

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City

**EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session

**HOUSE BILL NO. 2625**



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Introduced by Rep. Sonny L. Lagon, *Party List*, AKO BISAYA

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Cockfighting is an ancient spectator sport. It was partly a religious and partly a political institution in ancient Athens and was continued for improving the seeds of valor in the minds of their youth. It then evolved into a common pastime, without any political or religious intention.

Cockfighting is very popular in the country. Some see it as a form of gambling while others see it a sport. For some, cockfighting is an institution and a national recreation.

It has been said that long before the establishment of Spanish Catholicism, the practice of pitting two trained cocks against each other had been thriving in local shores. When Ferdinand Magellan arrived in 1521, it was already a roaring spectacle. Pigafetta's account on the Spanish's fleet arrival at "Polaoan" (now known as Palawan) included this observation.

For Filipinos, sabong is more than just entertainment. The sport is considered as a very important part of the Filipino culture that dates back to 6000 years ago. Filipinos, are very fond of the game that the Philippines is now generally considered as the Mecca of the sport. In fact, the country had hosted the grandest of international cockfighting spectacles including the "Olympics of Cockfighting" as well as numerous international gamefowl expositions.

In recent years, cockfighting in the country has climbed to a whole new level. It has become a booming Billion-Dollar industry that has not only captured the heart of the entire nation, but also the world at large. With prestigious international derbies held regularly in the country, cockfighting aficionados from all over the world has constantly streamed into the country helping spur the continued growth of the industry to provide a steady source of revenues for the government and thousands of jobs to Filipinos.

It is estimated that the Philippine gamefowl industry's worth now stands at around P60 billion and is exhibiting a constant upward trend. It covers production of gamefowl feed and veterinary products; manufacturing of related equipment and tools such as incubators, knives (*tari*), cords (*tali*), wing and leg bands, feeders and waterers; breeding; cockpit facilities and other related undertakings.

The industry provides job opportunities to individuals directly or indirectly engaged in the sport such as *sentenciadors* (individuals who officiate the fight), gaffers (*mananari*), *kristo* (bettakers), informal cock doctors (*manggagamot*), farmhands and cockpit vendors in the hundreds of cockpits across the country. Indirectly, the industry also provides employment to thousands of workers in feed mills and manufacturers of veterinary products.

With constant growth over the years, the industry is seen to grow even more. As the number of foreign cockfighting aficionados participating in local derbies continue to rise, some of whom have partnered with local breeders to establish more breeding farms in the country, new players can be expected to engage in the manufacture of feed and veterinary products, with more job opportunities likewise to be expected.

The burgeoning industry, however, is governed by an antiquated law that no longer conforms to the demands of the times. At the present, the conduct of cockfighting is governed by Presidential Decree No. 449 which was issued in 1974.

After forty-five years, it is necessary that the law be updated to keep up with the developments in the field, meet new challenges and provide new opportunities. It is necessary to come up with a new law that will provide measures and standards that ensure fairness in the conduct of the sport and likewise ensure that the government gets its fair share to boost its charitable programs.

In view of the above premises, the prompt approval of this proposed measure is earnestly sought and recommended.



**SONNY L. LAGON**  
Party-List, AKO BISAYA

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**AN ACT REGULATING COCKFIGHTING**

*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 “Revised Cockfighting Law of 2019”.

SECTION 2. *Scope.* – This Act shall govern the establishment, operation, maintenance and ownership of cockpits.

SECTION 3. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to preserve local customs and traditions that promote national identity; effectively regulate cockfighting as a national recreation; and maximize its potential as a revenue source for tourism and charitable programs.

SECTION 4. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act, the following terms shall be understood, applied and construed as follows:

- (a) Cockfighting – embraces the commonly known game or term hackfight, derby, ulutan, pintakasi or tupada or its equivalent terms in different localities;
- (b) Zoning Law or Ordinance – national, local, city or municipal legislation which logically arranges, prescribes, defines and apportions a given political subdivision into specific land uses as present and future projection of needs warrant;
- (c) Promoter or Host – a person or group of persons; association or federation who puts up a cockfighting event.
- (d) Casador or Pit Manager - a person who calls and takes care of the bets from owners of opposing gamecocks and those of other bettors before he orders the commencement of the fight and thereafter distributes won bets to the winners after deducting a certain commission.;
- (e) Gaffer – a person knowledgeable in the art of arming fighting cocks with gaffs or blades in either or both legs;
- (f) Referee (Sentenciador) – A person who watches and oversees the proper gaffing of fighting cocks, ensures that the fighting cocks are in normal fighting conditions before the commencement of the fight, determines their physical condition while the fight is in



progress, the injuries sustained by the cocks and their capability to continue fighting and decides and make known his decision by word or gestures and the result of the cockfight by announcing the winner or declaring a tie or no-contest game.

- (g) Participant or Entry Owner – a person who enters a cockfighting event as a player or participant.
- (h) Bettor – a person who participates in cockfights and with the use of money, bets with other bettors through the bet taker or promoter and wins or loses his bet depending upon the result of the cockfight as decided and announced by the referee or sentenciador. He may be the owner of one of the fighting cocks or not.

#### SECTION 5. *Cockpits and Cockfighting*: In General:

- (a) Ownership, Operation and Management of Cockpits. – Only Filipino citizens not otherwise disqualified by law shall be allowed to own, manage and operate cockpits. Cooperative capitalization shall be encouraged.
- (b) Establishment of Cockpits. – Only one cockpit shall be allowed in each city or municipality, except in cities and municipalities with a population of over one hundred thousand, in which case one cockpit may be established, maintained and operated for every population of one hundred thousand.
- (c) Cockpits Site and Construction. – Cockpits shall be constructed and operated within the appropriate areas as prescribed by applicable Zoning laws and ordinances. In the absence of such law or ordinance, local chief executives shall ensure that no cockpits are constructed within a radius of five hundred meters from residential areas, schools, hospitals, churches and public buildings. Owners, lessees or operators of cockpits which are now in existence and do not conform to this requirement are given three years from the passage of this Act to comply herewith. Approval or issuance of building permits for the construction of cockpits shall be made by the city or municipal engineer in accordance with their respective building codes or ordinances.
- (d) Holding of Cockfights. Except as provided in this Act, cockfighting shall be held only in licensed cockpits. Provided, that barangays may hold cockfights outside of licensed cockpits during fiestas and other local holidays subject to approval by the local chief executives concerned. Provided, further that proceeds thereof shall redound to the sponsoring barangay's general funds after deducting the permit fees and all expenses necessary thereto.
- (e) Cockfighting for Entertainment of Tourists or for Charitable Purposes. Cockfighting to be conducted outside of licensed cockpits for the entertainment of foreign dignitaries or tourists, returning overseas Filipinos, or for the support of fund raising campaigns for charitable purposes may be authorized by the Games and Amusements Board upon request by the Department of Tourism or the local government hosting the said events upon payment of reasonable fees prescribed by the Board.

- (f) Other Forms of Games or Gambling Prohibited in Cockpits. No gambling of any kind shall be permitted within the premises of licensed cockpits at any time except upon the issuance of a special permit by the local government unit concerned during fiestas, local holidays, carnivals, expositions or agricultural, commercial or industrial fairs.

SECTION 6. *Licensing of Cockpits.* Permits for the construction, maintenance and operation of cockpits shall be issued by the City or Municipal Mayor of the locality concerned subject to applicable laws or ordinances. For this purpose, local government units may promulgate ordinances for the imposition of reasonable taxes and fees.

SECTION 7. *Cockfighting Officials.* Gaffers, referees, promoters, hosts, casadors and pit managers shall not act as such in any cockpit authorized herein, without first securing a license to be issued by the Games and Amusements Board upon payment of reasonable fees. A mayor's permit may be required for the issuance of such licenses.

It shall be the duty of cockpit operators to ensure that said cockfighting officials are duly licensed by the Board and that they wear proper uniform and identification cards during cockfights.

SECTION 8. *Penalty Clause.* Any violation of this Act and the rules and regulations promulgated pursuant hereto shall be penalized as follows:

- (a) By prison correctional in its maximum period and a fine of fifty thousand pesos (P50,000), with subsidiary penalty of imprisonment in case of insolvency, when the offender is the financer, owner, manager, operator, gaffer, referee or bet taker; or the offender is guilty of allowing, promoting or participating in any other kind of gambling in the premises of the cockpit.
- (b) By prison correctional or a fine not less than thirty thousand pesos (P30,000) or both such fine and imprisonment at the discretion of the court, with subsidiary imprisonment in case of insolvency, in case of any offender.

SECTION 9. *Rules and Regulations.* – The Games and Amusements Board, in consultation with the Department of the Interior and Local Government shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of the provisions of this Act and for the issuance of licenses for gaffers referees, promoters, hosts, casadors and pit managers. The Board, in consultation with respected personalities and entities in the gamefowl industry and cockfighting leagues, shall promulgate a Standard Cockfighting Rule that shall be implemented all over the Philippines.

SECTION 10. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, decrees and orders inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SECTION 11. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least one (1) newspaper of general circulation.

*Approved,*