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SENATE

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INTRODUCED BY THE HONORABLE MAR ROXAS

A RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED IMPOSITION OF CUSTOMS DUTIES BY THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS ON IMPORTED BOOKS, WHICH RESTRICTS THE IMPORTATION OF BOOKS IN THE COUNTRY.

WHEREAS, Section 17, Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution mandates the State to “give priority to education, science and technology, arts, culture, and sports to foster patriotism and nationalism, accelerate social progress, and promote total human liberation and development”;

WHEREAS, on 24 March 2009, the Department of Finance issued Department Order No. 17-09, clarifying the guidelines on duty-free importation of books provided under the Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Florence Agreement on the Importation of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Materials, and the Republic Act No. 8047 or the Book Publishing Industry Development Act;

WHEREAS, the new Department Order imposes on book importers 1% rate of duty on imported educational, technical, scientific, historical or cultural books, and 5% rate of duty on books other than educational, technical, scientific, historical or cultural and those books or raw materials not to be used for book publishing and its related activities, should they fail to satisfy requirements for duty-free importation of books;

WHEREAS, under the UNESCO Florence Agreement, contracting States such as the Philippines, shall not apply customs duties or other charges on, or in connection with, the importation of: a) books, publications and documents and b) educational, scientific and cultural materials;

WHEREAS, Republic Act No. 8047 or the Book Publishing Industry Development Act, reaffirms the commitment of the Philippines to the principle of free exchange of ideas and knowledge under the Florence Agreement, by ensuring an “adequate supply of affordable and quality-produced books not only for the domestic but also for the export market”;

WHEREAS, the Office of Senator MAR Roxas has received complaints from various book importers, sellers and readers that the new Department of Finance Order No. 17-09 imposes a more stringent policy in importing books therefore restricting importation of books in our country;

WHEREAS, additional duties mean higher costs, which consequently discourage book importers from engaging business in the Philippines, and should they consider to import books in our country, they will have to necessarily pass on these costs to the book readers, and would result to higher book prices;

WHEREAS, as stated in the Book Publishing Industry Development Act, "books are the most effective and economical tools for achieving educational growth, for imparting information and for recording, reserving, and disseminating the nation's cultural heritage";

WHEREAS, the free exchange of ideas and knowledge is the key to a nation's intellectual growth and is important to foster intellectual progress and international understanding;

WHEREAS, it is incumbent upon the government to promote the development of the book industry by pushing for policies that will foster the advancement of Philippine literacy and intellectual growth;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the Senate direct the Senate Committee on Education, Arts and Culture to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the alleged imposition of customs duties by the Bureau of Customs on imported books, which restricts the importation of books in the country.

Adopted,


MAR ROXAS
Senator