

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2546



Introduced by **HON. LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Despite the passage of Republic Act No. 9514, or the "Fire Code of the Philippines" in 2008, the Bureau of Fire Protection has reported an increase in fire incidents in 2018 along with casualties of 200 people caught in fire accidents.

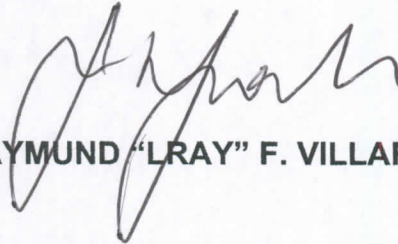
The Fire Code of the Philippines was to be the principal law that helped prevent and suppress destructive fires in the country. It also aimed for the professionalization of the fire service as a profession and encourage an increase of firefighters. However, as of 2017, the Commission on Audit reported the lack of less than half the ideal number of firefighters in the country.

Despite calls by the BFP to hire more personnel, the Department of Budget and Management only approved 2,000 of the 10,000 requested hired personnel. The BFP is also short of fire trucks—39% of which was acquired during 1950 to 1999—and lacks self-contained breathing apparatus devices, a crucial equipment for rescuers. Almost 400 municipalities in the country do not have their own fire trucks.

The proposed measure seeks to address these pressing concerns for fire prevention through the establishment of a Fire Protection Modernization Program. The program would include hiring of more personnel, acquiring modern fire equipment, trainings for firefighters, and the provision of the appropriate budget for this undertaking.

In the hopes of preventing fire incidents, and stopping the unfortunate increase of fire-related deaths nationwide, this representation files this counterpart bill to Senator Bong Go's version in the Senate for a safer Philippines.

The approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lray F. Villafuerte, Jr.', with a stylized, cursive script.

LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.

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Introduced by **HON. LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.**

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING AND MODERNIZING THE BUREAU OF FIRE PROTECTION,
PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known as the "Fire Protection Modernization Act of 2019."

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is the policy of the State to develop the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), ensure public safety through the prevention of and suppression of all kinds of destructive fires with the active support of the community. Towards this end, the State shall implement a Fire Protection Modernization Program.

SECTION 3. *Additional Functions of the BFP.* - Aside from its existing functions under Republic Act No 9514 and Republic Act No. 6975, the BFP shall have the following functions:

- a) Be responsible for the prevention and suppression of all destructive fires on buildings, houses and other structures, including those found in economic zones including agro-industrial economic zones, free ports and special economic zones, IT parks/centers, manufacturing economic zones, medical tourism parks/centers, tourism economic zone, and other similar entities;
- b) Establish and maintain regional arson laboratories and research and testing facilities with complete equipment;

- c) Respond to disasters, whether manmade or natural, and respond to other emergencies, including rescue, emergency medical, hazardous materials (hazmat), chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive (CBRNE) materials, and other emergencies;
- d) Conduct monthly fire prevention campaigns and information drive in all local government units, particularly in informal settler areas and economically-depressed areas, in coordination with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG); and
- e) Require the building owner to submit plans and specifications of the said building and other pertinent documents as may be determined by BFP and evaluate the same to ensure compliance with the Fire Code and other applicable codes and standards. For this purpose, a fire safety evaluation clearance shall be issued as a prerequisite for the issuance of the building permit.

SECTION 4. *Fire Protection Modernization Program.* – The Bureau of Fire Protection, in coordination with the DILG, shall establish and implement a Fire Protection Modernization Program which shall consist of the following components:

- a) Fire Protection Service - The modernization program shall include the establishment of Fire Protection Service (FPS) in all local government units with no existing fire protection services, and the establishment of rescue hotlines in all local government units;
- b) Force restructuring and organizational development. — The modernization program shall develop the BFP into a compact, efficient, responsive and modern with the capability to implement Republic Act No. 9514 otherwise known as the Fire Code of the Philippines. The BFP, within ninety (90) days from the promulgation of the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of this Act, shall recommend and submit to the Secretaries of DILG and Department of Budget and Management the revised organizational structure and staffing pattern for officers and personnel of the BFP. The revised organizational structure shall include all the offices of the BFP, the Fire Training Service, and the BFP Central and Regional Hospitals. The BFP shall design and establish qualifications upgrading program for the BFP officers and personnel in accordance with the Civil Service Commission rules and regulations;

- c) Capability, material, and technology development - The modernization program shall upgrade existing fire protection equipment and services and acquire of new equipment for fire protection: *Provided*, That the acquisition of new equipment shall be synchronized with the phase-out of uneconomical and obsolete major equipment and weapons systems in the BFP inventory;
- d) Specialized services development - The modernization program shall establish specialized fire protection services within the BFP such as but not limited to; high-rise building fires, forest fires, aircraft/airport fires, ship fires, chemical fires, disaster rescue services, emergency medical services, and the like; and
- e) Human resource development - The modernization program shall include trainings for BFP personnel, and establish training facilities, hire internationally accredited training consultants and advisers if experts of equal qualification cannot be secured locally, to accelerate the personnel development program. All newly appointed uniformed personnel of the BFP shall undergo a Mandatory Training Program.

Within one hundred eighty (180) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of DILG and the head of the BFP shall submit the details of the Fire Protection Modernization Program to Congress.

SECTION 5. *Multi-Year Contracts or Other Contractual Arrangement.* - The Secretary of Interior and Local Government may, subject to the approval of the President, under provisions of existing laws and regulations including those of the Commission on Audit and under such terms and conditions favorable to the government, enter into multi-year contracts or other contractual agreements with local or foreign 6 suppliers/contractors in the implementation of this Act.

SECTION 6. *Annual Report.* - The BFP shall submit to the Office of the President and Congress, through the Secretary of Interior and Local Government, an annual report containing the process and status of the implementation of the Fire Protection Modernization Program.

SECTION 7. *Period of Implementation.* – The Fire Protection Modernization Program under this Act, shall be implemented over a period of three (3) years effective

upon the date of the approval of this Act: *Provided*, That payments for amortization of outstanding multi-year contract, obligations incurred under the modernization program may extend beyond this period.

SECTION 8. *Appropriation.* - The amount necessary to implement the provisions of this Act shall be sourced from the BFP modernization trust fund as provided for in Republic Act No. 9514. An additional amount of Five Billion Pesos (P5,000,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated to be included in the General Appropriations Act of the year immediately following the effectivity of this Act.

SECTION 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - Within thirty (30) days from the approval of this Act, the BFP and DILG shall promulgate the rules and regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this Act

SECTION 10. *Separability Clause.* - Any portion or provision of this Act that is declared unconstitutional shall not have the effect of nullifying other portions or provisions hereof as long as such remaining portions can still subsist and be given effect in their entirety.

SECTION 11. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, ordinances, rules, regulations, other issuances or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with this Act, are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 12. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,