

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session
HOUSE BILL NO. 4364



INTRODUCED BY CONGRESSMAN ALFRED VARGAS

EXPLANATORY NOTE

As a democratic country, the State must always ensure that all citizens have access to news and information.

Under the Republic Act No. 7277, otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), TV stations are encouraged to provide subtitles or sign language insets in newscasts and TV programs: encouraged, but not required.

The Philippine Government already took the initial steps in making telecommunications and mass media available to persons with hearing disabilities through the approval of Republic Act No. 10905 which requires the TV franchise holders, operators and producers to provide closed captions in the broadcast of their programs. It is important to note, however, that this law may not be fully equipped to empower our PWDs. The law exempts television stations from complying with the closed captioning requirement on certain instances such as when a public service announcement is shorter than 10 minutes or when compliance would be economically burdensome. In addition, our deaf brothers and sisters prefer the sign language interpretation as their mode of accessibility for TV programs as it can convey not only the text of the information but can also express the feelings and intensity of the communicator when the interpreter matches his or her manual movements with facial expressions.

The provision of Filipino Sign Language inset during the 2016 Presidential and Vice-Presidential debates was proven crucial to the recently-concluded elections. The national candidates were able to communicate their platforms to the 7,786 registered voters with hearing disabilities. Furthermore, this initiative fostered intelligent conversations with the deaf community and empowered them to make informed decisions in the recent national elections.

Information is power: we must foster an inclusive society when sharing information and make sure that our PWDs are not left behind in the national discourse.

This bill seeks to require the use of Filipino sign language insets for local news programs.

In line of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is urged.


ALFRED VARGAS

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AN ACT

REQUIRING THE USE OF FILIPINO SIGN LANGUAGE INSETS FOR LOCAL NEWS PROGRAMS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 22 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7277, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "MAGNA CARTA FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDs)"

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

SECTION 1. This Act shall be known as "The Filipino Sign Language in Broadcast Media Act"

SEC. 2. *Filipino Sign Language in Broadcast Media.*— Section 22 of Republic Act No. 7277, as amended, otherwise known as the "Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)", is hereby further amended to read as follows:

SEC. 22. Broadcast Media. – ALL FREE-TO-AIR television stations ~~{shall be encouraged}~~ ARE REQUIRED to provide [a] FILIPINO sign language insets in at least ~~{one (1)}~~ TWO (2) newscast programs a day and special programs covering events of national significance.

THE FREE-TO-AIR TELEVISION MAY LIKEWISE OPT TO PROVIDE FOR FILIPINO SIGN LANGUAGE INSETS IN OTHER PROGRAMS SUCH AS THOSE PERTAINING TO CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIVELIHOOD AND THOSE CATERING TO CHILDREN.

SEC. 3. *Penalties.* – Any franchise holder or operator of television stations and producers of television programs, who shall violate the provisions of this Act shall be punished by a fine not less than Fifty Thousand Pesos (P 50,000.00), but not more than One Hundred Thousand Pesos (P 100,000.00), or by imprisonment of not less than six (6) months, but more than one (1) year, or both at the discretion of the court.

In case the offender is a corporation, partnership or association, or any other juridical person, the president, manager, administrator, or person-in-charge of the

management of the business shall be liable therefor. In addition, the license or permit to operate its business shall be cancelled.

SEC. 4. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*– Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the National Telecommunication Commission (NTC) and the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB), in consultation with other concerned agencies and entities, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 5. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, rules or regulations, other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 6. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid, other parts or provisions thereof not affected thereby shall remain and continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 7. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in at least two (2) newspapers of national circulation.

Approved.