

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



23 MAR -7 P2:16

SENATE
S.B. No. 1968

RECEIVED BY _____

Introduced by **SENATOR IMEE R. MARCOS**

AN ACT
IDENTIFYING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AREAS IN THE PROVINCE OF
ISABELA, MANDATING SUPPORT FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT, CREATING
THE ISABELA TOURISM COUNCIL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Being labelled and described as the "Melting Pot of the North" and the "Rice and Corn Granary of Luzon," Isabela has consistently emerged and figured prominently from the late 20th century to the turn of the millennium to become a premier province of the Philippines as it is currently being recognized as the trade and industrial center of Northeastern Luzon.

Covering a total land area of 10,665 square kilometres which comprises about 40% of the regional territory, Isabela boasts of its size as the largest province in the region and the second largest province in the Philippines. At present, Isabela houses 1,593,566 residents who are acknowledged for their tenacity and diligence.

The tourism industry, which focuses on the delivery of both products and services, has the potential to generate and have significant positive effects on the socioeconomic. It could aid in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably those that deal with eradicating poverty, protecting the environment, and creating jobs for women, indigenous groups, and young people. Also, tourism might generate income for the government in the form of taxes and foreign exchange gains, and because of its multiplier impact, it could open doors for regional economic growth.

Republic Act No. 9593, otherwise known as the "Tourism Act of 2009" provides that the State shall declare tourism as an indispensable element of the national economy and an industry of national interest and importance, which must be harnessed as an engine of socio-economic growth and cultural affirmation to generate investment, foreign exchange, and employment, and to continue to mold an enhanced sense of national pride for all Filipinos.

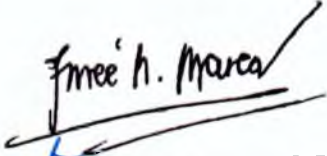
The State must recognize tourism development as integral to the national socioeconomic development efforts to improve the quality of life of the Filipino people, providing the appropriate attention and support for the growth of this industry.

Isabela has a seemingly immense potential to be a viable tourism destination for it serves as a home to several attractions such as the country's oldest churches and sites ranging from the highest mountains to the deepest waters. An example of which is the highest and biggest dam in Asia at the time of its construction, the Magat High Rise Dam and Tourism Complex, located in the largest tributary of Cagayan River. Isabela also takes pride of the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park which is the largest protected area in the country ranked first in the world's biodiversity. There, we can also find Aguinaldo Shrine, Parish Church of St. Mathias in Tumauni declared as a National Cultural Treasure, Palanan Rainforest which is the Philippines' largest low altitude rainforest with numerous unknown endemic species of flora and fauna and exceptional biological diversity, Mororan River, Sinavulluan Caves, among others.

The ultimate purpose of this bill is to encourage the local government units, with unified goals intertwined with the efforts made by the national government, to promote a tourism industry that is ecologically sustainable, responsible, participative, culturally sensitive, economically viable, and ethically and socially equitable for local communities as they formulate tourism policies, plans, and projects for the development of tourism. In turn, the local residents of Isabela must then develop a strong sense of ownership of tourism resources in their area as the local government constructs models and strategies geared to help design options appropriate to specific situations or circumstances.

The province of Isabela will have the opportunity to maximize all of its potential as a growing tourist destination with the help of the Department of Tourism.

In view of aforementioned considerations, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


IMEE R. MARCOS

¹ QuickStat ¹Quickstat Isabela <https://psa.gov.ph/content/isabela-quickstat-june-2018>.

² Javier, A. and Elazigue, D. (2011). Opportunities and Challenges in Tourism Development Roles of Local Government Units in the Philippines. Accessed on 7 March 2023 through <https://www2.gsid.nagoya-u.ac.jp/blog/anda/files/2011/08/5-rolesjaviere38080.pdf>.

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FUNDS THEREFOR

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

Chapter 1
Preliminary Provisions

1
2
3
4 **SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy.** – It is hereby declared the policy of the
5 State to promote a tourism industry that is ecologically sustainable, responsible,
6 participative, culturally sensitive, economically viable, and equitable for local
7 communities. To this end, the State shall endeavor to provide the proper
8 mechanisms and infrastructure for sustainable tourism development. It shall
9 develop and promote certain areas and sites identified as tourist destinations or
10 attractions in order to drive and propel inclusive growth throughout the country.

11
12 Pursuant thereto, all areas within the Province of Isabela endowed with
13 natural beauty or historical and cultural significance, with either existing or potential
14 integrated leisure facilities developed for one or more tourism purpose, shall be
15 considered tourism development areas.

16
17 **SEC. 2. Identification and Declaration of Tourism Sites.** – Areas in the
18 Province of Isabela that have potential for tourism shall be declared as ecotourism,
19 cultural heritage tourism, health and wellness tourism, general leisure tourism, or
20 mixed use tourism sites after consultation with the Department of Tourism (DOT):
21 *Provided,* that areas in environmentally protected areas shall not be declared
22 tourism sites without consultation with the Department of Environment and Natural
23 Resources (DENR).
24

1 The survey and verification of the areas shall be conducted by the National
2 Mapping and Resource Information Authority, in coordination with the Provincial
3 Government of Isabela.

4
5 **SEC. 3. *Isabela Tourism Council.*** – There is hereby created the Isabela
6 Tourism Council, hereinafter referred to as Council, which shall be the primary
7 policy-making, planning and coordinating body in the development of tourism in
8 the Province of Isabela and the administration of tourism sites therein. It shall be
9 composed of the following members:

- 10 (a) Provincial Governor of Isabela, as Chairperson;
11 (b) Municipal Mayors of all the municipalities and cities of the Province of
12 Isabela, who shall elect from among themselves the Council's Vice
13 Chairperson;
14 (c) Member of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Isabela, duly designated
15 by such body; and
16 (d) Two (2) representatives from the private sector, appointed by the
17 Chairperson of the Council, who shall serve for a period of two (2) years.

18
19 The Provincial Government of Isabela shall provide a Secretariat for the
20 Council including the funding necessary to cover expenses for the
21 performance of its official functions and activities.

22
23 **SEC. 4. *Functions of the Council.*** – The Council shall have the following
24 functions:

- 25 (a) Identify and declare areas as tourism sites;
26 (b) Formulate programs and recommendations and manage local
27 resources and funds to develop local tourism facilities and attractions;
28 (c) Assist in the regulation and supervision of tourism-oriented
29 establishments, thereby ensuring wholesome and clean tourism
30 activities;
31 (d) Assist in monitoring the implementation of the Local Government
32 Code on the licensing of tourism establishments in the locality to
33 ascertain safe and enjoyable stay of travellers;
34 (e) Strictly enforce health and sanitary standards in public restrooms
35 frequented by public utility vehicles and tourist transport services, i.e.,
36 gasoline stations and restaurants along main highways and bus stops;
37 and
38 (f) Perform any other duties in accordance with the guidelines issued by
39 the Department of the Interior and Local Government.

40
41 **SEC. 5. *Isabela Tourism Development Plan.*** – The DOT shall, in coordination
42 with the Council and concerned local government units (LGUs) and agencies of the
43 government, prepare a tourism development plan for the province of Isabela and

1 incorporate the same in its overall tourism development plan pursuant to Republic
2 Act No. 9593, otherwise known as the "Tourism Act of 2009." The development
3 plan shall be jointly implemented with the concerned LGUs and the Council.
4

5 The concerned LGUs shall, in coordination with the DOT, DENR, the Tourism
6 Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority and other concerned agencies of the
7 government, delineate well defined geographic areas within the tourism sites and
8 coordinate the integrated development of these sites for the optimal use of natural
9 assets and attractions, as well as of existing facilities: *Provided*, that said
10 development plan shall ensure the preservation of the ecological balance and
11 natural beauty of the areas.
12

13 Upon the promulgation of this Act, the Department of Public Works and
14 Highways (DPWH) shall, in coordination with the DOT and the Council, implement
15 the construction and improvement of roads and other infrastructure necessary in
16 the development of tourism sites and shall incorporate the same in its infrastructure
17 program.
18

19 **SEC. 6. Appropriations.** – The Secretaries of DOT, DPWH, DENR, and the
20 Department of Transportation (DOTr) shall include in their respective Department's
21 program the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in
22 the annual General Appropriations Act and shall augment such allocation with
23 internally generated funds of the DOT.
24

25 **SEC. 7. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within sixty (60) days from
26 the effectivity of this Act, the Council shall, in consultation with the DOT, DENR,
27 DPWH, DOTr, the National Economic and Development Authority and other
28 concerned government agencies and stakeholders, promulgate the necessary rules
29 and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act.
30

31 **SEC. 8. Separability Clause.** – If, for any reason, any section or provision of
32 this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, other sections or provisions which are
33 not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.
34

35 **SEC. 9. Repealing Clause.** – Any law, presidential decree or issuance,
36 executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, proclamation, charter,
37 rule or regulation and/or parts thereof contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions
38 of this Act is hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.
39

40 **SEC. 10. Effectivity Clause.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days
41 following its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general
42 circulation.
43

Approved,