



NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)

23 JAN -9 P12 :08

RECEIVED BY: _____

SENATE

S.B. No. 1639

Introduced by **SENATOR JOEL VILLANUEVA**

AN ACT
AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7662, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE
LEGAL EDUCATION REFORM ACT OF 1993, CREATING FOR THE
PURPOSE A LEGAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RETURN SERVICE
PROGRAM, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Based on the Supreme Court of the Philippines' Lawyers' List, as of November 30, 2022, there is a total of 84,236 lawyers in the Roll of Attorneys since the first Philippine Bar Exams took place in 1901.¹ However, the number of active lawyers in the country is lower as there are non-practicing lawyers, lawyers working in other jurisdictions, have passed away, or for any other reason do not engage in active legal practice.

Lawyer-to-population ratio in other jurisdictions are lower. According to the World Population Review, an independent organization based in the United States,² the lawyers per capita in the following countries are as follows: United States (1 lawyer:248 residents); Italy (1 lawyer:260 residents); and Germany (1 lawyer:516 residents).³

Previous estimates in 2016 cite that there are around 40,000 living lawyers, with 1 lawyer serving 2,500 Filipinos.⁴ While the total population of the country has increased since then to 109.035 million Filipinos,⁵ and additional lawyers have been

¹ Supreme Court of the Philippines, Lawyers' List. Available at <https://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/lawlist/> (Accessed on January 5, 2023).

² About World Population Review. Available at <https://worldpopulationreview.com/about> (Accessed on January 5, 2023).

³ Lawyers per Capita by Country 2023. Available at <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/lawyers-per-capita-by-country> (Accessed on January 5, 2023).

⁴ September 16, 2016, *Too Many Lawyers*, Foundation for Economic Freedom. Available at <https://www.fef.org.ph/jemy-gatdula/too-many-lawyers/> (Accessed on January 5, 2023).

⁵ Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020 Census of Population and Housing. Available at <https://psa.gov.ph/population-and-housing/node/167965> (Accessed on January 5, 2023).

admitted to the Philippine Bar, our current ratio may still be far from manageable, necessitating the country to produce more lawyers.

Nonetheless, the pursuit of legal education is not a small feat. Tuition fees alone in private law schools in the country range from Php33,000 to Php98,000 per semester, while fees in a leading state law school range from Php25,000 to Php30,000 per semester. Additional costs for books and reading materials, commuting or renting accommodation, Bar petition, review, and exam-related costs, and other miscellaneous fees likewise vary.

Thus, this bill aims to provide deserving students access to legal education, with the aim of bridging the gap of access to justice by increasing the number of lawyers in the public service. Inspired by the "Doktor Para sa Bayan Act" established under Republic Act No. 11509, the bill proposes to establish a Legal Scholarship and Return Service (LSRS) Program for deserving students in state universities and colleges (SUCs) and partner private higher education institutions. The LSRS shall be separate and distinct from the Clinical Legal Education Program under Rule 138-A of the Rules of Court.



The LSRS shall be administered by the Legal Education Board (LEB), which is tasked with the duty of administering the legal education system in the country under Republic Act No. 7662 or the "Legal Education Reform Act of 1993," in coordination with the UniFAST Board created under Republic Act No. 10687 or the "Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST) Act."

Covered financial assistance in the LSRS Program include:

- a) Free tuition and other school fees;
- b) Allowance for prescribed books;
- c) Clothing or uniform allowance;
- d) Allowance for dormitory or boarding house accommodation;
- e) Transportation allowance;
- f) Bar review fees, including Bar examination application fees: Provided, That the same shall only be available for the first two (2) bar examinations taken;
- g) Annual medical insurance; and
- h) Other education-related miscellaneous subsistence or living allowances.

In return, scholars shall render at least one (1) year of return service for every scholarship year availed of, and shall be integrated into the public or pro bono legal service system, through the Public Attorney's Office or other appropriate government offices in need of lawyers, and shall be granted the appropriate civil service rank, salary, and related benefits.

Thus, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


JOEL VILLANUEVA 



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AN ACT
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PURPOSE A LEGAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RETURN SERVICE
PROGRAM, 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. Long Title.** – The long title of Republic Act No. 7662, otherwise
2 known as the “Legal Education Reform Act of 1993,” shall be amended as follows:
3

4 “An Act Providing for Reforms in the Legal Education, Creating for the
5 Purpose, a Legal Education Board AND A LEGAL SCHOLARSHIP AND
6 RETURN SERVICE PROGRAM, and for Other Purpose”
7

8 **SEC. 2. Short Title.** – Section 1 of Republic Act No. 7662 shall be amended to
9 read as follows:
10

11 **Section 1. Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “Legal Education Reform
12 AND LEGAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RETURN SERVICE PROGRAM ACT.”
13

14 **SEC. 3. Legal Scholarship Fund.** – New Sections 11-A to 11-D shall be
15 inserted to read as follows:
16

17 **Section 11-A. Establishment of the Legal Scholarship and Return Service**
18 *Program.* – There shall be established a Legal Scholarship and Return
19 Service (LSRS) Program for deserving students in state universities and
20 colleges (SUCs) or in partner private higher education institutions (PHEIs)
21 in regions where there are no SUCs offering a Bachelor of Laws or Juris
22 Doctor Program: *Provided,* That the Legal Education Board may designate
23 more than one (1) partner higher education institutions (HEIs) in the region,
24 including regions where there are existing SUCs offering the Bachelor of

1 Laws or Juris Doctor Program as deemed necessary, upon consultation with
2 the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, the Philippine Association of Law
3 Schools and other relevant stakeholders.

4
5 In all case, qualified applicants from municipalities without an active
6 practicing lawyer providing pro bono services or other similar organizations
7 offering pro bono or discounted legal services or areas shall be prioritized
8 in the allocation of scholarship slots to ensure the assignment of one (1)
9 lawyer for every municipality in the country.

10
11 The LSRS, including the funding thereof, shall be administered by the Legal
12 Education Board, in coordination with the UniFAST Board created under
13 Republic Act No. 10687 or the “Unified Student Financial Assistance
14 System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST) Act.”

15
16 **Section 11-B. Coverage.** – The LSRS Program established under this Act
17 shall be made available to deserving Filipino students who want to pursue
18 a Bachelor of Laws or Juris Doctor degree.

19
20 The student financial assistance for the LSRS Program shall include the
21 following:

- 22
23 a) Free tuition and other school fees;
24 b) Allowance for prescribed books;
25 c) Clothing or uniform allowance;
26 d) Allowance for dormitory or boarding house accommodation;
27 e) Transportation allowance;
28 f) Bar review fees, including Bar examination application fees: Provided,
29 That the same shall only be available for the first two (2) bar
30 examinations taken;
31 g) Annual medical insurance; and
32 h) Other education-related miscellaneous subsistence or living
33 allowances.

34
35 **Section 11-C. Conditions for the Grant of Scholarship.** – Deserving
36 students accepted to the LSRS Program shall be subject to the following
37 conditionalities:

- 38
39 a) Must sign an agreement stating the terms and conditions of the
40 scholarship on a form prescribed by the LEB pursuant to the provisions
41 of this Act;
42
43 b) Must carry the full load of subjects prescribed per semester by the
44 SUC or PHEI, and shall not, under any circumstances, drop a course
45 which will result in underloading;
46
47 c) Must meet all the academic requirements of the SUC or PHEI
48 concerned;

- 1 d) Must finish the entire Bachelor of Laws or Juris Doctor degree program
2 within the prescribed time frame of the SUC or PHEI where the scholar
3 is enrolled in, subject to the retention policies of the SUC or PHEI:
4 *Provided*, That nothing herein shall prevent the scholar from applying
5 for a leave of absence for justifiable reason/s;
6
7 e) Must take the Bar examination within a maximum period of one (1)
8 year after completion of the degree program; and
9
10 f) Must render return service as provided under Section 11-D of this Act.
11

12 A violation of any of the foregoing conditions shall automatically result in the
13 revocation of the scholarship provided under this Act. The acceptance of
14 another scholarship while the scholar is a recipient of the benefits of the
15 LSRS Program shall also result in the revocation of the scholarship.
16

17 **Section 11-D. Return Service.** – The scholar shall render at least one (1)
18 year of return service for every scholarship year availed of: *Provided*, That
19 any fraction of scholarship year shall be deemed as one (1) whole year for
20 the purposes of computing the return service provided under this Section;
21 *Provided, further*, That the scholar shall have a period of three (3) years
22 from the time of signing the Roll of Attorneys to commence the return
23 service; *Provided further*, That the scholar shall be integrated into the public
24 or pro bono legal service system, through the Public Attorney’s Office and
25 other appropriate government offices in need of lawyers, and shall receive
26 the appropriate civil service rank, salary and related benefits; *Provided*,
27 *further*, That the mandatory return service herein provided shall be distinct
28 and separate from the Clinical Legal Education Program as provided under
29 Rule 138-A of the Rules of Court; *Provided, finally*, That the scholar shall
30 serve in a government public legal office in the scholar’s hometown or, in
31 the absence of a need thereat, in any municipality within the scholar’s home
32 province, or in any underserved municipality closest to the scholar’s
33 hometown determined by the Board as a priority area, upon consultation
34 with relevant stakeholders.
35

36 A scholar who fails or refuses to comply with the mandatory return service
37 and integration provided under this Act shall be required to pay two times
38 the full cost of scholarship, including other benefits and expenses incurred
39 by reason of participation in the scholarship program, with full legal interest
40 thereon; *Provided*, That the abovementioned penalties shall not apply to
41 lawyers who fail to comply with the required return service on account, or
42 by reason of, severe or serious illness, or death.
43

44 **SEC. 4. Appropriations.** – An initial amount of One Hundred Million Pesos
45 (Php100,000,000.00) shall be appropriated as seed money for the establishment of
46 the Legal Scholarship and Return Service Program provided under this Act.
47

48 Thereafter, the amount necessary for the continuous implementation of the
49 legal scholarship provided under this Act shall be included in the scholarship program
50 of SUCs and LEB in the annual General Appropriations Act.

1
2 **SEC. 5. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within thirty (30) days from
3 the effectivity of this Act, the LEB, in consultation with the Public Attorney’s Office
4 (PAO), the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, the Philippine Association of Law
5 Schools and other relevant stakeholders, shall promulgate the implementing rules
6 and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

7
8 **SEC. 6. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, orders, issuances, rules and
9 regulations or part thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby
10 repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

11
12 **SEC. 7. *Effectivity Clause.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after
13 its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in at least two (2) newspapers of general
14 circulation.

15
16 **Approved,**