

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 2397



Introduced by **Rep. LAWRENCE LEMUEL H. FORTUN**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Balangay Festival is a celebration in Butuan City that commemorates the rich history of Butuanons that is encapsulated in the *Balangay* boats. These vessels, where a flotilla was found in the city, are the first-ever wooden watercraft to be excavated in Southeast Asia that serve as evidences of the extensive and vibrant trade relations between our ancestors and neighboring countries and empires around Southeast Asia, even as far as China.

More than a proof of boatbuilding genius and sailing tradition of a thousand years, the Balangay is also a cherished symbol of Filipino communities as voyages in the high seas nurtured the values of solidarity, resilience, and fortitude. As such, it has been used even before the arrival of the Spaniards to refer to the smallest political unit in the Philippines – the *barangay*.¹ With the national historical significance of the balangay, it has become a pride and joy of every Filipino, especially the people of Butuan; thus, an indelible part of the Butuanon identity.

The festival was first known as the Mazaua Festival from 1981 to 1985. It was then dubbed the “Freedom Festival” upon the takeover of the transition Revolutionary Government in 1986. It was only in 1987 when the annual festivity was more aptly renamed Balangay Festival to celebrate the rich and colorful history of Butuan City.

During the Balangay Festival, the City of Butuan hosts an array of activities including the celebrated Balangay lighted float parade, indigenous street dances, sports competitions, trade fairs, musical concerts, art exhibits and competitions, alumni and *balikbayan* homecomings, the Search for the Mutya Hong Butuan (The Gem of Butuan), thanksgiving activities, and more. The conduct of the festival is at all times a multi-sectoral effort with the city government, government agencies, the academe, the business sector, the religious sector, and the civic society contributing to make each celebration a success.

The Balangay Festival is a month-long celebration with the pinnacle of its festivity on May 19. Due to its social and cultural importance, this bill seeks to declare May 19 of every year a special nonworking holiday in the City of Butuan to give the Butuanons the opportunity to take active and meaningful participation in this longstanding tradition of celebrating a monumental legacy of our ancestors that should be etched in the consciousness of every Butuanon.

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

LAWRENCE LEMUEL H. FORTUN
1st District of Agusan del Norte

¹ Zamora, Mario D. "Political History, Autonomy and Change: The Case of the Barrio Charter." *Asian Studies Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia* 5, no. 1 (1967): 79-100. January 11, 2013. Accessed July 9, 2019. <https://asj.upd.edu.ph/mediabox/archive/ASJ-05-01-1967/zamora-political-history-autonomy-change-barrio-charter.pdf>.

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AN ACT
DECLARING MAY 19 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN
THE CITY OF BUTUAN, IN CELEBRATION OF THE BALANGAY FESTIVAL

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

Section 1. May 19 of every year is hereby declared a special nonworking holiday in the City of Butuan, in celebration of the Balangay Festival. When the holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the special nonworking day shall be observed on the Monday that follows.

Section 2. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.