



Sangguniang Panlalawigan

BATAAN CAPITOL, BALANGA CITY



EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE 7TH REGULAR SESSION OF THE SANGGUNIANG PANLALAWIGAN OF BATAAN ON AUGUST 18, 2025 HELD AT THE SESSION HALL, THE BUNKER @ THE CAPITOL COMPOUND, TENEJERO, BALANGA CITY, BATAAN 2100

PRESENT:

Hon. Ma. Cristina M. Garcia, Vice Governor and Presiding Officer

FIRST DISTRICT:

Hon. Jomar L. Gaza J.D., Board Member
Hon. Mylene A. Serrano, Board Member
Hon. Godofredo B. Galicia, Jr., M.D., Board Member

SECOND DISTRICT:

Hon. Maria Margarita R. Roque, Board Member
Hon. Noel Joseph L. Valdecañas, Board Member
Hon. Victor A. Baluyot, Jr., Board Member

THIRD DISTRICT:

Hon. Romano L. Del Rosario, MPA, Board Member
Hon. Angelito M. Sunga, Board Member
Hon. Jorge S. Estanislao, M.D., Board Member
Hon. Roman Harold R. Espeleta, OP, Board Member

Hon. Jovy Z. Banzon, Board Member (PCL President)
Hon. Romeo A. Austria, Board Member (FABC President)
Hon. Lovely Joy A. Poblete, Board Member (SKF President)
Hon. Feliciano G. Magay, Jr., Board Member (IPMR)

ABSENT:

None

PROVINCIAL ORDINANCE NO. 15 Series of 2025

AN ORDINANCE PROHIBITING THE WILLFUL CREATION, DISSEMINATION, AND PROPAGATION OF FAKE NEWS AND HARMFUL RUMORS WITHIN THE PROVINCE OF BATAAN, PROVIDING PENALTIES THEREFOR.

**AUTHORED AND SPONSORED BY:
HON. JOMAR L. GAZA J.D.**

WHEREAS, while freedom of speech is protected under the 1987 Philippine Constitution, malicious acts of spreading false information can threaten public order, safety, health, or reputation, and thus beyond the ambit of this protection;

WHEREAS, recent events such as disasters, public health emergencies, and peace and order issues have revealed how the rapid spread of rumors and falsehoods on digital platforms and word-of-mouth can cause fear, misallocation of resources, violence, defamation, and uncertainty among residents;

JOSE ENRIQUE S. GARCIA III
Provincial Governor

"EXCELLENT PUBLIC SERVICE TOWARDS A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL"

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WHEREAS, the Provincial Government of Bataan (PGB) seeks to adopt a local mechanism to deter harmful communication, foster accountability, and preserve the truthfulness of public discourse while respecting constitutional rights;

WHEREAS, while national laws such as Article 154 of the Revised Penal Code (RPC), as amended, the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10175), or the Mandatory Reporting of Notifiable Diseases and Health Events of Public Health Concern Act (Republic Act No. 11332), penalize certain forms of false information, there remains no comprehensive law that addresses the general spread of fake news or rumor-mongering in everyday, non-criminal contexts;

WHEREAS, thus, even members of Congress have recently filed proposed bills aimed at penalizing the creation and distribution of fake news and malicious rumors;

WHEREAS, the Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act No. 7160) empowers local government units (LGUs), through the general welfare clause, to enact ordinances that preserve public peace, promote accountability, and ensure the safety and welfare of their constituents;

WHEREAS, jurisprudence affirms that LGUs may legislate on matters not specifically or exclusively regulated by national laws, and may impose penalties within the limits provided under the Local Government Code of 1991;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it ordained as it is hereby ordained by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of the Province of Bataan, in session assembled, that:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE. - This Ordinance shall be known and cited as the "Anti-Fake News and Harmful Rumors Ordinance of Bataan."

SECTION 2. INTENT OF THE ORDINANCE. - This Ordinance is enacted to fill a regulatory gap in addressing harmful local behavior not sufficiently covered by existing national statutes. It aims to establish a community-based and locally enforceable mechanism to mitigate the social harms caused by rumor-mongering and disinformation. The PGB seeks to deter the creation and propagation of false narratives, promote accountability, and safeguard the integrity of public discourse, all while upholding constitutional rights, including freedom of speech and due process.

SECTION 3. DECLARATION OF POLICY. - It is the declared policy of the PGB to uphold and promote the values of truth, transparency, and responsible communication. The PGB shall adopt measures to prevent, deter, and penalize the willful creation, dissemination, and circulation of fake news and harmful rumors whether conveyed through print, digital media, social platforms, or verbal communication, that threaten public welfare, incite panic, damage reputations, or undermine peace and order. Through this Ordinance, the PGB reaffirms its commitment to protecting the public from the disruptive effects of false information while fostering a culture of discernment, accountability, and mutual respect.

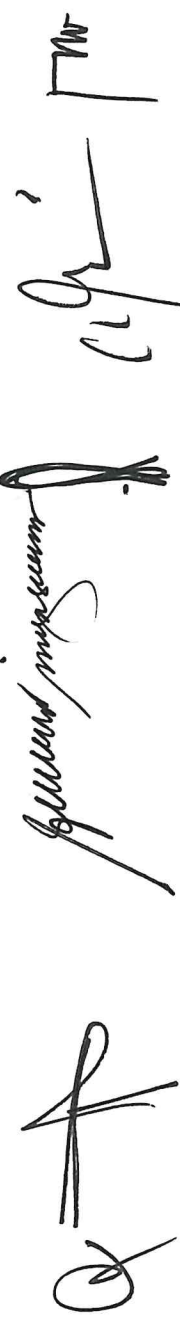
SECTION 4. DEFINITIONS. - For the purpose of this Ordinance, the following terms are hereby defined:

- a. Disinformation - False information deliberately created or disseminated to deliberately deceive or mislead people;


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Provincial Governor 







- b. Fake News – Any information that is verifiably false or misleading, created or disseminated with the intent to deceive, manipulate public perception, or provoke public reaction;
- c. Harmful Rumors – Unverified, misleading, or false claims whether spoken, written, or shared digitally that may cause public panic, harm to individuals or institutions, or disruption of peace and order;
- d. Rumor-Mongering – The willful act of initiating, circulating, or amplifying harmful rumors or unverified information, especially during critical events, with the intent to mislead or cause social disruption;
- e. Critical Events – Situations of heightened public concern, including but not limited to: natural disasters, public health emergencies, national or local elections, security incidents, or other urgent events affecting public safety; and
- f. Public Platform – Any medium or communication channel, physical or digital, through which information is disseminated to the general public, including but not limited to social media, websites, print materials, messaging apps, and public gatherings.

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SECTION 5. PROHIBITED ACTS. - The following acts are hereby declared unlawful and punishable under this Ordinance:

- a. Creating, publishing, or sharing fake news or harmful rumors, with knowledge of their falsity or without reasonable effort to verify their accuracy, particularly through public platforms;
- b. Spreading false or misleading information during critical events, including typhoons, floods, public health emergencies, or other situations that may incite panic, disrupt response efforts, or endanger public welfare;
- c. Engaging in rumor-mongering, either online or offline, with malicious intent or reckless disregard for the truth, resulting in reputational damage, undue alarm, or social tension;
- d. Using false identities or anonymous accounts to propagate disinformation or malicious content intended to mislead the public or attack individuals or institutions;
- e. Refusing to remove or retract publicly disseminated false content after receiving written notice from authorized government entities that such content has been verified as false or misleading; and
- f. Defaming public officials or institutions through knowingly false claims, where such claims are intended to erode public trust or interfere with legitimate governmental functions.

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SECTION 6. EXCEPTIONS. - This ordinance shall not penalize:

- a. Content shared in good faith based on credible sources at the time of posting;
- b. Clearly labeled satire, parody or content intended for humor and not meant to mislead; and

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JOSE ENRIQUE S. GARCIA III
Provincial Governor *[Handwritten initials]*

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c. Private communications not intended for public dissemination.

SECTION 7. PENALTIES. - Any person or entity who violates this ordinance shall be subject to the following:

1 st Offense	Fine of PHP 3,000
2 nd Offense	Fine of PHP 4,000
3 rd Offense	Fine of PHP 5,000 and/or imprisonment of not more than 6 months, subject to court discretion

The above is without prejudice to separate administrative, civil, or criminal actions that may be filed under the appropriate laws or other issuances.

SECTION 8. ENFORCEMENT. - The following shall be responsible for enforcing this Ordinance:

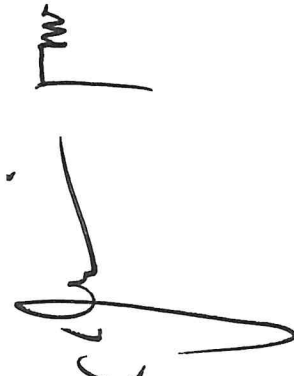
- a. Philippine National Police (PNP) in coordination with barangay officials for community-level monitoring;
- b. Office of the Provincial Information Officer (PIO) for reporting and tracking;
- c. Office of the Provincial Legal Officer for legal action, including prosecution and filing of civil and administrative cases, as may be appropriate; and
- d. National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) for tracking and identifying individuals who post fake news or harmful rumors online in coordination with other enforcement agencies.

SECTION 9. RELATION TO NATIONAL LAWS. - If any act or omission penalized under this Ordinance likewise constitutes a violation of national laws such as Article 154 of the RPC, as amended, the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10175), or the Mandatory Reporting of Notifiable Diseases and Health Events of Public Health Concern Act (Republic Act No. 11332), the provisions of such national law shall prevail with respect to the prosecution of the offense and the imposition of penalties.

In such cases, the role of the PGB shall be limited to assisting the appropriate national authorities in evidence-gathering, documentation, and coordination, without prejudice to the application of remedies available under this Ordinance.

For avoidance of doubt, this Ordinance differs from the above-mentioned national laws in that it specifically addresses the willful creation and local dissemination of fake news and harmful rumors within the Province of Bataan, whether or not it threatens national security or public order, and regardless of whether it is committed online or offline. National laws primarily address broader or more specific contexts: Article 154 of the RPC focuses on false news affecting public order or State interest; Republic Act No. 10175 addresses cybercrimes,


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including online libel and cyber libel; and Republic Act No. 11332 penalizes the spread of false information relating to notifiable diseases and public health emergencies. This Ordinance supplements these national provisions by providing localized enforcement mechanisms and community-level preventive measures.

SECTION 10. MONITORING AND REPORTING. - The Office of the Provincial Information Officer (OPIO) shall establish a monitoring and reporting system-online and offline-for citizens to file complaints of suspected fake news or rumors. Upon receiving a complaint, the OPIO shall notify the PNP, NBI and/or relevant barangay officials for verification and fact-checking. The OPIO may partner with independent fact-checking groups for assistance.

SECTION 11. PUBLIC EDUCATION. - The OPIO shall lead awareness campaigns about the harms of fake news, responsible digital behavior, and critical thinking. Schools, barangays, and government offices are encouraged to regularly conduct information literacy seminars.


SECTION 12. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE. - If any provision of this Ordinance is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions not affected shall continue in full force and effect.

SECTION 13. REPEALING CLAUSE. - All ordinances, resolutions, or parts thereof which are inconsistent with this Ordinance are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SECTION 14. EFFECTIVITY. - This Ordinance shall take effect after compliance with the relevant provisions of the Local Government Code of 1991.

UNANIMOUSLY ENACTED this 18th day of August 2025.

I HEREBY CERTIFY to the enactment of the foregoing ordinance.


ATTY. MARK LORENZ C. QUEZON
Secretary to the Sangguniang Panlalawigan


ENACTED:



JOMAR L. GAZA J.D.
Board Member


MARIA MARGARITA R. ROQUE
Board Member


MYLENE A. SERRANO
Board Member


NOEL JOSEPH L. VALDECAÑAS
Board Member


GODOFREDO B. GALICIA, JR., M.D.
Board Member


VICTOR A. BALUYOT, JR.
Board Member


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ROMANO L. DEL ROSARIO, MPA
Board Member



JORGE S. ESTANISLAO, M.D.
Board Member




ANGELITO M. SUNGA
Board Member


ROMAN HAROLD R. ESPELETA, OP
Board Member


JOVY Z. BANZON
Board Member
(PCI President)


ROMEO A. AUSTRIA
Board Member
(FABC President)





LOVELY JOYA A. POBLETE
Board Member
(SKF President)


FELICIANO G. MAGAY, JR.
Board Member
(IPMR)

ATTESTED:


MA. CRISTINA M. GARCIA
Vice Governor & Presiding Officer

APPROVED:


JOSE ENRIQUE S. GARCIA III
Provincial Governor
Date: 9-01-2025 