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Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 1155



Introduced by
HON. YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ
and
HON. FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Eastern Visayas is located at the very heart of the Philippines, with the islands of Samar and Leyte serving as island bridges between the country's northern island of Luzon and the southern region of Mindanao. One of the most ecologically diverse regions of the country, the three islands of Samar, Leyte, and Biliran are blessed with land, mineral, energy, and marine resources, making it favorable for agricultural, fishery, and industrial potentials. Its geothermal resources have also been tapped, producing electricity for the national power grid. Its coconut, abaca, and other agricultural produce have contributed toward increasing the national economic supply. But in spite of its immense potentials and vast resources, Eastern Visayas remains one of the poorest regions in the country today.

In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan, one of the strongest typhoons in recorded human history, flattened parts of Eastern Visayas, leaving behind a trail of devastation that has tragically resulted in loss of lives, livelihood, and property. But even as it rises from the typhoon, the region continues to be caught up in the vicious cycle of poverty.

Even before Typhoon Haiyan struck, the incidence of poverty has already been worsening. While the nation's overall economic situation has been improving on the average, poverty in the region worsened from 2006 to 2012. In 2014, poverty incidence was at 54.9 percent; more than half of the region's population of 4.10 million is now extremely poor and unable to earn the minimum amount necessary to address their basic needs.

1 The recent typhoon has aggravated this already deplorable situation,
2 with the poor becoming desperately poorer. Following the recent latest Family
3 Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES) conducted in 2015, four of the six
4 provinces in Eastern Visayas are among the country's top twenty poorest
5 provinces Leyte (ranked 17 at 46.7% poverty incidence), Western Samar
6 (ranked 14th at 49.5%), Eastern Samar (ranked 11th at 50%) and Northern
7 Samar (ranked 4th at 61.6%).
8

9 Our post-Haiyan situation has already revealed the vulnerability of the
10 poor to long-term poverty as a result of major natural disasters. This is
11 particularly the case for the poor residing in Eastern Visayas. This vulnerability
12 to poverty arises because many of the poor are living just above the poverty
13 line and mainly rely on income from agriculture. Income inequality, especially
14 in Eastern Visayas is very high. Incomes of the poor are low and they have
15 minimal savings to provide a buffer from the disaster. Remittances will be an
16 important part of families coping strategies, however, the poorest have lower
17 access to remittances compared to the better off families.
18

19 Given this situation in Eastern Visayas, there is a need to establish an
20 effective institutional mechanism to be exercised through a unified responsive
21 agency. This will address the need for a coordinated and integrated approach
22 in the formulation and implementation of the plans, programs and projects
23 geared towards economic growth and development in the region, including the
24 establishment, among others, of special economic zones and support of the
25 required social innovations.
26

27 This measure seeks to enact the creation of the Eastern Visayas
28 Development Authority, a proposed development agency mandated to
29 promote, coordinate and facilitate the active and extensive participation of all
30 sectors to effect the socioeconomic development of Eastern Visayas.
31

32 By providing an integrated and coordinated direction to the agricultural,
33 industrial, economic and social development, EVDA will serve as the lead
34 agency tasked to steer the sound and balanced industrial, economic and social
35 growth of Eastern Visayas and carry on with the speedy rehabilitation in the
36 aftermath of typhoon Haiyan. To this end, EVDA will craft and implement
37 programs and projects that will increase trade, tourism and investments in the
38 region, encourage private enterprise and advance efforts towards progress and
39 development
40

41 Once the promise of a resilient economy is fulfilled, the right economic
42 and social conditions will be realized - one that will provide jobs to the people,
43 especially those in rural areas, increase their productivity and their individual
44 and family income, and thereby improve the level and quality of their living
45 conditions.
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2 In view of the foregoing, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.
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12 **Rep. YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ**
13 Representative, Tingog Sinirangan
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18 **Rep. FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ**
19 Representative, First District of Leyte
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15

16
17 Introduced by
18 **HON. YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ**
19 and
20

21 **HON. FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ**
22
23

24
25 **AN ACT CREATING THE EASTERN VISAYAS DEVELOPMENT**
26 **AUTHORITY (EVDA), DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS,**
27 **PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**
28

29
30 *Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of the Representatives of the*
31 *Philippines in Congress assembled:*
32

33 **Section 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “Eastern
34 Visayas Development Authority (EVDA) Act of 2019”.
35

36 **Section 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is hereby declared the policy of
37 the State to promote and accelerate the sound and balanced industrial,
38 economic and social growth of Eastern Visayas and ensure its speedy
39 rehabilitation in the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan by increasing its trade, tourism
40 and investments, encouraging private enterprise and advancing efforts towards
41 progress and development within the context of national plans and policies in
42 order to provide jobs to the people, especially those in rural areas, increase

1 their productivity and their individual and family income, and thereby improve
2 the level and quality of their living conditions.

3
4 Towards this end, an effective institutional mechanism to be exercised
5 through a unified responsive agency shall be established in order to address
6 the need for a coordinated and integrated approach in the formulation and
7 implementation of the plans, programs and projects geared towards economic
8 growth and development in the region, the establishment, among others, of
9 special economic zones and in support of the required social innovations.

10
11 **Section 3. The Authority.** - The Eastern Visayas Development
12 Authority, hereinafter referred to as the Authority, is hereby created, which shall
13 promote, coordinate and facilitate the active and extensive participation of all
14 sectors to effect the socioeconomic development of Eastern Visayas.

15
16 **Section 4. Coverage** - The Authority shall cover all the provinces of
17 Northern Samar, Eastern Samar, (Western) Samar, Leyte, Biliran and Southern
18 Leyte, the independent city of Ormoc and the highly urbanized city of Tacloban.

19
20 **Section 5. Main Office** - The Authority shall have its main office in
21 Tacloban City. It may establish other satellite offices in Metro Manila and in
22 other provinces within Eastern Visayas, if necessary, to achieve the objectives
23 of this Act. The Authority shall also have a term of fifty (50) years from the
24 effectivity of its Act and renewable for the same period unless otherwise
25 provided by law.

26
27 **Section 6. Purpose** – The Authority shall have the following purposes
28 and objectives:

- 29
30 (a) To promote the development of Eastern Visayas by initiating and/or
31 undertaking, by itself or otherwise, development and/or business
32 projects of corporate, economic nature whether in agriculture, power,

1 infrastructure, energy, public utilities, land development, manufacturing,
2 exploration and/or utilization of natural resources and other fields or
3 projects;

4
5
6 (b) To integrate government and private sector efforts and resources for a
7 planned sustainable development and balanced growth of Eastern
8 Visayas, as proposed in the post-Haiyan rehabilitation plan and other
9 relevant development plans, programs and projects, through the
10 combined and harmonized pursuit of industrial, economic and social
11 objectives on a self-sustaining basis;

12
13 (c) To facilitate investments in any field as would enhance the economic
14 development of the region;

15
16 (d) To provide a model for the full implementation of comprehensive
17 regional industrialization and agricultural modernization policy.

18
19 **Section 7. Powers and Functions of the Authority.** – In the exercise
20 of those activities, which specific to Eastern Visayas in scope, intent and nature,
21 the Authority shall have the following powers and functions:

22
23 (a) Formulate an integrated development framework for Eastern Visayas
24 that is consistent with the peace and development initiatives of the
25 national government, as far as practicable;

26
27 (b) Provide strategic direction for the long-term economic development
28 Eastern Visayas;

29
30 (c) Integrate, prioritize, program and implement, whenever allowed and
31 authorized by applicable laws, specific programs, activities and projects
32 within Eastern Visayas, including Official Development Assistance

- 1 (ODA) projects, subject to such limitations prescribed by existing laws,
2 rules and regulations;
3
- 4 (d) Recommend to and, whenever necessary, call upon the proper agencies
5 on the technical support, physical assistance and, generally, the level of
6 priority to be accorded to agricultural, industrial, commercial, and
7 infrastructure, environmental, tourism and technological programs and
8 projects soliciting or requiring direct or indirect help from or through the
9 national government or any of its instrumentalities;
10
- 11 (e) Advocate to the constituents of Eastern Visayas, their elected
12 representatives in Congress and the national government, national
13 policies that will foster the integrated and balanced development of
14 Eastern Visayas;
15
- 16 (f) Promote and facilitate investments in any field that would enhance the
17 socioeconomic development of Eastern Visayas and uplift the living
18 standards of the people and their socio-political activities in close
19 coordination with agencies primarily mandated to undertake such
20 functions;
21
- 22 (g) Explore sources for financing priority programs, projects and activities
23 that are critical to the development of Eastern Visayas;
24
- 25 (h) Coordinate and facilitate the extension of necessary planning,
26 management and technical assistance to prospective and existing
27 investors, complementary and in support of agencies primarily
28 mandated to execute such functions;
29
- 30 (i) Establish a comprehensive and integrated database on Eastern Visayas
31 to support planning and decision making;
32

- 1 (j) Perform prior screening functions, as a condition precedent to the
2 approval by any national, provincial or municipal government agency, of
3 any permit, license, lease, franchise or concession for the operation of
4 any business or the exploitation, development or utilization of natural
5 resources within the Eastern Visayas;
- 6 (k) Negotiate and enter into management and/or consulting contracts with
7 local and/or foreign management consulting firms for the management
8 of the Authority and/or the planning and implementation of agricultural,
9 tourism and industrial development projects in Eastern Visayas;
- 10
- 11 (l) Avail of the expertise of any particular employee, technician, or group of
12 persons in any bureau, office or department of the national government
13 whose services are deemed urgently needed for the attainment of the
14 goals of the Authority, with the consent and approval of the department
15 head concerned;
- 16
- 17 (m) Conduct scientific experiments, investigation and research to discover
18 economical and practical methods of increasing agricultural and
19 industrial production and other related endeavors;
- 20
- 21 (n) Encourage and organize by arranging appropriate financing schemes,
22 cooperative ventures in agriculture, agri-business, industry, tourism and
23 commerce;
- 24
- 25 (o) Monitor, evaluate and formulate recommendations in the
26 implementation of Eastern Visayas-wide development programs,
27 activities and projects;
- 28
- 29 (p) Establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure the timely implementation
30 of Eastern Visayas-wide projects, whenever necessary, as far as
31 practicable, including, but not limited to, public-private partnership;
- 32

1 (q) Review and recommend for approval by the National Economic and
2 Development Authority (NEDA) Board such Eastern Visayas-wide
3 programs, projects, and plans by the national government and donor
4 agencies subject to existing laws, rules and regulations;

5
6 (r) Recommend the creation and regulate, supervise and develop special
7 economic zones according to the principles and provisions set forth in
8 this Act;

9
10 (s) Interface with foreign assistance agencies and international aid
11 organizations, in coordination with NEDA and other relevant national
12 government agencies, for the purposes of obtaining financing support,
13 grants and donations in support of its programs and projects;

14
15 (t) Receive and administer donations, contributions, grants, bequests or
16 gifts, in cash or in kind, from foreign governments, international
17 agencies, private entities and other sources, including ODA, to be used
18 in the development of Eastern Visayas, subject to existing laws, rules
19 and regulations;

20
21 (u) To sue and be sued, enter into contracts, acquire, purchase, hold, lease,
22 transfer, dispose of property of any kind or nature to carry out the
23 purposes to this Act; and

24
25 (v) Discharge other functions that may be deemed necessary or as may be
26 provided by law.

27
28 In the discharge of its functions, the Authority shall ensure appropriate
29 consultation and coordination with the Regional Development Council Eastern
30 Visayas (RDC-EV) and other local development councils as well as with
31 national government agencies, local government units, accredited people's

1 organizations, non-government organizations and the private sector operating
2 in Eastern Visayas.

3
4 The Authority, through the EVDA Chairperson, shall submit to the
5 President and both Houses of Congress annual reports on its accomplishments
6 and activities.

7 **Section 8. Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer.** – The EVDA
8 Chairperson shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines with the rank
9 of Undersecretary and shall act as the Chief Executive Officer. He or she shall
10 serve a term of six (6) years from the date of his or her appointment unless
11 removed for cause. *Provided*, That no person shall be appointed as
12 Chairperson unless he or she is a Filipino citizen, of good moral character, of
13 proven probity and integrity and a holder of a degree in any of the following
14 fields: economics, business, public administration, law, management or their
15 equivalent and have at least five (5) years relevant experience preferably in the
16 field of management or public administration: *Provided, further*, That he or she
17 shall be a resident of Eastern Visayas for at least (5) years before the
18 appointment: *Provided, finally*, that he or she shall also be an ex officio member
19 of the NEDA Board and the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone
20 Authority (TIEZA) Board.

21
22 The Chairperson shall have the following duties and functions:

- 23
24 (a) Call and preside meetings of the Board and see to it that the policies,
25 programs and rules and regulations are implemented properly;
26
27 (b) Call on formidable players in the formulation and implementation of a
28 comprehensive and integrated development plan for Eastern Visayas,
29 investment programs and the preparation of investment programming
30 priorities, annual reports and other pertinent documents approved by the
31 Authority;

- 1 (c) Identify solutions to key issues and concerns, taking into account related
2 risks, affected parties and impact, in coordination with the Board and key
3 stakeholders;
4
- 5 (d) Advocate the Authority's work among the various concerned sectors and
6 stakeholders;
7
- 8 (e) Call on any agency, group, individual member of the Board, local
9 government unit, and host community to address issues and concerns
10 relating to implementation of major programs, projects and activities;
11
- 12 (f) Supervise the monitoring and timely implementation of Eastern Visayas-
13 wide programs, projects and activities;
14
- 15 (g) Endorse to the Board all policy recommendations, plans and programs
16 for approval;
17
- 18 (h) Accept, on behalf of the Authority, donations, contributions, grants and
19 bequests or gifts, in cash or in kind, from members, foreign
20 governments, international agencies, private entities or any individual for
21 purpose that will realize the functions of the Authority;
22
- 23 (i) Supervise administrative operations including disbursement of any fund
24 of the Authority, subject to the usual accounting and auditing
25 procedures, and submit reports thereon;
26
- 27 (j) Execute and administer the policies and measures approved by the
28 Board;
29
- 30 (k) Appoint all employees of the Authority, and remove, dismiss or otherwise
31 discipline for cause, such employees in accordance with the standard
32 guidelines for recruitment, employment, and discipline in the Civil
Service Code;

1
2 (l) Represent the Authority in all dealings with other offices, agencies, and
3 instrumentalities of the government and with all persons and entities,
4 public or private;

5
6 (m) Sign agreements and/or contracts on behalf of the Authority, including
7 those for expert and consultant services and other reports of
8 accountabilities emanating from the Authority; and
9

10 (n) Perform such other functions that the Board may direct to carry out the
11 provisions of this Act.
12

13 **Section 9. Deputy Chairperson.** – The EVDA Chairperson shall be
14 assisted by one Deputy Chairperson, who shall be appointed by the President
15 of the Philippines with the rank of Assistant Secretary upon the
16 recommendation of the EVDA Chairperson. The Deputy Chairperson shall have
17 the same qualifications as the Chairperson and shall perform such duties and
18 functions as may be assigned by the Chairperson or as provided for by law.
19

20 **Section 10. Executive Director.** – An Executive Director shall be
21 appointed by the President of the Philippines upon recommendation by the
22 Chairperson: *Provided*, That no person shall be appointed as Executive unless
23 he or she is a Filipino citizen, of good moral character, of proven probity and
24 integrity and a holder of a degree in any of the following fields: economics,
25 business, public administration, law, management or their equivalent and have
26 at least five (5) years relevant experience in said fields: *Provided, further*, That
27 he or she shall be a resident of Eastern Visayas five (5) years prior to his or her
28 appointment and has the requisite eligibilities for third level career service
29 position pursuant to the career executive rank system: *Provided, finally*, that he
30 or she shall reside in Eastern Visayas during his or her incumbency.
31

1 The Executive Director shall assist the Chairperson in carrying out the
2 functions of the Authority and shall, likewise, serve as the Secretary of the
3 Board.

4
5 Notwithstanding the foregoing and the other provisions of this section,
6 the management of the Authority may by Board Resolution contract the
7 services of a firm of professional managers to manage the affairs of the
8 Authority.

9
10 **Section 11. Board of Directors.** – The Authority's overall directions and
11 thrusts shall be provided and approved, unless provided otherwise in this Act,
12 by the EVDA Board of directors, hereinafter referred to as the Board. It shall be
13 composed of the following members:

14
15 (a) The EVDA Chairperson as head;

16
17 (b) The Regional Development Council of Eastern Visayas (RDC-EV)
18 Chairperson;

19
20 (c) Senator, upon designation by the Senate President, who shall be an ex
21 officio member;

22
23 (d) Member of the House of Representatives, upon designation by the
24 District Representatives of the legislative districts comprising Eastern
25 Visayas, who shall be an ex officio member;

26
27 (e) The Regional President of the League of Municipalities-Eastern Visayas
28 Chapter;

29
30 (f) The three (3) Private Sector Representatives to be appointed by the
31 President, upon the recommendation of the Board comprising of one (1)
32 representative each from the:

1. Eastern Visayas business sector;
2. Eastern Visayas academic sector; and
3. Eastern Visayas non-government sector.

The term of the three (3) representatives from the private sector shall be six (6) years: *Provided*, That at the initial appointment of such members, the second member to be appointed shall only serve a term of four (4) years and the third member to be appointed shall only serve a term of two (2) years. *Provided, further*, That they shall continue to hold office until their successors shall have been appointed. All vacancies, prior to the expiration of the term, shall be filled for the unexpired term only.

Members of the Board shall received a per diem of not more than five thousand pesos (P5,000.00) for every board meeting: *Provided, however*, That the per diem collected per month does not exceed the equivalent of four (4) meetings: *Provided, further*, That the amount of per diem for every Board meeting may be increased by the President but such amount shall not be increased within two (2) years its last increase.

The term of *ex officio* members including the Senator and the Member of the House of Representatives shall correspond to their term as elected officials.

The Board shall have the following functions:

- (a) Provide direction and guidance for the Authority's work and thrusts for Eastern Visayas;
- (b) Ensure that the goals and policies of the Authority are consistent with the overall national development goals and objectives;

- 1 (c) Ensure that the programs of the Authority are consistent with regional
2 and local development plans, programs and projects and vice versa for
3 purposes of harmonization;
4
5 (d) Explore sources for financing of priority Eastern Visayas-wide
6 development plans, programs, projects and activities;
7
8 (e) Create committees/task forces as may be deemed necessary in the
9 accomplishment of duties and functions;
10
11 (f) Determine schedules, establish voting procedures, criteria for the
12 constitution of a quorum and other rules and regulations in the conduct
13 of Board meetings; and
14 (g) Perform such functions as may be necessary to carry out the purposes
15 of this Act.
16

17 **Section 12. Executive Committee.** – The Board shall constitute an
18 Executive Committee from among its membership to act, for and on its behalf
19 when the Board is not in session, on urgent matters as may be deemed
20 necessary by the Chairperson.
21

22 The following shall comprise the Executive Committee:
23

- 24 (a) The EVDA Chairperson as head;
25
26 (b) The RDC EV Chairperson;
27
28 (c) The Private Sector Representative from the business sector;
29
30 (d) The Private Sector Representative from the academic sector;
31
32 (e) The Private Sector Representative from the non-government sector.

1
2 **Section 14. EVDA Advisory Council.** – There is hereby constituted an
3 EVDA Advisory Committee to be composed of the following:

4
5 (a) EVDA Chairperson as head;

6
7 (b) The RDC EV Chairperson;

8
9 (c) The District Representatives of the legislative districts comprising
10 Eastern Visayas;

11
12 (d) The Provincial Governors of the provinces comprising Eastern Visayas;

13
14 (e) The City Mayors of the independent cities in Eastern Visayas;

15
16 (f) The Regional Directors of the national line agencies with regional offices
17 in Eastern Visayas.

18
19 The EVDA Advisory Council shall convene at least once every six (6)
20 months, or as often as necessary, upon the call of the EDVA Chairperson,
21 advise or be consulted by the Authority on important matters related to Eastern
22 Visayas.

23
24 **Section 14. Organizational Structure.** – The Board of Directors, upon
25 the recommendation of the Chairperson shall determine the organizational
26 structure, staffing pattern and pay scales of the Authority subject to existing civil
27 service and compensation laws. The Chairperson may reorganize the Authority
28 and may create or abolish divisions, units or branches therein as the exigencies
29 of the affairs of the Authority may require.

30
31 **Section 15. Merit System.** – All officials and employees of the EVDA
32 shall be selected and appointed on the basis of merit and fitness in accordance

1 with civil service law, rules and regulations. The recruitment, transfer,
2 promotion, and dismissal of all its personnel including temporary workers shall
3 be governed by a merit system that will be established by the EVDA in
4 compliance with existing laws, rules and regulations.

5
6
7 **Section 16. Appropriations.** – There is hereby authorized to be
8 appropriated the sum of one billion pesos (P 1,000,000,000.00) to cover the
9 initial operating costs of the Authority to be charged against the unexpended
10 contingency funds of the Office of the President.

11
12 Thereafter, the amount needed for the operations and maintenance of
13 the Authority shall be provided in the General Appropriations Act: *Provided*,
14 That the operating expenses of the Authority should not exceed fourteen
15 percent (14%) of the annual appropriation: *Provided further*, That at least eight-
16 six percent (86%) of said annual appropriation shall be disbursed for the
17 programs, projects and activities of the Authority.

18
19 **Section 17. Transfer of Post-Haiyan Rehabilitation Funds.** All
20 authority, control and administration of funds, equipment and properties
21 donated by foreign governments, foreign and local non-profit agencies and
22 foundations and private entities to the national government for the purpose of
23 the rehabilitation of areas in Eastern Visayas that were affected by typhoon
24 Haiyan as well as all other funds received and/or appropriated by the
25 Government of the Philippines for the same purpose are hereby transferred to
26 the Eastern Visayas Development Authority, which shall hereafter be the
27 administrator and have sole power of disposition and control over said funds,
28 in accordance with the provisions of this Act and/or until the purposes for which
29 the said funds had been donated are accomplished.

30
31 **Section 18. Formulation of the Eastern Visayas Development**
32 **Master Plan.** Upon its organization, the Authority shall formulate and report to

1 the President of the Philippines with the utmost expedition, but in no case longer
2 than one year, a master plan that will serve as the framework for the
3 accelerated and balanced development of Eastern Visayas in accordance with
4 the aims and purposes of this Act. Upon approval by the President of the
5 development master plan, he shall direct the Authority to implement them with
6 dispatch and efficiency.

7 The Authority shall also submit its development master plan to NEDA for
8 integration into the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan and public
9 investment program.

10
11 **Section 19. Administrative Supervision.** The Authority shall be placed
12 under the direct supervision of the President of the Philippines.

13
14 **Section 20. Interpretation.** The powers, authorities and functions that
15 are vested in the Authority are intended to decentralize governmental functions
16 and authority and promote an efficient and effective working relationship
17 between the Eastern Visayas Development Authority, the national government,
18 and the local government units.

19
20 **Section 21. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – The EVDA shall
21 adopt rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act within sixty
22 (60) days from the date of its approval.

23
24 **Section 22. Repealing Clause.** – All laws, decrees, executive orders,
25 rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with or contrary to the
26 provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

27
28 **Section 23. Separability Clause.** – If any part or provision of this Act is
29 held unconstitutional or invalid, other parts or provisions hereof which are not
30 affected shall continue to remain in full force and effect.

31

1 **Section 24. *Effectivity*.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days
2 following completion of its publication in the Official Gazette and in at least two
3 (2) newspapers of general circulation.