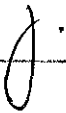


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SENATE
P. S. Res. No. 1537

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Joseph Victor G. Ejercito

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE, TO CONDUCT AN
INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, TO INVESTIGATE THE COMPLAINTS
OF OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS (OFWs) ON THE STRINGENT
INSPECTION OF BALIKBAYAN BOXES BY THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS

WHEREAS, the BOC is particularly mandated, among others, to assess and collect lawful revenues from imported articles and all other dues accruing under the tariff and customs laws, to prevent and suppress smuggling and other frauds upon the customs, and to supervise and control over the entrance and clearance of vessels and aircraft engaged in foreign commerce;

WHEREAS, the BOC previously broadcast its plan to subject the *balikbayan* boxes sent by our Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to stringent inspection by randomly opening the boxes, after receiving reports that these are being used for technical smuggling;

WHEREAS, the BOC claimed that the policy will serve to run after smugglers who use *balikbayan* boxes and consolidated shipments to smuggle contraband into the country through fake consignees or through the insertion of smuggled boxes or goods;¹

WHEREAS, according to the BOC, an average of 1,000 containers of *balikbayan* boxes with 400 boxes per container, arrive each month in Philippine ports. An estimated amount of P50 million a month or P600 million a year is lost due to smuggling through this channel compared to the amount of \$20 billion to \$24 billion a year from the big-time smugglers;²

WHEREAS, there is also a need to recognize the magnitude of the contribution of the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) whose solitary sacrifices in foreign land bring in a great amount of foreign exchange annually thus contributing to the national economy;

WHEREAS, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) the remittances of Filipinos working abroad escalate to \$ 2.2 billion in April 2015;³

¹ <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/127626/more-lawmakers-hit-boc-policy-on-ofw-boxes>

² <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/127626/more-lawmakers-hit-boc-policy-on-ofw-boxes#ixzz3jhrrdDp4>

³ <http://www.rappler.com/business/economy-watch/96442-remittances-rise-april-2015>

WHEREAS, *balikbayan* boxes symbolize the love of OFWs for their families. It is a product of their sweat and tears as they sacrificially work overseas;

WHEREAS, government was hailing the OFWs as the new heroes who are contributing greatly to the economy, yet the government makes the process of sending *balikbayan* boxes grueling and burdensome for the family of our OFWs;

WHEREAS, the stringent inspection of the BOC may be used capriciously and arbitrarily to the disadvantage and detriment of the OFWs, and can produce a new system of corruption under the bureau;

WHEREAS, our OFWs deserve a better customs administration, free from corrupt and crooked officials;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PHILIPPINE SENATE for the proper Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, to investigate the complaints of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) on the stringent inspection of *balikbayan* boxes by the Bureau of Customs (BOC).

Adopted,



JOSEPH VICTOR G. EJERCITO
Senator