade and investment, cultural, and historical materials, including information, education, and communication materials (IECs) to all Sentro Rizal hubs;

d) Assist the private sector in marketing and promoting Filipino content overseas with the DTI, DOT, PCIDC created under Republic Act No. 11904, otherwise known as the "Philippine Creative Industries Development Act", DCP, Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions, CCP, and other pertinent government agencies;

e) Collaborate with the One Town, One Product (OTOP) Management Committee to assist in supporting the beneficiaries of the OTOP Program and promote products through the Sentro Rizal hubs for OTOP Philippines products pursuant to the provisions and objectives of Republic Act No. 11960, otherwise known as the "OTOP Philippines Act";

f) Be the repository of cultural materials by acquiring, organizing, servicing, and preserving resource materials on Philippine arts, culture, languages, and other related fields; organize cultural events and activities for Filipinos, hold fora on Indigenous traditions and practices along with cultural heritage campaigns; coordinate the activities of visiting artists and performing groups from the Philippines to ensure maximum participation and community impact with the Filipino diaspora; and offer courses on Philippine culture, history, languages, arts, and other related fields; and

g) Adopt a whole-of-nation approach in the promotion of Philippine culture, history, arts, language, and creative output throughout the world.

Section 6. *Sentro Rizal Council.* – The Sentro Rizal Council, herein referred to as the Council, is hereby created to strengthen the State's institutional capacity to carry out the above-declared policy. The Council shall be composed of eleven (11) ex officio members:

1. The Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), as Chairperson;
2. The Chairperson of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, as co-Chairperson;

- 1 3. The Chairperson of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines
- 2 (NHCP);
- 3 4. The Secretary of the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development
- 4 (DEPDev);
- 5 5. The Secretary of the Department of Tourism (DOT);
- 6 6. The Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI);
- 7 7. The Secretary of the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW);
- 8 8. The Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST);
- 9 9. The Secretary of the Department of Education (DepEd);
- 10 10. The Chairperson of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED); and
- 11 11. The Director General of the Technical Education and Skills Development
- 12 (TESDA)

13 The *ex-officio* members of the Council may designate their respective next-in- rank

14 officials as their alternate representatives to the Council.

15 The Council for budgetary and administrative purposes, shall be attached to the NCCA.

16 Section 7. ***Powers and Functions of the Council.*** – The Council shall serve

17 as the policy and advisory body to the President on matters pertaining to cultural

18 diplomacy and shall, adopting a whole-of-nation approach, formulate policies and

19 programs aimed at promoting Philippine culture, history, arts, language, and creative

20 output throughout the world. To this end, the Council shall exercise the following

21 powers and functions:

- 22 a) Formulate a Sentro Rizal Development Plan that shall define Philippine cultural
- 23 diplomacy goals and the following key performance indicators, including, but
- 24 not limited to: (1) influence of cultural diplomacy on foreign policy decisions;
- 25 (2) monitoring and evaluation of media coverage and public perception; (3)
- 26 cross-cultural understanding; (4) conduct of cultural exchange activities
- 27 including cultural exchange programs, cultural festivals, co-production, touring
- 28 exhibitions, and academic exchanges; (5) partnerships and collaborations
- 29 established with international organizations, cultural institutions, and
- 30 government agencies; (6) economic benefits generated by cultural diplomacy
- 31 initiatives including tourism, trade, investment, and job creation; (7)
- 32 addressing long-term resource needs and exploring diverse funding models for

1 the Sentro Rizal programs; (8) culturally-literate and participative communities
2 of Filipinos overseas and foreign nationals; and (9) other soft power indicators
3 as may be defined by the Council;

4 b) Assess the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy in enhancing the country's soft
5 power and global reputation through indices like the Soft Power Index, global
6 opinion polls, and cultural influence rankings, among others;

7 c) Devise strategies in utilizing, among others, online platforms, digital tools, and
8 social media to expand its reach and engage global audiences for the
9 marketing and promotion of Philippine culture, history, arts, language, and
10 creative output throughout the world;

11 d) Review and approve programs, projects, and activities of the Sentro Rizal hubs
12 pursuant to the general purposes of this Act;

13 e) Provide rewards and awards to top-performing Sentro Rizal hubs, as well as
14 opportunities for the private sector to assist and collaborate with the Sentro
15 Rizal in the conduct of cultural diplomacy pursuant to the objectives of this
16 Act, and financial and/or logistical support to Sentro Rizal hubs in the
17 performance of their official duties and responsibilities;

18 f) Identify potential sites for the Sentro Rizal hubs and formally propose, through
19 the DFA, the establishment of said centers in host countries. The DFA shall
20 take the lead in negotiating the appropriate bilateral agreements with the host
21 countries, pursuant to its mandate under Republic Act No. 7157;

22 g) Lease, purchase, or otherwise acquire, construct, improve, furnish, or maintain
23 a suitable permanent headquarters for the Sentro Rizal hubs;

24 h) Accept grants, bequests, endowments, donations, and contributions from local
25 or foreign sources made to the Sentro Rizal, to be used actually, directly and
26 exclusively by the Sentro Rizal for purposes relevant to its functions: *Provided,*
27 That such grants, in cash or in kind, from government of foreign countries,
28 their agencies and instrumentalities or multilateral institutions or
29 organizations, acceptance thereof shall be subject to the prior clearance and
30 approval by the President or his authorized representative based on the
31 recommendation of the Secretary of Finance; *Provided, further,* That other
32 donations, in cash or in kind, from foreign governments shall require prior

1 clearance and approval by the President or his authorized representative based
2 on the recommendation of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs; Provided, finally,
3 That such grants, bequests, endowments, donations, and contributions shall
4 be exempt from donor's tax and the same shall be considered as allowable
5 deduction from the gross income for purposes of computing the taxable
6 income of the donor in accordance with the National Internal Revenue Code
7 of 1997, as amended;

8 i) Create ad hoc committees or technical working groups which shall include the
9 private sector to discuss specific issues pertaining to soft power, cultural
10 diplomacy, and the promotion of Filipino content; and

11 j) Exercise such other powers and functions as may be necessary to effectively
12 carry out the attainment of the purposes and objectives of this Act.

13 Section 8. **Organizational Structure and Staffing Pattern.** – A Secretariat to the
14 Sentro Rizal Council, hereinafter referred to as the Secretariat, shall be established to
15 be headed by an Executive Director (ED), who shall be appointed by the President of
16 the Philippines from a list of at least five (5) nominees recommended by the Council.
17 The ED shall be assisted by five (5) Division Chiefs for: (1) Research and Development;
18 (2) Operations; (3) Policy & Planning Division; (4) Admin and Finance; (5) Assets and
19 Management; and (6) Communications and Public Affairs.

20 Within one hundred twenty (120) days after the effectivity of this Act, the NCCA shall
21 create the organizational structure and plantilla positions of the Secretariat and submit
22 the same to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) for approval.

23 The formulation of qualification standards and the appointment to the newly-created
24 positions shall be done in accordance with civil service laws, rules, and regulations.

25 Pending the creation of the Secretariat's plantilla positions, the NCCA shall maintain
26 its existing Secretariat. Each of the Council member agencies shall formally designate
27 at least one (1) representative on temporary detail to the interim secretariat until such
28 time that the plantilla positions of the Secretariat shall have been created. The NCCA,
29 in consultation with the DFA, shall likewise be authorized to engage the services of
30 consultants and enter into service contracts, as necessary.

31 Section 9. **Functions of the Secretariat.** – The Sentro Rizal Secretariat shall
32 perform the following duties and responsibilities:

- a) Implement plans, programs, and projects as approved by the Council;
- b) Enter into and carry out contracts of every kind and description, save for the contracts contemplated by Sections 7(f) and 7(h) of which the contracting party is the Council, with any person, firm, association, or corporation, domestic or foreign, and sue or be sued relative to the contracts entered into;
- c) Lease and utilize, in any manner recognized by law, real or personal property outside the Philippines or elsewhere necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act;
- d) Adopt, alter, and use a corporate seal of the Sentro Rizal;
- e) Serve as the lead in the promotion of Philippine arts, culture, languages, and other content throughout the world; and
- f) Perform such other functions as vested by the Council to the Secretariat.

Section 10. ***Crafting the Filipino Brand.*** – To establish, manage, and enhance the image of the Philippines throughout the world, the Council shall, within three (3) months from the effectivity of this Act, develop and promote the “Filipino brand” which shall reflect the history, culture, image, and aspirations of the Philippines among other elements.

The Filipino brand shall, as much as possible, be adopted by all departments, agencies, and instrumentalities of the national government, including government owned and - controlled corporations, and local government units (LGUs) in the formulation and implementation of their programs, projects, and activities relative to the same.

The Council shall undertake a whole-of-government approach in the crafting of the Filipino brand in partnership with the private sector towards a whole-of-society approach in fostering and championing the same.

Section 11. ***Sentro Rizal Assistance Program.*** – The Council may provide financial assistance in the form of a grant to cultural, historical, scientific, educational, and creative organizations or entities for the promotion of Filipino culture throughout the world. No grant made pursuant to this Act shall be treated as taxable income.

Section 12. ***Awards and Citations.*** – To encourage the promotion of the Filipino brand and enhancement of the image of the Philippines throughout the world, the Council shall establish an annual recognition program under which monetary prizes, awards and citations will be given by the President of the Philippines, upon the

1 recommendation of the Council, for special achievements and important contributions
2 and services in the area of cultural diplomacy efforts.

3 Section 13. ***Appropriations.*** – The amount necessary for the initial implementation
4 of this Act shall be charged against the current year’s appropriations of the DFA and
5 NCCA. Thereafter, the amount necessary for the continued implementation of this Act
6 shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

7 Section 14. ***Annual Report.*** – The Council shall submit to the President of the
8 Philippines and to both Houses of Congress a report that provides a detailed account
9 of the implementation of this Act, including policy recommendations for legislation.

10 Section 15. ***Transitory Provision.*** – All existing Sentro Rizal hubs and facilities,
11 established pursuant to the provisions of Republic Act No. 10066 shall continue to
12 operate pursuant to, and be regulated by, the provisions of this Act and its
13 implementing rules and regulations.

14 The DFA and the NCCA shall, in coordination with the DBM and the Civil Service
15 Commission, ensure that the necessary changes in the plantilla items of the Sentro
16 Rizal Secretariat are reflected in the Revised Compensation and Position Classification
17 System and other relevant laws, rules, and regulations.

18 Section 16. ***Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within sixty (60) days from
19 the approval of this Act, the Council shall, in consultation with the other concerned
20 government agencies and stakeholders, formulate the rules and regulations for the
21 effective implementation of this Act.

22 Section 17. ***Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, executive orders, issuances, decrees, rules
23 and regulations or any part thereof which are inconsistent with or contrary to the
24 provisions of this Act are deemed amended, modified, or repealed accordingly.

25 Section 18. ***Separability Clause.*** – If any part or provision of this Act is held invalid
26 or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected shall remain in full force and
27 effect.

28 Section 19. ***Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
29 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,