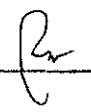


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SENATE

P.S. Resolution No. 405

RECEIVED BY: 

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INTRODUCED BY SENATOR VILLAR

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**RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEES TO CONDUCT A STUDY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED HIGH LEVEL OF POISONOUS MERCURY VAPORS IN SOME LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE COUNTRY WITH THE AIM OF HALTING ITS CAUSES AND SAVE THE PEOPLE FROM ITS TOXIC EFFECTS**

**WHEREAS**, Section 16 of Article II of the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines provides that:

*"The State shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature."*

**WHEREAS**, Section 2 of Republic Act No. 7942 otherwise known as the Philippine mining Act of 1995 provides:

*"All mineral resources in public and private lands within the territory and exclusive economic zone of the Republic of the Philippines are owned by the State. It shall be the responsibility of the State to promote their rational exploration, development, utilization and conservation through the combined efforts of government and the private sector in order to enhance national growth in a way that effectively safeguards the environment and protect the rights of affected communities.;"*

**WHEREAS**, the Philippines is endowed with the fifth richest mineral resources in the world with around US\$840 billion (PHP47 trillion) worth of mineral wealth hidden under the ground<sup>1</sup>;

**WHEREAS**, extraction of these mineral resources often take a great toll on the people's health and the environment especially with the use of Mercury, a heavy metal which is highly toxic; the process is called "whole ore amalgamation," which involves pouring liquid mercury onto ore, breaking apart rock and soil to extract gold;

**WHEREAS**, the ill effects of exposure to mercury include damage to the brain, kidney, and lungs which may result to Acrodynia, Hunter-Russell syndrome, and Minamata disease<sup>2</sup>;

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<sup>1</sup> As cited in [http://www.indophil.com/the\\_mineral\\_sect.asp](http://www.indophil.com/the_mineral_sect.asp) 2/28/11 2:00 PM

<sup>2</sup> As cited in [http://www.sciencedaily.com/articles/m/mercury\\_poisoning.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/articles/m/mercury_poisoning.htm) 2/28/11 2:30 PM

**WHEREAS**, according to the, United States Environmental Protection Agency the safe level of mercury vapor in the air is 900 nanograms per cubic meters (npcm) and, at 10,000 npcm, immediate evacuation of communities is recommended<sup>3</sup>;

**WHEREAS**, it is unfortunate that in the study by the Basel Action Network conducted on November 24-25, 2010, levels of mercury vapors in the air over mining communities in Benguet, Camarines Norte and Palawan has exceeded the normal levels that are considered safe for human beings<sup>4</sup>;

**WHEREAS**, In Barangay Malaguit in Paracale, Camarines Norte, the average reading for mercury vapor in the air is 14,275.3 npcm and the highest level was 30,000 npcm<sup>5</sup>;

**WHEREAS**, in the same study, Sitio Pulang-Lupa in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, was found to have as much as 1,488.8 npcm of mercury vapor in the air because it is near an abandoned mine that used to extract mercury<sup>6</sup>;


**WHEREAS**, around the barracks of workers of pocket miners in Itogon, Benguet, the aforesaid study showed a reading of a maximum 30,000 npcm of mercury vapor in the air and an average of 3,751.8 npcm<sup>7</sup>;

**WHEREAS**, with pockets of small mining sites mushrooming in several mining sites in the country, the levels of mercury has risen to a point where the poisonous vapors are no longer confined to mining areas but has spread to heavily populated urban centers like Metro Manila which in the same study was found to have as much as 7.9 ncpm in the air<sup>8</sup>;

**WHEREAS**, the often crude mining practices employed all over the country has a high number abandoned mines which has caused massive environmental damage, this legacy affects not only the livelihood but also the health of the present and future generations of Filipinos;

**NOW, WHEREFORE, BE IT RESOVED**, as it is hereby resolved by the Senate of the Philippines to direct the Senate Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources and other appropriate senate committees to conduct a study, in aid of legislation, on the reported cases of high levels of poisonous mercury vapors in the air for the purpose of halting its causes and save the people from its toxic effects give life to the right of every Filipino to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature.

Adopted,

  
**MANNY VILLAR**

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<sup>3</sup> "Benguet miners lead drive vs mercury use in small-scale mining" *Philippine Daily Inquirer* 26 February 2011: A11 print

<sup>4</sup> "In 3 Philippine areas, mercury poisons air, says study" *Philippine Daily Inquirer* 25 February 2011: A17 print

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*