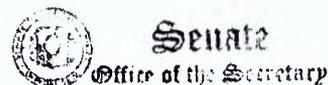


NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



'22 AUG -3 A11 :13

SENATE
S. B. No. 996

RECEIVED BY: _____

Introduced by Senator SONNY ANGARA

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE PROTECTION, SECURITY AND BENEFITS OF
WHISTLEBLOWERS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Whistleblower protection has been identified as essential to safeguard public interest and to promote a culture of public accountability and integrity. The *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* has highlighted that in the public sector, protecting whistleblowers can make it easier to detect passive bribery, the misuse of public funds, waste, fraud and other forms of corruption.¹

Notably, in the 2017 Global Corruption Barometer² (survey) of Transparency International, more than half of the respondents, particularly young people, believed that *ordinary people* could make a difference in the fight against corruption. With the Philippines having declined 5 points since 2014 in the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index of the Transparency International³, it is high time for government to ensure accountability among its ranks by crafting and implementing a framework that enables and even incentivizes, citizens to contribute in exposing any government misconduct.

The proposed measure institutionalizes such a framework by defining the security, protection and benefits afforded to whistleblowers.

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/gov/ethics/whistleblower-protection/>

² <https://www.transparency.org/en/gcb/global/global-corruption-barometer-2017>

³ https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/CPI2021_Report_EN-web.pdf

Enabling citizens to speak up about any wrongdoing in the government without fear of reprisal, in addition to other mechanisms already in place, helps restore credibility, integrity and accountability in public service. Hence, swift passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



SONNY ANGARA
78



NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)

22 AUG -3 A11 :14

SENATE
S. B. No. 996

RECEIVED BY:

Introduced by Senator SONNY ANGARA

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE PROTECTION, SECURITY AND BENEFITS OF WHISTLEBLOWERS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

1 Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the "*Whistleblower*
2 *Protection, Security and Benefit Act of 2022.*"

3 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – Public office is a public trust. It is the policy of
4 the State to promote and ensure full accountability in the conduct of its officers and
5 employees, and exact full retribution from those who shall engage in graft and corrupt
6 practices. Towards this end, the State shall:

- 7 a) Maintain honest and high standards of integrity in the public service;
- 8 b) Safeguard the national interest through the investigation and prosecution of
9 corrupt and erring public officials and employees; and
- 10 c) Encourage and facilitate the disclosure of corrupt conduct and practices in the
11 public service by providing benefits and protection to whistleblowers.

12 Nothing in this Act shall diminish or restrict the entitlement, receipt or
13 enjoyment by a whistleblower of more or higher benefits provided in existing laws.

14 Sec. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act, the following terms are hereby
15 defined as follows:

- 1 a) *Acts constituting graft and corruption* refer to any conduct, act or omission of
2 public officers and employees which are covered by, or constitute as violations
3 of:
- 4 1. Republic Act No. 3019, otherwise known as the "Anti-Graft and Corrupt
5 Practices Act";
 - 6 2. Sections 7, 8 and 9 of Republic Act No. 6713, otherwise known as the
7 "Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and
8 Employees";
 - 9 3. Republic Act No. 7080, entitled "An Act Defining and Penalizing the
10 Crime of Plunder";
 - 11 4. Presidential Decree No. 46, entitled "Making it Punishable for Public
12 Officials and Employees to Receive, and for Private Persons to Give, Gifts
13 on Any Occasion, Including Christmas"; and
 - 14 5. Title VII, Book Two of the Revised Penal Code on "Crimes Committed by
15 Public Officers".
- 16 b) *Council* refers to the Whistleblower Benefits and Protection Council created
17 pursuant to Section 29 of this Act.
- 18 c) *Informant* refers to any person who has personal knowledge or access to data,
19 events or information, of any conduct constituting graft and corruption as
20 defined under this Act by public officer/s and employee/s, and who shall
21 deliberately disclose of individual, collective or organized conduct constituting
22 graft and corruption as provided in this Act.
- 23 d) *Program* refers to the "Whistleblower Protection, Security and Benefit Program"
24 which the Council shall formulate and implement pursuant to this Act.
- 25 e) *Public officer* refers to any person holding any public office in the Government
26 of the Republic of the Philippines by virtue of an appointment, election or
27 contract.
- 28 f) *Whistleblower* refers to an informant admitted into the Program of the Council
29 in accordance with this Act and its rules and regulations.
- 30 g) *Reprisal* refers to any negative or obstructive response or reaction to a
31 disclosure made under this Act aimed at, pertaining to, or against a

1 whistleblower or any of the members of the family and relatives up to the
2 second degree of consanguinity or affinity.

- 3 h) *Reprisal in workplace* refers to any discriminatory conduct or policies against a
4 whistleblower which affect promotion or job assignment including undue
5 negative performance appraisal, unusual and unwarranted close monitoring by
6 supervisors, unwarranted criticisms or avoidance by co-employees,
7 blacklisting from other job opportunities or prejudicial transfers by reason of a
8 disclosure made under this Act.

9 Sec. 4. *Coverage.* – This Act covers conduct constituting graft and corruption,
10 whether commenced or consummated before the effectivity of this Act, refers to any
11 conduct, act or omission of public officers and/or employees which are covered by, or
12 amount to violations of Presidential Decree No. 46; Republic Act No. 3019; Sections
13 7, 8 and 9 of Republic Act No. 6713; Republic Act No. 7080; and Title VII, Book Two
14 of the Revised Penal Code on “Crimes Committed by Public Officers”.

15 Sec. 5. *Admission to the Program.* – Whistleblowers admitted into the Program
16 shall be entitled to the protection and benefits under this Act: *Provided,* That all the
17 following requisites concur:

- 18 a) The disclosure is voluntary, in writing and under oath;
19 b) The disclosure relates to conduct constituting graft and corruption under this
20 Act;
21 c) Such disclosure is necessary for an effective and successful investigation or
22 prosecution, or essential for the acquisition of material evidence not yet in the
23 possession of the Council;
24 d) The information given by the whistleblower can be corroborated; and
25 e) The information disclosed leads to a successful gathering of evidence and/or
26 conduct of investigation sufficient to sustain a finding of probable cause for the
27 filing of a criminal complaint or information before a court of competent
28 jurisdiction.

29 Sec. 6. *Necessity of Testimony.* – The testimony of a whistleblower in court
30 shall not be necessary for the entitlement to the benefits and protection under this
31 Act, subject to the provision of Section 17 herein. In the event that the whistleblower’s
32 testimony is determined by the Council to be necessary and indispensable to the

1 success of an investigation or the prosecution of a case, the whistleblower shall be
2 entitled to the additional benefits and protection under Republic Act No. 6981,
3 otherwise known as the "Witness Protection, Security and Benefit Act".

4 *Sec. 7. Memorandum of Agreement with the Whistleblower.* – As a prerequisite
5 to the availment of the protection and benefits under this Act, a whistleblower shall
6 enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Justice (DOJ) which
7 shall set forth the whistleblower's responsibilities including the following:

- 8 a) To provide information to and testify before all inquiries, in aid of legislation,
9 and before any law enforcement official concerning any appropriate proceeding
10 in connection with or arising from the activities involved in the offense subject
11 matter thereof;
- 12 b) To avoid a commission of a crime involving moral turpitude;
- 13 c) To take all necessary precautions to avoid detection by others of the facts
14 concerning the protection provided under this Act;
- 15 d) To cooperate with respect to all reasonable requests of officers and employees
16 of the government who are providing protection under this Act; and
- 17 e) To regularly inform the appropriate program official of the whistleblower's
18 current activities and address.

19 *Sec. 8. Breach of the Memorandum of Agreement.* – Substantial breach of the
20 Memorandum of Agreement shall be a ground for the immediate termination of the
21 protection and benefits provided under this Act. The Council shall send notice to a
22 whistleblower concerned, stating therein the reason for such termination. In view
23 thereof, a whistleblower shall be afforded reasonable time to take appropriate and
24 necessary protection and security measures.

25 In addition, the whistleblower shall return all the financial rewards received pursuant
26 to Section 17 of this Act.

27 *Sec. 9. Protection Against Other Actions.* – A whistleblower or an informant
28 who has made a disclosure under this Act shall not be subject to any liability in any
29 proceeding. Any disclosure made or any document submitted to the Council shall be
30 inadmissible in evidence against the whistleblower.

31 This protection shall also operate as immunity in favor of a whistleblower or
32 informant against any action or proceeding taken against the whistleblower by any

1 person subject of a disclosure, by reason thereof and acts in relation to subject of
2 disclosure. Provided, however, that the protection against any action or proceeding
3 shall not be available in cases of deliberate and voluntary giving of false or misleading
4 information, and of any unjustified recantation of testimony by a whistleblower.

5 Sec. 10. *Defense of Privileged Communication.* – A whistleblower or any person
6 who has made a disclosure under this Act shall have, as defense in any other inquiry
7 or proceeding, the absolute privilege with respect to the subject matter of the
8 disclosure or information given to the proper authorities.

9 Sec. 11. *Confidentiality.* – Except as allowed by this Act, during and after a
10 disclosure, and throughout and after any proceeding taken thereafter, a whistleblower
11 or an informant is entitled to absolute confidentiality about:

- 12 a) Whistleblower's identity;
- 13 b) The subject matter of the disclosure; and
- 14 c) The person to whom such disclosure was made.

15 There shall be no such confidentiality of identity if a whistleblower or an
16 informant makes a public disclosure of a conduct constituting graft and corruption
17 unless, notwithstanding such public disclosure, the whistleblower has taken means
18 and measures obviously intended to preserve anonymity.

19 Sec. 12. *No Breach of Duty of Confidentiality.* – A whistleblower or an informant
20 who has made a disclosure under this Act, on whom a provision of law, regulation,
21 issuance, practice or other convention, imposes a duty to maintain confidentiality with
22 respect to any information disclosed, is considered not to have committed a breach
23 thereof.

24 Sec. 13. *Confidential Information.* – No person to whom a disclosure has been
25 made or referred shall divulge any information that may identify or tend to identify a
26 whistleblower or informant or reveal the subject matter of such disclosure, except
27 under the following circumstances:

- 28 a) The whistleblower or the informant consents in writing prior to a disclosure of
29 an information;
- 30 b) The disclosure is indispensable and essential as determined by the Council,
31 having regard to the necessary proceedings to be taken after the disclosure; or
- 32 c) The disclosure or referral is made pursuant to an obligation under this Act.

1 The prohibition on disclosure under this section shall apply to any person who
2 has become privy to any confidential information, whether officially or by other means.

3 *Sec. 14. Protection Against Disciplinary Action or Reprisals.* – A whistleblower
4 who has made or is believed or suspected to have made a disclosure under this Act is
5 not liable to disciplinary action for making said disclosure.

6 Prohibited acts under this section include reprisals in the workplace or
7 prejudicial conduct towards a whistleblower such as: discriminatory actions behind
8 policies and procedures, unwarranted reprimand, punitive transfers, malicious referral
9 to a psychiatrist or counselor, and unfounded or baseless poor performance reviews.
10 Other prejudicial actions include obstruction of an investigation, withdrawal of
11 essential resources, undue reports and the attachment of false personnel files or
12 notes.

13 *Sec. 15. Security and Protection of a Whistleblower.* – When determined to be
14 necessary and appropriate by the Council, a whistleblower, even if the disclosure is
15 made in confidence, shall be entitled to personal security. For this purpose, the
16 Council may request any law enforcement agency for assistance. Should, at any time,
17 the identity of the whistleblower be revealed, or anonymity compromised, the
18 whistleblower may, upon the recommendation of the Council, be entitled to the
19 benefits of Republic Act No. 6981, in addition to the other benefits under this Act.

20 *Sec. 16. Confidentiality of the Proceedings.* – All proceedings before the Council
21 involving application and/or enjoyment of the benefits under this Act, including any
22 action taken thereon, shall be confidential in nature. No information or documents
23 given or submitted in support thereof shall be released except upon written order of
24 the Council, and provided such disclosure shall not endanger the life of a
25 whistleblower.

26 *Sec. 17. Financial Rewards for Whistleblowers.* – The whistleblower shall be
27 entitled to a corresponding monetary reward in accordance with the following stages:

Stages	If the case is capable of pecuniary estimation	If the case is not capable of pecuniary estimation
Upon admission into the program	P200,000.00	P100,000.00

Upon filing of the case with the Office of the Ombudsman	P100,000.00	P 50,000.00
Upon completion of the testimony of the whistleblower	P100,000.00	P 50,000.00

1 For cases capable of pecuniary estimation, such as plunder, forfeiture of ill-
2 gotten wealth, bribery, malversation and damage or injury to government, the
3 whistleblower shall be entitled to an additional reward of ten percent (10%) of the
4 actual amount recovered by final judgment.

5 *Sec. 18. Return of the Amount Received as Financial Rewards.* – A
6 whistleblower admitted into the Program who deliberately and voluntarily gives false
7 or misleading information in connection with conduct constituting graft and corruption
8 as defined under this Act or who unjustifiably recants testimony shall, in addition to
9 the penalties provided in Section 21 and Section 22 of this Act, be required to return
10 all the amounts received as financial rewards.

11 *Sec. 19. Mandatory Posting of Abstract.* – All government agencies, offices,
12 bureaus and LGUs, including government-owned or -controlled corporations, whether
13 or not with original charters, shall conspicuously display an abstract of this Act and
14 the rights and protections of whistleblowers or informants. Such abstract shall be
15 provided in the rules and regulations to be promulgated pursuant to Section 31 of this
16 Act.

17 All government agencies, offices, bureaus and LGUs, including government-
18 owned and -controlled corporations, whether or not with original charters, are likewise
19 required to put in place internal procedures for dealing with whistleblowers or
20 informants, consistent with the provisions of this Act and the rules and regulations.
21 Said internal procedure shall be widely disseminated to all the public employees.

22 *Sec. 20. Credibility of a Whistleblower.* – In all cases, the fact of the entitlement
23 of the whistleblower to the protection and benefits provided in this Act shall not be
24 admissible in evidence to diminish or affect the whistleblower’s credibility.

25 *Sec. 21. Penalty for Giving False and Misleading Information.* – The penalty of
26 imprisonment of not less than six (6) years but not more than twelve (12) years and
27 a fine of not more than One hundred thousand pesos (Php100,000.00) shall be

1 imposed upon a whistleblower who deliberately and voluntarily gives false or
2 misleading information in connection with conduct constituting graft and corruption
3 under this Act. If the offender is a public officer or employee, the penalty of dismissal
4 from the service and the accessory penalty of perpetual absolute disqualification from
5 holding public office shall also be imposed. In addition, the offender may be held
6 criminally and civilly liable under existing laws.

7 *Sec. 22. Penalty for Unjustified Recantation.* – The unjustified recantation of
8 testimony by a whistleblower shall constitute an offense and shall be punishable by a
9 penalty of imprisonment of not less than four (4) years but not more than six (6)
10 years.

11 *Sec. 23. Penalty for Reprisal Against Whistleblower.* – The penalty of
12 imprisonment of not less than six (6) years but not more than twelve (12) years or a
13 fine of not more than One hundred thousand pesos (Php100,000.00), or both, at the
14 discretion of the court shall be imposed upon any person who shall commit any act of
15 reprisal as defined in this Act against a whistleblower and/or hinders, delays, prevents
16 or dissuades said whistleblower from:

- 17 a) Attending, assisting or testifying before any investigating agency or judicial or
18 quasi-judicial body;
- 19 b) Reporting to a law enforcement officer or judge the commission or possible
20 commission of an offense, or a violation of conditions of probation, parole, or
21 release pending judicial proceedings;
- 22 c) Seeking the arrest of another person in connection with the offense;
- 23 d) Causing a criminal prosecution, or any proceeding for the revocation of a parole
24 or probation; and
- 25 e) Performing and enjoying the rights and benefits under this Act or attempt to
26 do so.

27 In addition, the penalty of dismissal from the service and the accessory penalty
28 of perpetual absolute disqualification from holding public office shall be imposed upon
29 an offender who is a public officer or employee.

30 *Sec. 24. Penalty for Violation of Confidentiality.* – The penalty of imprisonment
31 of not less than six (6) months but not more than six (6) years shall be imposed upon
32 any person who shall violate the protection of confidentiality of a protected disclosure

1 under Sections 10, 11, 13 and 16 of this Act. The penalty of dismissal from the service
2 and the accessory penalty of temporary absolute disqualification from holding public
3 office shall also be imposed upon an offender who is a public officer or employee. In
4 addition, the offender shall be civilly liable to indemnify the whistleblower or informant
5 in such amount of damages as may be awarded and deemed reasonable by a
6 competent court.

7 *Sec. 25. Penalty for Reprisal in the Workplace.* – The penalty of imprisonment
8 of not more than six (6) years but not more than twelve (12) years shall be imposed
9 upon any person who shall commit any act of reprisal in the workplace as defined in
10 this Act, against a whistleblower or believed or suspected to be one. The penalty of
11 dismissal from the service and the accessory penalty of temporary absolute
12 disqualification from holding public office shall also be imposed upon an offender who
13 is a public officer or employee. In addition, the offender shall be civilly liable to
14 indemnify the whistleblower in such amount of damages as may be awarded and
15 deemed reasonable by a competent court. Towards this end, an aggrieved
16 whistleblower shall be entitled to the provisional remedy of injunction against any
17 reprisal in the workplace, prejudicial conduct, or discriminatory treatment by reason
18 of whistleblower’s disclosure.

19 The proceedings herein shall be independent of any action that an aggrieved
20 person may take before the Civil Service Commission or the DOLE for unfair or
21 discriminatory practices, backwages, or other labor disputes, or before other quasi-
22 judicial agencies that may or may not have arisen from a disclosure or believed or
23 suspected disclosure.

24 *Sec. 26. Penalty for Discriminatory Hiring.* – The penalty of imprisonment of
25 not more than six (6) months shall be imposed upon any person who shall deny a
26 qualified applicant for employment, or who shall reject an application for employment
27 solely on the ground that an applicant is a whistleblower or informant for the State.
28 If the offender is a corporation, partnership, association, or any juridical person, the
29 penalty shall be imposed upon the president, partner, manager and/or any responsible
30 officer who participated in the commission of the offense.

1 The penalty of dismissal from the service and the accessory penalty of
2 suspension of the right to hold public office shall also be imposed upon the offender
3 who is a public officer or employee.

4 In addition, the offender shall be civilly liable to indemnify the whistleblower in
5 such amount of damages as may be awarded and deemed reasonable by a competent
6 court.

7 *Sec. 27. Failure to Post Abstract.* – The failure to post an abstract required
8 under Section 19 of this Act shall constitute an offense and shall be punishable with a
9 fine of One hundred thousand pesos (Php100,000.00) for the first offense. The
10 amount shall be doubled for every succeeding offense, and punishable with
11 imprisonment of not more than six (6) months at the discretion of the court. For this
12 purpose, the president, general manager, or head of agency, office or bureau shall be
13 held criminally liable and shall suffer the accessory penalty of suspension of the right
14 to hold public office.

15 *Sec. 28. Failure to Act or Report to the Council.* – Any person under obligation
16 to report a disclosure under this Act to the Council, who fails to do so within a period
17 of two (2) months, or who fails to act thereon or cause an investigation thereof, shall
18 be held liable and shall suffer the penalty of not more than one (1) month
19 imprisonment or a fine of not more than Fifty thousand pesos (Php50,000.00) at the
20 discretion of the court.

21 *Sec. 29. Whistleblower Benefits and Protection Council.* – A Whistleblower
22 Benefits and Protection Council is hereby created composed of the Overall Deputy
23 Ombudsman as Chairperson, and the following as members:

- 24 a) Prosecutor General, DOJ;
- 25 b) Special Prosecutor, Ombudsman;
- 26 c) Witness Protection Program Director, DOJ;
- 27 d) Executive Director, Anti-Money Laundering Council;
- 28 e) Director, Legal Service, Philippine National Police, in case the respondent is a
29 member thereof;
- 30 f) The Judge Advocate General of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, in case the
31 respondent is a member thereof;

- 1 g) A representative from the civil society/nongovernment organization involved in
2 anti-corruption and good governance to be appointed by the Chairperson of
3 the Council, upon the recommendation of the members thereof; and
4 h) A representative from the business sector to be appointed by the Chairperson
5 of the Council, upon the recommendation of the Philippine Chamber of
6 Commerce and Industry.

7 The existing personnel of the Office of the Ombudsman shall serve as
8 secretariat to the Council.

9 *Sec. 30. Powers and Functions of the Council.* – In addition to its powers and
10 functions under existing laws, the Council shall have the following powers and
11 functions:

- 12 a) Monitor, coordinate and evaluate all efforts relative to the implementation and
13 enforcement of the provisions of this Act;
14 b) Evaluate the disclosure and qualification of whistleblowers or informants for
15 coverage within this Act, and make the appropriate decision on their
16 entitlement to the benefits extended herein;
17 c) Undertake, in coordination and cooperation with the private and public sectors,
18 an information campaign to educate the public on the provisions and benefits
19 of this Act;
20 d) Develop plans and implement programs to further encourage whistleblowers or
21 informants on graft and corrupt activities with a view to effective deterrence
22 and/or prosecution;
23 e) Control and administer, consistent with the provisions and purposes of this Act,
24 the protection and benefits of whistleblowers in connection with the cases
25 within the coverage of Section 4 of this Act;
26 f) Call upon, or deputize any department, bureau, office or any other government
27 agency or public official to assist in the effective implementation and
28 enforcement of this Act; and
29 g) Grant immunity in accordance with the provisions of this Act and its
30 implementing rules and regulations.

31 *Sec. 31. Appropriations.* – The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of
32 this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

1 *Sec. 32. Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The Council shall promulgate
2 such rules and regulations as may be necessary to implement the intent and purposes
3 of this Act. Said rules and regulations shall be published in two (2) newspapers of
4 general circulation.

5 *Sec. 33. Separability Clause.* – If any portion or provision of this Act is
6 subsequently declared invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof which are
7 not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

8 *Sec. 34. Repealing Clause.* – All other laws, acts, presidential decrees, executive
9 orders, presidential proclamations, issuances, rules and regulations, or parts thereof
10 which are contrary to or inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act are hereby
11 repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

12 *Sec. 35. Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
13 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,