

SENATE

S. B. No. 3379

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Prepared by the Committee on Justice and Human Rights  
with Sen. Francis G. Escudero as Author thereof

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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:*

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

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

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

6           **SECTION 2.** Section 28 of Batas Pambansa Blg. 129, as amended, is hereby  
7           further amended to read as follows:

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

13          Every Metropolitan Trial Judge shall be appointed to a  
14          metropolitan area which shall be his permanent station and his  
15          appointment shall state the branch of the court and the seat thereof  
16          to which he shall be originally assigned. **IN THE EVENT OF**  
17          **VOLUNTARY APPLICATIONS FOR LATERAL TRANSFERS**  
18          **BY SITTING JUDGES TO ANOTHER REGION OR TO**  
19          **ANOTHER BRANCH WITHIN THE SAME REGION, THE**  
20          **SUPREME COURT SHALL ACT UPON SAID APPLICATIONS**  
21          **AND SHALL ISSUE THE APPROPRIATE ORDERS FOR THE**  
22          **PURPOSE; PROVIDED THAT THE SAID TRANSFER SHALL**  
23          **NOT IN ANY MANNER BE INIMICAL TO THE SPEEDY**  
24          **DISPENSATION OF JUSTICE.** A Metropolitan Trial Judge may  
25          be assigned by the Supreme Court to any branch within said  
26          metropolitan area as the interest of justice may require, and such  
27          assignment shall not be deemed an assignment to another station  
28          within the meaning of this section. **HOWEVER, THE SUPREME**  
29          **COURT MAY ASSIGN TEMPORARILY A METROPOLITAN**  
30          **TRIAL JUDGE TO ANOTHER REGION OR TO ANOTHER**  
31          **BRANCH WITHIN THE SAME REGION, AS PUBLIC**  
32          **INTEREST MAY REQUIRE, PROVIDED THAT SUCH**  
33          **TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENT SHALL NOT LAST LONGER**

1        **THAN SIX (6) MONTHS WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE**  
2        **METROPOLITAN TRIAL JUDGE CONCERNED.**

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

5                "SEC. 31. - Municipal **CIRCUIT** Trial Courts. - There shall be  
6 a Municipal Circuit Trial Court in each area defined as a municipal  
7 circuit, comprising one or more cities and/or one or more  
8 municipalities. The municipalities comprising municipal circuits as  
9 organized under Administrative Order No. 33, issued on June 13,  
10 1978 by the Supreme Court pursuant to Presidential Decree No.  
11 537, are hereby constituted as municipal circuits for purposes of the  
12 establishment of the Municipal Circuit Trial Courts; and the  
13 appointments thereto of Municipal Circuit Trial Judges: Provided,  
14 however, That the Supreme Court may, as the interests of justice  
15 may require, further reorganize the said courts taking into account  
16 workload, geographical location, and such other factors as will  
17 contribute to a rational allocation thereof, pursuant to the  
18 provisions of Presidential Decree No. 537 which shall be applicable  
19 insofar as they are not inconsistent with this Act.

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

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

24              **SECTION 4.** A new section, Section 31-A, is hereby inserted  
25 to read as follows:

26              "SEC.31-A. A MUNICIPAL TRIAL JUDGE SHALL BE  
27 APPOINTED TO A JUDICIAL REGION TO PRESIDE OVER A  
28 MUNICIPAL TRIAL COURT IN CITIES, MUNICIPAL TRIAL  
29 COURT OR A MUNICIPAL CIRCUIT TRIAL COURT WHICH  
30 SHALL BE HIS PERMANENT STATION, AND HIS  
31 APPOINTMENT SHALL STATE THE BRANCH OF THE  
32 COURT AND THE SEAT THEREOF TO WHICH HE SHALL BE

1       **ORIGINALLY ASSIGNED. IN THE EVENT OF VOLUNTARY**  
2       **APPLICATIONS FOR LATERAL TRANSFERS BY SITTING**  
3       **JUDGES TO ANOTHER REGION OR TO ANOTHER BRANCH**  
4       **WITHIN THE REGION, THE SUPREME COURT SHALL ACT**  
5       **UPON SAID APPLICATIONS AND SHALL ISSUE THE**  
6       **APPROPRIATE ORDERS FOR THE PURPOSE; PROVIDED**  
7       **THAT THE SAID TRANSFER SHALL NOT IN ANY MANNER**  
8       **BE INIMICAL TO THE SPEEDY DISPENSATION OF JUSTICE.**  
9       **HOWEVER, THE SUPREME COURT MAY ASSIGN**  
10       **TEMPORARILY A MUNICIPAL TRIAL JUDGE TO ANY**  
11       **MUNICIPAL COURT IN ANOTHER REGION OR TO**  
12       **ANOTHER BRANCH WITHIN THE REGION, AS PUBLIC**  
13       **INTEREST MAY REQUIRE, PROVIDED THAT SUCH**  
14       **TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENT SHALL NOT LAST LONGER**  
15       **THAN SIX (6) MONTHS WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE**  
16       **MUNICIPAL TRIAL JUDGE CONCERNED."**

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

19               **"SEC. 44. THE AMOUNT NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT**  
20       **THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT ON PRIORITY BASIS AS**  
21       **DETERMINED BY THE SUPREME COURT IS HEREBY**  
22       **AUTHORIZED TO BE INCLUDED IN THE APPROPRIATIONS**  
23       **OF THE SUPREME COURT IN THE ANNUAL GENERAL**  
24       **APPROPRIATIONS ACT OF THE YEAR FOLLOWING ITS**  
25       **ENACTMENT INTO LAW AND THEREAFTER: PROVIDED,**  
26       **THAT, TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT THIS ACT, THE**  
27       **SUPREME COURT IS HEREBY VESTED WITH THE POWER**  
28       **TO PRIORITIZE OR TO DETERMINE WHICH SALA OR**  
29       **SALAS SHALL BE ESTABLISHED FOR A GIVEN YEAR:**  
30       **PROVIDE, FURTHER, THAT, FOR REASONS OF EFFICIENCY,**  
31       **ECONOMY AND ACCESSIBILITY, THE SUPREME COURT IS**  
32       **HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO TRANSFER A SALA FROM ONE**  
33       **STATION, AS DETERMINED HEREIN, TO ANOTHER**  
34       **WITHIN THE SAME JUDICIAL REGION: PROVIDED,**  
35       **FINALLY, THAT THE SUPREME COURT SHALL NOT EFFECT**

1           **THE TRANSFER OF A SALA OFTENER THAN ONCE EVERY**  
2           **THREE (3) YEARS."**

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

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

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

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

15           *Approved,*