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Senate
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SENATE
P. S. Res No. 1533

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Maria Lourdes Nancy S. Binay

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEES TO CONDUCT AN
INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS' NEW
POLICY OF OPENING BALIKBAYAN BOXES SENT BY OVERSEAS FILIPINOS
TO THEIR FAMILIES

WHEREAS, it was reported that the Bureau of Customs (BOC) will implement tighter rules on balikbayan boxes sent by overseas Filipinos to their families¹;

WHEREAS, according to news reports, the BOC is adopting a new policy of randomly opening balikbayan boxes arriving in the country²;

WHEREAS, according to Customs Commissioner Alberto Lina, balikbayan boxes may be considered as smuggled goods for noncompliance to the Philippine Tariff and Customs Code and that Customs are allowed by law to do a 100% check of balikbayan boxes³;

WHEREAS, many Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) expressed their concerns, opposition and protests against the BOC's new policy of opening balikbayan packages they send to their families. They said that the directive is anti-OFW, is a form of harassment, and deflects from the real smugglers⁴;

WHEREAS, in a news article published in InterAksyon.com, the OFW coalition, composed of Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW), the OFW Family Party-List, United Filipino Seafarers, Blas F. Ople Policy Center, Filipino Migrant Workers Group, PEBA, Lito Soriano of LBS Recruitment Solutions, Global Asia Alliance Consultant, Inc, KAMPI and KAKAMPPI and Patnubay Online, called on BOC to appreciate the unfathomable significance of every single balikbayan box to an overseas worker and his or her family, stating that "Every balikbayan box is sacred to the OFW and his or her family"⁵;

¹ Inquirer.net, Customs hit: Hands off OFW boxes of goodies, <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/127594/customs-hit-hands-off-ofw-boxes-of-goodies>.

² Ibid.

³ BusinessMirror, Customs to traders, OFWs: Don't abuse 'balikbayan' box privileges, <http://www.businessmirror.com.ph/customs-to-traders-ofws-dont-abuse-balikbayan-box-privileges/>.

⁴ InterAksyon.com, Online petition of OFWs vs Customs' random inspection of Balikbayan boxes, <http://www.interaksyon.com/business/116455/online-petition-of-ofws-vs-customs-random-inspection-of-balikbayan-boxes>.

⁵ InterAksyon.com, VIDEO | BOC raises hackles with Balikbayan box inspection rule, <http://www.interaksyon.com/article/116428/video--boc-raises-hackles-with-balikbayan-box-inspection-rule>

WHEREAS, the coalition of OFW groups and advocates urged BOC to be sensitive enough to conduct a dialogue with the OFW sector prior to executing its plan concerning the entry and delivery of balikbayan boxes to prevent unscrupulous individuals from taking advantage of the situation⁶;

WHEREAS, duty and tax free privileges granted to OFWs is in recognition of their immense contribution to the national economy;

WHEREAS, it is necessary that an inquiry be conducted to determine whether the new policy of the BOC is in accordance with law, not unduly burdensome to OFWs and not in violation of the rights and privileges of OFWs;

WHEREAS, it is the duty of the Senate, by law, to protect the rights and privileges of OFWs.

BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED to direct the proper Senate Committees to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the Bureau of Customs' new policy of opening balikbayan boxes sent by overseas Filipinos to their families.

Adopted,



MARIA LOURDES NANCY S. BINAY

⁶ Ibid.