

## Legislation Text

---

**File #:** 170654, **Version:** 0

---

To commemorate and honor the life and legacy of Baltazar “Bal” Pinguel, a former political prisoner who braved imprisonment and death threats to challenge authoritarian regimes in the Philippines and around the globe and became a tireless activist for peace and justice and a radical voice for a democratic people’s movement.

WHEREAS, Before Philadelphia became his home, Baltazar “Bal” Pinguel was an anti-imperialist, anti-dictatorship activist who fought his entire life for national independence and real democracy for the Philippines in the face of a repressive regime; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar opposed Philippine involvement in the Vietnam War, decrying the deployment of troops and presence of U.S. naval bases as colonialist and oppressive, and said that the war opened his eyes and pushed him to engage deeper into the Filipino resistance; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar was at the front and center of social movements ranging from ousting United States military bases to fighting for land reform for Filipino peasants; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar was a prominent leader in the struggle against colonialism and for political justice, and emphasized that the working-class and immigrants were a vital force in this struggle, without whom the struggle would not continue nor be revolutionary; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar became legendary as a fiery orator at rallies in Manila and was the last open and legal spokesperson of Kabataang Makabayan (KM), the largest militant youth and student organization in the Philippines, engaging more than 75,000 members in 1971; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar’s organizing and leadership caused him to be identified as a threat to national security by the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos, forcing him to go underground when martial law was declared in 1972; and

WHEREAS, In 1973 under martial law, Baltazar was arrested, along with other university students and teachers, becoming among many who were indefinitely detained and tortured by the Marcos regime; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar and eight others were involved in the largest-ever prison break in the Philippines under martial law - a memory he proudly recalled - and continued his organizing work until he was arrested again; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar became a political prisoner for nearly five years, from 1980 to 1985, and was subjected to torture while fighting the United States-backed Marcos regime, until he and other political prisoners were given temporary release; and

WHEREAS, After his release, Baltazar became a founding officer and Secretary General of Bagong Alyansang

Makabayan, or BAYAN, the largest grassroots coalition fighting the Marcos dictatorship, which developed the concept of the people's strike and was instrumental in the "People Power" revolution that eventually toppled Marcos; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar left his home in the Philippines after escaping an abduction attempt in 1989, and for two years traveled in Europe and Canada speaking about human rights issues; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar came to Philadelphia in 1991 with his wife and children, and began working for the Third World Coalition within the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) of Philadelphia, and his wife Rosario also joined the staff of AFSC; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar sought political asylum in the United States, was denied, and then after facing potential deportation, he and his family were granted asylum on appeal in 1997; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar's vast knowledge of imperialist and military relations of the United States led him to believe that United States citizens had an important part to play in achieving justice; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar contributed to a 1998 book "Resistance in Paradise: Rethinking 100 Years of U.S. Involvement in the Caribbean and the Pacific," a curriculum guide co-published by AFSC and the School District of Philadelphia that educates students about activism and resistance and the impact of U.S. foreign intervention and conquest in the Pacific and Caribbean from the perspective of people from island nations who are still struggling against oppression and U.S. domination; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar used his considerable intellect, passion, humor, and warmth to train and nurture many activists in the tools and habits of resistance; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar held the title of Director of the National Peace Building and Demilitarization Program at the American Friends Service Committee, where he continued his peace and justice organizing efforts, serving the organization for 17 years, and was also involved in numerous other peace and justice groups; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar was instrumental in organizing the April 20, 2002, Stop the War Mobilization in Washington, D.C. on behalf of AFSC, and also in organizing the No Bases Conference in Ecuador in 2007; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar never stopped organizing; nor was he deterred by his political imprisonment; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar was a passionate fighter for self-determination and spoke truth to power against systemic injustice around the world; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia was Baltazar's home and longest place of residence, and in a 2011 interview said that while the Philippines was always in his heart: "As an activist for peace and justice, I believe I can be at home in any place where there is a need for organizing"; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar is survived by his beloved wife, Rosario, and his three sons, Vladimir, Nicolai, and Friederich, who are continuing their father's legacy; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar was for the people and was respected by many; was viewed as a hero by those who knew him, was tireless in his work for peace and justice, and was the inspiration for generations of Asian American activists and countless other activists around the globe; and

WHEREAS, Baltazar passed away at his home in Philadelphia on June 10, 2017, leaving the City of Philadelphia more just and equitable than when he found it; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby commemorates and honors the life and legacy of Baltazar “Bal” Pinguel, a former political prisoner who braved imprisonment and death threats to challenge authoritarian regimes in the Philippines and around the globe and became a tireless activist for peace and justice, and a radical voice for a democratic people’s movement.