

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City

**FIFTEENTH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session

**HOUSE BILL NO. 738**

-----  
**Introduced by HONORABLE LUIS R. VILLAFUERTE**  
-----

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

This bill reenacts House Bill No. 1641 which has been approved by the 14<sup>th</sup> Congress of the House of Representatives on 08 September 2009 and has been transmitted to the Senate on same date. It has been received by the Senate on 15 September 2009.

The new and heightened sense of history and national identity which has been achieved in this country has not been without adverse side effects. One of the most deplorable is the theft of religious icons and cultural objects or artifacts from churches, temples and museums all over the country by criminal elements who have found a new and lucrative market among equally unscrupulous dealers and middlemen in these objects.

This type of larceny threatens the gains attained in establishing our people's links to its past. Where religious objects are stolen, it also outrages our people's sense of the sacred and the holy.

The theft of these objects and, likewise of cultural artifacts and artistic works, which constitute the finest expressions of our art, culture, traditions, and way of life, has aroused national indignation. This national indignation should find corresponding utterance in our criminal laws.

It is for this reason that it is here proposed that the penalty imposable on crimes involving the unlawful taking of religious and cultural objects from churches, temples and museums should be higher by two degrees than the penalty imposed for theft or robbery.

From the viewpoint of public policy and penology, such a measure is justifiable on the following grounds:

1. Theft or robbery, involving the unlawful taking of these objects from churches and museums, demonstrates a higher degree of perversity on the part of the offenders.

2. Museums and churches are open to the public and the objects frequently stolen from them are invariably openly displayed. They are also comparatively less well guarded than other public places because stringent security measures are sometimes incompatible with their very nature, not to mention the fact that they are not usually financially equipped to provide an elaborate security system. It is therefore relatively easier to gain entry to these places and to obtain access to the valuable objects on display in their premises.
3. The preservation of our religious and cultural heritage embodied in religious statues and cultural objects and artifacts is a matter of national concern.

On these grounds, therefore, the adoption of the measure herein proposed is most strongly urged.

  
**LUIS R. VILLAFUERTE**

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City

**FIFTEENTH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session

**HOUSE BILL NO. 738**

-----  
**Introduced by HONORABLE LUIS R. VILLAFUERTE**  
-----

**AN ACT TO INCREASE THE PENALTY FOR THEFT OR ROBBERY  
COMMITTED WITHIN THE PREMISES OF CHURCHES, TEMPLES  
AND MUSEUMS**

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

1

1       **SECTION 1.** The penalty to be imposed for theft or robbery  
2 committed within any church, temple or public museum shall be higher  
3 by two (2) degrees than that imposable for such offenses under existing  
4 law.

5       **SEC. 2.** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its  
6 publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general  
7 circulation.

8       Approved,