

# National ID bill ready for signing

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The National ID bill is now ready for signing by President Duterte after the House of Representatives ratified late Wednesday the bicameral conference committee report on the measure.

This came hours after the Senate ratified the bicameral conference committee report on the proposed measure that will establish a single, unified and streamlined national identification system. Lawmakers gave assurance the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys) will ensure the safety and security of Filipinos from threats of terrorism and lawless elements.

Camiguin Rep. Xavier Jesus Romualdo, one of the principal authors, said about 16.3 million out of 104 million Filipinos – or the poorest of the poor – stand to benefit from the establishment of the national ID.

“The PhilSys is particularly important for vulnerable sectors of our population, like those who are marginalized and living in poverty and those living in remote areas,” Romualdo said.

“Once they have the means to prove their identity, people will be empowered to exercise their rights and privileges and access basic services,” he added.

Romualdo cited the study undertaken by the Identification for Development initiative of the World Bank showing that over 16.3 million Filipinos “do not have proof of identity and are hindered from availing of government and financial services.”

The proposed national ID would contain basic information about all Filipinos such as their names, addresses, date of birth, gender, photograph and biometrics.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, principal author and sponsor of the bill in the Senate, gave assurance that all data stored in the national ID would be secure and kept by the Philippine Statistics Authority as the designated repository.

He said the national ID aims to provide a convenient way for Filipinos to transact with government and private institutions such as banks because they would no longer be required to present two valid IDs as proof of their identities.

Lacson said there are at least 33 different “functional” identification cards issued by various government agencies.

Former journalist and now Laguna Rep. Sol Aragon, co-author of the measure in the House, said the national ID system will synchronize and harmonize all existing government-initiated identification cards into a unified, comprehensive and efficient system.

“Called the PhilSys ID, it will be issued to all citizens and resident aliens to provide them with a valid proof of identity and a means to simplify public and private transactions,” Aragon said.

“We will no longer need to present multiple IDs to transact with government and private establishments that require individuals to present two or more government-issued IDs.”

Aragon described the passing of the measure as a “historical milestone” since it languished in Congress for over three decades because of strong opposition and fears about the possible violation of an individual’s right to privacy.

Another principal co-author, Surigao del Norte Rep. Robert Ace Barbers, said he expects “that the ratification of the bill would help law enforcement agencies to arrest lawbreakers and those behind illegal activities, including banned substances.”

Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) officer-in-charge Eduardo Año said with a national ID system in place, there will be more effective and efficient law enforcement and better crime prevention and solution. “It will help local government units and the Philippine Na-

tional Police exercise their role in protecting the general welfare of their communities as all persons will be easily identified,” Año said. Año said the DILG is supporting the implementation of a national identification system as it will help fast-track transactions with the government and hasten the delivery of public services.