

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 227

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	
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REGISTRATION UNIT BILLS AND INDEX SERVICE	

Introduced by Representative Eric D. Singson

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration has said that 1.6 million Filipinos were deployed abroad, and that total remittances has reached \$26.92 billion (P1.20 trillion). Overall we were third in the world at receiving remittances, behind India and China, based on statistics from the World Bank.

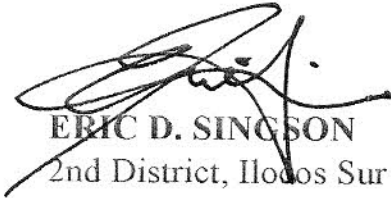
The Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) has been referred to as modern-day heroes. They have contributed much to improve the living conditions not only their families but also contributed greatly to the nation's economy. Their remittances make up nearly ten percent of the Philippine gross domestic product. That is the very reason why they are considered one of the pillars of the new Philippine economy.

Article XIII Section 3 of the Constitution states that "[t]he State shall afford full protection to labor, local and overseas, organized and unorganized, and promote full employment and equality of employment opportunities for all." In keeping with this declaration, the State has created the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) assisted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Labor and Employment. But despite the presence of these institutions, OFWs still feel neglected and unsupported by the government.

Considering the importance of Overseas Filipino Workers and their contribution to the Philippine economy, it is but appropriate that a separate Department be created. President Rodrigo Duterte has indicated that such department should provide immediate, prompt, and effective response to OFWs problems both local and abroad. He said that there should be a Department of Overseas Filipino Workers. In addition, I also propose

that there should be an official OFW bank, possible the Landbank, which shall address the OFWs financial needs.

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



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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE DEPARTMENT OF OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS
(DOFW), DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFORE AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* This Act shall be known as the "Department of Overseas Filipino Workers Act."

SECTION 2. *Declaration Of Policies.*

- A. To ensure the protection of the rights of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), promotion of their welfare, safety, and support;
- B. To ensure a policy of the government of orderly flow of OFW movements under favorable condition;
- C. To ensure that the government reaches out and cooperates with other states where there are OFWs;
- D. To ensure the provision of information and communication services to countries without such adequate services or provision of the same in times of calamities or emergencies;
- E. To develop a database for OFWs to ensure assistance in times of distress;

F. To establish a strong and effective regulatory system that will ensure only fit Filipinos are allowed to work outside of the country;

G. To promote the human capital development of OFWs to enable them to better compete in other countries;

H. To extend deployment and repatriation assistance and support to OFWs; and

I. To promote the reintegration of returning OFWs.

SECTION 3. *Creation Of A Department Of Overseas Filipino Workers.* There is hereby created a Department of Overseas Filipino Workers (DOFW), hereinafter referred to as the Department, which shall, among others, recommend and implement the government's policies, plans, and programs for the promotion of protection, safety, development, support, deployment and repatriation of OFWs.

SECTION 4. *Mandate.* The Department shall be the primary policy, planning, coordinating, implementing, regulating and administrative entity of the executive branch of the Government that protects and provides assistance to OFWs who are holders of Philippine passports.

SECTION 5. *Powers And Functions Of The Department.* The Department shall have the following powers and responsibilities which shall be exercised by its offices:

A. Formulate and recommend national policies and guidelines and conduct in-depth studies on all policy areas and options that will ensure protection of OFW and address perennial issues OFWs face abroad, in consultation with the relevant stake holders;

B. Assess, review, harmonize and coordinate all OFW-related local policies and procedures and international agreements to ensure overall consistency and implementation of the national policies;

C. Promote, advance and implement general and specific government objectives regarding OFW activities, programs, welfare and interests;

D. Build a strong and harmonious partnership with foreign countries and the private sectors to formulate strategies and implement the same;

E. Represent and negotiate for Philippine interest on matters pertaining to OFW affairs in international bodies;

F. Develop, implement and improve coordination with other countries with OFW presence and monitor foreign developments to ensure the most reasonable

working conditions for the OFWs and create a proactive approach in providing assistance to them especially in times of war and civil unrest, whether potential or apparent;

G. Promote knowledge, information and resource sharing, and develop a database to assist OFW anywhere in the world;

H. Coordinate and support the generation and build up of resources or funds for use of OFWs;

I. Conduct symposia, consultations and seminars on effective OFW related programs and plans;

J. Assist and provide technical expertise in the troubleshooting of OFWs in distress and tap the services of personnel, foreign and local, with expertise on the formulation of strategies and plans concerning OFW activities if needed;

K. Promote, develop and monitor the continuing education, training and qualification, availability and deployment of OFWs and coordinate with concerned agencies in the training of OFWs to improve their competitiveness globally;

L. Coordinate with concerned government agencies in the training and support of Filipinos who have worked abroad and are returning to the country;

M. Regulate and guide the business activities relative to the deployment of Filipino workers and other related activities;

N. Promulgate rules and regulations for the implementation of its guidelines and policies and related laws;

O. Administer, accept, hold and utilize property, both personal and real, subject to constraints by existing laws, for the purpose of assisting of expediting the work of the Department, and

P. To perform such other functions as maybe needed to achieve its goals and objectives to the fullest and as may be provided by this Act.

SECTION 6. *Composition.* The Department shall be headed by a Secretary.

The Department proper shall be composed of the Office of the Secretary, the Offices of Undersecretaries, and Assistant Secretaries and Regional and Assistant Regional Directors.

