

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 660



Introduced by Kabataan Party-list Representative Sarah Jane I. Elago

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article XVI, Section 10 of the Philippine Constitution states:

"The State shall provide the policy environment or the full development of Filipino capability and the emergence of communication structure suitable to the needs and aspirations of the nation and the balanced flow of information into, out of, and across the country, in accordance with a policy that respects the freedom of speech and of the press,"

In June 2011, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right of freedom of opinion and expression issued a report to the United Nations Human Rights Council, which states: *"Given that the Internet has become an indispensable tool for realizing a range of human rights, combating inequality, and accelerating development and human progress, ensuring universal access to the Internet should be a priority for all States."*

The Internet has made an enormous impact on the economic, socio-cultural and political spheres of human development. The Internet facilitates faster communication among and between citizens and institutions. Business transactions are now faster with online banking and trading; getting a degree over the Internet is now possible with distance learning education programs; people may now avail of certain public services, and monitor the implementation of government programs online.

The Free Public Wi-Fi Act seeks to move government one step forward in providing democratic access to the Internet. Notwithstanding the issue of the mass accessibility and availability of personal electronic devices that people have to use in order to access public networks, government has to recognize that the Internet is an

important mechanism in delivering some of its services, and a valuable tool for people's participation in governance and in democracy. One way to foster this democratic participation is by at least provide the people access to the Internet in many, if not all, of our government buildings and public establishments.



HON. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO
Representative, Kabataan Party-list

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1 AN ACT

2 PROVIDING FREE PUBLIC WIRELESS INTERNET ACCESSIBILITY IN NATIONAL
3 GOVERNMENT OFFICES, MUNICIPAL HALLS AND PROVINCIAL CAPITOLS,
4 STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES, PUBLIC PARKS AND PLAZAS, PUBLIC
5 HOSPITALS AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION TERMINALS BY INSTALLING
6 WIRELESS INTERNET CONNECTIONS IN THEIR BUILDINGS, AND PROVIDING
7 FUNDS THEREOF

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

10 **SECTION 1.** *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Free Public Wi-fi
11 *Act.*”

12 **SECTION 2.** *Installation of Wireless Internet Connections.* – Wireless internet
13 connection shall, as far as practicable, be installed and be made available in buildings
14 of all national government offices including its regional and satellite offices, in
15 municipal halls and in provincial capitols, in state universities and colleges, in public
16 parks and plazas, in public hospitals and in public transportation terminals such as
17 airports and public bus stations.

18 **SECTION 3.** *Internet Service Provider.* – The Department of Science and
19 Technology (DOST) shall, as far as practicable, provide the internet connectivity
20 necessary to comply with the provisions of this Act. Only in cases where the DOST is
21 technically unable to provide internet connectivity shall the administration or
22 management of a government office, state university or college, public park, public

1 hospital or public transportation terminal concerned avail of the services of commercial
2 internet service providers.

3 **SECTION 4. *Wi-fi Access.*** – No restrictions, in the form of passwords and other
4 similar mechanisms, shall be imposed with regard to access to the free public wi-fi
5 network. Only in cases where there is a clear and present security or technical risk
6 that cannot be remedied through normal technical solutions shall the administration or
7 management of a government office, state university or college, public park, public
8 hospital or public transportation terminal limit access to the network through the use
9 of passwords, which shall be easily provided to the public upon request by individuals.
10 No fee may be charged for access to the free public wi-fi network.

11 **SECTION 5. *Places of Access.*** – At the minimum, government offices, state
12 universities and colleges, public hospitals and public transportation terminals shall
13 ensure that access to the free public wi-fi network is available at the main lobbies and
14 main hallways of each distinct and separate publicly-accessible building in government
15 offices, state universities and colleges, public hospitals and public transportation
16 terminals and at the main assembly points in a public park or plaza.

17 **SECTION 6. *Implementing Agency.*** – The Commission on Information and
18 Communications Technology shall be the lead agency in charge of ensuring the
19 implementation of this Act. It shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for
20 the effective implementation of this Act, and will likewise ensure compliance therewith.
21 It shall also formulate project proposals that will ensure that the government can fully
22 provide for itself the technology and infrastructure necessary to comply with the Act.

23 **SECTION 7. *Appropriations.*** – The amount necessary for the implementation
24 of this Act shall be incorporated in the annual General Appropriations Act.

25 **SECTION 8. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
26 publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) national newspapers of general
27 circulation.

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29 Approved,