

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 4357



Introduced by Representative Hon. Christopher “Toff” V.P. de Venecia

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR MANDATORY APPOINTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION
OFFICERS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE
REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160, OR THE “LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991”

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The need for centralized and clearly communicated information has never been more essential in today’s society. With the rapid rise of technology comes the high risk of disinformation which could hamper the delivery of government services. This opens up the public to many potential dangers, especially during calamities. Unfortunately, not all of our local government units (LGU) have established mechanisms to ensure that their official government communications are streamlined to the public and to the media. In fact, some LGUs do not have any established online information channels.

This bill amends the Local Government Code to mandate the appointment of a Public Information Officer in all LGUs. This ensures that there is a single chain of communication emanating from the local government, for clarity and organization in all official LGU communications. The Public Information Officer shall serve as the official spokesperson of the LGU, and shall be the liaison between the government to the press, the public, and the Philippine Information Agency. This bill also mandates the Public Information Officer to create a communication plan which will serve as the backbone for the LGUs information dissemination programs.

In view of the foregoing, approval of the measure is earnestly sought.


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

SECTION 1. *Declaration of Policy.* - In line with the constitutional right to information, the State shall provide for a local government position that will be responsible for the proper dissemination of public information to ensure the effective and accurate communication of government policies.

SEC. 2. Section 443(a) of Republic Act No. 7160, otherwise known as the Local Government Code of 1991 is hereby amended to read as follows:

(a) There shall be in each municipality a municipal mayor, a municipal vice-mayor, sangguniang bayan members, a secretary to the sangguniang bayan, a municipal treasurer, a municipal assessor, a municipal accountant, a municipal budget officer, a municipal planning and development coordinator, a municipal engineer/building official, a municipal health officer [and] , a municipal civil registrar [.] **AND A MUNICIPAL PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER.**

SEC. 3. Section 454(a) of the Local Government Code of 1991 is hereby amended to read as follows:

(a) There shall be in each city a mayor, a vice-mayor, sangguniang panlungsod members, a secretary to the sangguniang panglungsod, a city treasurer, a city assessor, a city accountant, a city budget officer, a city planning and development coordinator, a city engineer, a city health officer, a city civil registrar, a city

administrator, a city legal officer, a city veterinarian, a city social welfare and development officer, [and] a city general services officer [.] , **AND A CITY PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER.**

SEC. 4. Section 463(a) of the Local Government Code of 1991 is hereby amended to read as follows:

(a) There shall be in each province a governor, a vice-governor, members of the sangguniang panlalawigan, a secretary to the sangguniang panlalawigan, a provincial treasurer, a provincial assessor, a provincial accountant, a provincial engineer, a provincial budget officer, a provincial planning and development coordinator, a provincial legal officer, a provincial administrator, a provincial health officer, a provincial social welfare and development officer, a provincial general services officer, a provincial agriculturist, [and] a provincial veterinarian (.), **AND A PROVINCIAL PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER.**

SEC 5. There shall be incorporated in Title V of the said Code, entitled “Appointed Local Officials Common to All Municipalities, Cities, and Province”, a new article to be known as Article XXI on the Public Information Officer, and its accompanying provision, to read as follows:

“ARTICLE XXI

The Public Information Officer

Section 490-A. *Qualifications, Powers, and Duties*

- (a) No person shall be appointed Public Information Officer unless he is a citizen of the Philippines, a resident of the local government unit concerned, of good moral character and irreproachable reputation, of known integrity and competence, has never been convicted of any election offense or of any crime punishable by more than six (6) months of imprisonment, or has no pending information for any offense, a holder of a college degree in business, communications, marketing, journalism, or other related fields from a recognized college or university, and a first grade civil service eligible, or its equivalent. They must have at least three (3) years of substantial work experience and involvement in the field either in the private sector or government.

Local Government Units with existing Public Information Officers prior to the implementation of this law will be given three (3) years to comply with the aforementioned requirements.

(b) The public information officer shall take charge of the office for public information and shall practice the following:

1. Plans, develops, directs, and coordinates comprehensive communication programs of the Local Government Unit, to include media, public affairs and publications, in close collaboration with other institutional communications and/or public relations activities;
2. Develops a communication plan for the LGU;
3. Serves as the designated spokesperson for the LGU;
4. Communicates critical information effectively for the public's consumption;
5. Manages all official media platforms and releases of the LGU to the media, public affairs and publications, and to other related institutions;
6. Liaises with the Philippine Information Agency with their plans and programs; and
7. Performs miscellaneous job-related duties as may be assigned by the Local Chief Executive.”

SEC. 6. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 7. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decrees, executive orders, issuances, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 8. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,