

PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES, PLAINTIFF-APPELLEE, VS. DONALD BALLAGAN, DEFENDANT-APPELLANT.

G.R. No. 88278. August 23, 1995

Ponente: ROMERO, J.

Read online (full-text search, related cases, audio case brief): <https://batas.org/library/g-r-no-88278/>

ROMERO, J.:

This is an appeal from the March 30, 1989 Decision[1] in Criminal Case No. 86-CR-0345 which the Regional Trial Court of Baguio and Benguet, Branch 8 in La Trinidad, Benguet resolved as follows:

"WHEREFORE, the accused, Donald Ballagan y Binayan, is hereby found guilty beyond reasonable doubt of violating Section 4, Article II of Republic Act No. 6425, otherwise known as the Dangerous Drugs Act of 1972, as amended; and he is hereby sentenced to suffer the penalty of life imprisonment and to pay a fine of Twenty Thousand (P20,000.00) Pesos.

The dried marijuana leaves subject matter of this case is hereby declared forfeited in favor of the Government, and it is hereby directed that the same be forthwith turned over to the Dangerous Drugs Board for proper disposal.

SO ORDERED."

In the evening of August 20, 1986, Major Basilio Cablayan of the Philippine Constabulary (PC), acting on the confidential information that Ballagan would be arriving with prohibited drugs, ordered the installation of a checkpoint in Acop, Tublay, Benguet. With Lt. Jerry Valeroso as the leader, the other members of the team who manned the checkpoint were Sgts. Amado Ablang, Oscar Parajas and Fontanilla.

From 6:30 o'clock in the evening when they started checking all vehicles passing the area, the team flagged down 10 to 13 vehicles, some of which had passengers carrying marijuana, before they were able to apprehend the object of the checkpoint. At 1:45 o'clock in the morning of August 21, 1986, they stopped an Isuzu Elf truck with plate No. 269, laden with vegetables on its way to Baguio City from Buguais. The truck had four passengers including the driver.

Sgt. Parajas climbed the cargo portion of the truck and found Ballagan, one of the passengers sleeping, using a brown travelling bag as his pillow. Near the sleeping passenger's back was a rattan bag locally known as pasiking. Sgt. Parajas woke him up and asked permission to check his baggage. When Ballagan turned them over to him, he found out that both the bag and the pasiking contained marijuana. Sgt. Parajas then handed them to Sgt. Ablang who, upon opening them, confirmed that the pasiking had two bundles of marijuana while the bag had two or three bundles of the same contraband. Sgt. Ablang handed all the bundles to Lt. Valeroso.

The team questioned the driver and learned that Ballagan had hitched a ride with him. Thereafter, they brought Ballagan and the confiscated marijuana to the PC detachment at 51 General Luna Road, Baguio City. The marijuana was brought to the PC Crime Laboratory Service in Camp Bado Dangwa, La Trinidad, Benguet where, Capt. Carlos V. Figueroa, a forensic chemist, applying the Duguenois Levine Test and the Thin Layer

Chromatography on the submitted specimen, positively identified the same as "marijuana," a prohibited drug.[2] He found as marijuana the 2.4 kilos dried flowering tops in two bundles wrapped in a plastic container and in a pink straw sack inside the pasiking as well as the 1.7 kilos dried flowering tops placed in transparent plastic bags inside the brown-colored bag marked "ADIDAS."

At the General Luna Road detachment, Ballagan executed a waiver of Article 125[3] of the Revised Penal Code[4] even as the Constabulary operatives tried to ferret out more information from him about drug-trafficking. On December 24, 1986, the following information charging Ballagan with violation of Section 4, Article II of Republic Act No. 6425, otherwise known as the Dangerous Drugs Act of 1972, as amended, was filed against Ballagan:

"That on or about the 20th day of August, 1986, along the Halsema Road at Acop, Municipality of Tublay, Province of Benguet, Philippines, and within the jurisdiction of this Honorable Court, the herein accused, without any authority of law, nor any permit from any government agency, did then and there wilfully, unlawfully and knowingly possess, carry, transport and deliver from Bad-ayan, Buguias, Benguet to Baguio City five (5) kilos of dried marijuana leaves which are sources of prohibited or dangerous drugs which is in violation of the said law.

Contrary to Law."

The date of arraignment of the accused was set by the trial court but the prosecution filed a motion to suspend proceedings in the case on the ground that the accused had filed a petition for review before the then Ministry of Justice, as evidenced by the letter-request dated January 12, 1987 of counsel for the accused.[5] After the trial judge granted the motion,[6] the prosecution manifested that the Department of Justice had denied the accused's petition for review and prayed that the case be set for arraignment.[7] The accused pleaded not guilty to the charge on March 31, 1987.[8] The prosecution then proceeded to present its evidence to prove the commission of the crime.

A camote farmer who did not go beyond the fifth grade, Ballagan was 24 years old when he testified. On August 20, 1986, he was sent by his brother, Vice-Mayor Leon Ballagan, to his sister who was a housegirl in Bekkel, La Trinidad, to inform her that their mother was seriously ill of TB at the Tinok Emergency Hospital. He left their house in Barrio Iheb, Tinok, Ifugao at around 11:00 o'clock in the morning and hiked the 14 to 15-kilometer distance from Iheb to Bad-ayan from where he intended to get a ride to Baguio City.

In Bad-ayan, he was able to hitch a ride at the back of the Elf truck of a vegetable dealer. At that time there were five passengers in the truck - three in front and two in the back. Because he was rushing to see his sister, he did not carry any baggage.

At around midnight, the group had dinner at Km. 32 and Ballagan paid fifty pesos of his P250 pocket money for their food.[9] After eating, a man holding a brown bag and a pasiking asked their driver for permission to hitch a ride at the back of the truck.

As the truck proceeded to Baguio City, Ballagan slept and was awakened by armed soldiers at Acop near the toll gate. As he was getting off the truck, he saw someone running away who was chased by the soldiers while the rest of the truck passengers were ordered to lie face down on the ground. The soldiers who identified themselves as members of the NARCOM frisked all of them and then mauled them. The soldiers took them to a jeep and brought them with their truck to Baguio City. Since the jeep had a flat tire before reaching the city, Ballagan's group were transferred to their Elf truck.

The group was investigated at the General Luna station of the PC. The soldiers showed Ballagan the pasiking and

the bag with the marijuana and when he was asked who owned them, he told the soldiers that the articles belonged to the man who ran away. After the investigation, the soldiers once again mauled them. After four days, except for Ballagan, the rest of the apprehended persons were released after each of them had handed over P5,000 to the NARCOM. He, too, was asked to shell out P5,000 but he could not produce the amount. The P200 remaining of his pocket money was taken from him by the NARCOM. His brother Leon visited him at the NARCOM office but when he told Leon about the P5,000 demand of the NARCOM for his release, Leon told him that he had no money. Ballagan stayed at the NARCOM office for 21 days until he was transferred to the provincial jail.

Philip Tanawe, one of the vegetable dealers apprehended with Ballagan, testified that he was with Genaro Tomayan, Teofilo Wanay and Tony Patian in the Elf truck driven by Rogelio Goyong. While they were in Badayan loading peppers into the truck at around 6:00 o'clock, a person who introduced himself as Donald Ballagan, asked permission to ride with them. He noticed that Ballagan had no baggage at all and that he rode at the back of the truck. Along the Halsema Road, they had supper at a place called Guerilla Saddle.[10]

It was then between midnight and 1:00 o'clock in the morning. After eating, a man approached them and asked for a ride. He was slender and in his mid-30's, had a travelling bag and a knapsack or rattan bag and climbed in the front part of the truck where Tanawe was seated. In Acop, soldiers ordered them to alight from the truck and they were made to face the wall of a nearby house while the soldiers frisked them with guns pointed.

Introducing themselves as NARCOM operatives, the soldiers boxed the members of the group after finding the travelling bag and the knapsack with the marijuana. The man who last hitched a ride with them ran away and the soldiers tried to chase him but since only the tollgate was lighted, the soldiers gave up. The soldiers did not shoot the man who ran away because there were many trucks coming along the road. The group was then asked to ride in a jeep which Tanawe failed to describe because it was dark and raining. Since the jeep had a flat tire, they were transferred to the Elf truck which proceeded to the General Luna station.

At the NARCOM office, they were asked to tell the truth about the marijuana while the soldiers boxed them. The investigation lasted all night. He stayed in the office for two nights only while the others stayed for four nights because his wife was able to produce the P5,000 demanded from each of them by the NARCOM. However, he did not report the matter to the proper authorities because he was afraid that he might get "salvaged."

To fortify his claim that he had no baggage when he left home for Baguio City, Ballagan presented Gabino Botatta, the barangay captain of Iheb (Eheb). Botatta swore that when Ballagan dropped by his house for a glass of water, Ballagan carried no baggage.

On March 30, 1989, the trial court rendered the aforementioned decision. Ballagan now appeals the same on the ground that in convicting him, the trial court erroneously gave full faith and credit to the prosecution witnesses and their testimonies while disregarding the testimonies of the defense witnesses which were the "true and accurate version" of the crime.

In a long line of decisions, this Court has consistently held that the findings of facts of a trial judge, who has seen the witnesses testify and who has observed their demeanor and conduct while on the witness stand, should not be disturbed on appeal, unless certain facts of substance and value have been overlooked which, if considered, may affect the outcome of the case.[11] When the issue is one of credibility of witnesses, the appellate courts will generally not disturb the trial court's findings.[12]

In its decision, the trial court unequivocally stated that it found "the testimonies of the two eyewitnesses for the prosecution to be forthright and convincing enough to overcome the presumption of innocence in favor of the accused" and that it was "not convinced by the version of the defense." We quote with approval the following

findings of the trial court which sealed the culpability of the appellant:

"The testimony of the defense's witness, in the person of Barangay Captain Gabino Botata, 36 years old, is to the effect that the accused was not carrying anything when he (accused) was on his way to Baguio. Even assuming this to be true, that would not necessarily mean that along the way from the Barangay Captain's house in Eheeb, Tinoc, Ifugao, to Bad-ayan where he was to take his ride and which is admittedly 10 to 11 kilometers away (TSN, March 14, 1988, pp. 4-5), he could not have picked up some baggages. The testimony of another defense witness, Philip Tanawe, a vegetable dealer who was then one of the passengers of the same Isuzu Elf that the accused was then riding on, to the effect that he saw the accused without any baggage in boarding the back portion of the truck cannot be believed. Said witness is admittedly seated in the front part of the truck along with the driver and another passenger, and the truck is likewise admittedly fully loaded with 1,500 kilos of vegetables (TSN, Feb. 23, 1988, pp. 18-19). How could he have seen the accused climb the rear part of the truck carrying no baggages? Then, again, corroborating the testimony of the accused, he claims to have seen another person request permission to hitch a ride at Guerilla Saddle; but unlike the accused who was introduced to him by name, this witness did not know the second hitch-hiker's name, and even his description except that 'I think he is slender' and 'mid-30's' (TSN, supra, pp. 26-27). On the matter of the alleged extortion by the NARCOM agents of P5,000.00 from each of the six of them who were brought to the NARCOM office, the witness corroborates a similar claim of the accused. However, this witness did not explain how his wife came to know of his predicament such that she visited him ready with the amount for him (TSN, supra, p. 28); and he was evasive and hazy about why, although he wanted to help the accused, he did not give his statement that would exculpate said accused before the Fiscal's office, how he came out for the first time to testify in court on February 8, 1988, for the accused, how the sickly mother of the accused was able to get him to testify (TSN, supra, pp. 29-30). That story about the alleged P5,000.00 extortion by the NARCOM agents appear to be a figment of the imagination of the accused and this witness. If it is true that they were afraid to report this matter to the authorities - such as the investigating fiscal or the defense counsel - because of the threat that they would be salvaged, it is not credibly explained why said accused and this witness are now no longer afraid." [13]

Moreover, if the arresting NARCOM agents indeed prevaricated, no reason therefor was volunteered by the defense. [14] No improper motive was ever imputed to them who, as arresting officers, are presumed to have regularly performed their official duty in the absence of any evidence to the contrary. [15] Neither was there proof of an evil design on the part of the prosecution witnesses to falsely testify against appellant mendaciously implicate him. [16] The lack of any ill-motive on the part of the arresting officers to testify falsely and impute to appellant a grave offense is of considerable evidentiary weight in assessing the credibility of witnesses. [17]

Appellant's claims that the prosecution witnesses made "fantastic, unnatural and contradicting statements" [18] are unfounded as the statements singled out by appellant are not really contradictory. He merely points to what he believes should have been presented by the prosecution. Thus, he bewails the fact that while the prosecution proved that the checkpoint was installed on account of a confidential information that appellant would be transporting marijuana, it failed to show "how the information was obtained or relayed." [19] We find such "lacking evidence" to be a peripheral one which would not add a shred to the solid prosecution evidence. It should be remembered that the matter of what evidence to present or who to present as witnesses is within the discretionary power of the prosecutor. Such matter is definitely not for the courts to dictate. [20] More-over, the presentation of the informant in a drugs case is not essential for conviction or indispensable to its successful prosecution. [21] His testimony would be merely corroborative and cumulative. [22]

The other "fantastic story" which appellant underscores is the established fact that he was caught sleeping by the soldiers at the checkpoint. To his mind, a person engaged in an illegal activity would not be so nonchalantly unconcerned as to sleep peacefully with the contraband as pillow. It may now seem strange to appellant but the fact is, that was how he was caught by the arresting officers. The situation was not actually "fantastic" or outside

the realm of reality - the truck was hailed at the checkpoint during the wee hours of the morning when sleeping was not "unnatural." Be that as it may, the "inconsistencies" marked by appellant are not major ones which may affect the result of this appeal. But, if taken into account, they may only be considered the understandable result of natural differences in the perception of the same set of facts.[23]

The appellant claims that there was "unreasonable delay in forwarding the person of the accused and the transmittal of the records to the proper authorities." [24] An explanation for this may be gleaned from the records. In the course of appellant's testimony, he was confronted with the document marked as Exhibit "F" wherein he "waived" the effects of his detention vis-a-vis Art. 125 of the Revised Penal Code. Appellant admitted having signed it [25] and in the absence of any evidence rebutting it or showing that appellant was under duress when he executed the "waiver," he cannot now complain about his detention or the perceived delay in delivering him to the provincial jail.

Moreover, contrary to his contention, such delay does not in any way prove that he was maltreated while in custody. [26] In fact, appellant himself admitted that while detained in the NARCOM office, he was free to roam around even if he was not free to go out. [27] Appellant's claim is further handicapped by his failure to have himself medically examined to prove his alleged mauling and maltreatment. The purported corroborative testimony of Philip Tanawe on the matter was discredited by the trial court.

The defense of denial interposed by the appellant cannot save him from conviction for denial, which is self-serving negative evidence, cannot be given greater weight than the declaration of credible witnesses who testified on affirmative matters. [28]

Appellant has been proven guilty beyond reasonable doubt of violating Section 4 of Article II of Republic Act No. 6425, the Dangerous Drugs Act of 1972, as amended, specifically for transporting marijuana. This law has been amended further by Republic Act No. 7659 which took effect on December 31, 1993. In *People v. Simon*, [29] the Court explicitly states that the beneficent provisions of the law shall be given retrospective effect, specifically the provision which bases the penalties imposed upon the quantity of the regulated drugs involved subject to certain exceptions particularized therein. Thus, the provisions beneficial to the accused were applied in such cases as *People v. Martinez*, [30] *People v. Basilgo*, [31] *People v. Cañeja* [32] and *People v. David*. [33]

As amended by Republic Act No. 7659, Sec. 4 of the Dangerous Drugs Act penalizing transportation of prohibited drugs now reads:

"SEC. 4. Sale, Administration, Delivery, Distribution and Transportation of Prohibited Drugs. - The penalty of reclusion perpetua to death and a fine ranging from five hundred thousand pesos to ten million pesos shall be imposed upon any person who, unless authorized by law, shall sell, administer, deliver, give away to another, distribute, dispatch in transit or transport any prohibited drug, or shall act as a broker in any of such transactions.

Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 20 of this Act to the contrary, if the victim of the offense is a minor, or should a prohibited drug involved in any offense under this Section be the proximate cause of the death of a victim thereof, the maximum penalty herein provided shall be imposed."

Section 20 of the Act, as amended also by Republic Act No. 7659, provides that the penalty of reclusion perpetua to death and a fine ranging from P500,000.00 to P10,000,000.00 shall be imposed upon a violator of Section 4 if the marijuana involved is "750 grams or more." If the quantity is less than 750 grams, the penalty shall "range from prision correccional to reclusion perpetua depending upon the quantity."

The marijuana transported in this case being more than 750 grams, the penalty imposable shall be reclusion perpetua to death and a fine ranging from five hundred thousand pesos to ten million pesos. Section 27 of the

Revised Penal Code has also been amended by Republic Act No. 7659 such that the duration of reclusion perpetua is now "from twenty years and one day to forty years" whereas before its amendment, any person sentenced with the penalty "shall be pardoned after undergoing the penalty of thirty years."

On the other hand, the penalty of life imprisonment, which was correctly imposed on herein appellant because no aggravating or mitigating circumstances were proven,[34] has no definite extent or duration. Thus, in *People v. Baguio*,[35] the Court, through now Chief Justice Andres R. Narvasa, clarifies: "reclusion perpetua entails imprisonment for at least thirty (30) years after which the convict becomes eligible for pardon, it also carries with it accessory penalties, namely: perpetual special disqualification, etc. It is not the same as 'life imprisonment' which, for one thing, does not appear to have any definite extent or duration." In *People v. Gerona*,[36] which is also a prohibited drugs case, the Court states:

"x x x. The penalty prescribed by Section 4, Article II of Republic Act No. 6425 for the commission of the described offense is life imprisonment to death and a fine ranging from twenty to thirty thousand pesos, and not reclusion perpetua. Life imprisonment and reclusion perpetua are two distinct penalties and are not interchangeable for the latter carries with it the accessory penalties enumerated in Article 41 of the Revised Penal Code. Furthermore, reclusion perpetua entails imprisonment for at least thirty (30) years after which the convict becomes eligible for pardon; whereas life imprisonment does not appear to have any definite extent or duration."

In all the drugs cases decided by this Court wherein the trial court erroneously interchanged "life imprisonment" and reclusion perpetua, the Court invariably ruled that the former, being the penalty prescribed by Republic Act No. 6425, should be imposed. With the amendment of the law by Republic Act No. 7659, however, the penalty is now reclusion perpetua which has a definite duration of twenty years and one day to forty years.[37] Under these circumstances, which penalty is more favorable to the appellant - life imprisonment which, not having a fixed duration, may, therefore, span the rest of the natural life of the convict, or reclusion perpetua with a twenty-year minimum penalty?

First, the wealth of jurisprudence in cases wherein "life imprisonment" is imposed is to the effect that said penalty, unlike reclusion perpetua, does not carry accessory penalties. In the event that Republic Act No. 7659 is applied retrospectively to appellant, he has to suffer not only reclusion perpetua but also the accessory penalties.

Second, the fine imposed upon appellant is the minimum imposable of twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00), whereas if he were penalized under the new law, he would have to bear the minimum fine of P500,000.00. Thus, retrospective application of Republic Act No. 7659, the "heinous crimes law", in cases wherein the penalty of "life imprisonment" has been imposed by the trial court, would prove more burdensome upon the appellant and would contradict the basic principle that all penal laws shall be interpreted in favor of the accused.

WHEREFORE, the decision of the trial court finding appellant Donald Ballagan guilty beyond reasonable doubt of violating Section 4, Article II of Republic Act No. 6425, as amended, and imposing on him the penalty of life imprisonment and a fine of twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00) is hereby AFFIRMED in toto. Costs against the appellant.

SO ORDERED.

Padilla, Regalado, Davide, Jr., Bellosillo, Melo, Puno, Vitug, Kapunan, Mendoza, Francisco, and Hermosisima, Jr., JJ., concur.

Narvasa, C.J., and Feliciano, J., on leave.

[1] Penned by Judge Nicodemo T. Ferrer.

[2] Exh. "E."

[3] ART. 125. Delay in the delivery of detained persons to the proper judicial authorities. - The penalties provided in the next preceding article shall be imposed upon the public officer or employee who shall detain any person for some legal ground and shall fail to deliver such person to the proper judicial authorities within the period of twelve (12) hours, for crimes or offenses punishable by light penalties, or their equivalent; eighteen (18) hours, for crimes or offenses punishable by correctional penalties, or their equivalent; and thirty-six (36) hours, for crimes or offenses punishable by afflictive or capital penalties, or their equivalent.

In every case, the person detained shall be informed of the cause of his detention and shall be allowed, upon his request, to communicate and confer at any time with his attorney or counsel.

[4] TSN, September 9, 1987, p. 12. Appellant admitted having signed this waiver of detention dated August 21, 1986 and the same was marked as Exhibit "F" (TSN, November 11, 1987, pp. 43-44) but it is not attached to the record.

[5] Record, pp. 6-7.

[6] Ibid., p. 8.

[7] Ibid., p. 9.

[8] Ibid., p. 13.

[9] TSN, November 11, 1987, p. 22.

[10] TSN, February 23, 1988, p. 19.

[11] People v. Mauyao, G.R. No. 84525, April 6, 1992, 207 SCRA 732, 738.

[12] People v. Basilgo, G.R. No. 107327, August 5, 1994, 235 SCRA 191.

[13] Decision, pp. 4-5; Record, pp. 368-369.

[14] People v. Navaja, G.R. No. 104044, March 30, 1993, 220 SCRA 624, 634.

[15] People v. Basilgo, *supra* at p. 196.

[16] People v. Retuta, G.R. No. 95758, August 2, 1994, 234 SCRA 645, 655.

[17] People v. Fernandez, G.R. No. 90019, December 8, 1993, 228 SCRA 301, 308.

[18] Appellant's Brief, p. 5.

[19] Ibid., p. 6.

[20] People v. Sariol, G.R. No. 83809, June 22, 1989, 174 SCRA 237.

[21] People v. Macasa, G.R. No. 105283, January 21, 1994, 229 SCRA 422, 429; People v. De los Reyes, G.R. No. 106874, January 21, 1994, 229 SCRA 439, 447.

[22] People v. Cerelegia, G.R. No. 72353, January 30, 1987, 147 SCRA 538, 549.

[23] Mercado v. Court of Appeals, G.R. No. 108802, July 12, 1994, 234 SCRA 98, 101.

[24] Appellant's Brief, p. 8.

[25] TSN, November 11, 1987, pp. 43-44.

[26] Appellant's Brief, p. 8.

[27] TSN, November 11, 1987, p. 43.

[28] *People v. Carizo*, G.R. No. 96510, July 6, 1994, 233 SCRA 687, 701 citing *People v. Marti*, G.R. No. 81561, January 18, 1991, 193 SCRA 57, 70 and *People v. Antud*, G.R. No. 95684, October 27, 1992, 215 SCRA 190.

[29] G.R. No. 93028, July 29, 1994, 234 SCRA 555.

[30] G.R. Nos. 105376-77, August 5, 1994, 235 SCRA 171.

[31] *Supra*.

[32] G.R. No. 109998, August 15, 1994, 235 SCRA 328.

[33] G.R. No. 105667, August 16, 1994, 235 SCRA 366.

[34] Art. 63 (2), Revised Penal Code.

[35] G.R. No. 76585, April 30, 1991, 196 SCRA 459, 469.

[36] G.R. No. 100230, November 8, 1993, 227 SCRA 547, 556 citing *People v. Blas*, G.R. No. 97930, May 27, 1992, 209 SCRA 339; *People v. Marcos*, G.R. No. 91646, August 21, 1992, 212 SCRA 748 and *People v. Baguio*, *supra*.

[37] In the March 1, 1995 minute resolution on the motion for reconsideration in G.R. No. 82292, *People v. Cua*, the Court states that "the penalty of reclusion perpetua as provided in Section 21 of R.A. No. 7659 remains indivisible as from twenty (20) years and one (1) day to forty (40) years."

ABOUT BATAS.ORG

Study smarter at BATAS.org

The Philippine bar review and law-school companion built around how your brain actually remembers.

The complete Philippine law library - free for everyone.

More than 100,000 Supreme Court decisions, Republic Acts, and executive issuances - full-text searchable, browsable by category and year, and always free. No paywall, no login. This PDF came from it.

Audio case-brief lectures.

Any decision becomes a podcast-style lecture - facts, issues, ruling, and doctrine - with read-along highlighting and a hands-free presentation mode. Study while commuting, working out, or resting your eyes.

Bar review built on the science of memory.

Complete, sequenced courses for all eight bar subjects, narrated like podcasts and reinforced with retrieval practice and spaced review - the study techniques with the strongest evidence behind them.

The full law-school curriculum.

One subscription unlocks the entire J.D. curriculum - every subject, every lesson, with your progress tracked down to the paragraph so you can pick up exactly where you left off, on any device.

Mock exams that tell you where you stand.

Timed multiple-choice exams graded instantly, with per-subject score breakdowns and focus suggestions that point you at your weakest topics first.

A study planner that keeps you on pace.

Set your schedule and BATAS tells you every day whether you are on track for bar day - and exactly which lesson to take next.

Start free at <https://batas.org>

The law library is free forever - and your first lesson is one click away.

The text of this document is an official public record and remains in the public domain. Formatting, presentation, and compilation © 2026 batas.org.

Downloaded free from the batas.org Law Library. Share it freely - the library is free for every law student, bar reviewee, and practitioner.