



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila



Eighteenth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5313

Introduced by Representative Frederick W. Siao

EXPLANATORY NOTE

At the core of this proposed bill is the recognition of the ethnolinguistic flag for Filipinos sharing common ethnicity, culture and language.

The proposal is based on the realization that despite the Philippines being a multi-cultural and multi-lingual country, we use either Filipino, Tagalog or English as a means of communication in terms of public information such as in public signages. This is in contrast with the practice in other countries where they recognize other local languages or use the most common language spoken within a certain place as it is mandated by their laws and policy. To correct this anomaly, we should adopt the multi-lingual method, and recognize the different ethnolinguistic groups found throughout the country.

In particular, Congress should mandate the display of “ethnolinguistic community flags” in government edifices, in addition to the national and local government flags, and to require street and building signages to be written in the most predominant local language, apart from Filipino and English.

An ethnolinguistic group refers to people unified by both a common ethnicity and language. Most Filipino ethnic groups have their own language. Despite this, the term is often used to emphasize when language is a major basis for the ethnic group, especially with regard to its neighbours.¹

¹ Fishman, Joshua A.; García, Ofelia (2010). Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity. Oxford University Press. p. 12. (access on 25 September 2019).

The Philippines is a country which is inhabited by a number of ethnic groups. In addition, these several ethnolinguistic groups whose kinds of language are Austronesian since their discovery, have established a different kind of national and symbolic prominence which are uniquely theirs.² At present, there are 110 ethnolinguistic groups in the country based on the National Commission on Indigenous People's INFOKIT.³

While the use of ethnolinguistic or regional flags may sometimes symbolize fractious politics and regionalism, it more often represents pride in our unique identity and culture.

Accordingly, Congress may authorize the different ethnolinguistic groups to also bear their own flags to identify as well as differentiate their varying ethnolinguistic groupings. It may also mandate the use of local languages in street and building signages to promote local culture and heritage.

In light of the foregoing premises, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



FREDERICK W. SIAO

² Ethnic Groups in the Philippines: The Most Formidable Treasures of Philippine Culture. Retrieve from <http://driftwoodjourneys.com/ethnic-groups-in-the-philippines-the-most-formidable-treasures-of-philippine-culture/>

³ INFOKIT from the National Commission on Indigenous People.



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AN ACT

**RECOGNIZING AND PROMOTING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE
OF THE FILIPINO ETHNOLINGUISTIC GROUPS THROUGH THE
ADOPTION OF ETHNOLINGUISTIC COMMUNITY FLAGS AND
USE OF LOCAL LANGUAGES IN STREET SIGNAGES AND OTHER
INFORMATIONAL SIGNAGES IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND
FACILITIES**

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the
"Ethnolinguistic Community Recognition Act."

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State shall recognize, respect,
and protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities to preserve and
develop their cultures, traditions, and institutions. It shall consider these
rights in the formulation of national plans and policies, foster the preservation,
enrichment, and dynamic evolution of a Filipino national culture based on the
principle of unity in diversity.

1 SEC. 3. *Use of Ethnolinguistic Community Flag.* – Provinces, cities
2 and municipalities are hereby allowed to adopt and use ethnolinguistic
3 community flags that represent the predominant ethnolinguistic group or
4 groups in their respective localities. The design of these flags shall be subject
5 to approval by the National Historical Institute (NHI), as provided in the next
6 succeeding section.

7 SEC. 4. *Ethnolinguistic Flag Recognition.* – The NHI is hereby
8 mandated to receive, record and evaluate applications for recognition of
9 ethnolinguistic flags, and approve applications based on precedence, design,
10 customs and traditions.

11 SEC. 5. *Flown with the National Flag.* – When flown with the
12 National flag, the ethnolinguistic flag may be flown in the same halyard as the
13 Philippine flag but below the latter and may not be of greater size than the
14 Philippine flag.

15 When flown with other national or local flags, the rules provided for in
16 Section 12 of Republic Act No. 8491 otherwise known as the “Flag and
17 Heraldic Code of the Philippines” shall be strictly observed.

18 SEC. 6. *Use of Local Language in Public Signages.* – New signages
19 that shall be placed in public streets, buildings and other facilities are hereby
20 required to be written in English, Filipino, and the most predominant local
21 language.

1 SEC. 7. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days
2 from the effectivity of this Act, the National Historical Institute shall issue the
3 necessary rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act.

4 SEC. 8. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, administrative
5 orders, rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act, are hereby repealed or
6 amended accordingly.

7 SEC. 9. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after
8 its complete publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general
9 circulation.

10 Approved,