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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES )  
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Senate  
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SENATE  
P. S. RES. NO. 588

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Introduced by **SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA**

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**RESOLUTION**  
**DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT**  
**AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE EMERGING TREND OF**  
**REQUIRING AN ADDITIONAL FEE FOR PAPER BILLING WHICH IS**  
**BEING IMPOSED BY SEVERAL PRIVATE SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND**  
**THE ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION**

*WHEREAS*, Article XVI, Section 9 of the Constitution states that “[t]he State shall protect consumers from trade malpractices and from substandard hazardous products”;

*WHEREAS*, Article II of Republic Act No. 7394, otherwise known as the Consumer Act of the Philippines, declares that, “[i]t is the policy of the state to protect the interests of the consumer, promote his general welfare and to establish standards of conduct for business and industry”;

*WHEREAS*, the same outlines the States’ objectives to achieve the following objectives namely, (b) protection against deceptive, unfair, and unconscionable sales, acts and practices, (c) provision of information and education to facilitate sound choice and the proper exercise of rights by the consumer, and (d) provision of adequate rights and means of redress;

*WHEREAS*, according to Section 4, Resolution No. 08, Series of 2017 of the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC), “[d]istribution utilities shall adopt their own rules and procedures on electronic billing and communications, provided that these do not contravene the provisions of these rules and regulations and other regulations”;

*WHEREAS*, Article II, Section 10 of the same states that customers who are currently enrolled to receiving their bills electronically “...have the option to revert back to receiving paper bills and communications, subject to prior notice to, and procedures set by the concerned distribution utility.”;

*WHEREAS*, in an ABS-CBN news video report aired last 18 September 2017, it was reported that customers who chose to be billed in the traditional way are required

to pay for the release of their paper bill usually at P50 per month for Globe<sup>1</sup> and PLDT Inc.;<sup>2</sup>

*WHEREAS*, according to a Philippine Star article, the ERC, which has the mandate to ensure customer choice and penalize abuse of market power in the electric industry<sup>3</sup>, laid down their e-billing rules stating that the Commission aims “to reduce administrative costs caused by traditional billing and methods”, and said rules encompass monthly billing statements and other consumer related bills, disregarding essential factors such as the availability of Internet connection and the status of their customers;<sup>4</sup>

*WHEREAS*, this e-billing scheme, also being presented as a Pro-Environment measure, is deviant to certain scientific studies which show that the paperless campaign contributes to the increase in carbon emissions;<sup>5</sup>

*WHEREAS*, an article from Environmental LEADER, a leading trade publication that publishes energy, environmental and sustainability news, posted last 12 August 2010, reported that, “[i]t is increasingly clear that electronic communication and in particular the energy requirements of the increasing worldwide network of servers which are necessary to store all the information needed for immediate access, has a significant and increasing carbon footprint. Electronic document storage must be recognised as delivering efficiency but not sustainability”;<sup>6</sup>

*WHEREAS*, the same article furthermore stated that “[i]n the UK it has been suggested that PCs and servers may consume up to 50% of household energy requirements in the next 10 years. Greenpeace has reported that electronic waste is the fastest growing waste stream and there are extremely serious disposal costs emerging”;<sup>7</sup>

*WHEREAS*, on 13 June 2013, a survey submitted by Two Sides, a non-profit organization in Chicago, showed that 72% agree that a printed medium is a sufficient way to communicate, as to which they also added that “[w]hile e-billing can be very convenient and internet delivery is now commonplace, it’s clear that U.S. consumers

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<sup>1</sup> Globe website. “FAQS Globe Postpaid Paperless billing”. Retrieved from <https://www.globe.com.ph/help/postpaid/paperless-billing?jsid=9F1C0E0B33035F2FE9DD3942F03D0400.41507620920634>. Accessed on 10 October 2017

<sup>2</sup> PLDT Home. “PLDT Paperless billing”. Retrieved from <https://pldthome.com/paperless-billing>. Accessed on 10 October 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Energy Regulatory Commission. Mandate, Mission and Vision. Retrieved from <http://www.erc.gov.ph/ContentPage/17>. Accessed on 6 November 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Rivera, Danessa. 18 June 2017. Philippine Star. “ERC issues e-billing Rules”. Retrieved from <http://www.philstar.com/business/2017/06/18/1710957/erc-issues-e-billing-rules>. Accessed on 2 October 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Environmental Leader. 12 August 2010. “Online Billing May Not Be as Sustainable as You Think”. Retrieved from <https://www.environmentalleader.com/2010/08/online-billing-may-not-be-as-sustainable-as-you-think/>. Accessed on 2 October 2017.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*



like paper bills and statements and don't want to be pushed into electronic-only communications";<sup>8</sup>

*WHEREAS*, those who were surveyed said that they do not believe – even question the validity of the “protect the environment”, “save trees”, “Go Green, Go Digital” claims, and see it more as a suspicious marketing hype by banks, utilities, telecommunications companies and other service providers; <sup>9</sup>

*WHEREAS*, the aforementioned survey revealed that a third of consumers who received their e-bills print them – contradicting the purpose of paperless billing, and more importantly, indirectly passing the printing costs to the consumers;<sup>10</sup>

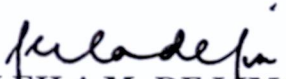
*WHEREAS*, instances requiring from consumers additional payment for a printed copy of their monthly billing is unnecessary and should not be imposed to all consumers under any circumstances;

*WHEREAS*, this shift towards e-billing highlights and widens the class disparity in our country by putting citizens that do not have the means to access their invoices electronically at an undue disadvantage;

*WHEREAS*, there is a need to improve existing legislation, especially Republic Act No. 7394, to strengthen its fundamental purpose of protecting the interests of the consumers, promoting their general welfare and establishing ethical standards of conduct for business and industry;

***NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED***, as it is hereby resolved, in view of the foregoing reasons and circumstances, to direct the appropriate Senate committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the emerging trend of mandatory electronic billing being imposed by several private service providers, and the Energy Regulatory Commission.

*Adopted,*

  
LEILA M. DE LIMA

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<sup>8</sup> Reibe, Phil. 31 July 2013. TwoSides website. “Most U.S. Consumers Want the Option to receive Paper Bills and Statements.” Retrieved from <http://www.twosidesna.org/US/Most-US-Consumers-Want-the-Option-to-Receive-Paper-Bills-and-Statements>. Accessed on 26 September 2017.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*