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SENATE  
P. S. R. No. 1498

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Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

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RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED CONCERNS OVER THE P2.5 BILLION RADIO FREQUENCY ID (RFID) TAGGING SYSTEM TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article 3, Section 1 provides: "No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, nor shall any person be denied the equal protection of the laws";

WHEREAS, various media reported that the Land Transportation Office (LTO) will implement on 1 January 2010 the mandatory tagging of vehicles using radio frequency IDs (RFID); however, vehicle owners may start volunteering their vehicles for tagging this year from November 3 to 16;

WHEREAS, the RFID system uses a "tag", which is a sticker with a chip that stores a unique number assigned to a vehicle, and a "reader", which is a device that could track down the chip through radio frequency;

WHEREAS, the RFID system has been reportedly implemented in other countries; in the Philippines, the devices that will be used to read the data on the RFID chips will have a "limited" range of 10 meters, and each chip will cost P350 that could last 10 years;

WHEREAS, Eleanor S. Calderon, chief of the Land Transportation Office Operations Division claimed that the RFID system will minimize the incidents of carnapping;

WHEREAS, Calderon also reportedly stated that although the government will not force motorists to have their vehicles tagged with RFIDs, they will still be arrested if found that they have not complied with the program, since such is mandatory;

WHEREAS, it was reported, however, that Philippine National Police (PNP) spokesman Senior Superintendent Leonardo Espina has expressed doubt on how to implement the RFID system; according to Espina, the PNP will need time to study the program;

WHEREAS, it was also reported that various groups have rejected the idea of implementing the RFID system; according to George San Mateo, secretary general of the Pinagkaisang Samahan ng Tsuper at Opereytor Nationwide (Piston), the P350 fee will be an added burden to jeepney drivers; the group also claimed that jeepney drivers earn only as much as P250 or lower for every 14 hours of travel;

WHEREAS, the group also alleged that a single chip only costs P15;

WHEREAS, the LTO claimed that in the initial registration of 5 million motor vehicles for RFIDs, the government could earn P1.6 billion;

WHEREAS, aside from Piston, Liza Maza of the Gabriela party-list has also expressed her concern that that the RFID system might be used to violate an individual's right to privacy; aside from Maza, Piston also claimed that the RFID system may be used to spy on transport groups and their leaders who initiate protest actions;

WHEREAS, aside from these concerns, some lawmakers have also questioned the legality of the RFID plan, which reportedly would cost the government P2.5 billion for its implementation;

WHEREAS, various reports have alleged that the RFID project has not passed through legal channels such as a public bidding process and review from the National Telecommunications Commission;

WHEREAS, the Commission on Human Rights has also expressed fears similar to those voiced by Piston and by Maza that the RFID may be used for "illegal" surveillance;

WHEREAS, given all these concerns, the LTO should not hastily implement the RFID system without proper consultation and without properly informing the public, especially the transport system of the pros and cons of the program;

WHEREAS, Congress should also ascertain whether the bidding system was correctly followed by the LTO;

WHEREAS, it is crucial that during this global economic crisis, the government should not implement programs that will increase its spending on projects that do not cater to health and social services;

WHEREAS, the P2.5 billion needed for the implementation of the RFID could be allocated to priority projects; there is merit to the argument that the RFID program will impose an additional financial burden on the public apart from the allegation that it will cost the government a large sum of money and that the project could violate one's constitutional right to privacy;

WHEREFORE, it hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate, to direct the Economic Affairs Committee, to conduct an inquiry in aid of legislation, on the reported concerns over the P2.5 billion radio frequency ID (RFID) tagging system to be implemented by the Land Transportation Office.

Adopted,

  
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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