

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

House Bill No. **7342**



INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE ALFRED VARGAS

EXPLANATORY NOTE

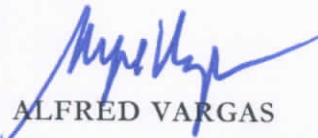
Despite the country's highly touted rapid economic growth, unemployment remains a persistent problem. Based on the year 2016 survey by the Philippine Statistics Authority, unemployment had already reached an almost 3 million unemployed persons in the Philippines.

In the Philippines, progress has been uneven, with poverty gap between the urban and rural areas. The lack of significant economic growth in the rural areas has resulted to shortage of employment opportunities for residents in the said areas, which contributes to the poverty incidence. This also explains the stubborn rural-to-urban migration experience.

This bill shall aims to provide a temporary employment for qualified members of poor households in the rural areas. Projects and activities to be identified and undertaken under the proposed Rural Employment Assistance Program may include the following:

- a. Development, rebuilding / rehabilitation of agri-based livelihood assets destroyed or lost due to natural disasters such as desilting of irrigation canals, development of paddy dikes and rehabilitation of water impounding;
- b. Rehabilitation and or development of common service facilities which are being shared and used by poor families as production or consolidation centers/units such as post-harvest facilities and public markets;
- c. Development or rehabilitation of physical assets to open up access to natural assets where the former is necessary to bring the products of poor families to the market such as farm-to-market roads, slope protection and bridges; and
- d. Protection of productive assets through mitigation measures such as mangrove planting, rehabilitation and tree planting.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate enactment of this measure is earnestly sought.


ALFRED VARGAS

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**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A RURAL EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREOF**

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 “Rural Employment Assistance Act.”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. It is declared policy of the State to promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity of the nation and free the people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social services, promote full employment, a rising standard of living, and an improved quality of life for all. Towards this end, the State shall provide employment assistance to qualified head of family or an unmarried, single adult member of qualified poor households in rural areas identified by the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

SECTION 3. Rural Employment Assistance Program. The DSWD shall establish and implement the Rural Employment Assistance Program (REAP), hereinafter referred to as the Program, in coordination with the local government units (LGUs). The Program shall provide temporary employment to every qualified head of family or an unmarried, single adult member of qualified poor families in rural areas who volunteers to do unskilled manual work for a minimum of forty-five (45) days but not more than ninety (90) days in every calendar year.

As used in this Act, a “rural area” refers to a barangay which has a population size of less than two thousand five hundred (2,500) and which does not have any business establishment with twenty-five (25) or more employees, or five (5) or more establishments with a minimum of ten (10) employees, or five (5) or more facilities within a two (2) kilometer radius from the barangay hall.

The “poor” refers to individuals and families whose income fall below the poverty threshold as defined by the government or those who cannot afford to provide their minimum basic needs of food, health, education, housing and other essential amenities of life in a sustained manner or those who have been identified as poor by NHTS-PR.

SECTION 4. Assessment to Determine Qualification for Ailment of Employment Assistance. The DSWD, in close coordination with the LGUs and other concerned government agencies, shall conduct an assessment of all poor individuals and families in rural areas who signify interest to do unskilled labor to determine their eligibility to avail of the services and benefits under the REAP.

SECTION 5. Rate of Assistance. Every head of family or an unmarried, single adult member of a poor family in the rural areas who qualifies to avail of the benefits and services under the REAP shall be entitled to receive for each day of work financial assistance equal to the applicable minimum wage set by the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board (RTWPB) in the region. The shall also be entitled to the coverage of mandatory social security benefits such as those extended by the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), Home Development Mutual Fund (PAG-IBIG) and the Social Security System (SSS).

SECTION 6. Types of Works and Activities. The DSWD, in coordination with the LGUs and other concerned government agencies, shall lead in the implementation of the REAP, particularly in projects and activities to be identified and undertaken under the REAP should be of the type and nature that can be completed in a specific period of time. These projects may include the following:

- e. Development, rebuilding / rehabilitation of agri-based livelihood assets destroyed or lost due to natural disasters such as desilting of irrigation canals, development of paddy dikes and rehabilitation of water impounding;
- f. Rehabilitation and or development of common service facilities which are being shared and used by poor families as production or consolidation centers/units such as post-harvest facilities and public markets;
- g. Development or rehabilitation of physical assets to open up access to natural assets where the former is necessary to bring the products of poor families to the market such as farm-to-market roads, slope protection and bridges; and
- h. Protection of productive assets through mitigation measures such as mangrove planting, rehabilitation and tree planting.

SECTION 7. Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). Within ninety (90) days after the approval of this Act, the Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development shall, in consultation with the Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government, issue the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation.

SECTION 8. Effectivity. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following the completion of its publication in the Official Gazette or two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,