

Press Release
January 18, 2021

POE URGES ONE BIG, FINAL PUSH AS AMLA AMENDMENTS HEAD TO BICAM

Sen. Grace Poe urged fellow lawmakers to give the Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA) amendment a big, final push to bolster the existing law crucial to the Philippines' economic comeback in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senate Bill No. 1945 or the proposed Strengthening the Anti-Money Laundering Act authored by Poe, was approved on third and final reading with 21 affirmative votes on Monday, Jan. 18.

The measure will be finalized when the Senate and the House of Representatives meet in the bicameral conference committee meeting. The ratified version will then be sent to Malacañang for the President's signature.

The bill pitches for amendments to the law to curb money laundering and terrorist financing activities.

"There are cracks in our financial institutions that some people have used to their advantage. With the AMLA amendments, their days are numbered," Poe said.

"The amendments to the AMLA are responsive to emergent risks and challenges facing our financial system and at the same time, protective of the money of the people, including hard-earned cash of overseas Filipino workers," the chairperson of the committee on banks, financial institutions and currencies, said.

Among the amendments to the law focus on the inclusion of offshore gaming operators and service providers introduced as different set of covered persons from casinos.

The bill also deals with tax crimes covered by AMLA and their proposed threshold.

It also proposed a section on information security and confidentiality, and a system of incentives and rewards.

The measure was crafted as a response to the key findings of the mutual evaluation report which evaluated the Philippines' compliance with the 40 recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on Money Laundering.

"If we fail to act now, the FATF Asia Pacific Joint Group or AP-JG will place the Philippines in the so-called 'grey list' along with countries like Albania, Pakistan, Panama, Syria, Uganda, and Zimbabwe," Poe had said.

She explained that being on the grey list could put Filipino nationals and businesses under tighter scrutiny that could upset investors as it means additional paper costs, paperwork, high interest rates and processing fees.

The "enhanced due diligence" to be imposed on the Philippines could translate as well to higher costs of remittance for the millions of overseas Filipino workers sending money to their families.

"We have come this far in reforming the AMLA, for sake of good governance, transparency and enhanced financial systems. There's no turning back until we have a stronger law," Poe said.