



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

H. No. 5971

BY REPRESENTATIVES TANADA, NOGRALES, FABIAN, CUA (J.), BRIONES, MIRAFLORES, GUINGONA, CHATTO, DAYANGHIRANG, GOLEZ, JAAFAR, PADILLA, ORTEGA, PANCRUDO, CRISOLOGO, DIMAPORO, GARIN, GARCIA (P.), GATLABAYAN, GONZALES (N.), JALA, MALAPITAN, AGYAO, CASIÑO, CUENCO, GULLAS, LAPUS, ONG, RODRIGUEZ, AGGABAO, CHIONGBIAN, JOSON, LACSON, MITRA, CASTELO-DAZA, CELESTE, BALINDONG, FUENTEBELLA, FERNANDEZ, AMATONG, ANGARA, ARENAS, MANDANAS, BONDOC, ALFELOR, RAMIRO, HONTIVEROS-BARAQUEL, ANGPING, ZAMORA (R.), HATAMAN, DUAVIT, OLAÑO, BONOAN-DAVID, CERILLES, DURANO, PUNO, CARI, MAGSAYSAY, GARAY, HOFER, MATUGAS, MARAÑON, PABLO, EMANO, RODRIGUEZ-ZALDARRIAGA, VILLANUEVA, CUA (G.), ALCALA, BARZAGA, ARAGO, UMALI (A.), DOMOGAN, SAN LUIS, TEVES, DE GUZMAN, AGBAYANI, VELARDE AND ROMULO, PER COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 1782

AN ACT CREATING THE PHILIPPINE TRADE REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

1 SECTION 1. *Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Charter of the
2 Philippine Trade Representative Office”.

3 SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the
4 State to pursue a trade policy that serves the general welfare, creates jobs,

1 ensures food security and rural and industrial development, among others, and
2 utilizes all forms and arrangements of exchange on the basis of fair trade.
3 Market access in itself is not the end goal of trade negotiations.

4 It is also the declared policy of the State to ensure the right of the people
5 and their organizations to be duly informed on matters of public concern and
6 the right to effectively and reasonably participate in economic decision
7 making.

8 Congress has the power to regulate commerce, including commerce with
9 foreign nations, and has the power to reorganize the bureaucracy in order to
10 make it more responsive to the needs of all the stakeholders in the Philippine
11 economy and the exigencies of international economic relations. Any
12 international economic, commercial or trade agreement entered into by the
13 government constitutes regulation of commerce and will affect the different
14 stakeholders in our economy. Hence, it is essential that any agreement is
15 harmonized with our existing domestic commercial laws and our Constitution.

16 Moreover, Congress, as one of the three (3) political branches of the
17 government, has power over foreign relations, especially international
18 economic relations.

19 For this purpose, and pursuant to the power of Congress to regulate
20 commerce, the State shall ensure that a single office shall, with competence
21 and accountability, direct, formulate and coordinate government agencies
22 towards formulating cohesive policies, positions and measures, and conduct
23 regular stakeholders consultations with respect to international trade and
24 investment relations and negotiations.

25 *SEC. 3. Definition of Terms. –*

26 (a) “Ambassador” refers to a diplomatic official accredited to a foreign
27 sovereign or government, or to an international organization, to serve as the
28 official representative of his or her own country. In everyday usage, it applies

1 to the ranking plenipotentiary minister stationed in a foreign capital. The host
2 country typically allows the ambassador control of specific territory called an
3 embassy, whose territory, staff, and even vehicles are generally afforded
4 diplomatic immunity from most laws of the host country.

5 (b) "Civil society" refers to the totality of voluntary civic and social
6 organizations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society as
7 opposed to the formal institutions and structures of a State.

8 (c) "Commerce" refers to the entire range of activities connected with
9 the production, manufacturing, accumulation, gathering, mining, raising,
10 harvesting, exchange or buying and selling of something of economic value
11 such as agricultural products, minerals, goods, services, information, debt
12 instruments, shares of stock or equity, derivatives and money. It also includes
13 capital formation, either through debt or equity, savings, and investments.
14 Finally, it likewise includes the obligations, rights and duties of all economic
15 entities such as natural persons, corporations, partnerships and governmental
16 entities.

17 (d) "Consultation mechanism" refers to the means by which
18 stakeholders and sectors could participate effectively and meaningfully in the
19 governmental process of drawing up our international trade policy, and in
20 coming up with all other policies and rules affecting all aspects of international
21 trade.

22 (e) "Fair trade" refers to a trading partnership, based on dialogue,
23 transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It
24 contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to,
25 and securing the marginalized producers and workers.

26 (f) "Investment" refers to the act of putting money to a business, either
27 by directly buying or leasing assets, hiring personnel, and entering into a whole

1 gamut of contracts needed to run an ongoing concern, or by buying equity in a
2 business – typically in the form of shares of stock.

3 (g) “Legal” refers to the characterization of an act that is not contrary
4 to Philippine laws, including international commercial agreements to which the
5 Philippines is a party, and the accession of the parties to a trade and/or
6 investment agreement.

7 (h) “Multi-sectoral” refers to a grouping of different sectors of the
8 economy.

9 (i) “Nongovernment organizations” refers to non-stock, non-profit
10 corporations organized under the laws of the Republic of the Philippines doing
11 charitable, educational, religious, social, economic, and other not-for-profit
12 endeavors.

13 (j) “Private sector” refers to that sector of the economy that is owned
14 by or is composed of private individuals, including natural persons doing
15 business in their personal capacities.

16 (k) “Research” refers to the study of the potential or actual economic
17 implications of a proposed or existing trade agreement and the validation of its
18 findings among the stakeholders.

19 (l) “Sectors” refers to the different economic or commercial groups
20 composed of members with substantially common commercial interest,
21 including business, labor, peasants, farmers, fisherfolk, consumers, private
22 sector, public sector, service sector and manufacturing sector.

23 (m) “Stakeholders” refers to persons or groups of persons with
24 legitimate interest in commerce or whose economic well-being will be affected
25 by any government policy or law affecting commerce – either as factors in the
26 production, sale, or distribution of goods and services, or as consumers or
27 beneficiaries thereof.

1 (n) "Trade" refers to the voluntary exchange of goods, services and all
2 things of economic value, whether or not across national borders.

3 (o) "Trade and investment agreement or international trade and
4 investment agreement" refers to an accord whereby two (2) or more countries
5 bind themselves to a set of rules that govern the commercial and investment
6 transactions of persons originating from any of the parties to the agreement.
7 When it is just between two (2) countries, it is called a *Bilateral Agreement*.
8 On the other hand, if it involves more than two (2) countries, then it is called a
9 *Multilateral Agreement*. *Regional Agreements* are those among countries
10 within the same geographical area as contemplated by the agreement.
11 *Plurilateral Agreements* are specialized agreements included in a multilateral
12 agreement, and where the parties have the option of acceding.

13 (p) "Trade dispute" refers to a disagreement between two (2) or more
14 countries to a trade agreement that arises when at least one country adopts a
15 trade policy measure or takes some action that one or more fellow members
16 consider to be a breach of the agreement, or a failure to live up to obligations
17 under the agreement.

18 SEC. 4. *Creation*. – There is hereby created the Philippine Trade
19 Representative Office, hereinafter referred to as the "Trade Office", that shall
20 be attached to the Office of the President.

21 The Trade Office shall be headed by the Philippine Trade
22 Representative who shall be appointed by the President and confirmed by the
23 Commission on Appointments. He/She shall hold a cabinet rank with a fixed
24 term of six (6) years.

25 Further, the Trade Office shall have three (3) Deputy Philippine Trade
26 Representatives who shall be appointed by the President upon the endorsement
27 of various stakeholders and shall have the rank of senior undersecretary.

1 The deputies shall have a term of six (6) years each and can be
2 re-appointed for no more than a second term. Of those first appointed under
3 *this Act, one deputy shall serve for six (6) years, another deputy for four (4)*
4 *years and another deputy for two (2) years.*

5 SEC. 5. *Qualifications and Limitations on Appointments. –*

6 (a) *Qualifications. – The Philippine Trade Representative and Deputy*
7 *Trade Representatives must be natural-born citizens of the Philippines, and*
8 *must be at least forty (40) and thirty-five (35) years of age, respectively, of*
9 *good moral character, unquestionable integrity, and known probity and*
10 *patriotism, and should possess the academic training, experience, and*
11 *competence in business, economics, international trade law and policy or trade*
12 *negotiations.*

13 The Philippine Trade Representative and Deputy Trade Representatives
14 shall not, during their tenure in office, engage in the practice of any profession,
15 *or intervene directly or indirectly in the management or control of any private*
16 *enterprise which may, in any way, be affected by the functions of their office,*
17 *nor shall they be financially interested, whether directly or indirectly, in any*
18 *contract with the government, or in any franchise, or special privilege granted*
19 *by the government or any subdivision, agency or instrumentality thereof,*
20 *including government-owned or -controlled corporations or their subsidiaries.*
21 *They shall strictly avoid conflicts of interest in the conduct of their office.*

22 (b) *Limitations on Appointments; Disqualifications. – No person shall*
23 *be appointed Philippine Trade Representative or Deputy Trade Representative*
24 *if he/she has directly represented, aided, or advised a foreign entity in any trade*
25 *and/or investment negotiation or trade dispute against the Philippines.*

26 Likewise, the Philippine Trade Representative, Deputy Trade
27 Representatives, and all members of the research and legal staff of the Office
28 of the Philippine Trade Representative shall not be allowed to be employed,

1 commissioned, or retained by foreign entities, or to do any kind of consultancy
2 or related work for foreign clients on trade and investment issues within two
3 (2) years after the expiration or termination of their service with the Office of
4 the Philippine Trade Representative. They shall likewise maintain at all times
5 the confidentiality of all matters that they have handled during their service
6 with the Office of the Philippine Trade Representative.

7 SEC. 6. *Functions and Responsibilities of the Philippine Trade*
8 *Representative Office.* – The Philippine Trade Representative Office shall:

9 (a) Negotiate trade and investment agreements on the basis of the
10 Philippine Constitution and other laws;

11 (b) Coordinate with different line agencies of government in
12 formulating harmonized and coherent Philippine trade and investment policies
13 based on a national development agenda that is a product of regular and
14 meaningful consultation with stakeholders;

15 (c) Advise the President and Congress on international trade and
16 investment policies and their implications on the domestic economy and the
17 impact of domestic policies on international trade and investment
18 commitments;

19 (d) Report to Congress and to the Multi-sectoral Advisory Committee
20 as herein created any intention to negotiate any economic treaty, be it bilateral,
21 regional or multilateral. At the minimum, the report shall contain the subject
22 matter for negotiations and the general objectives of the government. The
23 office shall update Congress and the Multi-sectoral Advisory Committee on the
24 negotiations, including the offers and counter-offers of all the parties. The
25 office shall also notify Congress and the Multi-sectoral Advisory Committee of
26 any tentative or final agreement of the parties;

27 (e) Coordinate with departments and agencies on basic issues of policy
28 and interpretation arising in the exercise of international trade and investment

1 functions including, but not limited to, the World Trade Organization (WTO),
2 regional, bilateral and plurilateral negotiations to the extent necessary to assure
3 the coordination of international trade and investment policy and its
4 consistency with any other law;

5 (f) Conduct research and legal studies related to trade and investments
6 that will enhance trade policy formulation;

7 (g) *Obtain, collate and maintain a database that shall include, but not*
8 *be limited to, trade and investment statistics, trade and investment-related laws,*
9 *policies, trade and investment agreements, and initiatives which have*
10 *implications on the development of the Philippine negotiating position in trade*
11 *and investment agreements, and which shall be accessible to the stakeholders;*

12 (h) Conduct or facilitate the conduct of trainings and courses for the
13 benefit of the technical staff of the office and other government personnel
14 directly or indirectly engaged in trade and investment policy work in order to
15 build, improve and enhance their capacity and competence in trade and
16 investment negotiations;

17 (i) Report directly to the President, Congress and the Multi-sectoral
18 Advisory Committee regarding the implementation, operation and
19 effectiveness of any trade and investment agreement entered into including the
20 status of ongoing trade and investment negotiations, in which the Philippines
21 participates;

22 (j) Undertake consultations with stakeholders in all aspects of trade
23 policy formulation and negotiation. Stakeholders must also be directly
24 involved in formulating positions related to trade and investment negotiations
25 in line with the national development agenda;

26 (k) *Subject to Civil Service Commission rules, elect, appoint, employ*
27 *and fix the compensation in accordance with the existing compensation laws of*

1 such officers and employees as are necessary and prescribe their authority and
2 duties;

3 (l) Promulgate such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry
4 out the functions, powers and duties vested herein;

5 (m) Enter into and perform such contracts, leases, cooperative
6 agreements, or other transactions as may be necessary in the conduct of the
7 work of the office and on such terms as the Philippine Trade Representative
8 may deem appropriate with any agency or instrumentality of the Philippine
9 government or with any public or private person, firm, association, corporation
10 or institution;

11 (n) Provide the necessary staff support for the Multi-sectoral and Sub-
12 sectoral Advisory Committee and the Inter-agency Coordinating Committee;
13 and

14 (o) Adopt an official seal.

15 SEC. 7. *Functions of the Philippine Trade Representative.* – The
16 Philippine Trade Representative shall:

17 (a) Serve as the chief trade negotiator of the Philippines in international
18 trade and investment agreements including, but not limited to, the WTO,
19 regional, bilateral and plurilateral negotiations, in which the Philippines
20 participates, and shall be responsible for the conduct of such;

21 (b) Head the Philippine Trade Representative Office and exercise
22 control and supervision over all its functions and activities and including its
23 organization;

24 (c) Participate in economic summits and other international meetings at
25 which international trade and investment are major topics;

26 (d) Chair the Inter-agency Coordinating Committee on international
27 trade and investments;

1 (e) Co-chair the Multi-sectoral Advisory Committee in their regular
2 and special meetings; and

3 (f) Report at least twice a year and as needed to Congress and to the
4 *Multi-sectoral Advisory Committee on the developments of any international*
5 *trade and investment negotiations and/or agreements.*

6 *SEC. 8. Functions and Responsibilities of Deputy Trade*
7 *Representatives.* – The Deputy Trade Representatives shall:

8 (a) Lead the negotiations for their respective sectors and/or areas of
9 concern;

10 (b) Convene and chair the *Sub-sectoral Advisory Committees and the*
11 *Inter-agency Coordinating Subcommittee* for their respective sectors and/or
12 areas of concern;

13 (c) Ensure proper coordination among the various government
14 agencies involved in their *specific sectors of concern, and harmonize*
15 *conflicting negotiating positions;*

16 (d) Prepare sector-specific proposals and negotiating positions and
17 strategies; and

18 (e) Perform all other functions as may be delegated by the *Philippine*
19 *Trade Representative*, or as may be required by the nature or exigencies of
20 their foregoing functions and responsibilities.

21 *SEC. 9. Inter-agency Coordinating Committee and Subcommittees.* –
22 In connection with the performance of his/her functions, the *Philippine Trade*
23 *Representative* shall, to the extent necessary for the proper administration and
24 execution of the trade and investment agreements of the Philippines, draw
25 upon the expertise of, and consult with national agencies.

26 The *Philippine Trade Representative* shall consult with concerned
27 agencies and any other agency on trade and investment policy issues, without
28 prejudice to the exercise by the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* of its authority as

1 an independent central monetary authority under the Constitution and Republic
2 Act No. 7653 or the New Central Bank Act. All agencies consulted by the
3 Philippine Trade Representative shall participate actively, cooperate fully, and
4 promptly provide to the Philippine Trade Representative all documents and
5 information requested.

6 Further, there is hereby created Inter-agency Subcommittees to provide
7 inputs and support to the Deputy Trade Representatives.

8 SEC. 10. *The Multi-sectoral Advisory Committee.* – The Philippine
9 Trade Representative shall seek information and advice from representatives of
10 the private sector, nongovernment organizations and Members of Congress
11 working on trade and investment policy based on a national development
12 agenda aimed at balancing the interests of various stakeholders with respect to:

13 (a) negotiating objectives and bargaining positions before entering into
14 a trade and investment agreement;

15 (b) the operation, implementation and monitoring of any trade and
16 investment agreement once entered into;

17 (c) trade remedies, dispute settlements, noncompliance and/or
18 violations to any trade and investment agreement; and

19 (d) other matters arising in connection with the development,
20 implementation and administration of the trade and investment policy.

21 On the other hand, the *Multi-sectoral Advisory Committee* shall:

22 (a) provide the Philippine Trade Representative overall policy advice
23 on trade matters;

24 (b) prior to any trade negotiation, be an active participant in the
25 development of the negotiation objectives and bargaining positions of the
26 country;

27 (c) at the conclusion of negotiations for each trade agreement entered
28 into, provide a report to the President and Congress. The report of the

1 committee shall include an assessment and evaluation of whether and to what
2 extent the agreement promotes the economic interest of the Philippines and
3 achieves the applicable overall and principal negotiating objectives set forth;
4 and

5 (d) be allowed to accompany the Philippine delegation in trade and
6 investment negotiation missions in an observer capacity.

7 The Committee will meet as needed at the call of the Committee
8 Chairman or the Philippine Trade Representative depending on various factors
9 such as the level of activity of trade negotiations.

10 Further, there is hereby created Sub-sectoral Advisory Committees to be
11 defined by the Philippine Trade Representative for trade and investment policy
12 formulation and negotiations. These committees shall be broadly
13 representative of the key sectors and groups of the economy, particularly with
14 respect to those sectors and groups which are affected by trade and shall
15 consist of representatives of industry, academe, agriculture, fisheries, labor,
16 small business, service industries, retailers, consumer interest and other
17 stakeholder groups. Members from both Houses of Congress who are Chairs
18 and Vice Chairs of the relevant committees in Congress shall have the option
19 to join the Sub-sectoral Advisory Committees during the conduct of
20 consultations and in the course of the Trade Representative's reportorial duties.

21 Members of the committee and subcommittees shall be appointed by the
22 Philippine Trade Representative upon the endorsement of various
23 nongovernment organizations and stakeholders. Members of the committee
24 shall serve without either compensation or reimbursement of expenses.

25 The Chairman of the committee and subcommittees shall be elected by
26 its members.

27 SEC. 11. *Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on Trade and*
28 *Investment Matters.* – There shall be a Joint Congressional Oversight

1 Committee on Trade and Investment Matters to which the Philippine Trade
2 Representative Office shall seek *a priori* negotiating mandate, parameters and
3 authority with respect to trade and investment agreements. The Oversight
4 Committee shall be composed of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Trade
5 and Industry, Agriculture, Foreign Affairs, Economic Affairs, Labor,
6 Environment and Natural Resources and Special Committee on Globalization
7 of both Houses of Congress.

8 The Oversight Committee shall conduct a periodic review and
9 evaluation of the performance of the Philippine Trade Representative Office,
10 including its officials, every three (3) years. An independent panel composed
11 of experts to be appointed by the committee shall review the activities and
12 performance of the Philippine Trade Representative Office and shall make
13 recommendations, based on its findings, to the Congressional Oversight
14 Committee. The independent panel of evaluators shall likewise conduct
15 consultations with stakeholders in the conduct of the review.

16 SEC. 12. *Trade Research Services, Data Collection, Analysis and*
17 *Dissemination.* – The office shall improve and strengthen its capacity on
18 research, data collection, analysis, and dissemination of trade and investment
19 statistics, laws and policies, agreements and other related information.

20 The trade and investment research under the Office of the Philippine
21 Trade Representative shall have the following specific functions and
22 responsibilities:

23 (a) Generate, maintain, and update records/files of comprehensive
24 national and international trade statistics, tariff and non-tariff measures, and
25 investment-related data;

26 (b) Conduct sectoral and macrolevel impact assessment and/or
27 potential effects of the country's trade negotiating positions or an eventual
28 trade agreement and validate such studies;

1 (c) Provide the general public access to trade data and information and
2 other relevant documents through online databases, journals, publications, etc.

3 (d) Collaborate with government and nongovernment research
4 institutions in research concerning trade and investment policies and programs
5 in relation to the national development program;

6 (e) Tap the foreign trade service corps to get market intelligence
7 information with regard to commercial, industrial and general economic
8 conditions, as well as non-economic conditions affecting Philippine products
9 both in the export and domestic markets; and

10 (f) Perform other functions as may be provided by law or assigned by
11 the Trade Representative or Deputy Trade Representative.

12 SEC. 13. *Legal Services and Programme.* – The Office shall have a
13 Legal Services arm with the following functions:

14 (a) Provide legal advice to the Office of the Philippine Trade
15 Representative, including legal advice on trade and investment negotiations;

16 (b) Interpret laws and rules affecting the operation of the office;

17 (c) Prepare contracts and instruments to which the office is a party, and
18 interpret provisions of contracts covering work performed for the office by
19 private entities;

20 (d) Assist in the promulgation of rules governing the activities of the
21 office;

22 (e) Prepare comments on proposed legislation concerning the office;

23 (f) Assist the Solicitor General in suits involving the office or its
24 officers or employees, or act as their principal counsel in all actions taken in
25 their official capacity before judicial or administrative bodies;

26 (g) Assist the office in ensuring compliance by the Republic of the
27 Philippines with its obligations in the WTO agreements, other multilateral
28 trade, regional, plurilateral and bilateral trade and investment agreements;

1 (h) Represent the Republic of the Philippines in any dispute settlement
2 before the WTO, other multilateral trade agreements, bilateral trade
3 agreements, or in any other suit involving international trade; and

4 (i) Perform such other functions as may be directed by the Philippine
5 Trade Representative Office.

6 SEC. 14. *Penalties for Withholding Information, Non-Consultation.* --
7 The failure of the Philippine Trade Representative or any other officer of the
8 Office of the Philippine Trade Representative to provide information to
9 Congress, as well as failure to hold meaningful consultations, as provided for
10 under this Act, shall be punishable by imprisonment of not less than six (6)
11 months to not more than six (6) years, and a fine of not more than Fifty
12 thousand pesos (P50,000.00).

13 SEC. 15. *Transfer of Functions.* -- The functions of the Bureau of
14 International Trade Relations under the Department of Trade and Industry,
15 Attaches and Permanent Mission to the WTO, Association of Southeast Asian
16 Nations (ASEAN) and United Nations International Organization (UNIO), and
17 the negotiating functions of the Tariff and Related Matters Committee (TRMC)
18 are hereby transferred to the Office of the Philippine Trade Representative.

19 The foregoing transfer of powers and functions shall include all
20 applicable funds and appropriations, records, equipment, property and
21 personnel as may be necessary.

22 SEC. 16. *Transitory Provision.* -- The Tariff and Related Matters
23 Committee (TRMC) created by Section 6 of Executive Order No. 230, series
24 of 1987, together with the Technical Committee on WTO Matters shall
25 continue to function for six (6) months or until the Office of the Philippine
26 Trade Representative is set up whichever comes earlier, after which they shall
27 cease to function.

1 SEC. 17. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90)
2 days of the effectivity of this Act, the President shall appoint the Philippine
3 Trade Representative, who shall, in consultation with the Departments of
4 Trade and Industry, Agriculture, Foreign Affairs and the National Economic
5 and Development Authority, issue the necessary rules and regulations to
6 implement the provisions of this Act.

7 SEC. 18. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary to implement the
8 provisions of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations
9 of the Bureau of International Trade Relations under the Department of Trade
10 and Industry, Attaches and Permanent Mission to the WTO, ASEAN and
11 UNIO, the TRMC and other concerned agencies. Thereafter, such sums as may
12 be necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual
13 General Appropriations Act.

14 SEC. 19. *Separability Clause.* – If any section or provision of this Act
15 shall be declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other sections or provisions
16 not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

17 SEC. 20. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, rules and regulations and other
18 issuances inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, including Section 6 of
19 Executive Order No. 230, series of 1987 and relevant provisions of Executive
20 Order No. 133, series of 1987 are deemed modified, revoked or repealed
21 accordingly.

22 SEC. 21. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15)
23 days following its publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation or
24 in the *Official Gazette*, whichever comes earlier.

Approved,

O