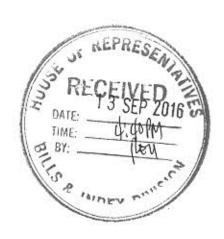
Republic of the Philippines HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

First Regular Session

House Bill No. __3595



Introduced by Representative Estrellita B. Suansing

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Since time immemorial, farmers have been paying irrigation fees to provide water for their crops all over the Philippines. It is time that we do away with this burden on our farmers. In other countries, both in the developed nations and even those in less developed countries such as Thailand, supplying water services through artificial means is considered part and parcel of the government's commitment to the agricultural sector.

Food security is a highly imperative issue nowadays considering the expanding global population most especially in the Philippines, which already numbers more than a 100 million and occupies a land area only about the size of the US state of Nevada. To impose harsh financial hardships on our agricultural workers would only impede increased food production and discourage Filipinos to become farmers whose current average age is an elderly 58.

To cite one example, when Typhoon Lando struck the Philippines in 2015, the province of Nueva Ecija was flooded, destroying the palay and other crops. Of the 108,000 hectares of agricultural land, only around 10% or 10,108 hectares were harvested. The rest were destroyed which resulted in total losses of more than 3.3 billion pesos for palay alone.

Vegetables suffered losses of 76 million pesos, corn had 20.8 million pesos and root crops had 6 million pesos. Aside from income losses, many of our farmers also lost their homes because of the typhoon and on top of all that are the bills for irrigation services.

Financial constraints in the agricultural sector are a constant threat to the farmers laying them on the brink of bankruptcy and charging them for irrigation fees is like adding insult to injury. Water is a God given resource that should be free to all, whether

it should sustain man's bodily functions or for purposes of growing crops to feed mankind.

Hence, the prompt passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

ESTRELLITA B. SUANSING

Republic of the Philippines HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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AN ACT

REQUIRING THE NATIONAL IRRIGATION ADMINISTRATION TO RENDER FULL IRRIGATION SERVICE FEES FREE OF CHARGE FOR QUALIFIED BENEFICIARIES AND WAIVE ALL UNPAID IRRIGATION SERVICE FEES

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the "Free Irrigation Service Fee for Qualified Beneficiaries Act of 2016."

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- SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. Under Article II, Section 9 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, "The State shall promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation and free the people from poverty thru policies that provide adequate social services to promote full employment, a rising standard of living and an improved quality of life for all." It is therefore the duty of the State to provide irrigation services at no cost to qualified beneficiaries as one of the means to raising the standard of living.
- SECTION 3. Qualifications for Waiver of Irrigation Service Fees. All Filipino farmers whose farm lands cover an area not greater than five (5) hectares shall be exempt from the payment of irrigation service fees.
- SECTION 4. Waiver of Unpaid Irrigation Service Fees. All unpaid irrigation service fees due from a landowner whose farm lands cover an area not greater than five (5) hectares are hereby waived by the Government.
- SECTION 6. Implementing Rules and Regulations. Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Agriculture shall, in coordination with

- NIA and after consultations with directly affected stakeholders, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.
 - SECTION 7. Separability Clause. If for any reason, any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, such parts or portions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.
 - SECTION 8. Repealing Clause. All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, issuances, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.
 - SECTION 9. Effectivity. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.
- 11 Approved,