

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

17th CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 3480

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Introduced by **REP. EVELINA G. ESCUDERO**

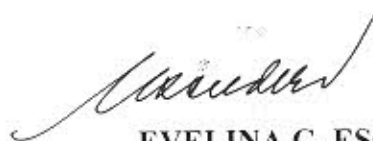
EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill is being filed to possibly further enhance the disposition of cases in court.

Undeniably, vacant courts and the non-availability of courts have resulted in the clogging of court dockets, especially in areas where cases have significantly increased.

With this proposed amendment of Batas Pambansa Blg. 129, as amended, it is believed that the Supreme Court shall be afforded the required flexibility in the management of courts. The re-assignment of judges from one judicial region or branch of a region to another through lateral transfer shall now be allowed as a matter of administrative prerogative on the part of the Supreme Court.

In view of the above, passage of this legislation with utmost dispatch is sought.



EVELINA G. ESCUDERO

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HOUSE BILL NO. 3480

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AN ACT
FURTHER AMENDING BATAS PAMBANSA BLG. 129, OR THE JUDICIARY
REORGANIZATION ACT OF 1980, AS AMENDED

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

SECTION 1. Section 17 of Batas Pambansa Blg. 129, as amended, is hereby further amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 17. - Appointment and assignment of Regional Trial Judges. - Every Regional Trial Judge shall be appointed to a **JUDICIAL** region which shall be his permanent station, and his appointment shall state the branch of the court and the seat thereof to which he shall be originally assigned. **IN THE EVENT OF THE FILING OF APPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY LATERAL TRANSFERS BY SITTING JUDGES TO ANOTHER REGION OR TO ANOTHER BRANCH WITHIN THE SAME REGION, THE SUPREME COURT SHALL ACT UPON SAID APPLICATIONS AND SHALL ISSUE THE APPROPRIATE ORDERS FOR THE PURPOSE; PROVIDED THAT THE SAID TRANSFER SHALL NOT IN ANY MANNER BE INIMICAL TO THE SPEEDY DISPENSATION OF JUSTICE.** However, the Supreme Court may assign temporarily a Regional Trial Judge to another region **OR TO ANOTHER BRANCH WITHIN THE SAME REGION**, as public interest may require, provided that such temporary assignment shall not last longer than six (6) months without the consent of the Regional Trial Judge concerned.

A Regional Trial Judge may be assigned by the Supreme Court to any branch or city or municipality within the same region as public interest may require, and such assignment shall not be deemed an assignment to another station within the meaning of this section.”

SEC. 2. Section 28 of Batas Pambansa Blg. 129, as amended, is hereby further amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 28. - *Other Metropolitan Trial Courts.* - The Supreme Court shall constitute Metropolitan Trial Courts in such other metropolitan areas as may be established by law whose territorial jurisdiction shall be co-extensive with the cities and municipalities comprising the metropolitan area.

Every Metropolitan Trial Judge shall be appointed to a metropolitan area which shall be his permanent station and his appointment shall state the branch of the court and the seat thereof to which he shall be originally assigned. **IN THE EVENT OF VOLUNTARY APPLICATIONS FOR LATERAL TRANSFERS BY SITTING JUDGES TO ANOTHER REGION OR TO ANOTHER BRANCH WITHIN THE SAME REGION, THE SUPREME COURT SHALL ACT UPON SAID APPLICATIONS AND SHALL ISSUE THE APPROPRIATE ORDERS FOR THE PURPOSE; PROVIDED THAT THE SAID TRANSFER SHALL NOT IN ANY MANNER BE INIMICAL TO THE SPEEDY DISPENSATION OF JUSTICE.** A Metropolitan Trial Judge may be assigned by the Supreme Court to any branch within said metropolitan area as the interest of justice may require, and such assignment shall not be deemed an assignment to another station within the meaning of this section. **HOWEVER, THE SUPREME COURT MAY ASSIGN TEMPORARILY A METROPOLITAN TRIAL JUDGE TO ANOTHER REGION OR TO ANOTHER BRANCH WITHIN THE SAME REGION, AS PUBLIC INTEREST MAY REQUIRE, PROVIDED THAT SUCH TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENT SHALL NOT LAST LONGER THAN SIX (6) MONTHS WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE METROPOLITAN TRIAL JUDGE CONCERNED.**

SEC. 3. Section 31 of Batas Pambansa Blg. 129, as amended, is hereby further amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 31. - Municipal **CIRCUIT** Trial Courts. - There shall be a Municipal Circuit Trial Court in each area defined as a municipal circuit, comprising one or more cities and/or one or more municipalities. The municipalities comprising municipal circuits as organized under Administrative Order No. 33, issued on June 13, 1978 by the Supreme Court pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 537, are hereby constituted as municipal circuits for purposes of the establishment of the Municipal Circuit Trial Courts; and the appointments thereto of Municipal Circuit Trial Judges: Provided, however, That the Supreme Court may, as the interests of justice may require, further reorganize the said courts taking into account workload, geographical location, and such other factors as will contribute to a rational allocation thereof, pursuant to the provisions of Presidential Decree No. 537 which shall be applicable insofar as they are not inconsistent with this Act.

Every Municipal Circuit Trial Judge shall be appointed to a municipal circuit which shall be his official station.

The Supreme Court shall determine the city or municipality where the Municipal Circuit Trial Court shall hold sessions.”

SEC. 4. A new section, Section 31-A, is hereby inserted to read as follows:

“SEC.31-A. A MUNICIPAL TRIAL JUDGE SHALL BE APPOINTED TO A JUDICIAL REGION TO PRESIDE OVER A MUNICIPAL TRIAL COURT IN CITIES, MUNICIPAL TRIAL COURT OR A MUNICIPAL CIRCUIT TRIAL COURT WHICH SHALL BE HIS PERMANENT STATION, AND HIS APPOINTMENT SHALL STATE THE BRANCH OF THE COURT AND THE SEAT THEREOF TO WHICH HE SHALL BE ORIGINALLY ASSIGNED. IN THE EVENT OF VOLUNTARY

APPLICATIONS FOR LATERAL TRANSFERS BY SITTING JUDGES TO ANOTHER REGION OR TO ANOTHER BRANCH WITHIN THE REGION, THE SUPREME COURT SHALL ACT UPON SAID APPLICATIONS AND SHALL ISSUE THE APPROPRIATE ORDERS FOR THE PURPOSE; PROVIDED THAT THE SAID TRANSFER SHALL NOT IN ANY MANNER BE INIMICAL TO THE SPEEDY DISPENSATION OF JUSTICE. HOWEVER, THE SUPREME COURT MAY ASSIGN TEMPORARILY A MUNICIPAL TRIAL JUDGE TO ANY MUNICIPAL COURT IN ANOTHER REGION OR TO ANOTHER BRANCH WITHIN THE REGION, AS PUBLIC INTEREST MAY REQUIRE, PROVIDED THAT SUCH TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENT SHALL NOT LAST LONGER THAN SIX (6) MONTHS WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE MUNICIPAL TRIAL JUDGE CONCERNED."

SEC. 5. A new Section 44 is hereby inserted into Batas Pambansa Blg. 129 as amended, which is to read as follows:

"SEC. 44. THE AMOUNT NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT ON PRIORITY BASIS AS DETERMINED BY THE SUPREME COURT IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO BE INCLUDED IN THE APPROPRIATIONS OF THE SUPREME COURT IN THE ANNUAL GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT OF THE YEAR FOLLOWING ITS ENACTMENT INTO LAW AND THEREAFTER: *PROVIDED*, THAT, TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT THIS ACT, THE SUPREME COURT IS HEREBY VESTED WITH THE POWER TO PRIORITIZE OR TO DETERMINE WHICH SALA OR SALAS SHALL BE ESTABLISHED FOR A GIVEN YEAR: *PROVIDE, FURTHER*, THAT, FOR REASONS OF EFFICIENCY, ECONOMY AND ACCESSIBILITY, THE SUPREME COURT IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO TRANSFER A SALA FROM ONE STATION, AS DETERMINED HEREIN, TO ANOTHER WITHIN THE SAME JUDICIAL REGION: *PROVIDED, FINALLY*, THAT THE SUPREME COURT SHALL NOT EFFECT THE TRANSFER OF A SALA OFTENER THAN ONCE EVERY THREE (3) YEARS."

SEC. 6. The existing Sections 44 through 48 of Batas Pambansa Blg. 129 as amended are hereby renumbered as Sections 45 through 49 accordingly.

SEC. 7. *Repealing Clause* – All other laws, decrees, executive orders, executive issuances or letters of instructions, rules and regulations, or any part thereof, inconsistent or contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby deemed repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 8. *Separability Clause* – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, other parts or provisions hereof not affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 9. *Effectivity*. – This Act shall take effect (15) days after completion of its publication in the Official Gazette or of two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,