

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 10969



Introduced by Representative ANTOLIN "LENLEN" A. ORETA III

AN ACT
MANDATING THE INTEGRATION OF WEST PHILIPPINE SEA STUDIES INTO
THE CURRICULA OF ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTIONS AT ALL LEVELS AND A NATIONWIDE INFORMATION AND
AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to institutionalize the teaching of the historical, legal, ecological, and socio-economic dimensions of the West Philippine Sea across all levels of the Philippine educational system, in keeping with Article II, Section 7 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution which provides that the State shall pursue an independent foreign policy, where the paramount considerations are national sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interest, and the right to self-determination. Furthermore, Article II, Section 13 mandates the State to promote the holistic well-being of the youth while inculcating in them patriotism and nationalism.

The West Philippine Sea dispute is one of the most pressing foreign policy and national security issues facing the Philippines. At its core is the conflict between the Philippines' maritime entitlements and the People's Republic of China's sweeping claim over almost the entire West Philippine Sea (WPS), represented by the so-called "nine-dash line."

While the Republic of the Philippines has fiercely asserted its sovereign rights over the West Philippine Sea on the global stage, the defense of the national territory must also take root in the minds of the Filipino people, most importantly the youth.

Recent geopolitical developments have laid bare the urgent need for a unified, educated, and resolute citizenry. Our sovereignty continues to be challenged by aggressive and illegal foreign incursions in our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). According to recent reports, the ongoing harassment of our uniformed personnel and fisherfolk remains a pressing national security issue. On July 20, 2026, a confrontation escalated at Ayungin Shoal when China Coast Guard personnel deployed a rigid-hull inflatable boat and struck a Philippine Navy sailor on the head with a wooden baton near the BRP Sierra Madre, leaving two Filipinos injured. Beyond physical confrontations, incidents such as the December 2025 targeting of Filipino civilian fishing boats with water cannons near Sabina Shoal highlight the escalating threat to the livelihoods of coastal communities. These relentless maritime incursions have caused a significant shift in public sentiment. A national survey released in July 2026 revealed that 64 percent of Filipinos now distrust China, a sharp increase driven by the continued harassment of Filipino personnel and the sweeping claims over the disputed waters.

In response to these escalating threats, the Philippine government achieved a landmark legislative victory on November 7, 2024, when President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. signed the Philippine Maritime Zones Act, or Republic Act No. 12064. This law officially codified our maritime boundaries into domestic legislation, strictly aligning our territorial claims with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the historic July 12, 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration Award. The passage of this law firmly established the legal framework for the Philippines to assert its sovereign rights to explore, exploit, and manage marine resources within its Exclusive Economic Zone.

However, legislation and diplomatic protests alone cannot secure the waters. While public sentiment strongly favors the defense of the West Philippine Sea, there is a necessity to elevate this from reactionary emotion to a deep, factual, and legal understanding.

True patriotism is rooted in knowledge. By mandating the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education to integrate West Philippine Sea Studies into basic and higher education, students will understand the significance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the 2016 Arbitral Award, and the ecological and economic importance of the Exclusive Economic Zone. Furthermore, the measure provides continuous capacity-building for educators and drives nationwide public information campaigns through the Philippine Information Agency. To protect the West Philippine Sea is to protect the nation's future. By educating the youth, the State ensures that the legacy of our maritime heritage, the clarity of our legal rights, and the courage of those who defend our waters today will never be forgotten or surrendered by the generations of tomorrow.

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


ANTOLIN "LENLEN" A. ORETA III
Lone District of Malabon City

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

1 **SECTION 1. *Short Title.*** – This Act will be known as the “*West Philippine Sea (WPS)*
2 *Education Act of 2026.*”

3 **SEC. 2. *Declaration of Principles and State Policies.*** – *It is the policy of the State* to
4 give priority to education, science and technology, arts, culture, and sports to foster patriotism
5 and nationalism, accelerate social progress, and promote total human liberation and
6 development.

7 To this end the State must instill and nurture awareness among young Filipinos of the
8 West Philippine Sea, its rich history, the incursions by China into the West Philippine Sea in
9 violation of Philippine national sovereignty and the United Nations Convention on the Law of
10 the Sea (UNCLOS), and the legal significance of the ruling promulgated by the Permanent Court
11 of Arbitration on the West Philippine Sea in 2016.

12 **SEC. 3. *Integration in the Curriculum.*** – The Department of Education (DepEd) and
13 Commission on Higher Education (CHED) are hereby mandated to integrate in the curricula of
14 all public and private educational institutions at the primary, secondary and collegiate levels the
15 history and legal basis of the Philippines' jurisdiction over the West Philippine Sea, including
16 but not limited to the following:

- 17 (a) The rich history of the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea, its use as traditional fishing
18 grounds by Filipino fisherfolk in coastal communities, and the cultural, environmental,
19 ecological, and economic importance of these waters to the national economy;
- 20 (b) The meaning and significance of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and continental shelf,
21 as well as the Philippine laws that define the Philippines' rights and jurisdiction over the
22 West Philippine Sea;
- 23 (c) The Philippines' sovereignty rights over the EEZ, for the purpose of exploration and
24 exploitation, conservation and management of the natural resources, whether living or

non-living, both renewable and non-renewable, of the sea-bed, including the subsoil and the superjacent waters, and with regard to other activities for the economic exploitation and exploration of the resources of the zone, such as the production of energy from the water, currents and winds;

- (d) The Philippines' exclusive rights and jurisdiction with respect to the establishment and utilization of artificial islands, off-shore terminals, installations and structures, the preservation of the marine environment, including the prevention and control of pollution, and scientific research;
- (e) The significance of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the ratification of UNCLOS by the Philippines and by China;
- (f) The significance of the Permanent Court of Arbitration's Award in favor of the Philippines dated July 12, 2016;
- (g) The incursions and activities of China in the West Philippine Sea and their impact on the Philippines' food security, marine resources, and the environment;
- (h) All other matters the DepEd and CHED may deem necessary.

SEC. 4. Curriculum Development. – The DepEd and CHED shall, in collaboration with the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), state media institutions, academic institutions, and relevant civil society organizations, develop age-appropriate curricula, instructional materials, and teaching modules.

SEC. 5. Training and Capacity Building for Teachers. – The DepEd and CHED shall, in collaboration with relevant government and private institutions, conduct mandatory continuous training and capacity-building seminars to equip teachers with pedagogical tools to effectively teach the legal, ecological, socioeconomic and other essential facets of the WPS.

SEC. 6. Development of Teaching and Learning Materials. – The National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA), DENR, DFA, National Security Council, and other relevant government agencies, shall:

- a. Develop standardized and updated learning materials on the WPS;
- b. Ensure the availability of digital, printed, and community- based learning resources;
- c. Assist in capacity-building programs for teachers;

SEC. 7. Public Information and Awareness Campaign. – The Philippine Information Agency (PIA) shall, in collaboration with the DepEd, CHED, DFA, DENR, Department of Interior and Local Government, and state media institutions, launch a nationwide information campaign to promote:

- a. Awareness of the Philippines' maritime rights and laws;
- b. Protection of marine ecosystems in the WPS; and
- c. Responsible and accurate public discourse on WPS issues.

Such campaigns may include, but are not limited to, media productions, documentaries, community fora, and youth-oriented engagement programs.

SEC. 8. Research Extension and Innovation. – State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and research institutions are encouraged to undertake studies on, but not limited to:

- a. Maritime security and governance;
- b. Marine biodiversity and conservation;
- c. Philippine maritime claims; and
- d. Socioeconomic impacts on coastal communities.

Research outputs shall be made accessible to policymakers and the public, subject to existing laws on security and information disclosure.

SEC. 9. *Monitoring and Evaluation.* – The DepEd, CHED, and PIA shall submit an annual report to Congress on the implementation of WPS education program and public information and awareness campaign, including curriculum integration, materials development, and public information and awareness outcomes.

SEC. 10. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary to carry out the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the DepEd, CHED, DENR, PIA and DFA. Thereafter, such amount needed for its continued implementation shall be included in the budget of all the national government agencies mandated to implement this Act in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - Within thirty (30) days from the effectivity of this Act the Civil Service Commission and the Government Procurement Policy Board shall, in consultation with other relevant government agencies, formulate the rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 12. *Separability Clause.* - Should any provision or part of this Act be declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions and parts hereof, insofar as they are separable from the invalid ones, shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 13. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, executive orders or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, modified, or amended 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,