

[REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9999, February 23, 2010]

AN ACT PROVIDING A MECHANISM FOR FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* — This Act shall be known as the "Free Legal Assistance Act of 2010".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* — It is the declared policy of the State to value the dignity of every human person and guarantee the rights of every individual, particularly those who cannot afford the services of a legal counsel.

Furthermore, it is the policy of the State to promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation and free the people from poverty through policies and programs that provide adequate social services and improve the quality of life for all.

In addition, the State shall guarantee free legal assistance to the poor and ensure that every person who cannot afford the services of a counsel is provided with a competent and independent counsel preferably of his/her own choice, if upon determination it appears that the party cannot afford the services of a counsel, and that the services of a counsel are necessary to secure the ends of justice and protect the rights of the party.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* — As provided for in this Act, the term legal services to be performed by a lawyer refers to any activity which requires the application of law, legal procedure, knowledge, training and experiences which shall include, among others, legal advice and counsel, and the preparation of instruments and contracts, including appearance before the administrative and quasi-judicial offices, bodies and tribunals handling cases in court, and other similar services as may be defined by the Supreme Court.

SEC. 4. *Requirements for Availment.* — For purposes of availing of the benefits and services as envisioned in this Act, a lawyer or professional partnership shall secure a certification from the Public Attorney's Office (PAO), the Department of Justice (DOJ) or accredited association of the Supreme Court indicating that the said legal services to be provided are within the services defined by the Supreme Court, and that the agencies cannot provide the legal services to be provided by the private counsel.

For purposes of determining the number of hours actually provided by the lawyer and/or professional firm in the provision of legal services, the associationa and/or