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SENATE

P. S. Res. No. 715

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

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**RESOLUTION**  
**DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE**  
**TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION,**  
**ON THE ADMINISTRATION'S ORDER**  
**TO CLOSE OFF BORACAY ISLAND FOR SIX MONTHS,**  
**AND TO INQUIRE INTO THE GOVERNMENT MEASURES, IF ANY, TO**  
**ADDRESS THE EFFECTS OF THE CLOSURE TO THE PHILIPPINE**  
**ECONOMY AND THE FILIPINO PEOPLE**

1           WHEREAS, Article II, Section 9 of the Constitution provides that it is the policy  
2 of the State to "... promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the  
3 prosperity and independence of the nation and free the people from poverty through  
4 policies that provide adequate social services, promote full employment, a rising  
5 standard of living, and an improved quality of life for all";

6           WHEREAS, Boracay Island, the world famous tourism haven boasting of  
7 powdery white sand beaches and pristine waters located at the northwestern tip of the  
8 Panay region, serves as one of the poster destinations of Philippine tourism;

9           WHEREAS, as the country's premier tourist destination, it has attracted more  
10 than two (2) million domestic and international tourists and generated revenues of  
11 ₱56 billion in 2017 alone;

12           WHEREAS, with only a land area of 1,032 hectares, operations on the island  
13 contribute twenty (20%) percent of the total income generated by the tourism sector,  
14 which is the third-biggest sector in terms of share in the country's gross domestic  
15 product (GDP);

16           WHEREAS, due to the rapid and massive influx of tourists in Boracay, coupled  
17 with the unchecked activities therein over a long period of time, studies have shown  
18 that the coral reefs on Boracay have been damaged, its ecosystem has been threatened

1 by unregulated commercial development, and water quality on the island has  
2 deteriorated due to the direct discharge of untreated waste water near the shoreline;

3 WHEREAS, last 04 April 2018, roughly two (2) months after calling the island  
4 a “cesspool”, President Rodrigo Duterte hastily approved the proposal to close the  
5 island from tourists for six (6) months starting on 26 April without proper consultation  
6 from the stakeholders that will be affected most – the local residents and the workers;

7 WHEREAS, the shutdown is still pushing through amidst pleas from affected  
8 sectors, with the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board going as far as  
9 issuing a resolution asking the President to reconsider the planned closure, pleading  
10 that the matter “... should be studied for the sake of the 17,735 workers and their  
11 families [who] would be undergoing economic deprivation if the closure will push  
12 through”<sup>1</sup>;

13 WHEREAS, in spite of the necessity to rehabilitate the island, the only thing we  
14 heard from administration officials are vague, inconsistent, and ultimately empty plan  
15 of action on how to go about the island’s rehabilitation;

16 WHEREAS, the seemingly inadequate plan to provide economic support for the  
17 residents of Boracay show how little thought, regard, empathy and care were afforded  
18 to those who will be most affected;

19 WHEREAS, according to a Rappler report published on 10 April 2018, the  
20 President admitted during a press conference last 09 April 2018 that he does not have  
21 a master plan yet for the affected individuals bluntly stating, “Master plan? *Wala*  
22 *akong master plan diyán. Linisin ko muna ‘yan kasi agricultural ‘yan.*” (But master  
23 plan, I don’t have a master plan for that. I will first clean it up because it’s agricultural  
24 land)<sup>2</sup>;

25 WHEREAS, in a Manila Standard report posted last 06 April 2018, the  
26 impending closure of Boracay during its lean months will cost the economy ₱20 billion

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<sup>1</sup> Pascual-Dormido, Y. ABS-CBN News. (2018, February 28), *Planned Boracay closure endangers 17,000 jobs: labor rep.* Retrieved 22 February 2018, from <http://news.abs-cbn.com/business/02/28/18/planned-boracay-closure-endangers-17000-jobs-labor-rep>

<sup>2</sup> Esmaguél II, P. Rappler. (2018, April 10), *TRANSCRIPT: Duterte admits he has no master plan for Boracay.* Retrieved 22 February 2018, from <https://www.rappler.com/nation/199956-duterte-boracay-closure-no-master-plan>

1 of foregone revenue, affecting the livelihood of 73,522 residents, 17,735 registered  
2 workers and 9,365 belonging to the informal economy <sup>3</sup>;

3 WHEREAS, in a Manila Times article posted last 16 April 2018 entitled  
4 “Boracay closure: More harm than help”, it was reported that the social and economic  
5 repercussions of the closure will not just be contained within the island, alone as it will  
6 definitely affect the suppliers, contractors, including those in the auxiliary industries  
7 that provide goods and services like food and souvenir production, land, air, and sea  
8 transportation and touring services;

9 WHEREAS, starting 26 April 2018, several airlines such as Cebu Pacific, Air  
10 Asia and Philippine Airlines will cease to offer direct flights to and from Caticlan  
11 airport, projecting a revenue loss between \$3 million and \$5 million per airline  
12 because of the six-month closure <sup>4</sup>;

13 WHEREAS, according to a Philippine Star article published last 18 March 2018  
14 entitled “Boracay closure to hit entire tourism industry”, contrary to the claims made  
15 by the Department of Tourism (DOT) that the closure will have a minimal impact on  
16 Philippine tourism, Jojo Clemente of the Tourism Congress of the Philippines stresses  
17 that one cannot separate Boracay from the entire tourism industry since the island, as  
18 the staple destination for tour packages offered by international travel agencies, is a  
19 big factor in convincing tourists to choose the Philippines in the first place;

20 WHEREAS, according to Mr. Clemente, the stakeholders of Boracay asked for  
21 a six-month lead time in order to prepare for the impending closure and that they have  
22 always been willing to cooperate with the rehabilitation of the island, emphasizing that  
23 the tourism industry would be amenable if the rehabilitation will be done on a phase-  
24 by-phase basis thus avoiding a total closure for the island;

25 WHEREAS, the same article avers that the Trade Department recommended  
26 and prefers to address the issue in phases, with then Senior Deputy Executive  
27 Secretary (now, Department of Justice Secretary) Menardo Guevarra stating that,  
28 “[t]he Department of Trade and Industry has submitted a separate memorandum to

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<sup>3</sup> Barcelo, V., Ramos-Araneta M., Zurbano J., and Amojelar, D., Manila Standard. (2018, April 06), *Tourism, airlines take a hit; P20-billion loss feared*. Retrieved 22 April 2018 from, <http://manilastandard.net/news/top-stories/262497/tourism-airlines-take-a-hit-p20-billion-loss-feared.html>

<sup>4</sup> Amojelar, D., Manila Standard. (2018, April 06), *CEB stands to lose \$5-million from closure of Boracay*. Retrieved 22 April 2018 from, <http://manilastandard.net/business/transport-tourism/262538/ceb-stands-to-lose-5-million-from-closure-of-boracay.html>

1 us saying that maybe this closure can be done in phases because of the effect on  
2 businesses and livelihood in the area”;

3 WHEREAS, in an interview with CNN Philippines, Annabella Wisniewski, the  
4 President of Raintree Hospitality Group which manages hotels and restaurants on the  
5 island claimed that, “[the government] never included... the private sector in the  
6 planning. *Nakakasama ng loob kasi hindi nila in-involve yung mga tao na*  
7 *maapektuhan, hindi yung mga taong naghahanap-buhay doon, yung*  
8 *nagtatrabaho.*” (There are hard feelings because they didn't involve those who will be  
9 affected, those working and earning a livelihood there);

10 WHEREAS, having been given only a three-week allowance to prepare for their  
11 imminent six (6) months of joblessness, these affected Filipinos are being robbed of  
12 their ability to plan for themselves and have control of their lives – with the very people  
13 tasked to protect them stripping them off their means of livelihood, leaving them  
14 dazed, clueless, and extremely disadvantaged moving forward;

15 WHEREAS, on an 07 April 2018 news article from CNN Philippines entitled,  
16 “Three week notice of Boracay closure unfair – stakeholders”, it was revealed that  
17 Budget Secretary Ben Diokno believed that the closure was done too soon, stating that  
18 the government should “[d]o it at the off-peak period and then maybe gradually.  
19 Before doing that, you have to have a plan already [that] is implementation-ready”;

20 WHEREAS, the government should have exercised due diligence and  
21 encouraged people’s participation through public consultations – listening,  
22 understanding, and giving the local residents their right to be heard most especially  
23 since it is their land, livelihood and future in jeopardy;

24 WHEREAS, as supposed advocates of federalism, decentralization and  
25 devolution, this Administration is ironically exhibiting clear signs of autocratic rule as  
26 it relies on the powers and prerogatives of the central government to impose sanctions  
27 and enforce policies from the top irrespective of the multi-faceted realities on the  
28 ground and regardless of the actual needs of the people and the environment;

29 WHEREAS, Secretary Benjamin Diokno of the Department of Budget and  
30 Management (DBM) has assured the public that the government will be using calamity  
31 funds to help affected workers cope with the unexpected but supposedly temporary  
32 loss of jobs and income, setting aside ₱2 billion to cushion the impact expected to be

1 felt by the estimated 36,000 workers in Boracay, but excluding those to be affected in  
2 mainland Aklan and Panay <sup>5</sup>;

3 WHEREAS, given the tremendous government resources that will be poured  
4 into the project, transparency and accountability measures should be in place. Under  
5 its guidelines, however, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)  
6 requires that “[j]ournalists [would] need permission to cover [the rehabilitation  
7 process]. Media will be allowed entry subject to prior approval from the Department  
8 of Tourism, with a definite duration and limited movement”<sup>6</sup>;

9 WHEREAS, according to an article published last 17 January 2018 in the  
10 Philippine Information Agency (PIA) website, with an allotted budget of  
11 ₱851,460,348.75, significant repairs on the water supply and sewerage system of the  
12 island have been supposedly underway after the Tourism Infrastructure and  
13 Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) Board of Directors approved the three-year  
14 implementation of the Phase II of the Boracay Drainage Improvement Project <sup>7</sup>;

15 WHEREAS, it is imperative for the Senate to conduct an investigation into  
16 whether the closure of Boracay Island was the most sound, rational and appropriate  
17 course of action to address the pressing economic, zoning, and environmental issues  
18 in the island, and whether better options are available to confront them, along with  
19 the other myriad challenges that beset the island and the various stakeholders;

20 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, to direct the  
21 appropriate Senate committee to conduct an investigation, in aid of legislation, on the  
22 administration’s order to close off Boracay island for six (6) months, and to inquire  
23 into the government measures, if any, to address the various effects and implications  
24 of the closure to the Philippine economy and the welfare of the Filipino people.

Adopted,

  
LEILA M. DE LIMA

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<sup>5</sup> Stinus-Cabugon, M. The Manila Times. (2018, April 16), *Boracay closure: More harm than help*. Retrieved 21 April 2018, from <http://www.manilatimes.net/boracay-closure-more-harm-than-help/392870/>

<sup>6</sup> Talabong, R. Rappler. (2018, April 12), *LIST: New Boracay rules during 6-month closure*. Retrieved 21 April 2018, from <https://www.rappler.com/nation/200122-list-new-rules-boracay-closure>

<sup>7</sup> Philippine Information Agency. (2018, January 18), *TIEZA approves completion of Boracay Drainage Project*. Retrieved 22 April 2018, from <http://pia.gov.ph/news/articles/1004107>