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SENATE

Senate Bill No. 73

INTRODUCED BY SEN. MANNY VILLAR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The occurrence of natural calamities in the country is something to be expected. Just last year and even this year, we have been affronted with numerous typhoons and floods that triggered millions of pesos of property damage and even claimed several lives. It is ironic however, that PAGASA, which is supposed to be the harbinger of weather information, cannot fully serve the purpose of its existence. There were times where PAGASA disseminated erroneous forecast or the forecast came in belatedly, these inadvertent errors are not attributable to the people composing the said Agency, but rather to the antiquated apparatus or equipment they use.

In some countries, they spend millions of dollars for the modernization of weather forecasting, the rationale is to forestall or at least minimize that damage that a calamity will surely bring forth. With correct and reliable weather forecasting, the damage is lessened because before the calamity strikes, preparation has already been established for said purposes.

We have more reasons to modernize our weather forecasting because our country is considered a typhoon-belt not to mention that we are in an agricultural country. It is highly imperative that we should also contemplate the welfare of the farmers by giving them accurate weather information for their own protection.

Hence, considering the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought in order to eradicate or at least minimize the consequential damage of the natural calamities in the country.


MANNY VILLAR

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AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE MODERNIZATION OF THE PHILIPPINE
ATMOSPHERIC GEOPHYSICAL AND ASTRONOMICAL SERVICES
ADMINISTRATION, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFORE AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. Title - This Act shall be known as the "PAGASA
Modernization of 2010."

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy - It is hereby declared the policy of the
State to improve weather forecasting in the country and to ensure its accuracy
and timely dissemination to the public. Towards this end, the State shall
undertake the modernization of the national weather service to ensure the safety
and well-being of the people and to ensure national progress.

In the implementation of the foregoing policy, the State shall, in
accordance with the provision of this Act:

- a. Undertake measures to improve on the current state of weather
forecasting and warning system in the country;
- b. Cultivate greater awareness by the public of weather systems through
the educational projects and programs in storm signals, the
development of typhoons, climatic changes, and other related
information;
- c. Upgrade, modernize and procure state-of-the-art weather and
geophysical equipment, instruments and facilities, and the application
of new technologies to improve our capabilities in providing timely and
reliable forecasting, warning services, and information for agriculture,
transportation and other industries across the country.

SEC. 3. Components of Modernization - To realize improved and
enhanced weather and flood forecasting, climate monitoring/prediction and
astronomical and associated services, the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical
and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) shall undertake a six (6)

year modernization program. Towards this end, the PAGASA shall adopt the following four pronged principal approach, in the order of priority:

- a. Establishment of regional weather service centers strategic areas in the country to broaden the agency's bases for delivery of service to the countryside;
- b. Modernization of physical resources and operational techniques through acquisition of state-of-the-art instruments, equipment and facilities, with emphasis on weather and flood monitoring and warning system and ago-meteorological observational system to strengthen services for agriculture;
- c. Intensification of human resources development to keep at pace with the rapid scientific and technological advances;
- d. Upgrading of research and development capability through a more rationalized and totally integrated approach and identified activities, with focus on improvement of operations, as well as the development of specialized services for cost recovery.

SEC. 4. Program Description - The modernization program under this Act shall principally be a re-tooling of the PAGASA with modern equipment and facilities, including but not limited to advanced observational and surveillance system for meteorological and hydrological elements, whenever possible satellite-based communication network, supercomputers for data processing analysis and forecasting, and computer based workstations for generating increased volume for detailed information. It shall also establish an efficient human resources development program that emphasizes on professional education, training and research.

SEC. 5. PAGASA Modernization Oversight Committee – There is hereby created a Modernization Oversight Committee composed of the Secretary of Science and Technology, the Director of the PAGASA, the Chairperson of the Congressional Committee on Science and Technology, and a representative from the Office of the President, through the Project Monitoring Staff of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), who shall oversee the implementation of the modernization program provided under this Act. The Committee shall be chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST).

SEC. 6. PAGASA Modernization Fund - There is hereby created the PAGASA Modernization Fund which shall be used exclusively to fund the modernization program which shall include whatever funds may be made available from, but not limited to, the following sources:

- a. A portion of the net income of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) to be taken from the fifty percent (50%) share of the National Government.
- b. Loans, grants, bequests, and donations whether from local or foreign sources. The Secretary of the DOST with the approval of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and subsequently the Department of Finance is hereby granted the authority to enter into loan agreements with foreign financial institutions.

SEC. 7. Cost Recovery Measures - The PAGASA, with the approval of the DOST Secretary, shall implement a sustainable cost recovery program that will allow it to earn revenue from its issuance of specialized weather information, certifications, and scientific and technical publications for which the necessary fees can be charged; Provided that one hundred percent (100%) of the fees collected shall be retained by PAGASA for the next twenty (20) years starting six (6) years after the effectivity of this Act, for the operation and maintenance of the equipment acquired during the modernization program; Provided, however, that no fees shall be charged on the issuance of regular and special reports to the general public that affect national safety, weather, and economy, and such other relevant data;

SEC. 8. Progress Report - The Secretary of the DOST and the Director of the PAGASA shall submit to the Office of the President and the Congressional Committees on Science and Technology a quarterly report on the progress of the modernization program for the duration of its implementation.

SEC. 9. Repealing Clause. - All laws, orders, proclamations, rules and regulations, or part thereof, which are inconsistent with any provision of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 10. Effectivity - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,