

# *GMA signs anti-child porn law*

President Arroyo signed on Tuesday night Republic Act 9775, otherwise known as the Anti-Child Pornography Law, Tarlac Rep. Monica Teodoro, its principal author in the House, announced yesterday.

"The passage of this landmark bill is very timely since we are going to commemorate the 20th year of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on Nov.

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20," Teodoro said.

"Now that we already have a stringent law against child pornography, we can efficiently prosecute perpetrators who produce, use and distribute child pornography," she said.

"We used to be a haven for child pornography proliferators and foreign pedophiles. Now, our country is going to be a safe haven for children," she added.

Under the law, child pornography is defined as any representation, be it visual, audio or written form or combination thereof, by electronic, mechanical, digital, optical, magnetic or other means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities.

Any person who produces, distributes, publishes or commits other related acts will face stiff penalties. Violators may include Internet service providers and Internet content hosts.

Violators face fines ranging from P50,000 to P5-million and prison terms, including the maximum penalty of life im-

prisonment.

A child who is victimized shall be recognized as a victim of a violent crime and may claim compensation and protection under the law, which also provides mandatory services for the victim, including counseling and legal assistance.

Teodoro said Filipino children as young as seven years had fallen victim to child pornography syndicates operating cyber sex dens.

Modern technology and equipment such as digital cameras and cellular phones have made child pornography easier to commit and more difficult for authorities to stop and for perpetrators to be apprehended and prosecuted, she said.

Teodoro, on her first term in Congress, chairs the House committee on the welfare of children.

She is reportedly not seeking a second term so she could devote her time helping her husband, former Defense secretary Gilbert Teodoro Jr., in his quest for the presidency.

- Jess Diaz, Paolo Romero