



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES  
**Senate**  
Pasay City

# Journal

**SESSION NO. 67**

Monday to Thursday, June 1 - 4, 2020

**EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS  
FIRST REGULAR SESSION**

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Monday to Thursday, June 1 to 4, 2020

**CALL TO ORDER**

At 3:00 p.m., Monday, June 1, 2020, the Senate President, Hon. Vicente C. Sotto III, called the session to order.

**PRAYER**

Preliminarily, Sen. Juan Miguel F. Zubiri urged everyone to take a moment to seek God's continued guidance and protection in this time of great peril and uncertainty, especially as the Christian world observed the Pentecost Sunday which commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and disciples.

He then led the Body in prayer, to wit:

We pray, Lord, that You watch over the nation as we tentatively begin rebuilding a sense of normalcy amid the continuing dangers of this pandemic.

With many areas now going into general community quarantine after months of total lockdown, we pray that You help us find safe and smart ways forward, threading the fine line between needing to protect our

people and needing to keep our economy and, therefore, our nation of law.

As public servants, help us help our people, who are facing sudden unemployment, create income laws, filing bills—all while continuing to deal with the persistent threat of the virus.

Help us help the people most affected by this pandemic and this quarantine—patients, frontliners, essential workers, people stranded away from their homes and their loved ones, people in an unsafe crowd, and crowded areas, unsanitary living situations, people of no homes to quarantine at all.

Give us the wisdom and enlightenment we need to make the right policies and decisions to alleviate their difficulties in this time of pandemic.

All these we ask, in Jesus' Name.

Amen.

**NATIONAL ANTHEM**

Everybody remained standing for the singing of the national anthem.



## MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON

Considering the difficult internet connection, Senator Drilon suggested that the names of the senators present and who responded to the roll call be read by the Senate Secretary to ascertain if they were indeed recorded as present.

### ROLL CALL

Upon the direction of the Senate President, the Secretary of the Senate, Atty. Myra Marie D. Villarica, called the roll, to which the following senators responded:

#### *Physically present:*

Angara, S.	Tolentino, F. T. N.
Gatchalian, W.	Zubiri, J. M. F.
Lacson, P. M.	Sotto III, V. C.
Lapid, M. L. M.	

#### *Virtually present:*

Binay, M. L. N. S.	Pangilinan, F. N.
Cayetano, P. S.	Pimentel III, A. K.
Drilon, F. M.	Poe, G.
Go, C. L. T.	Recto, R. G.
Gordon, R. J.	Revilla Jr., R. B.
Hontiveros, R.	Villanueva, J.
Marcos, I. R.	Villar, C. A.
Pacquiao, E. M. D.	

With seven senators physically present and 15 senators virtually present, for a total of 22 senators present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum.

Senator Dela Rosa arrived at the Session Hall after the roll.

Senator De Lima was unable to attend the session as she was under detention.

### BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

On behalf of the Body, Senator Zubiri greeted Senator Lacson who was celebrating his birthday.

### APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body dispensed with the reading of the Journal of Session No. 66 (May 26 and 27, 2020) and considered it approved.

## REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary of the Senate read the following matters and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

### BILLS ON FIRST READING

Senate Bill No. 1559, entitled

AN ACT ACCELERATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PHILIPPINE HEALTH FACILITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN, THEREBY CREATING A BUILD, BUILD, BUILD PROGRAM FOR HOSPITALS AND OTHER HEALTH FACILITIES, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

**To the Committees on Health and Demography; Public Works; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1560, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR FREE FREIGHT SERVICES IN THE TRANSPORTATION OF RELIEF GOODS TO CALAMITY-STRICKEN AREAS

Introduced by Senator Revilla, Jr.

**To the Committee on Public Services**

Senate Bill No. 1561, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING THE EFFECTIVITY OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11469, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "BAYANIHAN TO HEAL AS ONE ACT," PROVIDING MECHANISMS TO ACCELERATE THE RECOVERY AND BOLSTER THE RESILIENCY OF THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMY, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11469, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Recto

**To the Committee on Finance**

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**RESOLUTIONS**

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 427, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ROLE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN FIGHTING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, INCLUDING THE USE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN DEVELOPING PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS THAT WILL HELP THE COUNTRY ADAPT TO THE NEW NORMAL

Introduced by Senator Binay

**To the Committee on Science and Technology**

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 428, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED ILLEGAL HOSPITALS EXCLUSIVELY FOR CHINESE NATIONALS INFECTED WITH COVID-19

Introduced by Senator Binay

**To the Committee on Health and Demography**

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 429, entitled

A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE TO IMPOSE SUSPENSION OF THE INCREASE IN PHILHEALTH PREMIUM CONTRIBUTIONS FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS AND OTHER HEALTH CARE WORKERS APPLICABLE FOR THE YEAR 2020

Introduced by Senator Pacquiao

**To the Committee on Rules**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Committee Report No. 94, prepared and submitted jointly by the Committees on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs; Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality; and Finance, on Senate Bill No. 1562 with Senators Revilla, Jr., De Lima and Dela Rosa as authors thereof, entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE RECRUITMENT QUOTA REQUIREMENT OF FEMALE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE (PNP) OFFICERS, AMENDING SECTION 58 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8551, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,

recommending its approval in substitution of Senate Bill Nos. 675 and 1148.

Sponsor: Senator Dela Rosa

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 95, prepared and submitted jointly by the Committees on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs; National Defense and Security, Peace, Unification and Reconciliation; and Justice and Human Rights, on Senate Bill No. 1563, with Senators Zubiri, Sotto III, Lacson, Tolentino and Dela Rosa as authors thereof, entitled

AN ACT LOWERING THE MINIMUM HEIGHT REQUIREMENT FOR APPLICANTS OF THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE (PNP), BUREAU OF FIRE PROTECTION (BFP), BUREAU OF JAIL MANAGEMENT AND PENOLOGY (BJMP), AND BUREAU OF CORRECTION (BUCOR), AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6975, AS AMENDED, REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9263, AND REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10575, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,

recommending its approval in substitution of Senate Bill Nos. 312, 405 and 871.

Sponsor: Senator Dela Rosa

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

**ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS****RESOLUTIONS**

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 432, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING JESSON C. PEÑAFLORES OF KALILANGAN, BUKIDNON FOR BEING COMMISSIONED TO THE RANK OF SECOND LIEUTENANT AFTER FINISHING A 4-YEAR COURSE FROM THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY AT WEST POINT IN NEW YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Introduced by Senator Zubiri

**To the Committee on Rules**

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 433, entitled

RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE PROFOUND SYMPATHY AND SINCERE CONDOLENCES OF THE SENATE ON THE DEATH OF THE HONORABLE ELEANOR "JONI" J. VILLANUEVA-TUGNA

Introduced by Senators Zubiri, Gatchalian, Angara and Binay

**To the Committee on Rules****SECOND ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS****COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Committee Report No. 96, submitted jointly by the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance, on House Bill No. 6036, introduced by Representative Villar, entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE BED CAPACITY OF THE LAS PIÑAS GENERAL HOSPITAL AND SATELLITE TRAUMA CENTER IN LAS PIÑAS CITY, METRO MANILA FROM TWO HUNDRED (200) TO FIVE HUNDRED (500) BEDS,

UPGRADING ITS PROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE AND SERVICES AND FACILITIES, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,

recommending its approval with amendment, taking into consideration Senate Bill No. 143.

Sponsor: Senator Go

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 97, submitted jointly by the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance, on House Bill No. 6144, introduced by Representative Lara, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE BED CAPACITY OF THE CAGAYAN VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER (CVMC) IN TUGUEGARAO CITY, PROVINCE OF CAGAYAN, FROM FIVE HUNDRED (500) TO ONE THOUSAND (1,000) BEDS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,

recommending its approval with amendments, taking into consideration Senate Bill No. 1103.

Sponsor: Senator Go

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business****PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 433**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 433, entitled

RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE PROFOUND SYMPATHY AND SINCERE CONDOLENCES OF THE SENATE ON THE DEATH OF THE HONORABLE ELEANOR "JONI" J. VILLANUEVA-TUGNA.

With the permission of the Body, only the title of the resolution was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the Record of the Senate.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Zubiri for the sponsorship.

## SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri said that with deep sadness, he was presenting for plenary consideration Proposed Senate Resolution No. 433, entitled “Expressing Condolences on the Death of Eleanor Villanueva-Tugna.”

*The full text of Senator Zubiri’s sponsorship speech follows:*

Honorable Mayor Eleanor “Joni” J. Villanueva-Tugna was the former mayor of Bocaue, Bulacan, a dedicated public servant, an exceptional leader, and a loving daughter, wife and mother, who passed away on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2020 at the age of 42, due to sepsis secondary to bacterial pneumonia.

She passionately and selflessly served the people of Bocaue for four years, spearheading projects such as the construction of the town’s first-ever public hospital and the rehabilitation of the 12-kilometer Bocaue River.

Under her leadership, Bocaue also became the first local government unit of the Province of Bulacan to be ISO-certified, a reflection of a high quality of public service that the local government is able to provide its constituents.

She was admired for her hands-on approach to managing the day-to-day operations of the municipal government during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite having been diagnosed with vasculitis in January of this year. She initiated various programs such as an early mass testing program for the town’s frontliners and PUIs, and made sure to provide her constituents with ample and nutritious food during the enhanced community quarantine through the *Timba Timbang Biyaya* project which provided grocery food items and locally-produced salted dried fish to Bocaue residents, and the *Gulay Para Sa Bawat Bahay* initiative which brought vegetables grown by Cordillera farmers to senior citizens of the municipality. And I know very well for a fact that Sen. Joel Villanueva, our dear colleague and friend, fellow seatmate, was also her partner in all these endeavors.

She is a true hero to the people of Bocaue and a blessing to the millions of lives she has touched. We, in the Senate, would like to extend our sincerest condolences to the family of the late Mayor Eleonor “Joni” J. Villanueva-Tugna — to her father, Jesus Is Lord founder and Citizens’ Battle Against Corruption (CIBAC) Party-list representative, Bro. Eduardo “Eddie” Villanueva;

to her husband, former CIBAC Party-list representative Sherwin Tugna and their four children, and to the rest of the family, especially to my brother and seatmate, Sen. Joel Villanueva. Our prayers are with you in this very difficult time.

## COAUTHORS

With the permission of the Body, all senators present were made coauthors of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 433.

## SPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF SENATOR ANGARA

Senator Angara shared the sentiments of Senator Zubiri, saying that he had the pleasure of knowing Mayor Eleanor “Joni” J. Villanueva-Tugna as a very dedicated public servant, recalling that she even waded flooded waters with Sen. Nancy Binay to give out relief goods when flashfloods hit the province of Bulacan a few years ago. He also recalled that when he served in the House of Representatives with former CIBAC Party-list Congressman Sherwin Tugna, he would encounter Mayor Joni in various professional and social events with her children in tow.

In closing, he said that Mayor Joni would be missed by so many, not only by her constituents and her family.

## COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR BINAY

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the cosponsorship speech of Senator Binay on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 433 was considered read into the Journal and Record of the Senate.

*Following is the full text of Senator Binay’s cosponsorship speech:*

No words can fully describe the tragedy of losing Mayor Joni. At a young age, she already showed her passion for service by helping our less fortunate *kababayans* thru iCare Compassion Ministry.

Being the efficient leader that she was, coupled with her dedication to serve, it was only a matter of time that she entered into public service.

As the mayor of Bocaue, Bulacan, she was lauded for her exemplary and proactive brand of leadership. She worked hard to bring affordable



and quality health care to the people of Bocaue, which led to the construction of the first-ever hospital in her town.

*Nakita ko mismo and kanyang pagmamahal at kung paano niya inalagaan ang mga taga-Bocaue. At ipinagamalaki ko na nakasama ko siyang lumusong sa putik at baha para lang mabigyan ng relief goods and kanyang mga kababayang naging biktima ng matinding bagyo at pag-ulan.*

A true public servant, she continued to serve her constituents amid the COVID-19 pandemic despite having been diagnosed with vasculitis in January.

She was very hands-on in managing the day-to-day operations of the municipal government during the pandemic. And she even took the time to repack vegetables purchased from Benguet farmers which would be part of the relief goods to be distributed to Bocaue residents during the enhanced community quarantine.

More importantly, she was one of the first local leaders to launch a mass testing program, targeting frontliners and persons under investigation (PUIs) in Bocaue.

*Sa aking seatmate, Sen. Joel, aming taospusong pakikiramay lalo na sa inyong ama na si Bro. Eddie at sa inyong buong pamilya. I know how you cherished her and looked up to her, and we pray that God grant you the peace during this trying time.*

To the people of Bocaue, you lost a great leader and I only pray that her passing serve as an inspiration to everyone to follow the shining example she has set for us.

*Paalam Mayor Joni, at maraming salamat sa iyong sakripisyo at pagmamahal sa bayan.*

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PACQUIAO**

Senator Pacquiao stated that he too was saddened by the passing of Bocaue, Bulacan Mayor Joni Villanueva-Tugna, and that he was one with the people of Bulacan in grieving with her family, relatives and friends. On behalf of his family and the PDP-Laban party, he extended his love and prayers to her brother, Senator Villanueva, her husband, Sherwin Tugna, and her father, Eddie Villanueva.

Senator Pacquiao stated that Mayor Joni was his treasured friend, a dependable partner in the PDP-Laban, a true advocate of good and honest governance, and a servant-leader who, at a very young age,

had accomplished so much in serving and bringing hope, love and inspiration to a lot of people. He said that Mayor Joni was only 42 years old, but she lived her life to the fullest as salt and light in various platforms of influence. He said that he took comfort in knowing that Mayor Joni was now in the presence of God, who would have told her, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master."

#### **ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 433**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 433 was adopted by the Body, subject to style.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA**

Senator Villanueva thanked his colleagues for their kind words and condolences, as he admitted that he felt devastated over the death of his sister, Mayor Joni who, he recalled, had always been in awe after meeting some senators, describing them as down-to-earth. He said that as he grappled with the untimely loss of his sister, he found solace in what his mother would always tell them: the clay can never question the potter.

On behalf of his family, he thanked the Senate as he promised to continue serving God and the nation.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON**

Senator Drilon also conveyed his condolences to Senator Villanueva, his father and brother-in-law for the untimely departure of Mayor Joni, saying that he could feel their loss of a loved one, a young and promising public servant. He said that God has His own ways, and that they must accept what happened for surely Mayor Joni would be happy to see them perform their jobs as public servants as that was how she dedicated herself.

Senator Drilon expressed his deepest condolences to Senator Villanueva, saying that he will always pray for the repose of the soul of Mayor Joni Villanueva.

Senator Villanueva thanked Senator Drilon for his statement.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR GORDON**

On behalf of his family, Senator Gordon likewise



expressed his condolences to Senator Villanueva. He said that times like these are hard, especially when it happens consecutively, and it would take a lot of courage to face up to the reality. However, he believed that these are temporary matters in their journey as everyone will end up with God. He thanked God for giving Mayor Joni as a gift to the people. He said that the Senate respected what Mayor Joni tried to do in her brief lifetime, and that they join the family in their sorrow.

Senator Gordon also mentioned that the father of Senator Revilla was in the hospital and that he was praying for his quick recovery as well.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS**

Senator Hontiveros recalled what Senator Villanueva said on the day his sister died—that he could not believe that lightning could strike twice in a heart. She said that aside from his mother, Senator Villanueva spoke about Mayor Joni as the sibling closest to him. She said that it was hard for them to see him in tears but could not physically condole with him. However, she hoped that they are able to reach him with their words and prayers.

Senator Hontiveros said that no words could fully express their sympathy but she expressed her condolences to Senator Villanueva.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PANGILINAN**

On behalf of his family, Senator Pangilinan likewise conveyed his sincerest condolences to the Villanueva family. He said that they are close with Brother Eddie and the Villanueva family, and he agreed with the statement of Senator Hontiveros how sad it was that they could not personally be with Senator Villanueva during this difficult time. He assured Senator Villanueva that he and his family will always be in their prayers.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLAR**

Senator Villar said that she used to visit Bocaue to see the factories and attend festivals, and she recalled Mayor Joni visiting the Villar SIPAG Farm School in Las Pinas. On behalf of her family, she expressed her deepest condolences to Senator Villanueva.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI**

Senator Zubiri expressed his sincerest condolences to Senator Villanueva. He said that it was indeed a hard time for the family, and they would continuously pray for him and their family.

#### **PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 432**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 432, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND  
COMMENDING JESSON C. PEÑAFLOR  
OF KALILANGAN, BUKIDNON FOR  
BEING COMMISSIONED TO THE  
RANK OF SECOND LIEUTENANT  
AFTER FINISHING A 4-YEAR COURSE  
FROM THE UNITED STATES  
MILITARY ACADEMY AT WEST  
POINT IN NEW YORK, UNITED  
STATES OF AMERICA.

With the permission of the Body, only the title of the resolution was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the Record of the Senate.

The Chair recognized Senator Zubiri for the sponsorship.

#### **SPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF SENATOR ZUBIRI**

Senator Zubiri stated that the man being honored is a 24-year old native of Kalilangan, Bukidnon, and a Mindanao State University-Marawi student for three years. He said that Jesson Penaflor was admitted in the Philippine Military Academy as a cadet and was a member of Mabalasik Class of 2019; and graduated from the United States West Point Academy in New York, finishing a four-year course, thus joining a few distinguished members of the PMA who graduated from that prestigious academy. He said that it was an honor for the people of Bukidnon and the country.

#### **ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 432**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 432 was adopted by the Body.

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**APPROVAL OF SENATE BILL NO. 1541 ON THIRD READING**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, Senate Bill No. 1541, electronic copies of which were distributed to the senators on May 28, 2020.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Secretary Villarica read only the title of the bill, to wit:

AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 3 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7797, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "AN ACT TO LENGTHEN THE SCHOOL CALENDAR FROM TWO HUNDRED (200) DAYS TO NOT MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED TWENTY (220) CLASS DAYS."

Secretary Villarica called the roll for nominal voting.

**RESULT OF THE VOTING**

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor*

- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| Angara     | Pacquiao   |
| Binay      | Pangilinan |
| Cayetano   | Pimentel   |
| Dela Rosa  | Poe        |
| Drilon     | Recto      |
| Gatchalian | Revilla    |
| Go         | Sotto      |
| Gordon     | Tolentino  |
| Hontiveros | Villanueva |
| Lacson     | Villar     |
| Lapid      | Zubiri     |
| Marcos     |            |

*Against*

None

*Abstention*

None

With 23 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared Senate Bill No. 1541 approved on Third Reading.

**APPROVAL OF SENATE BILL NO. 1318 ON THIRD READING**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, Senate Bill No. 1318, electronic copies of which were distributed to the senators on May 28, 2020.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Secretary Villarica read only the title of the bill, to wit:

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10068 OR THE ORGANIC AGRICULTURE ACT OF 2010.

Secretary Villarica called the roll for nominal voting.

**RESULT OF THE VOTING**

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor*

- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| Angara     | Pacquiao   |
| Binay      | Pangilinan |
| Cayetano   | Pimentel   |
| Dela Rosa  | Poe        |
| Drilon     | Recto      |
| Gatchalian | Revilla    |
| Go         | Sotto      |
| Gordon     | Tolentino  |
| Hontiveros | Villanueva |
| Lacson     | Villar     |
| Lapid      | Zubiri     |
| Marcos     |            |

*Against*

None

*Abstention*

None

With 23 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared Senate Bill No. 1318 approved on Third Reading.

**APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 5888 ON THIRD READING**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no

objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, House Bill No. 5888, electronic copies of which were distributed to the senators on May 28, 2020.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Secretary Villarica read only the title of the bill, to wit:

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE THIRD DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF M'LANG, PROVINCE OF COTABATO, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Secretary Villarica called the roll for nominal voting.

**RESULT OF THE VOTING**

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor*

Angara	Pacquiao
Binay	Pangilinan
Cayetano	Pimentel
Dela Rosa	Poe
Drilon	Recto
Gatchalian	Revilla
Go	Sotto
Gordon	Tolentino
Hontiveros	Villanueva
Lacson	Villar
Lapid	Zubiri
Marcos	

*Against*

None

*Abstention*

None

With 23 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared House Bill No. 5888 approved on Third Reading.

**APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 5811 ON THIRD READING**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading,

House Bill No. 5811, electronic copies of which were distributed to the senators on May 28, 2020.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Secretary Villarica read only the title of the bill, to wit:

AN ACT TRANSFERRING THE LOCATION OF THE SORSOGON SECOND DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE FROM BULAN, SORSOGON TO GUBAT, SORSOGON AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9689, ENTITLED, "AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE SORSOGON SECOND DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE PROVINCE OF SORSOGON AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR."

Secretary Villarica called the roll for nominal voting.

**RESULT OF THE VOTING**

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor*

Angara	Pacquiao
Binay	Pangilinan
Cayetano	Pimentel
Dela Rosa	Poe
Drilon	Recto
Gatchalian	Revilla
Go	Sotto
Gordon	Tolentino
Hontiveros	Villanueva
Lacson	Villar
Lapid	Zubiri
Marcos	

*Against*

None

*Abstention*

None

With 23 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared House Bill No. 5811 approved on Third Reading.

**APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 5852  
ON THIRD READING**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, House Bill No. 5852, electronic copies of which were distributed to the senators on May 28, 2020.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Secretary Villarica read only the title of the bill, to wit:

AN ACT CONVERTING THE ALBAY DIVERSION ROAD IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF MINALABAC, BULA, AND NABUA, ALL IN THE PROVINCE OF CAMARINES SUR, INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Secretary Villarica called the roll for nominal voting.

**RESULT OF THE VOTING**

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor*

- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| Angara     | Pacquiao   |
| Binay      | Pangilinan |
| Cayetano   | Pimentel   |
| Dela Rosa  | Poe        |
| Drilon     | Recto      |
| Gatchalian | Revilla    |
| Go         | Sotto      |
| Gordon     | Tolentino  |
| Hontiveros | Villanueva |
| Lacson     | Villar     |
| Lapid      | Zubiri     |
| Marcos     |            |

*Against*

None

*Abstention*

None

With 23 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared House Bill No. 5852 approved on Third Reading.

**APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 5850  
ON THIRD READING**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, House Bill No. 5850, electronic copies of which were distributed to the senators on May 28, 2020.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Secretary Villarica read only the title of the bill, to wit:

AN ACT CONVERTING THE GUIMBA — TALUGTUG — UMINGAN PROVINCIAL ROAD IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF GUIMBA AND TALUGTUG, ALL IN THE PROVINCE OF NUEVA ECIJA AND THE MUNICIPALITY OF UMINGAN, PROVINCE OF PANGASINAN INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Secretary Villarica called the roll for nominal voting.

**RESULT OF THE VOTING**

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor*

- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| Angara     | Pacquiao   |
| Binay      | Pangilinan |
| Cayetano   | Pimentel   |
| Dela Rosa  | Poe        |
| Drilon     | Recto      |
| Gatchalian | Revilla    |
| Go         | Sotto      |
| Gordon     | Tolentino  |
| Hontiveros | Villanueva |
| Lacson     | Villar     |
| Lapid      | Zubiri     |
| Marcos     |            |

*Against*

None

*Abstention*

None

With 23 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared House Bill No. 5850 approved on Third Reading.

**APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 1061 ON THIRD READING**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, House Bill No. 1061, electronic copies of which were distributed to the senators on May 28, 2020.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Secretary Villarica read only the title of the bill, to wit:

AN ACT CONVERTING THE STA. IGNACIA – GUMBA PROVINCIAL ROAD IN THE PROVINCES OF TARLAC AND NUEVA ECIJA VIA GERONA-PURA ROAD STRETCHING FROM BARANGAY NAMBALAN, MUNICIPALITY OF STA. IGNACIA TO BARANGAY BUENAVISTA, MUNICIPALITY OF PURA, ALL IN THE PROVINCE OF TARLAC INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Secretary Villarica called the roll for nominal voting.

**RESULT OF THE VOTING**

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor*

Angara	Pacquiao
Binay	Pangilinan
Cayetano	Pimentel
Dela Rosa	Poe
Drilon	Recto
Gatchalian	Revilla
Go	Sotto
Gordon	Tolentino
Hontiveros	Villanueva
Lacson	Villar
Lapid	Zubiri
Marcos	

*Against*

None

*Abstention*

None

With 23 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared House Bill No. 1061 approved on Third Reading.

**APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 5851 ON THIRD READING**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, House Bill No. 5851, electronic copies of which were distributed to the senators on May 28, 2020.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Secretary Villarica read only the title of the bill, to wit:

AN ACT CONVERTING THE ROAD NETWORK CONNECTING BARANGAY GRIJALVO IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN FERNANDO AND THE MUNICIPALITY OF BULA, PROVINCE OF CAMARINES SUR INTO A NATIONAL ROAD.

Secretary Villarica called the roll for nominal voting.

**RESULT OF THE VOTING**

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor*

Angara	Pacquiao
Binay	Pangilinan
Cayetano	Pimentel
Dela Rosa	Poe
Drilon	Recto
Gatchalian	Revilla
Go	Sotto
Gordon	Tolentino
Hontiveros	Villanueva
Lacson	Villar
Lapid	Zubiri
Marcos	

*Against*

None

*ms per*

*Abstention*

None

With 23 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared House Bill No. 5851 approved on Third Reading.

**APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 1778 ON THIRD READING**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, House Bill No. 1778, electronic copies of which were distributed to the senators on May 28, 2020.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Secretary Villarica read only the title of the bill, to wit:

AN ACT CONVERTING THE ROAD STRETCHING FROM BARANGAY ANDUYAN, MUNICIPALITY OF TUBAO, PROVINCE OF LA UNION TO BARANGAY SAN PASCUAL, MUNICIPALITY OF TUBA, PROVINCE OF BENGUET INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Secretary Villarica called the roll for nominal voting.

**RESULT OF THE VOTING**

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor*

Angara	Pacquiao
Binay	Pangilinan
Cayetano	Pimentel
Dela Rosa	Poe
Drilon	Recto
Gatchalian	Revilla
Go	Sotto
Gordon	Tolentino
Hontiveros	Villanueva
Lacson	Villar
Lapid	Zubiri
Marcos	

*Against*

None

*Abstention*

None

With 23 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared House Bill No. 1778 approved on Third Reading.

**APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 5853 ON THIRD READING**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, House Bill No. 5853, electronic copies of which were distributed to the senators on May 28, 2020.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Secretary Villarica read only the title of the bill, to wit:

AN ACT CREATING A DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE SEVENTH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF THE PROVINCE OF CEBU, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Secretary Villarica called the roll for nominal voting.

**RESULT OF THE VOTING**

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor*

Angara	Pacquiao
Binay	Pangilinan
Cayetano	Pimentel
Dela Rosa	Poe
Drilon	Recto
Gatchalian	Revilla
Go	Sotto
Gordon	Tolentino
Hontiveros	Villanueva
Lacson	Villar
Lapid	Zubiri
Marcos	

*Against*

None

*Abstention*

None

With 23 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared House Bill No. 5853 approved on Third Reading.

### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI**

Senator Zubiri informed the Body that Senator Villanueva would be submitting his explanation of vote for Senate Bill No. 1541.

Senator Zubiri also informed the Body that they would take up the Bayanihan Extension Act as soon as it is filed. He said that the proposed measure was still with Senator Recto for his signature.

Asked by Senate President Sotto whether a copy had been sent to the Office of Senator Drilon, Senator Zubiri replied in the affirmative.

Senator Drilon confirmed that he had been briefed and given a copy of the committee report, and as such has directed his staff to affix his electronic signature onto the document.

### **SPECIAL ORDER**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 94 on Senate Bill No. 1562 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

### **COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 94 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1562**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 1562 (Committee Report No. 94), entitled

**AN ACT INCREASING THE RECRUITMENT QUOTA REQUIREMENT OF FEMALE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE (PNP) OFFICERS, AMENDING SECTION 58 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8551, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, with the permission of the Body, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, only the title of the bill was

read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the Record of the Senate.

The Chair recognized Senator Dela Rosa for the sponsorship.

### **SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR DELA ROSA**

Senator Dela Rosa, on behalf of the Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs, submitted for plenary consideration Senate Bill No. 1562, entitled "An Act Increasing The Recruitment Quota Requirement of Female Philippine National Police (PNP) Officers, Amending Section 58 of Republic Act No. 8551, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes" under Committee Report No. 94.

*The full text of Senator Dela Rosa's sponsorship speech follows:*

World-renowned feminist Gloria Steinem once said, "Women are always saying, 'We can do anything that men can do.' But men should be saying, 'We can do anything that women can do.'"

In the spirit of these words, I humbly stand before this august Body to sponsor Committee Report No. 94, containing Senate Bill No. 1562 with Senators Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. and Leila De Lima as coauthors, entitled, "An Act Increasing The Recruitment Quota Requirement of Female Philippine National Police (PNP) Officers, Amending Section 58 of Republic Act No. 8551, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes."

The idea that law enforcement is a task meant for cold and calculating men is not merely obsolete; it is untrue. In countless times and cases, women have shown the country their kind of bravery, the kind that listens and understands, the kind that steps back from judgment and moves forward in empathy. Through the years, women have held their own in restoring law and order in our communities. This they have done despite the discrimination and biases against them.

In July 2011 when communist terrorists from the New People's Army stormed the police station of Trento, Agusan del Sur, Chief of Police Senior Inspector Charity Galvez led her men in repelling the attackers. She was then awarded the PNP *Medalya ng Katapangan* for her bravery in action.

In September, 2019, the town of Maria in Siquijor saw the birth of the first all-women



police station called *Mariang Pulis* under the leadership of Capt. Judith Besas as chief of police.

As early as January this year, the National Capital Region police office announced that an all-female police precinct was being formed for Bonifacio Global City in Taguig. The said precinct was launched in March as we ushered in the International Women's Month.

A few weeks ago, *nabalitaan natin na ang mga valedictorian ng Masidlawin Class ng Philippine Military Academy at ng Mandayog Class ng Philippine National Police Academy ay mga babae. Sila Cadet First Class Gemalyn Sugui mula sa Isabela at Cadet Lei Anne Banico Palermo mula sa Zamboanga City.* And this is not the first time that females have graduated as valedictorians of their class, whether from the PMA or the PNPA. The same holds true in 2019 and other years before.

*Hindi madaling makapagtapos mula sa PMA o sa PNPA.* We can even say that these female cadets had it harder than everyone else, because the society's standard and expectations were against them. *Gayunpaman ay pinili nilang magpursigi at ipakita sa buong bansa, sa buong mundo, na sa kabila ng lahat ng hirap, nagawa nila itong mapagtagumpayan. Patunay na ang tawag ng tungkulin at pagsisilbi sa bayan ay walang pinipiling kasarian.*

PNP Chief General Archie Gamboa himself has attested to the capability of women in law enforcement, proving that empowering women is indeed one of the priority programs of the PNP.

Despite all this, the numbers tell quite a different story. Under Section 58 of Republic Act 8551, or the Philippine National Police Reform and Reorganization Act of 1998, the percentage reserved for women in the annual recruitment in the PNP remains at 10%.

Imagine, a hundred police officers. The quota would require that 10 of them should be women. With this analysis, that may sound fair enough. But if we blow up the numbers, say 200,000 police officers, a mere 20,000 positions would be legally mandated as reserved for women.

Allow me to say again. Out of our imagined 200,000 police officers, the present law reserves a meager 20,000 positions for women — women who are just as passionate for law and order, women with notable skills in investigation and crime-solving, women who are well-equipped to supervise the women's desk and to handle

gender-based cases of abuse and violence, women who certainly deserve more than 10%.

In response to this gap in legislation, Senate Bill No. 1562, contained in this Committee Report, increases the recruitment quota for females in the PNP, from 10% to 15%. In addition to increasing the recruitment quota from 10% to 15%, the bill also intends, after a five-year period, to further increase the recruitment quota of women in the PNP.

It is the understanding of this Representation, that in practice, the PNP is, in fact, already recruiting more than the required quota of 10%. However, if this active recruitment of women were bolstered by the amendments put forward by this bill, then the PNP's warm welcome of women into their ranks will now be supported, not just in practice, but also in law.

It is my honor to submit this Committee Report. Admittedly, we still have a long way to go in achieving equality. But, of course, any step forward is a step worth taking, especially if it means bringing us closer to our common goal, closer to that day when men will finally learn to say with pride: We can do the things that women can do.

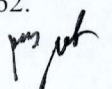
## **COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS**

Senator Hontiveros stated that she would always be happy to support any legislation that will open doors for women, whatever arena that might be; thus, she was particularly happy to support the increasing gender quotas in the Philippine National Police.

Senator Hontiveros recalled that one of the lessons learned from the implementation of Violence against Women and Children Law and the Safe Spaces Act, is that many women are afraid to report to law enforcers because they find it difficult to talk to policemen. She expressed hope that the bill would help address that gap. She pointed out further that it has been proven everywhere that more women in spaces and spheres of law enforcement create a counterculture of human rights, restorative justice, and healing. She said that the PNP can always do with a bit more of these in whatever time now or in the future.

## **COAUTHORS**

Upon their request, Senators Zubiri and Revilla were made couthors of Senate Bill No. 1562.



## **COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR REVILLA**

At the instance of Senator Revilla and upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the cosponsorship speech of Senator Revilla was deemed read and inserted into the record.

*Following is the full text of Senator Revilla's speech:*

At the onset, I would like to commend the good Sponsor for taking up this measure and for bringing my proposal closer to becoming a law.

I would also like to thank the leadership of the Philippine National Police for supporting the measure, and for complying with the requirement of the law regarding women empowerment and gender equality. The PNP is composed of 180,767 uniformed police personnel – 83.4 percent male and 16.6 percent female officers, slightly above the 15% requirement.

This bill will further strengthen the capacity of our police force to deal with and administer cases involving crimes against chastity, sexual harassment, abuses committed against women and children and other similar offenses. An increase in female representation in our country's police force will also help improve our police operations and strategies in preventing violations of women's rights.

In an article "Why We Need More Women Working in Law Enforcement," women are uniquely recognized for bringing positive impact into the police force because :

- Women are less likely to use excessive force;
- Women officers are skilled at addressing violence against women and sex crimes; and
- Women officers can help improve police-community relations.

*Tunay na malaki ang ambag ng mga kababaihan hindi lamang sa patuloy na pagpapabuti ng serbisyo ng puwersa ng pulisya, kundi sa kabuuang pag-unlad ng ating bansa. Marapat lamang na bigyan natin sila ng sapat na pagkakataon at suporta upang makapaglingkod sa ating mga kababayan. Nawa po ay suportahan ng ating mga kasamahang mambabatas ang panukalang ito.*

## **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1562**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no

objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

## **SPECIAL ORDER**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 95 on Senate Bill No. 1563 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

## **COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 93 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1563**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 1563 (Committee Report No. 95), entitled

**AN ACT LOWERING THE MINIMUM HEIGHT REQUIREMENT FOR APPLICANTS OF THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE (PNP), BUREAU OF FIRE PROTECTION (BFP), BUREAU OF JAIL MANAGEMENT AND PENOLOGY (BJMP), AND BUREAU OF CORRECTION (BUCOR), AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6975, AS AMENDED, REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9263, AND REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10575, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, with the permission of the Body, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, only the title of the bill was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the Record of the Senate.

The Chair recognized Senator Dela Rosa for the sponsorship.

## **SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR DELA ROSA**

Senator Dela Rosa, on behalf of the Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs, submitted for plenary consideration Senate Bill No. 1563, entitled "An Act Lowering the Minimum Height Requirement for Applicants of the Philippine National Police, Bureau of Fire Protection, Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, and Bureau of Correction, Amending Republic Act No. 6975, as Amended, Republic Act No. 9263, and Republic Act No. 10575" under Committee Report No. 95.





*The full text of Senator Dela Rosa's sponsorship speech follows:*

William G. Bentrin in one of his books said, "Physical size cannot measure the ferocity and compassion of the heart, spirit and soul. Truly in the measure of a person, short or tall does not matter at all."

It is my privilege to sponsor the Senate Bill No. 1563 under Committee Report No. 95. This bill is entitled "An Act Lowering the Minimum Height Requirement for Applicants of the Philippine National Police, Bureau of Fire Protection, Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, and Bureau of Correction, Amending Republic Act No. 6975, as Amended, Republic Act No. 9263, and Republic Act No. 10575."

*Sabi sa commercial ng isang kilalang margarine: "Iba na ang matangkad!" Ang isang vitamins naman ang sabi: "Tangkad Sagad!" Noon pa man, marami ng consumer products ang nagsasabi na mapapatangkad nila tayong mga Pilipino. Ngunit mukhang kahit gaano karaming margarine ang ating kainin, o inumin ang bote-boteng vitamins, ay mahihirapan tayong maabot ang height ni LeBron James o ni Michael Jordan. Genetically, sadyang may limitasyon ang height nating mga Pilipino.*

When the National Police Commission in 2018 declared that there shall be no height requirement for the Philippine National Police entrance exam applicants, it was positively accepted by our countrymen. Filipinos, being known to be small but terrible — terrible in a good way, if there is such. Just a figure of speech. — rejoiced at the thought that most of us might be accepted as police officers. However, the delight was short-lived as the height requirement for the PNP cannot be waived by the NAPOLCOM, as it is still written in stone, which is Republic Act No. 6975, as amended.

With that in mind, this Representation and our good Majority Leader, Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri, filed legislative measures that seek to remove or repeal the height requirement for our uniformed personnel. We both reasoned that there should be equal employment opportunity for all regardless of height.

However, during the hearing conducted by your Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs on February 12, 2020, the PNP, BFP, BJMP and BuCor, unanimously appealed not to remove the height requirement for their agencies, but to merely lower it to such level acceptable for them to effectively perform their given mandate. The PNP reasoned out that they need to maintain a

minimum height requirement for their respective applicants for practical considerations in law enforcement and military operations. On one hand, BJMP manifested that height is a necessary requirement considering their daily exposure to persons deprived of liberty with various body builds, attitudes and behaviors. BuCor concurred. Additionally, BFP argued that they need to retain a minimum height requirement since they respond to fire incidents and emergencies. Their duty involves carrying huge and heavy fire protection, suppression and rescue equipment and transporting fire and emergency victims.

We listened to the agencies that will be tasked to implement the proposed legislation once enacted into law. Given their justification, the Committee decided to lower the height requirement for the applicants of PNP, BFP, BJMP and BuCor instead of removing the same as originally proposed. The approval of this bill will now allow said agencies to accept male applicants with five (5) feet and two (2) inches height and female applicants with five (5) feet height.

This compromise will still enable us to achieve the purpose of broadening the pool of prospective applicants and addressing the height equality as most of the Filipinos are within the height range of five feet. Waiver of height requirement for applicants belonging to the cultural communities will still be retained in consideration of the limits of genetic height potential.

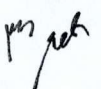
*Hindi po natin ibinababa ang standard na kailangan para makapagsilbi bilang pulis, firefighter, jail at correction officers. Ninanais lamang po nating mabigyan ng pagkakataong makapagsilbi ang mga hindi nabiyayaan ng katangkaran.*

I still believe that sacrifice, dedication and service to the country cannot be measured by height nor by any physical characteristics given by the unseen hand of our Supreme Being. However, given the required mandate of our uniformed personnel, and for practically in accomplishing tasks, we still need to retain a minimum height requirement so they can perform their duties and responsibilities exceptionally.

Given the aforementioned reasons, I urge this august Body for the immediate approval of this measure.

#### **COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR ZUBIRI**

As cosponsor of Senate Bill No. 1563, Senator Zubiri delivered the following speech:



In order to convey the impact that the PNP, BFP, BJMP, and the Bureau of Corrections Height Equality Act will have on our people, allow me to read a couple of messages that I have received on Facebook over the last year since our filing of this bill.

This one is from a young Criminology graduate. *“Salamat po sa pagbigay ninyo ng pansin sa aming mga aplikante na dahil lamang sa mataas ng height requirements sa PNP at sa iba pang mga organisasyon ay nareject kami. Nakaka-low morale po at nakaka-discriminate po ito sa amin...parang pinagkalkaitan po kami ng pagkakataon na maglingkod at magsilbi sa sarili naming bayan.*

Another one came from this private school teacher. *“I am the eldest child in the family and my childhood dream is to become a police-woman. In 2015, I took the PNPA Examination and fortunately passed the entrance exam and neuro exams, but I did not make the quota because I lack two centimeters in height.”*

Imagine, my distinguished colleagues, qualifying for the PNPA and passing the exams only to be turned away because of a mere two centimeters in height as though these two centimeters rendered one incapable of public service.

These are only two of the many, many messages that I have received regularly since I filed the Height Equality Act last year. I have read the pleas of so many people asking for the repeal of the height requirement so they can pursue their aspiration of joining the Philippine National Police, the Bureau of Fire Protection, the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, and the Bureau of Corrections.

In our legislative careers, we have all known the fulfilling thrill of those certain bills that arouse strong public clamor; those bills that gain such vocal support. These are the bills that most immediately affect the lives of everyday Filipinos. Going by the response to this bill, I can say with pride that we have a great number of selfless and patriotic individuals who, despite the institutional barriers against their physical stature, still cling to their desire to serve the nation as part of the police force and its attendant institutions. Adjusting our height standards by a mere few inches will open up a considerably large pool of promising new recruits.

I want to give an example. In the Philippine National Arnis Team, we have a gold medalist by the name of Samuel Delfin. He is five feet tall. He is this short but high-leaping—*na* frontpage *na* ng *Philippine Daily Inquirer* *iyang* *na* naka-

*bahag*. He was a high-leaping competitor who mesmerized and dazzled everyone in stage. He is also a distinguished fighter, being a gold medalist also in both the open category and the Anyo category. I will never want to cross swords with this individual. If you see him fighting with swords, I think you will be made into corned beef in a matter of seconds. That is how good this fellow is. And his dream was to join the Army. *Mabuti na lamang po at natagpuan namin ng ating mahal na Pangulo sa Malacanang at nalapitan po namin siya.* And when we approached the President, the President asked, *“Oh, what does this boy want, Migz?”* *Ang sabi ko, “Mr. President, ang pangarap po niya ay maging sundalo.”* *Ang sagot ni Presidente, “Pwedeng tunnel rat ito.”* *Kung sa Vietnam, iyong tunnel rat ay iyong pumapasok sa loob ng mga tunnel para habulin iyong mga kalaban.* Pero, thankfully, he was accepted to the Philippine Army because of him being a member of an indigenous tribe which is the Igorot. He is actually a pure blooded Igorot. And there is an exemption once you are a member of the indigenous tribal communities.

*Pero, maraming ganiyan na mga kuwento na maliliit lamang po sila. Ang gagaling—sa boxing, alam po ni Senator Pacquiao iyan. Magagaling din sa ibat-ibang larangan ng pangangailangan ng ating mga Philippine National Police and its attached agencies. So, I believe, a good protector of the public is not and should not be defined by their sex, age, their class, their faith, nor their height. But what we should look at is their commitment to service, their mental fortitude, their integrity, their loyalty to our national and to our people.*

And before I end, I know that this measure was vetoed in the last Sixteenth Congress, which was in the time of President Noynoy Aquino. *Naipasa na po ito ni Senator Honasan.* That was also my measure, I had also filed it, I believe, in the Fifteenth Congress *na na-veto iyan.* *Ang sabi po ni then President Aquino, “How can they defend daw themselves if they are smaller, how can they carry a lot of other firearms as well as personnel who are injured in the battlefield?”*

We have seen so many of our indigenous people soldiers who having a very limited height have distinguished themselves with several medals of valor and honor in the battlefield. So I do not think that would be a hindrance to our future heroes if we accept them to the police force.

I believe that our President has a heart for our Filipino brothers and sisters. I believe this

time, hopefully, it will not be vetoed and he will allow our less fortunate brothers and sisters, in terms of height requirement, to join the police force.

One more message that I received from our aspiring police officer, a message that inspires me, with its earnestness and patriotism, and it says: "We want to serve our country, sir, please give us a chance."

With that, I ask my colleagues to pass the Height Equality Act.

### MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR POE

At the outset, Senator Poe thanked Senator Dela Rosa for filing the bill as she recalled to have also filed it when she was the chairperson of the Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs.

She said that if there was a height requirement in the Senate, she would not be able to make it, and there would also be many previous senators who would have failed. She said that being a senator was not based on a person's physical appearance but rather on his or her abilities or skills.

Senator Poe said that there are various jobs and tasks in the PNP which, according to former PNP Chief and now Senator Dela Rosa, require different types of people, such as working in the office or on the Women and Children's desk. She expressed hope that there would be more people interested to join the PNP.

### COAUTHOR

Senator Zubiri said that Senator Pacquiao manifested his interest to be a coauthor of Senate Bill No. 1563.

### SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1563

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

### SPECIAL ORDERS

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of the following bills from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders:

1. Committee Report No. 96 on House Bill No. 6036; and
2. Committee Report No. 97 on House Bill No. 6144.

### BILLS UPGRADING HOSPITALS

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, the following House bills, one after the other:

1. House Bill No. 6144 (Committee Report No. 97), entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE BED CAPACITY OF THE CAGAYAN VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER (CVMC) IN TUGUEGARAO CITY, PROVINCE OF CAGAYAN, FROM FIVE HUNDRED (500) TO ONE THOUSAND (1,000) BEDS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR; and

2. House Bill No. 6036 (Committee Report No. 96), entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE BED CAPACITY OF THE LAS PIÑAS GENERAL HOSPITAL AND SATELLITE TRAUMA CENTER IN LAS PIÑAS CITY, METRO MANILA FROM TWO HUNDRED (200) BEDS TO FIVE HUNDRED (500) BEDS, UPGRADING ITS SERVICE FACILITIES AND PROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR; and

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Senate, with the permission of the Body, only the titles of the bills were read without prejudice to the insertion of their texts into the Record of the Senate.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Go for the sponsorship.

### OMNIBUS SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GO

Senator Go presented for the Body's consideration two House bills aimed towards the improvement of two government hospitals – the Cagayan Valley Medical Center (CVMC) under House Bill No. 6036 and the Las Piñas General Hospital under House Bill No. 6144, which were discussed and approved during the hearing of the Committee on Health and Demography the previous week.



He explained that House Bill No. 6144 seeks to increase the bed capacity of CVMC, a level III DOH hospital in Taguegarao City, Cagayan that caters to patients from Region II and nearby provinces of Cordillera Administrative Region such as Apayao, Kalinga, and Ifugao, from 500 to 1,000 beds. He informed the Body that in 2018, CVMC recorded 6,155 hospital admissions, and that from 2018 to 2019, it has an average bed occupancy rate average of 158% which is tremendously above the national standard of 85%.

As regards House Bill No. 6036, Senator Go stated that the bill seeks to increase to 500 beds the bed capacity of Las Piñas General Hospital and Satellite Trauma Center (LPGHSTC), a 200-bed DOH hospital serving the cities of Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Parañaque, Pasay, Bacoor, and Imus in Cavite, whose bed occupancy rate from 2018 to 2019 averaged at 110.53% which is exceedingly above the national standard of 85%, thus the need to upgrade from 200 beds to 500 beds.

He said that as the nation faces the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial to improve government health facilities, in particular public hospitals, because they are proof of how weak the country's health system is. He informed the Body that in 2018, almost 65% or 284 out of 437 public hospitals were overcrowded, the reason the DOH has expressed its support to the proposed measures to more effectively manage the increasing number of patients.

Finally, Senator Go thanked Senators Villar and Marcos for filing related Senate bills which were taken into consideration in the committee reports.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI**

Senator Zubiri recalled that the Committee originally reported out the Senate bills, taking into consideration the House bills, and this was questioned because being of local applications, the Committee should have reported out the House bills. Although there were precedents in the past, he said that they happened because they went unnoticed; thus, the Committee withdrew the House bills.

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NOS. 6036 AND 6144**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bills.

#### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, the session was suspended.

*It was 4:27 p.m.*

#### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 4:33 p.m., the session was resumed.

#### **BILLS UPGRADING HOSPITALS**

*(Continuation)*

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of the following House bills, one after the other:

1. House Bill No. 2444 (Committee Report No. 68), entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PAMPLONA IN THE PROVINCE OF CAMARINES SUR, TO BE KNOWN AS THE BICOL WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

2. House Bill No. 6218 (Committee Report No. 88), entitled

AN ACT RENAMING THE MALITA DISTRICT HOSPITAL IN BARANGAY POBLACION, MUNICIPALITY OF MALITA, PROVINCE OF DAVAO OCCIDENTAL, TO MALITA WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S WELLNESS CENTER;

3. House Bill No. 6035 (Committee Report No. 92), entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE BED CAPACITY OF THE WESTERN VISAYAS MEDICAL CENTER, MANDURRIA, ILOILO CITY, FROM FOUR HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE (425) BEDS TO SEVEN (700) BEDS, UPGRADING ITS PROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND FACILITIES, AUTHORIZING THE INCREASE OF ITS MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

4. House Bill No. 6365 (Committee Report No. 93), entitled

AN ACT UPGRADING THE SIARGAO DISTRICT HOSPITAL IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF DAPA, PROVINCE OF SURIGAO DEL NORTE INTO A LEVEL II GENERAL HOSPITAL TO BE KNOWN AS THE SIARGAO ISLAND MEDICAL CENTER, INCREASING ITS BED CAPACITY, UPGRADING ITS PROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND FACILITIES, AUTHORIZING THE INCREASE OF ITS MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR; AND

5. House Bill No. 6499 (Committee Report No. 89), entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE BED CAPACITY OF THE QUIRINO MEMORIAL MEDICAL CENTER IN QUEZON CITY, METRO MANILA FROM FIVE HUNDRED (500) BEDS TO ONE THOUSAND (1,000) BEDS, UPGRADING ITS PROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND FACILITIES, AUTHORIZING THE INCREASE OF ITS MEDICAL PERSONNEL COMPLEMENT AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Zubiri stated that the parliamentary status was still the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Go, sponsor of the measure, and Senator Drilon for his interpellation.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR DRILON**

Preliminarily, Senator Drilon said that he had no objection to the passage of the proposed measures, as he recognizes the challenges that the government was facing in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. He believed that one area which could stand improvement was the government's ability to treat the ailments arising from the COVID-19 virus. He then asked on the definition of a hospital under the existing laws, which would distinguish it from an infirmary or a clinic. Senator Go replied that under RA No. 4226, a hospital is primarily devoted to the maintenance and operation of facilities for the diagnosis, treatment, and care of individuals.

Asked on the number of public and private hospitals currently operating in the country, Senator Go replied that there are 73 hospitals operated by the DOH, 358 operated by the LGUs, and 808 by the private sector.

Asked on the ideal ratio of hospital beds to the population and whether the law sets standards as to the number of hospitals in a particular region, province, or municipality, Senator Go replied that the ratio should be 1:1,000, meaning an area with a population of 10,000 must have 100 hospital beds. He affirmed that additional bed may be put up if the average occupancy rate of 85% is reached; thus, the hospitals under the two bills being presented would qualify.

Senator Drilon stated that the country was currently in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the government has launched three programs to contain the problem: test, track, and treat COVID-19 patients. He then asked what kind of treatment the hospitals are giving to COVID-19 patients and what kind of hospitals are needed to treat the afflicted as he noted that hospitals are classified into three levels, namely, level 1, level 2, and level 3. Senator Go replied that according to the DOH, COVID-19 patients are admitted in Level 2 and Level 3 hospitals. He confirmed that the essential equipment in the treatment of the ailments caused by the virus are ventilators, and that nationwide the number of ventilators available is more than 1,000.

Senator Drilon said that the reason he wanted to know the number of ventilators was to test the adequacy of the system. Aside from the number of ventilators, he said that he would also want to know the ideal number of ventilators a hospital should have to properly respond to the current and future pandemics. Senator Go assured Senator Drilon that he would submit the data once available.

To Senator Drilon's observation that House Bill No. 6218 simply sought to rename a hospital, Senator Go affirmed, saying that the center shall provide specialty healthcare services on obstetrics and gynecology; prenatal, postnatal, and neonatal care; lactation programs; children's immunization; animal bite treatment; and other women and pediatric care. He clarified that the bill also seeks to expand the services of the hospital by giving more focus on women's and pediatric care.

Senator Drilon thus suggested that during the period of amendments, the title be amended to reflect the intention of the bill which was beyond renaming as it also aims to expand the services of the Malita District Hospital. Senator Go agreed with Senator Drilon.

Senator Drilon stated that a district hospital serves only the population of a particular congressional

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district, and he asked if the Malita hospital would remain as a district hospital since as earlier stated, the intention of the bill is not simply to increase the bed capacity of the hospital but to expand its services as well.

Senator Go clarified that the bed capacity would be quantified.

Senator Drilon further asked if the Malita Hospital was created by law, and whether this function of increasing the bed capacity should properly be done by the DOH because it is in the best position to determine the exact medical needs of a province or a district.

Asked if he would be willing to consider the proposal to enact a general law which would delegate the function of increasing the bed capacity to the Secretary of the Department of Health rather than to Congress as the bills are basically local in application and the agency is in the best position to determine the need for it, Senator Go replied that there were actually bills filed with the same intention which the Committee already considered, citing Senate Bill No. 1226 which he himself filed, authorizing the Department of Health to set and approve the bed capacity and service capability of all DOH hospitals, and he assured that he would personally push for the measure once session resumes in July. In the meantime, he hoped that the bills being considered would be passed before adjournment of session the following week so that their budget that would cover their upgrading would be included in the DOH budget.

Senator Drilon clarified that his proposal would apply to future efforts to increase the bed capacity of some hospitals so that the President need not be burdened by all of the requests for increase in bed capacity.

Asked by Senator Drilon if the allocation would depend upon the size of the hospital and the number of beds in it, Senator Go replied in the affirmative.

Senator Drilon thus believed that with more reason his proposal to delegate to the DOH secretary the authority to expand hospitals should be considered because the allocation set a specific number of beds, which would be funded in the budget, even if it has been set years ago and is already inadequate.

As regards House Bill No. 6499 which seeks to increase the bed capacity of the Quirino Memorial

Medical Center in Quezon City from 500 to 1,000 beds, Senator Drilon stated that the mere passage of the law is just the authority to set the budget, and he asked whether 1,000 beds would be sufficient considering the area that the Quirino Memorial Medical Center is serving.

Senator Go explained that the average bed occupancy rate of the Quirino Memorial Medical Center in 2018 and 2019 was 263.80% with outpatient visits that increased from 204,899 in 2018 to 208,047 in 2019 and a total of 240,190 inpatient and 55,010 emergency room consultations in 2019, thus the proposal to increase the bed capacity from 500 to 1,000 beds, which is consistent with the hospital development plan.

Senator Drilon then asked if 1,000 beds would be sufficient given that the bed-to-population ratio must not be more than one bed per 1,000 population. He also asked how many residents are covered in the service area of the Quirino Memorial Medical Center.

Senate President Sotto stated that the hospital covers the entire Third District of Quezon City that would be from the area of Cubao all the way to Project 4 and the whole of Barangay Libis with a population of around 400,000. He added that the hospital also caters to the residents of Marikina. Senator Go said that the hospital also caters to those in Antipolo, San Mateo, Montalban, Caloocan, Novaliches and even to those from the nearby provinces of Rizal, Laguna, Bulacan and Cavite.

Asked how much would be needed to upgrade a 500-bed hospital to a 1,000-bed hospital in terms of personal services, capital outlay, maintenance and daily expenses, Senator Go replied that a 500-bed hospital requires around P2 billion for infrastructure, around P960 million for personal services, and around P365 million for MOOE, so that if converted to a 1,000-bed hospital, expenses for PS and MOOE would also double.

Asked if the Department of Budget and Management was consulted on the amount needed in order to achieve the needed hospital services for 1,000 beds, Senator Go replied in the affirmative, giving the assurance that the agency was supportive of the measure during the committee hearing although he admitted that the budget needed was not discussed. Senator Drilon believed that the DBM would state their position when the 2021 budget is before Congress.

Senator Go stated that precisely the measure must be passed before the recess so that it would be included in the National Expenditure Program. Senator Drilon feared that it would be difficult to do so because of the three-day rule that would prevent the Body from passing the measure on June 3, 2020, unless certified as an urgent measure. That being the case, Senator Go suggested that they pass the measure and ask the DBM to include it in the NEP on July 28, 2020 after the SONA.

At this juncture, Senator Zubiri informed the Body that the Senate was already in receipt of the proposed second Bayanihan to Heal As One Act. He then asked if the interpellation of Senator Drilon would be lengthy and if he would want to take it up again the next day.

Senator Drilon replied that he still has a few more questions which he could ask the following day. He then requested to suspend the measure and to be put again in the agenda for the next session day. He likewise suggested that the bill be passed on Second Reading before adjournment on June 3, 2020 and be passed on Third Reading on July 27, 2020, as it would not make much of a difference.

Senator Go appealed to the Body not to delay the priority bills especially those involving health in a time of pandemic.

Senator Drilon clarified that the measure was not being delayed and that the requirements of the Constitution are what actually prevent them from passing it on Third and Final Reading on June 3. He reiterated that he would not stand in the way of having the measure approved on Second Reading on June 3. He likewise clarified that it should not be taken that the measure was being opposed given the present pandemic because if the bill was taken up earlier, there would have been no question that they could pass it on Third Reading on June 3. However, he maintained that given the technical requirements of the Constitution, the bill could not be passed on Third Reading by June 3, unless it is certified as an urgent measure.

Senator Zubiri thanked Senator Drilon and Senator Go for agreeing that the measure be taken up again the next day.

**SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION  
OF HOUSE BILL NOS. 2444, 6218,  
6035, 6365, AND 6499**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no

objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bills.

**THIRD ADDITIONAL  
REFERENCE OF BUSINESS**

The Secretary of the Senate read Committee Report No. 98, prepared and submitted jointly by the Committees on Finance; Ways and Means; Economic Affairs; and Health and Demography, on Senate Bill No. 1564 with Senators Marcos, Angara, Recto, Sotto, Zubiri and Cayetano as authors thereof, entitled

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES TO EXERCISE NECESSARY POWERS TO CARRY OUT THE DECLARED NATIONAL POLICY TO RESPOND TO CRISIS BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE 2019 CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) PANDEMIC AND PROVIDING MECHANISM TO ACCELERATE THE RECOVERY AND BOLSTER THE RESILIENCY OF THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMY, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,

recommending its approval in substitution of Senate Bill Nos. 1414, 1417, 1427, 1431, 1449, 1474, 1542, 1546, 1558 and 1561 taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution No. 409.

Sponsor: Senator Angara

**SPECIAL ORDER**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 98 on Senate Bill No. 1564 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

**COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 98  
ON SENATE BILL NO. 1564**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 1564 (Committee Report No. 98), entitled

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE PRES-

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IDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES TO EXERCISE NECESSARY POWERS TO CARRY OUT THE DECLARED NATIONAL POLICY TO RESPOND TO CRISIS BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE 2019 CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) PANDEMIC AND PROVIDING MECHANISM TO ACCELERATE THE RECOVERY AND BOLSTER THE RESILIENCY OF THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMY, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, with the permission of the Body, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, only the title of the bill was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the Record of the Senate.

The Chair recognized Senator Angara for the sponsorship.

#### **SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR ANGARA**

Senator Angara, on behalf of the Committees on Finance, Ways and Means, Economic Affairs, and Health and Demography, submitted for plenary consideration Senate Bill No. 1564, entitled “An Act Authorizing The President Of The Republic Of The Philippines To Exercise Necessary Powers To Carry Out The Declared National Policy To Respond To Crisis Brought About By The 2019 Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19) Pandemic And Providing Mechanism To Accelerate The Recovery And Bolster The Resiliency Of The Philippine Economy, Providing Funds Therefor, And For Other Purposes,” under Committee Report No. 98.

*Following is the full text of Senator Angara's sponsorship speech:*

Last March 14 was not a regular session day. It was actually a Saturday. But our esteemed leader, Senate President Vicente Sotto III, called us to a session and the Chamber labored for several hours, burning the midnight oil to pass the landmark measure “The Bayanihan To Heal As One Act” or Republic Act No. 11496.

Our colleagues, led by the Senate President and the principal sponsor, Sen. Pia Cayetano, worked together to pass, as mentioned, the Bayanihan Law.

Every week since then, the Office of the President has reported to the Senate and the House of Representatives, through the oversight committee, on the implementation of this law.

Our hardworking sponsor, Sen. Pia Cayetano, has repeatedly solicited our comments every week and diligently reported them back to the Executive branch with our comments.

I thank her as well as Sen. Imee Marcos, the chair of the Committee on Economic Affairs, who led a committee hearing last week. I also thank the authors of various measures, no less than our Majority Leader, Sen. Juan Miguel F. Zubiri, our Senate President Pro Tempore, Sen. Ralph Recto, as well as the other senators.

Their good work has enabled our authorities to respond to the pandemic and to assist millions of Filipinos in coping with the resulting hardship from COVID-19.

Just as it was with the first Bayanihan Act, this measure grants to the President the necessary flexibility to realign budgets from different agencies and directly respond to the crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are also still the emergency subsidies for low income households, especially the ones that did not receive any assistance in previous months.

We will also continue ongoing wage subsidy programs, making sure that freelancers/self-employed, those from the informal sector, the repatriated Overseas Filipino Workers or OFWs, and workers in various industries—tourism, construction, public transportation, trades, films, audio-visual workers and others from the from the creative industries—are included.

There is assistance for teachers in private schools, especially part-time teachers, as well as tuition subsidies for students who are facing financial difficulties. This is an amendment of our educational advocates, Sen. Joel Villanueva and Sen. Win Gatchalian.

The Land Bank of the Philippines, the Development Bank of the Philippines, the Social Security System, and the Government Service Insurance System or GSIS will also provide loans subsidies, discounts or even grants for purchasing necessary gadgets like laptops, tablets or smartphones given the expected shift to blended learning. These same government financial institutions or GFIs will also come up with similar loan programs to schools and universities for transitioning to online modes of teaching.

The 30-day grace period without incurring interests or penalties is also here present in this



proposed law where all banks, quasi-banks and other financial institutions, public and private, will be directed to implement a minimum 30-day grace period on loans in areas that are still under Expanded Community Quarantine (ECQ) or Modified Expanded Community Quarantine (MECQ) without incurring interest, interest on interest, penalties or other charges.

The same applies to utility companies for electricity, water, and telecommunications and also for residential rents.

To add to the decisive moves of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas or BSP, we are mandating various GFIs and government corporations to provide loans and credit, preferably with concessional interest to MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises), the self-employed, and enterprises in tourism, agri-fisheries and other business.

As a stimulus to our construction industry, the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development or DHSUD is directed to: 1) fast-track the approval of all pending and new applications for housing loans, permits and licenses; 2) prioritize critically impacted home buyers who may want to shift from private bank financing to Pag-IBIG; and 3) waive any fines and penalties that may cause delay in the delivery of housing units to buyers.

We are also directing the BSP to allow banks to reallocate any unutilized funds to housing loans and take steps so that borrowers gain access to cheaper home loans. This was suggested by our colleague, Sen. Cynthia Villar.

We are also providing assistance to the Department of Agriculture's "Plant, Plant, Plant" program, enabling them to provide extension support, financial subsidies, and other forms of assistance to agri-fishery enterprises, farmers, and fisherfolk. This was provided by our colleague, Sen. Imee Marcos.

To make sure that these programs and policy directives are well-supported, we are establishing a standby fund worth approximately P230 billion which will be appropriated for the following purposes:

- P25 billion for emergency subsidy to workers in critically-impacted sectors and industries as well as cash-for-work programs in the DOLE's TUPAD;
- P50 billion as an infusion to capital to the Land Bank of the Philippines, the Development Bank of the Philippines and PhilGuarantee;

This is for the purpose of providing credit to distressed enterprises.

- P30 billion for the DOH or Department of Health for programs on the prevention and control of infectious diseases as well as COVID-19 including the much-demanded mass testing;
- P50 billion for programs and projects in support of health workers, displaced OFWs, teachers and non-teaching personnel, part-time faculty and employees, and workers in public transport, tourism, and other critically-impacted industries, both in the formal and informal sectors;
- Approximately P40 billion for our agricultural sector, to provide assistance to qualified agri-fishery enterprises, farmers, and fisherfolk and to finance the DA's "Plant, Plant, Plant" program, again proposed by Senators Marcos and Recto;
- P35-billion fund for the DOTr to assist critically-impacted public transportation service providers as well as for the DOT or Department of Tourism to assist ailing enterprises in the tourism industry which are among the most highly impacted industries.

Only through concerted actions will we be able to overcome the negative effects of this pandemic.

This measure is an attempt to rally not just the government but the rest of our country towards recovery during these difficult times. We are thankful for the many contributions of our colleagues; we have had two rounds of a back-and-forth with our fellow senators to be able to accommodate, as much as possible, their amendments. And we also thank our coworkers in the Executive branch for coming back to us with their responses and comments on the various provisions and many of them are here. We thank them for being here today on short notice. To our resource persons, the private sectors and the academe, all who contributed to the drafting of the bill, we look forward to coming up with an improved measure after some debate and exchange with our esteemed colleagues.

I end the sponsorship with a quote from the great Martin Luther King. He said in 1968, "We must accept finite disappointment but we must never lose infinite hope."

Through the Chamber's efforts today and in the coming days, we hope to provide hope to all our countrymen who are facing difficulty during this very trying times. *Pagpalain po sana tayo ng Diyos. God bless at mabuhay ang Pilipinas.*

## COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR RECTO

Senator Recto delivered his cosponsorship speech as follows:

We have just emerged from the world's longest lockdown—75 days—when 109 million of us in the 13th most populous country in the planet hunkered down to stop the virus.

Although it spared us from digging mass graves, it, however, buried businesses in unpaid bills, our people in hardship, and our government in debt.

While the coronavirus does not suffocate all its victims, it sure can choke an entire economy, including ours, the 36th biggest in the world.

In our bid to flatten the curve, the needles of our economy moved to alarming lows.

2.79 million workers lost their income, putting them overnight into welfare. 103,653 firms shuttered—most temporarily, but some for good.

The quarantine cost our economy P18 billion a day.

Tax collections plummeted so much that an intoxicated government saw its April excise tax take dip from P28.6 billion to P7.2 billion year-on-year.

We can read the state of our economy from reports with numbers dripping with red ink. Or we can see it in human form – drivers begging on the streets, the long queues for cash aid, and construction workers who walk under the sun and under the stars for weeks to return empty handed to their families in the provinces.

And yet, our agony is not over. The virus remains an enigma. No cure is in sight. Ahead is the great unknown.

This measure is the “bill of lading” of the provisions that we will bring in our journey to the uncertain future, our survival tools.

The easy way forward is to simply extend the validity of the existing bill, which requires nothing more than changing the timestamp of its effectivity.

Or we can strengthen it, make it more potent, so that the end product is a bill that is not merely given a fresh lease on life, but is loaded with new features drawn from what our people have experienced over the past 75 days.

May I remind you, my dear colleagues, that this was the approach we had taken in tackling

the bare bones bill which we collectively improved on to become the Bayanihan To Heal As One Act.

Our friends in the other House were expecting that we will rubber-stamp the Palace proposal—so much so that they didn't even bother to order lunch.

But what did we do? In the time-honored tradition of the Senate, we crossed party lines and worked until dawn to craft a vastly superior version more attuned to what our people needed.

Why did we do it? Because it has been our practice that given a proposal full of generalities, we do not call for a vote until we have the bill granular.

Instead of sweeping powers, we in the Senate fleshed out a to-do list for the executive.

We mandated cash aid for 18 million families. We required PhilHealth to pay the full cost of COVID-19 treatments.

We decreed that health frontliners be given hazard pay. We compelled the prompt testing of PUIs and PUMs.

We instituted a moratorium in paying loans, rents and utilities. We directed credit flow to key sectors of the economy, like food production.

We relaxed the procurement rules for medical supplies. We enumerated where the anti-pandemic funds should go. We institutionalized work-from-home arrangements.

And many, many more—because there is a Senate that does not automatically say yes to bills they ask for, but think on how these bills could be made better.

This pandemic is a tragedy of many acts. As we begin a chapter, so must we write a new playbook.

When the pandemic mutates, we adapt. We may not be able to fully flatten the curve, but we must always be ahead of it.

What are the challenges we face?

No less than an economic Armageddon.

Our GDP will contract by 15 percent, according to one estimate. Instead of a nominal GDP of P21.4 trillion, it could be in the neighborhood of P18.9 trillion, a value-added loss of two and half trillion pesos.

This will, of course, tow down revenues, from 16.8 percent of GDP to 13.6 percent, and that is seen from a rose-colored glasses.

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As a result, national government debt will spike from 39.6 percent of GDP to 49.8 percent, at least.

But beyond dashboard economic indicators is the pandemic's harsh impact on Filipino lives.

The transport sector is grounded, service workers are furloughed, manufacturing has ground to a halt, and construction has ceased.

One estimate puts at 7.5 million to 10 million the number of people who will lose jobs this year. They will be joined by 300,000 Filipinos overseas who want to go home.

Also in the displaced column are 33 million students whose schooling is now interrupted, plus the 3 million teachers and auxiliary workers in education.

Throughout history, hunger has marched lockstep with pandemics, and poverty a dangerous comorbidity.

Already, the number of GNP—or *Gutom na Pilipino*—doubled from the 2.1 million families surveyed in December 2019, to 4.2 million families in May 2020.

If these are the ills we face, then this bill is the bag of cures. Band aids aren't enough. What is needed is a medicine cabinet approach.

This bill sets up a social safety net for those who will fall in the cracks, crank up stalled enterprises, rev up food production, ramp up virus testing that is essential for safe workplaces, so we will know when to pull the circuit breaker that will stop its spread.

In addition to programs under the *Bayanihan* Act, this bill authorizes the following:

- To displaced workers, a wage subsidy in the amount of P30 billion, in which a qualified individual can receive up to two months of minimum wage.
- To farmers, fishermen and other frontliners against hunger, various forms of production assistance through a P20 billion grant to the D.A.
- To workers, P20 billion for cash-for-work activities that will boost our defense against the pandemic, like contact tracing, health facilities construction, and nutrition activities.
- To the DOH, P20 billion for improving public health care, so that it can respond to other diseases and health emergencies simultaneous with managing COVID-19.
- To COVID-19 testing, P10 billion for Trace-

Test-Treat, a shot-in-the-arm of the health imperative for more and massive testing.

- To MSMEs, agri-fishery, tourism and export enterprises, P70 billion—P35 billion to the Land Bank, P15 billion to the DBP, P20 billion to the Philippine Guarantee Loans—for low interest loans.
- For workers in education, transport, health, including repatriated OFWs, and those displaced in other sectors, P80 billion in assistance.
- To private school teachers and part-time faculty of state colleges, a one-time cash aid of P5,000 to P8,000.
- To consumers with loans, utility bills, and other payroll taxes, a 30-day grace period. Unpaid credit card and utility bills can be settled by instalment, free of interest and charges, until the end of the year.

Yes, the above will be financed largely by borrowings, but with a debt-to-GDP ratio below 50 percent, we're far from maxing out the national credit card. If the economy were a patient in ICU, there is nothing morally wrong and no fiscal canon is violated in using credit to save it.

For our people, let us craft and pass this bill in true Senate *bayanihan* fashion.

## COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR CAYETANO

Senator Cayetano likewise delivered his cosponsorship speech as follows:

Last March, we pushed for the passage of Republic Act No. 11469 which this Representation also sponsored. Our shared goal was simple: empower our government to act fast in providing Filipino families with subsidy for their daily needs to keep them home.

As already mentioned by our chairperson of the Committee on Finance, Sen. Sonny Angara, since the passage of the law, we have been in close coordination with our counterparts in the Executive department in ensuring its proper implementation. Week after week, we receive extensive reports from the Office of the President. And every week, this Representation would consolidate the comments and recommendations of the Senate, which we would then submit back to the President in the hopes of strengthening these initiatives and addressing gaps.

Although we managed to act fast in responding to the threats of COVID-19 through



the passage of the *Bayanihan* law, the lack of a national ID system has been pointed out to contribute to the delay in identifying beneficiaries. Thankfully, resolving this challenge is now a priority of NEDA under the leadership of Sec. Karl Chua.

Meanwhile, 78 days since the declaration of a nationwide quarantine, it appears that we have slowed the spread of the virus although it is still out there. But staying at home has taken a toll on the livelihood of people and the economy.

The interventions provided in the *Bayanihan* to Heal as One and the powers of the President therein are set to expire this June 23, 2020. We need to move into the next phase of our battle versus COVID-19. We now need to RECOVER AS ONE.

Senate Bill No. 1564 particularly seeks to extend the validity of RA 11469 up to September 30, 2020. This shall allow the government to more aggressively pursue its efforts to contain the transmission of the virus and to provide specific support for various sectors as our economy starts to reopen.

For the health aspect, this bill proposes to enhance, through additional funding, the capacity of our public health care institution. The COVID-19 crisis has forced us to finally recognize the gaps in our current healthcare system. There is no better moment to make reforms, to invest more in health service, and to build more adequate health facilities.

Taking off from the current Administration's infrastructure program, it is now time to "Build, Build, Build" for the Filipinos' health and well-being.

Another great consequence of COVID-19 is the disruption to our education sector. Much support is needed from assistance to parents with educational-related bills to pay, teachers and school personnel now facing financial difficulties, private schools with bills to pay, and public institutions with threatened budget cuts.

As such, the bill shall extend education subsidies to qualified students and private institutions both for the basic and tertiary education sectors. These subsidies shall be released directly to schools for payment of tuition which will also sustain them. Furthermore, the bill shall provide cash assistance to affected and displaced teaching and non-teaching personnel, including part-time faculty members in private basic education schools and higher education institutions (HEIs), as well as part time faculty

members in state university and colleges (SUCs). Government financial institutions are also directed to develop relevant loan programs.

In order to ensure food security and supply chain resilience, financial assistance shall also be provided to qualified agri-fishery enterprises, farmers, and fisherfolk which would enable them to continue their productivity and, in turn, help feed their families and millions more.

Likewise, the needs of MSMEs and millions of their displaced workers, including probationary, seasonal, contractual, and casual employees as well as freelancers of various industries, are also recognized in the bill.

This Representation also introduced provisions to the bill in relation to our long-time advocacy of sustainable transportation. Amid the need to regulate the operation of all transport sectors in the country to help prevent the spread of the virus, people should be given access to safe and convenient alternatives. These provisions shall provide the necessary infrastructure and support for these alternative modes of transportation, including emergency pathways and pop-up bicycle lanes for pedestrians and cyclists. This will enable commuters, particularly our healthcare workers and other frontliners, to get to essential destinations like hospitals, banks, grocery stores, and the like.

Meanwhile, also throughout this bill, we will hasten the deployment of critical ICT infrastructure and wireless technologies in the country in order to address the need of digital connectivity, cyber security, e-government, online learning, and telecommuting during the pandemic.

These are just some of the highlights of our proposed bill. There are other important provisions. But I would also like to emphasize that in the effort to reach out to all sectors, we must recognize that our source of funding is not infinite and the key is to provide assistance to as many as are in need, especially the most needy.

There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to fighting a novel virus. Nations all over the world struggle to find the balance between protecting public health and safeguarding people's economic wellbeing in the time of crisis.

Our proposal seeks to strike this balance. It is a solution that is more tailor-fitted for Filipino families and for the different sectors of our society. It seeks to save more lives while also supporting our people as we try to regain our economic footing. Ultimately, our proposal is a call for sustainable recovery. The Filipinos are known all

over the world for their resilience. COVID-19 may have shaken our societies to the core but we will emerge stronger and more prepared.

Finally, I would also take this opportunity to call on the Filipino people to be proactive in protecting themselves. *Maging responsable sana ang bawat isa sa atin. Kung wala namang gagawin sa labas, manatili sa bahay.* Every day that we stay home, we save lives. Let those who have to go out, whether as frontliners or to earn a living, be safer because most of us stay home. And for those who need to go out, be responsible enough to note down all the places you go, because that small effort will go a long way in our contact-tracing efforts.

Congratulations, and we are here to also support the efforts of our chairperson, Sen. Sonny Angara. *Ituloy ang bayanihan* spirit. It is the only way we can foster sustainable recovery.

## MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR LACSON

Senator Lacson expressed reservations in enacting the proposed bill into law before Congress adjourns as it might run afoul of the Constitution, specifically Article VI, Section 23(2) thereof, which reads:

“In times of war or other national emergency, the Congress may, by law, authorize the President, for a limited period and subject to such restrictions as it may prescribe, to exercise powers necessary and proper to carry out a declared national policy unless sooner withdrawn by resolution of the Congress, such powers shall cease upon the next adjournment thereof.”

He also pointed out the fact that Congress would be adjourning on June 4, Thursday, and he believed that the Senate would only need to wait for one week in order to comply with Article VI, Section 15 of the Philippine Constitution which states:

“Section 15. The Congress shall convene once every year on the fourth Monday of July for its regular session, unless a different date is fixed by law, and shall continue to be in session for such number of days as it may determine until thirty days before the opening of its next regular session, exclusive of Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays. The President may call a special session at any time.”

He said that although Congress would be having a *sine die* adjournment, it would still have enough time – even excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and a legal

holiday – if it were to convene for a special session within the month. He said that Congress may request the President to call for a special session on June 8, 9, 10, or 11, during which it could pass Senate Bill No. 1564 on Third Reading in a matter of one to three days so that they would not have to grapple with the issue of unconstitutionality.

Assuming that Congress would not be granting emergency powers to the President, Senator Lacson pointed out that the country would still be under a declared national emergency because Presidential Proclamation No. 922 series of 2020 has not been lifted yet. He noted efforts to avoid the use of the word “emergency” in the proposed measure, with the Sponsor wisely terming the enumerated powers in Section 3 as “necessary powers,” but he asked how the President can perform such powers without Congress authorizing him or giving him emergency powers. He said that he was merely raising his concern as he urged the Body to wait until Congress adjourns on June 4, Thursday, so that should the President call for a special session, Congress would have complied with Section 23(2) of Article VI of the Philippine Constitution. He explained that should they pass the proposed measure during the current session or before the *sine die* adjournment, the emergency powers granted to the President shall cease to exist upon adjournment. He stated that he was not saying that he was correct but that he was merely expressing concern in anticipation of questions on the constitutionality of passing the proposed measure before Congress adjourns that week.

## MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR TOLENTINO

Senator Tolentino asked whether Senator Lacson was giving a manifestation or was raising a constitutional point of order, as he assumed that Senator Lacson was raising some constitutional grounds, specifically the constitutional repercussions of the Body tackling the proposed measure that day. Senator Lacson replied that he would rather call it a manifestation because he was not totally against the enactment of a law that would grant the President the necessary or emergency powers and to continue exercising such powers to alleviate the situation brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senator Tolentino suggested that after the Sponsor clarifies the intent of the bill and the manner on how to proceed with it, the Body proceed to a

caucus to tackle the constitutional repercussions, as he noted that all Members anyway were in support of the passage of the bill which was very timely and needed as an impetus to allow the economy to recover. Senator Lacson agreed, saying that the Members would not even have to come to the Senate since they have already passed a resolution to work from home and could therefore pass the bill into law even if they stay in their respective houses.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI**

Senator Zubiri pointed out a precedent legislation which was the second extension of the Martial Law Proclamation in Mindanao which was passed through a special joint session from December 13, 2017 until December 31, 2018, crossing through an adjournment of Congress. He nevertheless asked Senator Angara to enlighten the Body on how to look at the matter of legislating Senate Bill No. 1564.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ANGARA**

Angara thanked Senator Lacson for raising the constitutional issues, as he recalled Senator Drilon also raising the issue of emergency powers ceasing upon the adjournment of Congress during last Friday's joint committee hearing of the Committees on Finance and Economic Affairs, precisely why the original bill of Senator Zubiri was a simple one-line extension of the Bayanihan 1 Law. He added that when the Committee studied the law and jurisprudence behind the provision, they realized that Senator Drilon and Senator Lacson might have a point, which was why what they endeavored to do was to treat it as a separate measure altogether rather than as an extension of a previous measure, the Bayanihan 1 which can be viewed as an emergency measure since there was a declared national policy and the President also declared a national emergency. He opined that the Body can also view the Bayanihan 2 measure as a valid delegation of legislative power because as ruled by the Supreme Court, in many past cases, the legislative power of Congress is quite wide that it touches on all topics as long as there is a valid delegation of legislative power. He believed that the proposed measure could surmount any constitutional challenge because the test for a valid delegation of legislative power is that the statute must be complete in itself and that there is a standard that is delegated, which means that the Executive branch or the one to whom power is delegated is not given free elbow room or a blank check, meaning there are limits for

the exercise of the delegated legislative powers; thus, the Committee, along with the Legislative Budget Research and Monitoring Office (LBRMO), had to carefully go through the Bayanihan 1 Law and struck out all the provisions which might be interpreted as being emergency in character. For instance, he said that the proposed Bayanihan 2 no longer has the provision which allows the President to take over public utilities or hospitals, the relevant provision that was interpreted as being an emergency power. He then urged the Body to include in the bill provisions that they feel to be still a valid delegation of legislative power. He said that he was not aware of any law or jurisprudence which may conflict with the provisions raised by Senator Lacson and that if any laws which conflict or which may prevent the President from exercising the delegated legislative powers would be found, then he would yield and would support any amendment to take such provisions out of the proposed measure. He likewise pointed out that in case the measure is challenged before the Supreme Court, there is the separability clause that would allow the measure to stand on its own minus any provisions which may be declared as unconstitutional in the future.

Senator Lacson pointed out the need for the Body to be on the side of caution to avoid questions on legality just because they disregarded the difference that deferring the enactment of the proposed measure for one week may make. He asked if the Body would be able to comply with Section 23 of Article VI if Congress adjourns on July 5, Friday, and then convene on a special session the following week, starting June 8.

Senate President Sotto said that he was amenable to both ideas but that they would have to leave it to the sense of the majority of the Members of the Senate. He also asked if the Body was even sure that the President would call for a special session, saying that the other Members should be asked on what they think of the matter in case there would be a special session. He said the Body would not mind coming back one week or even two weeks from that day, depending on the final decision.

Senator Zubiri suggested that the Body proceed to the special caucus and suspend the session. He said that the Members, physically and virtually, would meet at the Senator's Lounge to ask and hear the opinion of other learned members of the Senate before continuing with the discussion on the floor.

## SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, the session was suspended so that the Body could convene into a caucus.

*It was 5:56 p.m.*

## RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 6:53 p.m., the session was resumed.

## MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ANGARA

Acting on the instruction of Senate President Sotto to place on record what was discussed in the caucus, Senator Angara stated that in order to obviate possible constitutional challenges, as recommended by Senator Drilon, they should remove any provision which might be interpreted as emergency in character, and likewise consider the date of the effectivity of the law.

Affirming the statement, Senator Drilon added that the effectivity of the law could be after the expiration of the present law. He said that there was no harm to public interest even if there is a gap of a week or two between the effectivity of the new law and the expiration of the present law which is the adjournment of the current session.

Thereupon, the Body proceeded to the period of interpellations.

The Chair recognized Senator Angara, sponsor of the measure, and Senator Recto for his interpellation.

## INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR RECTO

Asked by Senator Recto how much the government had thus far spent for the pandemic, Senator Angara stated that the total government expenditure for COVID-19 was P353.46 billion, and he affirmed that P240 billion more was needed until the end of the year or a total of P590 billion which is 3% of GDP.

Asked where the P350 billion was sourced, Senator Angara stated that P31 billion came from fiscal year 2019 GAA and the rest was sourced from the 2020 GAA, which authority was given under the "Bayanihan to Heal as One Act."

Asked how much was requested by the Department of Finance (DOF) from Congress during the

Committee of the Whole hearings last week, Senator Angara said that the agency requested P130 billion, broken down as follows: P50 billion for government financial institutions like Landbank and DBP; P50 billion to P55 billion for PhilGuarantee; P10 billion for health and testing; P30 billion for cash-for-work program; P21 billion emergency subsidy to workers; and P20 billion support programs for impacted sectors. He confirmed that there was no breakdown insofar as the monetary policy component totaling P673 billion sourced from the 2019 savings and the 2020 budget, was concerned.

Asked if there was any amount left in the 2019 appropriation, Senator Angara replied that there was none, while P406 billion was left in the 2020 appropriation.

On whether the DOF has submitted a source of financing and from which agencies the amount would be taken, Senator Angara admitted that there was no source of financing submitted since, originally, the position of the Executive department was just to extend the validity of the Bayanihan Act. He further disclosed that upon inquiry with DOF and the economic managers, two options were given: (1) simply extending the Bayanihan Act; or (2) requesting additional P130 billion under the Bayanihan Act.

As regards the deficit, Senator Angara agreed with Senator Recto that the reason there was no deficit incurred was that the government spent for the pandemic and that the reduction in revenue was because many businesses closed and people do not have money because times are really bad.

On whether he was aware of the many publications which showed that the country has one of the smallest fiscal packages in the region, Senator Angara replied that he not come across of any of these publications but he believed that compared to the fiscal package of other ASEAN countries, the Philippines has a modest one.

To the observation that the stimulus package of P236 billion under the Senate committee report which entails a 1.15% deficit, was quite low, Senator Angara said that the Committee on Finance took into account the comments made by the economic managers about not being on the high side when it comes to the deficit as the amount of P240 billion already brings the deficit from 9.2% to 9.3%. He agreed with Senator Recto that the stimulus package will work as a standby authority or unprogrammed appropriations.

*ps net*

As to the biggest cut in the 2020 budget because of the stimulus package, Senator Angara stated that P146 billion of the DPWH budget was realigned.

Since the aim of the Bayanihan Phase II is to recover from the pandemic, the reason why the government was opening up the economy little by little, starting with the creation of cheapest jobs in the agriculture and construction sectors, Senator Recto asked if he has any reservations in putting back the P350 billion cut in the 2020 DPWH budget with standby financing, Senator Angara said that he was receptive to the proposal, saying that the amount takes up over 10% which is still relatively more modest than the P350 billion initial proposal.

Senator Recto explained that the bill merely contains suggestions and not mandates, simply giving the Executive department all the tools that they can use, and that it is up to them to borrow or not. Senator Angara stated that the final decision depends on the implementor and that indeed they can resort to borrowing since as reported in an article, the Philippines ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in fiscal stability.

Senator Recto believed that it is imperative to create more jobs in the construction industry as the country moves on to its recovery phase. Senator Angara agreed even as he noted the reduction in unemployment in the sector in recent years.

On another matter, Senator Recto thanked Senator Angara for accepting his proposal for an additional P20 billion allocation for agriculture. He added that Senator Marcos's separate recommendation to set aside P20 billion for the sector would mean a total of P40 billion for the agriculture industry, which also requires the cheapest funding in terms of job creation.

Asked to confirm whether the budget of the education sector was the second biggest item that was cut in the 2020 budget, Senator Angara replied that P8 billion was slashed from the DepEd. Senator Recto noted that P7 billion and P15 billion had been deducted from the appropriation for the State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHed), respectively, resulting in an estimated P30 billion budget cut for the education sector.

On whether he was amenable to restoring the P30 billion allocation and repurposing its utilization for the new normal, Senator Angara replied that he

would be open to such a specific amendment as long as it is within the agreed limit.

On whether he would agree that the P6 billion reduction in the DICT budget could be used to accelerate WiFi connectivity in the new normal, Senator Angara said that he was inclined to accept such a proposal.

Asked if all the requests by the Executive department had been incorporated in the committee report, Senator Angara replied that all the items were included but that there might be some differences in the amount. He explained that the DOF actually submitted a P50 billion request, not P70 billion, which was accommodated in the committee report.

But Senator Recto recalled that in their presentation before the Committee of the Whole, the DOF requested P70 billion and an emergency subsidy of P30 billion. Senator Angara clarified that their request consisted of an emergency subsidy of P21 billion and a cash-for-work program of P30 billion.

Senator Recto pointed that there is a difference between cash-for-work program and wage subsidy, and he maintained that the government should prioritize wage subsidy because there have been many micro, small, medium and even large enterprises that have been hit by the pandemic. When the people lose their jobs, he said that the government would give them unemployment assistance and then look for a job for them — cash-for-work. Senator Angara agreed that they are conceptually distinct, but in its report, the Committee provided a lump-sum of P25 billion for both to give the Executive department flexibility since they would be in the best position to judge the necessary assistance.

Senator Recto pointed out the need to separate all the issues in their response, and that the first response to a pandemic should be on health, then wage subsidy, job protection, unemployment assistance, cash-for-work, loans to businesses and sectoral interventions—agriculture, transport, tourism, and others. He said that it is just an issue on style so that there would be proper order which could be addressed at the proper time. Senator Angara expressed his willingness to work with Senator Recto on the matter.

Senator Recto agreed to grant the Executive department's request of P130 billion, taking note



however, of the limited resources which prevent them to grant the requests of the other agencies of the government. He also noted that even as the bill does not mandate the Executive department what it should do because they would have to borrow the money, it would give them the tools and sets the priorities in the given timeframe which is three months. Senator Angara agreed, adding that the agencies would have to provide weekly reports to Congress. Senator Recto, however, noted that the submitted weekly reports were incomplete and he agreed with the three-month extension so that the Executive department could provide a report to Congress in September.

Asked how the economy grew in the first quarter, Senator Angara confirmed that the first quarter growth was a contraction of -0.2 per cent, and the second quarter GDP could look much worse. Senator Recto said that one leading economic indicator was that energy was down by 30 percent; thus, in the second quarter GDP, it could be -30 percent. He further noted that the stock market went down by 30 percent, and the biggest losers were the banks by about 30 to 40 percent which, he said, is an indicator of how bad the situation is. He also cited the airline industry which was also critically-impacted, predicting that the impact could last for years. With a -0.2 percent contraction in the first quarter and -30 percent in the second quarter, he estimated that the first half contraction could be at -15 percent. Asked if the spending would be the same as the 2019 consumption pattern, Senator Angara answered in the negative, stating that the spending could possibly be 20 percent less because a lot of people would lose their jobs and businesses would not be making as much money, thus influencing their consumption patterns. Senator Recto said that if the consumption would be more than 10 percent less, then the third and fourth quarter contraction could be -10 to -15 percent.

Asked how many jobs would be lost with that much contraction, Senator Angara said that according to DOLE, it could be five million to 10 million jobs. As per NEDA's pronouncements, Senator Recto said that a -2.5 percent contraction would result in about 2.5 million people losing their jobs, so a -15 percent contraction could possibly result in about 15 million people who would lose their jobs.

Senator Recto also mentioned that unemployment has been increasing in other countries, including the US and China, with the claims for unemployment in

the US reaching 30 million already not only because of the racial divide happening at present but also because of the lockdown which resulted in job loss. Thus, he surmised that it was not far-fetched that about 15 million jobs could be lost if government does not respond quickly, which could lead to the increase in poverty incidence as well. He stressed the seriousness of the situation, hence the proposal for a stimulus in the bill.

Senator Recto also expressed concern about the deficit and the debt-to-GDP ratio as indicated in the NEDA, DOF and DBM position papers. At present, he said that the GDP was around 39 to 40 percent, and that the government could spend a little more but make the contraction less to lessen the impact. He explained that it is important to protect jobs so that the economy would not be destroyed by letting the companies fold immediately. He suggested that the government prioritize the protection of jobs rather than the credit rating. Senator Angara agreed, stating that those could be put aside at the moment so that businesses would be more resilient and have the ability to recover quickly.

Regarding the transport sector intervention amounting to P25 billion, Senator Recto asked how it would be spent. Senator Angara said that there were some guidelines given in the previous hearing, as well as a provision on page 11 of the bill which mandates the DOTr and other agencies to extend various forms of assistance to the businesses in the transportation industry, including the grant of emergency lines, low interest loans or long-term credit facilities, credit guarantee schemes, grants for applicable regulatory fees, and others.

In the tourism industry, Senator Angara stated that there would also be a similar extension of various forms of assistance, like the grant of loans and guarantees, credit facilities and help with their marketing. He also proposed that the government share in some expenses to promote certain destinations as well as in providing grants for education and training of industry stakeholders. He also confirmed that the bill seeks to keep the transport and tourism industry alive as well as increase productivity and income for farmers.

Senator Recto thanked Senator Angara for adopting his recommendation to provide unemployment assistance even as he expressed his intention to propose an amendment to increase the proposed



P50 billion allocation to P80 billion. He explained that the current P8000/worker allotment would mean that P80 billion is needed to provide for P10 million jobless workers, most of whom are taxpayers or overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who make regular contributions to the Social Security System, Pag-IBIG, and the PhilHealth.

Senator Recto also noted that 100,000 of the estimated 400,000 OFWs expected to return to the Philippines remain stranded abroad because the government could only fly home about 600 people per day, and he estimated that the OFW repatriation would not only result in about a P476 billion reduction in earnings or 2.4% of the GDP. He believed that that the additional financial aid would give the economy a better chance against a severe contraction of the economy.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR DELA ROSA**

Senator Dela Rosa noted that the committee report proposed to delete Section 6 of the Bayanihan To Heal As One Act because the enumerated acts in that section were already punishable in some other laws. He then asked Senator Angara to spread into the record the different laws that may be invoked by law enforcers against those who violate the provisions of Section 6. The clarification, he said, would help law enforcers better understand that the Bayanihan Law is not tantamount to decriminalizing or condoning the acts committed by those who violate health protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senator Angara explained that it was Senator Drilon who proposed the removal of Section 6 because he was not particularly happy with the way it was being enforced and that, according to him, it exposes the citizens to double prosecution because there is no jeopardy if a person is charged under the Revised Penal Code as well as in the Bayanihan One law. Moreover, he pointed out that under a special law, a violator cannot present the defense that he acted innocently or without criminal intent because circumstances forced him to do so such as when people break quarantine protocols because they are starving and need food. He agreed with Senator Dela Rosa's observation on the need to clarify that the special law does not mean that such acts are no longer punishable. For instance, he pointed out that while there is no penal law against LGU officials who disobey national policies, Administrative Order

No. 23 authorizes the President to impose administrative disciplinary action against erring LGU officials through the DILG and the PNP as an adjunct organization. On the other hand, he said that those engaged in profiteering, injurious speculations, manipulation would be punished under Republic Act No. 7581 (Price Act) as amended by Republic Act No. 10623, specifically quoting Section 15 which provides that any person "who commits any illegal price manipulation of any basic necessity or prime commodity shall suffer the penalty of imprisonment for a period of not less than five (5) years nor more than fifteen (15) years and shall be imposed a fine of not less than P5000 nor more than P2 million." He added that under Joint Memorandum Circular of 2020, people found to be involved in product overpricing, profiteering, hoarding and cartel operations during the state of calamity would suffer an imprisonment of not less than five (5) years but not more than 15 years as well as pay up to P2 million in fines.

Senator Angara further cited an article on malicious mischief which punishes those who are involved in creating, perpetrating and spreading false information regarding the crisis on social media and other platforms; Article 328 which punishes by *prision correccional, arresto mayor or arresto menor* depending on the value of the damage, any person who shall cause damage to obstruct the performance of public functions, using poisonous or corrosive substance or spreading infection, etc.; and Section 6 of the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 or RA No. 10175 which penalizes crimes which are committed through the use of information and communication technologies. These laws, he said, show that even without Section 6 of the Bayanihan Law, people could still be prosecuted or arrested for such violations, including those who fail to comply with reasonable limitations on the operation of transportation sectors, as well as Article 151 of the RPC which punishes resistance and disobedience to a person in authority or the agents of such person. He then thanked Senator Dela Rosa for raising the issue lest the measure be misinterpreted as not having any penal provision. He reiterated that the deletion of Section 6 does not mean that the acts covered therein are no longer punishable under existing laws.

For his part, Senator Dela Rosa said that he was not against the proposal of Senator Drilon to have Section 6 deleted and that he merely reiterated his concern for law enforcers to be guided accordingly and not be misled into thinking that they can no

longer make arrests against lawbreakers such as those who break quarantine protocols. In response, Senator Angara said that he would request PNP Chief Gamboa to cascade such information and allow for a proper interpretation and implementation of the law.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO**

At the outset, Senator Cayetano stated that she had a long debate over the inclusion of Section 6 in Bayanihan One, as she insisted then that there was no need for the section as it was already covered by existing laws. However, she said that she knew that there was an urgency in ensuring that people understand the need to follow the law.

She expressed her intention to bring the Body's attention to other acts which have yet to be covered by the law. For instance, she noted that other countries like Singapore penalize persons who violate their quarantine to underscore the need to stop the spread of the virus, and that one way to make people understand that the government is serious about the situation is to either fine them or deprive them of liberty by way of imprisonment.

Senator Cayetano also informed the Body that she was looking into reports that some unscrupulous merchants are behind the sale of some Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs). She said that this offense is likely covered by the Food Drug and Cosmetic Act which was later amended by the FDA law. However, she said that she was leaving it up to the Body to decide if they ought to include provisions for such an act that has arisen during the pandemic.

Senator Angara remarked that it could fall under Article 315 (1)(b) of the RPC on swindling or estafa, which penalizes the act of "converting, to the prejudice of another... goods received by the offender... under any obligation involving the duty to make delivery of such good." On the other hand, he said that even though he was not aware of any law that would punish a violation of quarantine, he was receptive to any amendments that would be offered by Senator Cayetano as he recalled an earlier point made by Senator Drilon that some violations might have been borne out of hardship. He noted that the mere act of violating quarantine might not be a criminal act unless there is some disobedience or resistance to a person

in authority as this is where Article 151 of the RPC would come into play.

Senator Cayetano reiterated that she was leaving the matter up to the Body. She said that even though she would be the last person to penalize a person who is trying to feed his family, people need to understand that the virus would infect people regardless whether they are rich or tired, poor and hungry. This, she stressed, is precisely the reason why the government is implementing rules for people to follow. She clarified, however, that she was not a big fan of criminalizing acts and would prefer finding other ways such as a strong information campaign bearing a message that "this is injurious to your health, to your life."

Senator Angara said that he was aware that a case can be filed against quarantine violators under Republic Act No. 11332 or the Mandatory Reporting of Notifiable Diseases and Health Events of Public Health Concern Act that provides, among the punishable acts, the non-cooperation of the person or entities identified as having the notifiable disease.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR TOLENTINO**

At the outset, Senator Tolentino believed that 2020 would have been the golden age of Philippine tourism had it not been for this pandemic, and he pointed out that 80% of the tourism industry belong to the micro and small industries, since most of them are bed-and-breakfast and mom-and-pop establishments. However, he lamented that the proposed bill speaks only of primary tourism enterprises which are usually equated with the chain of hotels, five-star, four-star hotels, and air-conditioned three-star hotels with cable and televisions. He said that the proposed law did not specifically mention an economic stimulus for the small tourism businesses or tourism-oriented businesses. He stressed that 80% of the country's tourist establishments are small or medium tourism-oriented establishments, and he expressed concern that they may not be entitled to the economic stimulus benefits similar to America where the benefits went only to the big establishments.

Asked by Senator Tolentino whether the bill applies only to the big tourism enterprises, Senator Angara replied in the negative, saying that the Department of Tourism (DOT) was, in fact, directed to assist critically impacted businesses that are tourism

*R. Tolentino*

enterprises. He clarified that even as the term “tourism enterprises” was used, there was no intention to favor only larger hotels or establishments. He said that he would be open to an amendment that would clarify the intent, and to prevent any government assistance from being monopolized or dominated by any of the larger players.

Relative thereto, Senator Tolentino said that research would show that tourism is intersected with transportation and that it would be logical to lay down a roadmap on how the tourism sector would evolve. According to him, the DOTr and various airline companies such as Cebu Pacific, Philippine Airlines, and other airlines have announced that airports will be opened on June 8, 2020. However, he said that according to the IATF, domestic tourism will only be allowed in a modified GCQ to another modified GCQ locality. He believed that the proposed law would be more coherent if there was a tourism roadmap to help the industry recover, similar to what was being done by Vietnam or Sicily, Italy, where it would pay half of the tourist’s hotel bills, airline, and museum tickets just to entice tourists to visit. He said that he wanted to see something more specific rather than lumping all together in one sweeping provision, a supposed P80 billion to support various programs including the tourism industry.

Senator Angara acknowledged Senator Tolentino’s good points but he explained that the Committee tried to give maximum flexibility because a lot of the agencies requested that in their submission. However, he agreed with Senator Tolentino’s observation that domestic tourism would be a huge driver of the economy more than foreign tourism because of infrastructure bottlenecks. He disclosed that the DOT is drafting a Tourism Response Recovery Program, a comprehensive plan to address the recovery of the industry.

Senator Tolentino reported that a study on hotels conducted in April 2020 showed dismal figures: only 11,032 hotel rooms from the total hotel rooms across the country are occupied; and the occupants are the repatriated OFWs whose stay were paid for by the Department of Labor and some BPO workers and health frontliners. He lamented that even with the passage of Republic Act 11360 which provided that service charge, fees, contributions be given to the hotel workers, the current situation does not allow for dine-in in the establishments and transactions were reduced to only takeout orders of food.

He opined that it was the best time to help the tourism sector and that there should be provisions in the proposed measure on how to revive it.

Senator Tolentino also lamented that even the Barangay Micro-Enterprises Law, Republic Act No. 9178, does not cover small tourism businesses like bed-and-breakfast establishments.

On whether the DOT could give loans and grants, Senator Angara replied that the DOT would course the loans and grants through the GFIs. He said that DOT would draft the guidelines but it would be the GFI which would do the due diligence, credit investigations and related matters. Senator Tolentino said that giving grants and loans was beyond the ambit of the mandate of DOT which is mainly tasked to accredit hotels, restaurants and similar tourism establishments.

Asked whether he would agree to an amendment, at the appropriate time, to include the LGUs as part of the recognition process that would allow small tourism businesses to avail of the grants or the credit facility programs because only a part of the bill provided for the grants from the Land Bank of the Philippines and the Development Bank of the Philippines for accredited tourism enterprises, Senator Angara replied that he would be open to amendments, given that the intention of the proposed measure is to widen access to the benefits.

Senator Tolentino said that in fairness to the government agency, they still have to yet to see the real roadmap on what would happen to the tourism industry after the COVID-19 pandemic, considering the fiestas and other religious events that might be cancelled, in terms of social distancing, like the Feast of the Black Nazarene come January 2021, or the Maskara Festival in Bacolod, because of social distancing. He then asked whether Senator Angara would accept an amendment that would propose some festival support strategies. Senator Angara replied in the affirmative.

Senator Tolentino said that he would submit his proposed amendments for the tourism sector. However, he suggested that it is about time to make a roadmap for the tourism industry, like what Australia and Vietnam did. He hoped that the government could jumpstart domestic tourism for the good of the country.

## SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, the session was suspended.

*It was 8:20 p.m.*

## RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 8:24 p.m., the session was resumed.

## INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR POE

Senator Poe said that as discussed earlier, certain assistance, through grants and loans, would be for the airline industry. She noted that since it would be the DOTr that would determine the companies that would be granted the loans, she would submit an amendment that would indicate the qualifications of the grantees in order to have some sort of safeguards. She pointed out that many companies were undergoing hardships because of the pandemic, noting that some of them have better competence, reputation and a track record while others also in need might not be able to pay their loans later on. She then asked what safeguards should be put in place for companies that would not merely borrow but decide later on to stop their business or operations. As an example, she disclosed that there are guidelines in the original PEZA that companies should employ at least a number of people, among others. She feared that if the matter is left to the DOTr or any agency to come up with the qualifications in the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) without giving them a general idea of the direction that the Body would want to take, it might end up not being effective. She hoped that Senator Angara would allow amendments to that effect which would be discussed further more on the floor.

Senator Angara said that he would welcome amendments that would make the procedure more responsive to those who are suffering from the current pandemic.

Asked whether there has been a breakdown for the P25-million allocation for DOTr, Senator Angara replied in the negative. He explained that most of the agencies were given utmost flexibility by giving them a ceiling that they could work within and decide on the distribution of their loans, vouchers, subsidies, among others. He said that enacting a law that is too specific might not be responsive to the needs.

Senator Poe reiterated that she would nevertheless introduce additional amendments in the form of safeguards considering the limited resources the government has.

## SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1564

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

## SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Chair suspended the session until three o'clock in the afternoon of the following day.

*It was 8:30 p.m.*

## RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:30 p.m., Tuesday, June 2, 2020, the session was resumed with the Senate President presiding.

## FOURTH ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary of the Senate read the following and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

### BILL ON FIRST READING

Senate Bill No. 1565, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING POLICIES FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING IN THE NEW NORMAL, PRESCRIBING FOR THE PURPOSE STANDARDS FOR THE REOPENING OF SAFE SCHOOLS, CREATING THE SAFE SCHOOLS REOPENING TASK FORCE, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Gatchalian

**To the Committees on Basic Education, Arts and Culture; Health and Demography; Ways and Means; and Finance**

### RESOLUTION

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 434, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO

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CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED INCREASE IN ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN THE COUNTRY DURING THE COVID-19 ENHANCED COMMUNITY QUARANTINE

Introduced by Senator Binay

**To the Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality**

**COMMUNICATION**

Letter from the Executive Secretary of the Office of the President, respectfully transmitting to the Senate the 9th Report of the President to the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee, pursuant to Section 5 of Republic Act No. 11469, otherwise known as the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act.

**To the Committee on Finance**

**COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 98  
ON SENATE BILL NO. 1564**

*(Continuation)*

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of Senate Bill No. 1564 (Committee Report No. 98), entitled

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES TO EXERCISE NECESSARY POWERS TO CARRY OUT THE DECLARED NATIONAL POLICY TO RESPOND TO CRISIS BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE 2019 CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) PANDEMIC AND PROVIDING MECHANISM TO ACCELERATE THE RECOVERY AND BOLSTER THE RESILIENCY OF THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMY, PROVIDING FUNDSTHEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Senator Zubiri stated that the parliamentary status was still the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Angara, sponsor of the measure, and Senator Drilon for his interpellation.

**INTERPELLATION  
OF SENATOR DRILON**

At the outset, Senator Drilon stated that during the caucus, the consensus was that in order to avoid the legal issues arising from the provisions of the Constitution, particularly on the limitation that the law will be effective upon the next adjournment of Congress, the proposal that was agreed upon was that they should not in any way identify the proposed measure as an emergency act but rather as a set of policies designed to allow the country to recover from the pandemic. He said that he would be submitting an amendment that will basically categorize it as response and recovery programs and activities rather than programs that are emergency in nature.

Senator Drilon said that there are references in the bill to the funds and programs of the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) and the Social Security System (SSS). He said that page 15, line 28, to page 16, line 33 provide a grace period; however, from his reading, the second proviso would seem to go beyond just the grace period because as worded, it said:

“PROVIDED, FURTHER, That in addition to the provided grace period, banks, other Non-Bank Financial Institutions (NBFIs) under the supervision of the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (BSP), and lending and financing companies under the supervision of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) are encouraged to extend the terms of or agree to the restructuring of existing (i) consumer loans of employees of non-essential business during the CQ, (ii) commercial loans of non-essential businesses, or to fund activities or investments therein during the CQ, and (iii) local government loans, under any or all of the following conditions.”

Asked on the intent of the paragraph, Senator Angara explained that the wording was not really mandatory and that it was placed there to encourage non-bank financial institutions and other banks to stretch the payment for some of the loans that may have been contracted by some businesses or individuals in order to give relief during that difficult time. Senator Drilon said that he found it awkward to pass a law that was “encouraging.” Asked if the bill was saying that if despite the suggestion to encourage and the institutions concerned would not do anything then the government does not have the power to do anything, Senator Angara replied in the affirmative,

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saying that the bill is also expressing a policy with such a wording.

Senator Drilon reminded the Body that the funds of the GSIS and SSS do not belong to the government but to the members; that as ruled by the Supreme Court in a number of cases, they are trust funds belonging to the contributors — private employees and employers in the case of the SSS, and the government workers and the government in the case of the GSIS. He said that the Body must be conscious of imposing rules on the use of the funds on the boards of GSIS and SSS because, to him, it was improper. Senator Angara accepted the point raised by Senator Drilon, saying that the provision does not instruct the GSIS and SSS to lend the funds to non-members but merely encourages a more relaxed enforcement of loans given to members.

Senator Drilon then read lines 33 to 46 of page 17 up to lines 2 to 6 of page 18 on the authorized powers given to the President pertaining to giving a directive to the *“Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) and its key-shelter agencies to: (1) fast-track the approval of all pending and new application for housing loans, permits and licenses by simplifying the requirements and procedure; (2) accommodate and prioritize critically impacted home buyers who may want to shift from private bank financing to Pag-IBIG home financing with simplified requirements; (3) extend the compliance to the balanced housing requirement to be coterminous with the period for the completion on the main project; and (4) waive and desist from imposing fines and penalties to avoid unnecessary pecuniary burdens and to avoid delay in the delivery of the housing units to home buyers.”* Asked to place on record what exactly was the relation of the mentioned provision to the country’s effort to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and from its adverse effects, Senator Angara replied that people have been speaking about a new normal, part of which was for agencies to act more expeditiously and to eliminate as much red tape as it can. He cited, for instance, a person who has a housing loan with the private bank and is experiencing difficulties in payments due to the pandemic that cost his job permanently and is now a work-from-home part-timer. He said that in his interpretation of the provision, it would lessen the burden of that person as a homebuyer if he could easily shift to Pag-IBIG and the DHSUD. Asked by Senator Drilon if he can propose an amendment

consistent with his query on the previous discussion that used the word “encouraged,” Senator Angara replied in the affirmative.

Senator Drilon also cited the authority given to the President pursuant to paragraph (vv) on lines 7 to 13 of page 18, to wit:

*(vv) Direct the BSP to allow private banks and financial institutions to: (1) reallocate any unutilized loanable funds to housing loans; and (2) grant subsidy to the home loan borrowers at the rate equivalent to the gross receipt tax imposed on banks and other financial institutions on their interest income. In turn, the banks and financial institutions shall likewise be exempted from the payment of gross receipts tax on the discounted interests paid by the home loan borrowers.*

He pointed out that under Article XII, Section 20 of the Constitution, “The Monetary Board shall provide policy direction in the areas of money, banking, and credit.” He said that the rationale behind this constitutional provision is that the country should have an independent monetary board, and he feared that the way paragraph (vv) was crafted, the proposed measure was already directing the BSP to do what the Constitution leaves to the Monetary Board as a prerogative; it was already an encroachment of the power of the Monetary Board to set policy directions in the areas of banking, credit, and others.

Asked by Senator Drilon if he would be willing to consider an amendment deleting paragraph (vv), Senator Angara proposed a less mandatory language such as “suggest” or “encourage” rather than totally eliminating the provision.

Senator Drilon reiterated that the proposed measure must not encroach on the power of the Monetary Board in providing policy direction in the areas of money, banking, and credit which, precisely, was what the provision seemed to suggest since it was “directing” the BSP to allow private banks and financial institutions to reallocate and utilize loanable funds to housing loans. Senator Angara replied that he would work with Senator Drilon to craft the possible amendment.

Relative to paragraph (xx) of Section 3 on the approval of permits, Senator Drilon cited the recently passed Anti-Red Tape Law which sets the period within which the transactions must be completed in

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government, quoting Section 8(b) of the said law, to wit: *"All applications and/or requests submitted shall be acted upon by the assigned officer or employee within the prescribed processing time stated in the Citizen's Charter which shall not be longer than three (3) working days in the case of simple transactions and seven (7) working days in the case of complex transactions from the date of the request and/or complete application or request was received."* He added that the law also provides for an automatic approval or extension of the license and others if not acted upon within the timeframe set in the law which makes the provisions in paragraph (xx) not only unnecessary but that it was also crafted in a way that applications can be disapproved when the direction is only to approve. He said that if the Sponsor wants to maintain the provision, he may propose to change the word "approve" to the phrase "act on an application," so that the first sentence of paragraph (xx) on page 18, lines 25 to 29, would read as: *"Direct all government agencies and LGUs to ACT ON AN APPLICATION within an inextendible period of five (5) working days, all pending and new applications for permit, license, certificate, clearance, authorization and resolutions in order to support business continuity and encourage resumption of all economic activities."* Senator Angara expressed willingness to accept the amendment at the appropriate time.

Senator Drilon stated that in the last few days, Senate President Sotto has called upon the Department of Health to abandon the plan of hiring 130,000 contact tracers which would cost more than P11 billion, or about 10% of the budget. He said that he also wrote the head of the IATF asking not to proceed with the program because it would be a waste of funds. He pointed out that by the time the DOH is able to hire 130,000 people, there might no longer be a need for them. Saying that the Mayor of Baguio City has done the same work at no expense, he indicated that at the appropriate time, he would propose that the contact tracers should come from the network of barangay health workers, parent leaders from the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), or members of the DSWD's accredited civil society organizations so that they would just be provided with an allowance. He said that the proposal of the Health Secretary to hire 136,000 contact tracers and pay them P30,000 a month for three months is insensitive to the deficit and the lack of funds that the government is

facing at present. Senator Angara said that he would consider the proposal favorably.

At this juncture, Senator Villar mentioned that there were companies offering a computerized program for contact tracers, like Google, and she suggested that the government consider those options to make the process easier. Senate President Sotto pointed out that there were, in fact, local government units using the said technology, citing the Municipality of Carmona in Cavite. He also said that contact tracing has been successfully done in Baguio City without spending a single centavo.

Senator Cayetano narrated that in other developed countries like Germany, they go back to manual contact tracing which simply requires an intelligent person who could ask the right questions. She agreed with Senator Drilon that the government could utilize the barangay officials and provide them a set of questions, because they know the people in their locality. She said that the contact tracers just need to diligently ask the right questions. She volunteered to furnish the Members a copy of studies from other countries that show the effectiveness of manual intervention.

Senator Drilon stated that at the appropriate time, he would propose a provision that would prevent waste of government resources by hiring 135,000 contact tracers.

As regards the issue of where to source the funds, Senator Drilon recalled that in the caucus, the DOF Secretary stated that the economy could afford P130 billion more, and it reminded him of the P50 billion franchise tax and other taxes which the POGOs supposedly owe the government. He then asked on the status of the effort to collect P50 billion from the POGOs. Senator Angara replied that he would get some updates on the POGO activities and collections from the DOF and provide the answer at a later time.

Senator Drilon stated that he would propose an amendment in the repealing clause to reflect that the law would take effect upon the expiration of the present Bayanihan Heal as One law, as agreed upon in the caucus. He noted that it is not a controversial amendment as it would just clarify when the law would take effect.

Regarding the amount to be collected from the POGO sector, Senator Drilon said that he would also propose an amendment which would earmark that



amount to fund the programs and activities under the proposed measure to address the COVID-19 situation.

Senator Villanueva informed the Body that in the hearing conducted by the Committee on Labor and Human Resources Development, the BIR admitted that some P50 billion worth of taxes are due from the legal POGOs operating in the country in the previous year but that the agency was having a hard time collecting those unpaid taxes. He added that in the previous year, DOLE also arrested 6,678 illegal foreign workers working in legal POGO operations, and worse, according to PAGCOR, there have also been 120 to 150 illegal POGOs operating in the past weeks.

Senator Drilon stated that part of his proposed amendment on earmarking the amount collected from the POGOs would be to prohibit their operations unless those taxes have been paid. He then thanked the Committee for adopting as a committee amendment his proposal to delete Section 6 of the existing law; thus, the committee report has correctly focused not on the punitive provisions but on the policy and measures needed by the people to recover from the pandemic. He also placed on record that PNP Chief Gamboa did not oppose the amendment.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR PANGILINAN**

At the outset, Senator Pangilinan stated that the Bayanihan Heal as One Act was passed on the last week of March, and that according to the data submitted by the DBM to the Committee, around P350 billion has already been spent. Asked on the breakdown of the P353 billion, Senator Angara explained that around P320 billion was sourced from the 2020 budget and around P31 billion was from the 2019 budget, and that the three biggest realignments were from DPWH, DICT and other executive agencies including CHED and DepEd.

Asked for the breakdown of how the P353 billion was spent, Senator Angara stated that the DSWD got the biggest allocation with almost P200 billion which the agency fully disbursed to the local government units which were tasked to distribute the cash assistance from the government; DOLE got around P7.5 billion for the *Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers* (TUPAD) and Covid-19 Adjustment Measures Program (CAMP), or assistance for the employees. He then enumerated the other agencies and the corresponding allocation,

to wit: P48 billion for the DOH; P88 billion for the DOF for the continuation of the DOLE program given to them; P8.5 billion for the DA; P614 million for the DILG; P481.5 million for the DND; P5 million for the DFA; P41 million for the DOJ; P78 million for the DTI; P54 million for the DOST; P21.6 million for the OPAPP; and P400 million for UP-PGH.

With all the money spent in the last several months, Senator Pangilinan asked where the country was now in terms of curbing the spread of the virus, if the curve has been flattered or if there are spikes in COVID cases. Senator Angara said that there have been less deaths per day and that according to the DOH, the doubling of cases has slowed down, both of which were an indicator that things have gotten better, although people have been complaining about the delayed data reporting. He added that around 300,000 people have been tested, and the number of cases was somewhere between 18,000 to 25,000.

Asked if the DOH has reached the target number of testing that was set in May 30, Senator Angara answered in the negative, noting that the target was one million tests by July which the DOH was far from achieving it.

At this juncture, Senator Cayetano clarified that the one million tests per month was based on IATF's computation of having a testing goal of 30,000 per day. Senator Angara stated that the government has not hit its target as it only averages about 11,000 tests daily.

In view of the P353 billion that had been spent for the national emergency and the planned allocation of an additional P130 billion to P140 billion for the same purpose, Senator Pangilinan asked whether there was a way to get a better sense of how the government would achieve its testing target as it had been criticized for failing to do so despite having implemented the longest lockdown in the region.

#### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

Upon motion of Senator Angara, the session was suspended.

*It was 4:13 p.m.*

#### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 4:13 p.m., the session was resumed.

Senator Pangilinan pointed out that the government's approach to curbing the spread of COVID-19 was too militaristic rather than public health-oriented. He then asked on the buffer stock of testing kits for government facilities. Senator Angara recalled Secretary Duque explaining to him that the DOH was lagging behind the Philippine Red Cross in terms of COVID testing capabilities because it had older equipment than the PRC. He said that Secretary Duque had expressed confidence that the DOH would be able to ramp up its testing if Congress provided the funds for such undertaking.

Asked on the government's buffer stock of testing kits, Senator Angara replied that there were 833,976 remaining, and he assured that the government has buffer stock of around two-to-three months' supply of testing kits.

Senator Pangilinan then asked on the number of tests completed per day and when the government would be able to reach its full testing amid reports of only a 15% capacity. He said that efforts to revive the economy would be more difficult to achieve unless the problem of biology — which is people getting ill, lacking confidence and being afraid to go to work — is addressed. He said that he needed feedback on such queries within the day, before the measure is approved on Second Reading. Senator Angara assured that he would provide Senator Pangilinan with data from the DOH, even as he conveyed the information that the daily testing varies from day to day with the highest figure around 10,500 to 11,000 on May 15, which occurred at the time that the hearings of the Committee of the Whole was held.

Asked on the average turnaround time for testing in the various government facilities in terms of submission of tests and the release of the results amid reports on data backlog, poor contact tracing and the inability to isolate high-risk individuals, Senator Angara recalled that even Finance Secretary Dominguez had informed him that DOF personnel were awaiting the results of tests done in their office four weeks ago. He added that both he and Senator Pimentel waited 10 days to get their test results.

Asked why private hospitals have a faster turnaround time than the government, Senator Angara explained that the DOH has to process more specimens compared to private facilities that handle only a certain number of specimens daily.

Senator Pangilinan said that he was getting the impression that the bureaucracy in the DOH was simply going about its usual business and not taking urgent and necessary action during an emergency situation

At this juncture, Senator Cayetano shared information from IATF Deputy Chairman Vince Dizon that even though the government has facilities that can test up to 35,000 individuals daily and even has 50 laboratories for this purpose, the laboratories not only lack needed supplies but also trained medical technicians and laboratory personnel because some of them have been infected and had to be quarantined. She recalled that even the RITM had to shut down and that the PGH had a number of health workers who were infected by the virus. She also pointed out that there was not enough extraction of specimens from the community because of the limited testing protocols, noting the DOH's bias for symptomatic cases which was why fewer individuals have been tested. She underscored the importance of building the testing capacity and increasing the efficiency of the laboratories as well.

For his part, Senator Pangilinan pointed out that there were also concerns regarding the bureaucratic process of approving applications for testing facilities. He informed the Body that as of April 18, more than 90 laboratories have expressed their intention to obtain certification but only 16 of the 56 applications sent to the DOH have been certified to augment and expand the testing capacity of RITM. He then asked whether there had been an improvement in the current 30% approval rate and what else could be done to fast-track the approval of applications of private testing facilities.

Senator Pangilinan also believed that contact tracing is a central component in curbing the spread of the virus since conducting mass testing would be a half-baked process without it. He shared the view of Senate President Sotto and Senator Drilon that the DOH ought to revisit its plan of hiring 126,000 contact tracers. He expressed concern over the fact that three months after the health emergency was declared, the DOH was trying to augment its contact tracing ability which requires training people. He recalled that Baguio City Mayor Magalong, whose city had been cited as a model in contact tracing, had attributed their success to the four Cs of collaboration, coordination, cooperation, and communication.

Asked by Senator Pangilinan whether there was a plan to roll out the Baguio contact tracing procedure nationwide, Senate President Sotto said that the local government of Baguio City used the local officials, government employees and the Philippine National Police as contact tracers in the city.

Senator Angara reported for the record that there are 2,646 contact tracing teams composed of 40,603 members.

Senator Pangilinan said that the request to hire more contact tracers was something that has to be revisited. He agreed to the observations of Senate President Sotto and Senator Drilon on the matter of hiring more contact tracers because Baguio City proved that the job could be done even with few people as long as there was political will.

Senator Pangilinan then reiterated his earlier query on the accreditation of the laboratories which, to him, is an essential component of mass testing, and why the government has been unable to realize its target of 35,000 tests per day.

On the reasons for the slow accreditation of laboratories, Senator Angara said that according to the DOH, the accreditation process is composed of five stages: self-assessment on the application; assessment of DOF and RITM; compliance; proficiency testing; and full scale implementation. He said that usually, it is in stage four, proficiency testing, where the laboratories fall short, meaning some of the personnel are not trained to interpret or to process the data.

Senator Pangilinan believed that the whole process of testing or validating and accrediting of testing laboratories has to be revisited, recalling the case of the city government of Marikina which was prevented from operating until an ocular inspection was finally undertaken. He said that it looked like there was a problem with the bureaucracy, and he stressed the need to give way to the emergency rather than the emergency adjusting to the bureaucracy. He expressed hope that there would be more testing centers to be accredited because the people needed to get a sense of how far the fight against the virus was going in terms of mass testing because many workers are afraid to report for work and many employers are asking about tests.

Senator Angara said that 38% of applicants have been accredited—a slight improvement from 30% which was the earlier figure. He said that as to the number of accredited laboratories, there are 49 at present, and there are 81 still applying or whose applications are pending.

Senator Pangilinan said that Vietnam has 115 testing centers, while South Korea has 500 testing centers; on the other hand, from April 15 to June, in the Philippines, only 38% have been accredited. He expressed hope that the IATF would get the testing and the accreditation of the testing facilities done immediately,

Senator Pangilinan noted that the National Task Force Against COVID-19 is a creation of the IATF by way of a resolution, and heading that National Task Force Against COVID-19 is the Secretary of National Defense who happens to chair the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC).

Asked on the relationship between the National Task Force Against COVID-19 and the IATF, Senator Angara said that the IATF is the policy-making board headed by Health Secretary Duque, while the National Task Force Against COVID-19 is the implementing arm whose chair is Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, while General Galvez is the chief implementor of the IATF.

On the issue of transparency, Senator Pangilinan recalled that during the Committee of the Whole hearing, Senators Drilon and Lacson raised some concerns about overpricing. Asked whether he would be open to accept amendments at the appropriate time that would allow for greater transparency, Senator Angara replied in the affirmative.

Senator Pangilinan said the while the Bayanihan law exempts from the provisions of Republic Act 9184, or the Government Procurement Reform Act and other laws, the procurement of PPEs, medical equipment, medical supplies, common medicines, testing, and other supplies, it does not necessarily mean they are also exempted from the publication of the documents or relevant materials pertinent to the procurement undertaken. He said that the Government Procurement Policy Board requires the purchasing entities to post for information purposes, the notice of award, contract, or purchase order in either the website, or any conspicuous place, the GPPB online portal for emergency procurement under the Bayanihan Act.

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He said that he would propose some provisions that will mandate the publication of such purchases even if they are exempted from the Procurement Law.

Senator Angara believed that it is a good amendment because what the law wanted to exempt them from are the time periods in between publication and the time periods involved in bidding. He said that it was not proper to keep the public blind regarding the prices paid by the government.

Senator Pangilinan said that the law, and the GPPB resolution in certain regulations, require that even in negotiated transactions that are exempted from the Procurement Law, the negotiations should lead to the best price possible; while it may be exempted from bidding, there has to be an earnest effort from the part of the procuring entity to negotiate for the best terms. He said that he would propose that the minutes of the meetings for negotiated contracts be published or made available. He also said that he will work with the Committee staff on the proposed amendment on the publication of negotiated contracts, as he stressed that all procurement entities should comply with the necessary requirement of publication even if they are exempted; thus, the approved budget for contract, the contract period, the name of winning supplier, distributor, amount of contract as awarded, notice of award, among others, should be made available. At the same time, he stressed that the publication requirements must be simplified because of the difficulty of navigating the GPPB website, in particular, the list of procuring entities with awarded contracts. He noted that the GPPB website simply lists down the details of the project, and there is no way to easily sort the items for procuring entity; it does not show the total amount covering all projects already reported; and it does not appear to be complete. He disclosed that the controversial Kingfisher transaction by the DOH raised during the Committee of the Whole hearings does not appear in this website even if it was posted in the DOH website and the PhilGEPS.

Senator Pangilinan finally expressed hope that his proposed amendments for transparency and publication, may be able to correct the errors and make all transactions more transparent and precise because of the huge amount involved.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR POE**

At the outset, Senator Poe noted that on page 11,

line 8, for the DOTr, it can be granted emergency credit lines so that it could grant loans and she asked if the agency could source these credit lines from either the Land Bank of the Philippines of the Development Bank of the Philippines similar to DOT's loans which are administered by both financial institutions.

Senator Angara agreed that the funding assistance would be coursed through the LBP, DBP and other financial institutions because according to the DOF, the DOTr and the other agencies do not have the capacity to grant loans.

On whether the DOTr could source the loans from the P30 billion allotment to the Land Bank and DBP or to the P25 billion of the agency, Senator Angara stated that the loan could be sourced separately from either of the two allotments.

Senator Poe noted that since the grants may include reduction in rates through the removal of the VAT and local taxes as may be applicable, the DOTr would have to remit the equivalent of what would be waived to the LGU or the BIR as the case maybe.

Senator Angara said there may be two ways of doing it: 1) waiving the payment and nothing to be remitted; and 2) giving a grant and remit the amount.

Senator Poe posited that the agency may give grants and exemptions from certain taxes to companies in trouble, but the equivalent would have to be given to the appropriate collecting agencies of the government.

As regards the provision on the DICT found on page 13, Senator Poe noted that the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) is directed to accelerate the deployment of critical information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and equipment. She underscored that aside from the monetary support, the bill puts pressure on government agencies to provide service as quickly as possible. As an example, she stated that during the pandemic, the children's education would most likely be hybrid — some studying at home, online or some physically present in school. She recalled that during the hearings, among the complaints was poor internet signals and the telcos, for their part, cited the lack of infrastructure and cell towers. She said that at the appropriate time, she would propose to add a

provision that would boost the IT infrastructure, like cell towers in order to enhance connectivity.

Adverting to the provisions on the DOT found on page 12, lines 29 to 32, Senator Poe noted that the LBP and DBP shall administer the loans for the DOT subject to the guidelines that the DOT shall prepare for the purpose. She stated that at the appropriate time, she would suggest an amendment that would take into consideration the letter of the DOF, which was discussed during the caucus, that there might be changes in the amount of funding available for the Bayanihan bill. As she cautioned the Body to be careful in determining where the funding would go, she suggested that there should not be a restrictive condition but a common sense provision that would determine the company's capacity to pay and a track record to be productive. She proposed that on page 11, lines 32 to 35, the wording could be amended to read as follows:

"For purposes of item (b) and (c) and herein xxx regulations and guidelines issued under the funding intervention, INCLUDING A PROPER CREDIT ASSESSMENT OF THE BORROWER BY THE LBP AND DBP, WHICH WILL ADMINISTER THE CREDIT FACILITIES OR LOAN GUARANTEES UNDER SECTION 4 OF THIS ACT: PROVIDED THAT, INCLUDED IN THE CREDIT ASSESSMENT ARE THE FOLLOWING:

1. A REASONABLE AND PROPER BUSINESS PLAN;

She explained that the plan should be in consonance with the purpose of the bill in helping the workers save their jobs.

2. REASONABLE DEBT-TO-EQUITY RATIO OF NO MORE THAN 4:2 FOR THE ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORTING PERIOD PRIOR TO ECQ;
3. BORROWER MUST NOT HAVE BEEN IN BANKRUPTCY PROCEEDINGS PRIOR TO ECQ OR APPLICATION FOR ANY CREDIT LINES, LOANS OR GUARANTEES; AND
4. MUST HAVE RECEIVED AN UNQUALIFIED OPINION FROM EXTERNAL AUDITORS IN THEIR LATEST FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE PRIOR TO ECQ."

Senator Poe stated that she was open to suggestions as the proposed amendment could be too

specific. However, she opined that instead of giving blanket authority and waiting for the IRR which could end up to be contrary to the spirit of the law, Congress should put some sort of guarantee that the loans would be given to the companies that have the capacity to pay, employ and actually deliver.

Senator Angara assured that at the proper time, the Committee would consider the amendments as proposed by Senator Poe.

Senator Poe expressed concern that since funding for the proposed measure would be sourced from the national budget of 2020, certain projects and programs of Department of Education (DepEd) could be affected. She believed that programs like the school feeding program which have already been funded in the 2020 GAA should still be continued.

Senator Angara gave his assurance that even if the DepEd pursues distance learning, it would still endeavor to continue its programs such as the school feeding program.

Senator Poe stated that whatever amount that Congress would grant, what is important is that there are provisions in the bill that have nothing to do with government having to shell out money to fund matters in the nature of IOUs like the vouchers being requested by airlines in the meantime that they cannot give a full cash refund. She also stressed that the infrastructure needed like the putting up of cell towers, would be realized if the government would expedite the grant of the required permits, and she welcomed the provision in the bill that states that permits, among others, would have to be processed within five days. She lamented, however, that despite the Anti-Red Tape Act (ARTA), she still receives complaints that permits issued by the LGUs still take awhile. She said that at the proper time, she would introduce amendments that would address the matter.

As regards the funding for the informal sector or the emergency subsidy to workers and work-for-cash program, Senator Poe noted that the committee report provided a budget of P30 billion. Senator Angara clarified that the suggested budget for contract tracers was P25 billion but was reduced to P15 billion because of the concerns aired by Senate President Sotto, together with Senators Dylon and Pangilinan, all of whom were not in favor of funding the item.

## SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Poe, the session was suspended.

*It was 5:08 p.m.*

## RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:26 p.m., the session was resumed.

Senator Poe asked whether all COVID-19 patients are covered by the PhilHealth Insurance Program, because as provided in the bill, "THE COST OF THE KIT FOR COVID-19 PATIENT SHALL BE COVERED UNDER THE NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM OF THE PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM." Senator Angara replied that under the Universal Health Care Law, all Filipinos are members of the PhilHealth; however, it does not necessarily mean that it would cover all the medical expenses of the patients. He said that although the government initially committed to pay for the expenses of the patients in the early days of the pandemic, a cut-off period was implemented because it might not be sustainable. He disclosed that PhilHealth was now trying to develop case rates in order to make it sustainable.

Senator Poe feared that the bill, as presently worded, might lead the people to assume that the government would shoulder all the costs incurred by the COVID-19 patient. Senator Angara said that the language of the bill should be clarified.

Senator Poe cited the many complaints arising out of Social Amelioration Program (SAP) of the DSWD because of the irregularities in the distribution of the cash subsidies to the beneficiaries, and she attributed these to the unclear parameters of the program.

Adverting to line 19 of page 4 of the bill which says, in part, "... PROVIDE AN EMERGENCY SUBSIDY TO AROUND 80 MILLION LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS...", Senator Poe noted that the provision was also found in the first "Bayanihan To Heal As One Law." She then asked if the government would be extending the emergency subsidy on top of what was already released. Senator Angara replied that it was just to complete the initial SAP provision since the distribution of the subsidy was supposed to be in two tranches, which was clearly stated in the law. He admitted that the

language was not clear and needed to be clarified as it was only adopted from the first Bayanihan Law.

Senator Poe cited another proviso which, according to her, led to more confusion, to wit: "*Provided, finally,* that the subsidy received from the current Conditional Cash Transfer Program and Rice Subsidy shall be taken into consideration." She pointed out that in the first Bayanihan Law, the beneficiaries of the Conditional Cash Transfer Program were also eligible for the additional Bayanihan SAP Program; however, based on the proviso, the terms set in the Conditional Cash Transfer Program and rice subsidy received would be considered in the Bayanihan 2.

Senator Angara clarified that those SAP beneficiaries will still get an amount equivalent to a minimum of P5,000 to a maximum of P8,000 minus the Conditional Cash Transfer Subsidy. He agreed that the proviso should be clarified so that expectations are managed and well-taken.

Again on the issue of transportation, Senator Poe pointed out that the problem hounding the transportation sector stemmed from the guidelines released by the DOTr which allowed only modern jeepneys to operate under the GCQ and, at the same time, banned the traditional jeepneys. She asked whether the DOTr can be directed to craft specific guidelines as to how traditional jeepneys could continue to operate because there was really lack of transportation. She said that according to the DOTr, 90 buses were deployed with 25 persons per bus to augment the services of MRT on EDSA and allotted four pick-up and drop-off points. She recalled that before the lockdown, 3,500 buses were plying EDSA at full capacity but the number was currently down to 90 buses with 25 passengers per bus with a projection to transport 20,000 passengers instead of 250,000 before ECQ. She suggested that part of the pending DOTr budget of P25 billion be aligned to get additional shuttles for hire in the transition process.

Senator Angara said that a provision allowing traditional jeepneys to operate can be introduced in the bill.

Senator Poe pointed out that limiting the number of buses and jeepneys in the highways would result in overcrowding of people waiting for their ride to get to their workplaces which was, in fact, observed by Senator Binay, in her Twitter post. She then asked how much was earmarked for wage subsidies.

Senator Angara replied that the bill as reported out provided P25 billion which would be reduced to P15 billion to meet the deficit goal which should not exceed the deficit-to-GDP ratio targeted by economic managers, and to accommodate the wishes of some senators who were not happy with appropriating a large amount for contact tracers.

Asked how those qualified for the wage subsidies would be identified, Senator Angara admitted that the matter was yet to be finalized because of the many sectors involved as well as who would decide when it comes to subsidies.

Senator Poe surmised that only a few would receive if the amount to be allocated is P15 billion. Thus, she asked how those eligible to receive would be determined and identified.

In reply, Senator Angara stated that those eligible for the wage subsidy would be identified, for instance, the critically impacted displaced workers which include probationary, seasonal, contractual, and casual employees, freelancers, the self-employed and repatriated OFWs, including OFWs whose deployment was suspended due to any government-imposed deployment ban. He said that one criterion would be that the amount of wage remuneration shall be equivalent to 100% of the minimum wage rate, provided that the workers have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. He assumed that it would be the DOLE that would be the main implementor of the provision on wage subsidy.

Asked which category would be top priority given the vast category of different wage earners, Senator Angara admitted that the government institution holding the program was unreliable, and that there was really no reliable data as to the profile or the magnitude of the informal workers, thus, the difficulty in allotting a definite amount as what happened to CAMP and the TUPAD, wherein some were still applying but the funds were already fully exhausted.

Senator Poe stated that given the limited resources available, the P15 billion should be distributed as quickly and efficiently as possible and then later ask the Department of Finance if the government is still capable of releasing more to be distributed by that time.

Senator Poe stated that from the Bayanihan Heal as One Act, she learned the importance of

personal protective and medical equipment and that there was really a need to procure them as quickly as possible. Thus, if indeed there was a need to quickly procure the equipment, she asked how those procuring the equipment be made accountable to get the best deal and quality at the fastest time.

In reply, Senator Angara stated that least two Members have signified their intention to amend that provision to exempt the purchase of vital goods from the operation of the Procurement Act or RA 9184: Senator Lacson would want that not only would the purchase be done in the most efficient time but also in the most economical manner; while Senator Pangilinan would propose to insert some amendments regarding transparency in the bidding processes.

Senator Poe emphasized that the equipment to be procured should be of high quality in order to protect the frontliners and the rest of the constituents, and she questioned why some items were not purchased in bulk, which could have entitled the government to big discounts. She warned that investing in low quality equipment could result in more problems and more expenses on the part of the government. She said that with the help of Senator Lacson and the others, the appropriate language could be introduced in order to guarantee transparency and responsibility.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR REVILLA**

At the outset, Senator Revilla suggested that whatever version of the Bayanihan would be passed, he wanted that priority be given to the five million households who were not able to receive the first tranche; the grant of special allowance to the health workers who was given only once; and assistance too for the entertainment, farmers, fisherfolks, transportation and tourism sectors.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS**

Senator Hontiveros admitted that after the all-Senators caucus, she got the impression that the country's economic managers were not that serious as regards the problem of unemployment brought about by the pandemic. She believed that the advocacy of Senate President Pro Tempore Recto on the fiscal side responses to the clear and present danger of economic crisis must be supported and that the response needs to be aggressive.

Senator Angara replied that many of the bills filed by the Members were aimed at providing a large fiscal stimulus. However, he believed that the country's economic managers would still have to be consulted as regards programs or projects that can actually be funded, the cash position of the country, and the country's ability to borrow. He said that in a perfect world a vigorous fiscal stimulus is desirable but there has to be some form of reality check.

Senator Hontiveros stated that even in an imperfect world, there would always be a reason for extraordinary situations to happen which would force the people to draw up a wish list to counter the problem. She said that in terms of the health costs to the people as well as the economic deprivations, she anticipated that the problem would escalate especially if the deep economic crisis materializes, and the economic managers must take bolder but calculated risks for the sake of the national household that has suffered and has faced a lot of challenges. Relative thereto, she stressed the importance of understanding the size and the nature of the pandemic. Likening the pandemic to a beast, she pointed out that if the language of warning was already in the magnitude of millions of jobs to be lost and if it was already comparable to the Great Depression in the US in the 1930s, the country's economic managers must fully understand the nature and the size of the pandemic, particularly in terms of its impact on the economic well-being of the people.

Senator Angara said that while he agrees with Senator Hontiveros' characterization of the pandemic as a beast or a monster, it was actually more like the story about an elephant being described differently by looking at its tail and by looking at its legs which was quite a difficult task as they try to reconcile different points of view. For instance, he related that the Committee has already provided various forms of stimulus in the bill within the limits given to it and the economic managers have committed that they would recommend additional stimulus package should there be additional funding available. He emphasized that what is important is for the government to be prepared in case of a second wave and be ready to give aid to the people.

Senator Hontiveros expressed appreciation that the economic managers would be open to a stimulus package in the future if there would be a second or succeeding wave which is more probable given the ill-preparedness of the government on the health

side. She believed that no matter how one views the circumstance just like how the elephant in a story is seen differently, they would all agree that it is indeed huge and heavy and needs a sense of urgency. Stressing that timing is of the essence, she reiterated the need for the Senate to push the economic managers to take bolder but calculated risks because many lives and jobs were lost and a number of enterprises were destroyed. As regards the actual numbers, she informed the Body that the Philippine Statistics Authority and the NEDA will have a conference on June 5, 2020, Friday, wherein they will release the labor force surveys. That being the case, she asked for the possibility to extend the session days on the Bayanihan 2 bill until the said date so that, for instance, if the rate of unemployment jumped over 10% or 30% from the present rate of 4%, then they could follow the recommendations of Senator Recto, an economist, and Senator Villanueva, the chairperson of the Committee of Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development. She stated that the actual numbers in the labor force surveys would allow them to determine the actual situation of the economy and squelch the imminent hunger and job losses.

Senator Angara feared that Senator Hontiveros' proposal may not be possible as the calendar for the First Regular Session of the Eighteenth Congress was only until June 4, 2020, Thursday.

Agreeing with Senator Angara, Senator Zubiri pointed out that since the adjournment in the legislative calendar is June 5, 2020, they should already be done by June 4. In fact, he said that there was a query from one of the Members of the Chamber if they could just pass the measure the next session day given their schedule. However, he feared that they were already pressed for time because Malacañang was already waiting for the passage of the Senate version and that if the measure will be certified, they would still have to convince their counterparts in the House of Representatives to adopt the said version.

As regards the amendments, Senator Angara reminded the Body to conform to the imposed ceiling for fiscal sustainability. He added that his Committee could start drafting the amendments and could be finalized on the same day as well to meet the timeline set forth by Senator Zubiri.

Senator Hontiveros regretted that they could not wait for the important numbers from the PSA and the NEDA as those in the labor force are the ones



whom they want to help and protect the most from the present and the future crisis in the economy.

Recalling that there was a Budget Reform bill which was included as one of the priority measures of the administration, Senator Hontiveros asked for the possibility of including in the said bill an anti-impoundment proposal which would make it illegal for the Executive not to cause the disbursement of funds specified in the measure and in certain line items in the GAA 2020. She believed that such an anti-impoundment provision would return the power of the purse to the Congress even during emergencies while still providing the Executive with the flexibility to shape the response according to the evolution of the crisis. For instance, she said that the flexibility provision could allow the Executive to request congressional concurrence for the impoundment of specific expenditures in GAA 2020 and in the measure.

As regards Senator Hontiveros' earlier request, Senator Angara placed on record that even if they could not wait until the PSA releases the results of the labor force surveys, there are interventions in the law which are meant to assist the workers who may be out of work. On her query regarding the possibility of placing an anti-impoundment provision, he feared that it would be very difficult to place that kind of language in the measure as impoundment refers to the power of the Executive to not release or to impound appropriations made by Congress. He explained that the objective of both the Bayanihan Law and Bayanihan 2 bill was to give the Executive branch greater flexibility to be able to respond adequately to the challenges posed by COVID-19 given the unknown nature of the pandemic.

Senator Hontiveros stated that she would still make the effort to craft and propose such an amendment at the appropriate time, as she appreciated that the bill was philosophically different from the Bayanihan 1 which is an Emergency Powers Act, while that the Bayanihan 2 seeks to bring the country's health system and economy on the road towards recovery. Likening the country to a patient, she said that from ICU, the country was now being placed in a regular room but still needed support to fully recover and be healthy again.

Moving on, Senator Hontiveros believed that the fiscal response should aspire to make up for and stimulate lost investments and consumption spending. She then asked if job preservation and job creation

focus on the need to bring aggregate demand back up. Senator Angara replied in the affirmative.

Senator Hontiveros noted that although the country's economic managers have advised to only go up to a certain level, the original bills submitted by some Members of the Body would have asked them to go further. For instance, she said that as suggested by the secretary of Finance in one forum, the Land Bank and the Development Bank of the Philippines could be authorized to borrow with sovereign guarantees. She believed that the Philippines would not be the first country to do so because other countries are also in dire situation health-wise and economy-wise. She said that once lives are spared and the situation is normalized further as jobs and enterprises—micro/small, medium and large scale ones that may need assistance—have been protected after taking certain bolder but calculated risks and the capacity of the public health system has been upgraded, then they could, within a certain time, decide to go back to a process signaling to the international community that the country is coming out of the crisis to implement the normal or the regular fiscal disciplinary measures. She urged the Body to first save and preserve jobs and to create new ones along the lines of the new drivers of growth she earlier mentioned. Reiterating that time is of the essence, she feared that those who could be saved might not be saved if they act a stimulus package later on. She explained that the LBP and DBP borrowings with sovereign guarantees would allow for a stimulus package that is not limited by the 2020 revenues. Borrowing with sovereign guarantees, she believed, would free up a package and would not force them to labor under claims that a ceiling in deficit spending has been reached.

As regards the scenario-based legislation for economic recovery as she mentioned twice during the Committee of the Whole and during the joint hearing of the Committee of Finance and the Committee of Economic Affairs, Senator Hontiveros emphasized the need for a Plan B when the optimistic scenario of the country's economic managers would not materialize. She said that Plan B should include new drivers of growth and recovery. For instance, she said that agriculture, development of secondary cities, urban and rural areas, intersections along the train lines, and internet transformation could spur the recovery all over the country.

As regards her proposal to the Committee on Finance and the Committee of Economic Affairs to

*ms not*

hold a technical working group to study the said Plan B if the recovery scenario of the country's economic managers would not materialize, Senator Angara recalled making a commitment to Senator Hontiveros during the last Joint Committee hearing that he would be open to holding TWG. He hoped that the Committee on Finance could conduct more committee hearings, and that the Committee on Economic Affairs could assess the issues tackled therein in view of the limited time to consult the affected sectors. Still, he assured that responses to the economic managers' offer would be reevaluated so that when more revenues are realized, there is room for another stimulus package.

Relative to the stimulus package, Senator Hontiveros believed that there might be more than what was being presented in terms of cash and available funds, especially since some economists have claimed that the government's deficit spending was not so high since most of them were prompted by loss of revenues. Thus, she hoped for more elbowroom for spending and higher stimulus package funds.

At this point, Senator Hontiveros placed on record her concerns regarding the stimulus package bill which, she hoped, the Sponsor could comment on, to wit: (1) the design and prudential safeguards of DBP, Land Bank, Small Business Corporation (SB Corporation), and PhilGuarantee's support for small firms; (2) the possibility of delinking income support or wage subsidy to workers vis-à-vis support from firms so that they could pay their utility bills, rents, and leases in case they would go into partial closure and to allow negotiation for fresh loans with their creditors; and (3) the adequacy of protection to small firms and proprietors against creditors who might become impatient and could cause the premature permanent loss of jobs. Lastly, she hoped that the *Balik Probinsya* program which is similar to her broader proposed program, *Sulong Probinsya*, would be included as a major element of the stimulus package, in the event that the economic carrying capacity and job creation potential in the cities would be reduced from short to medium term.

To Senator Hontiveros' hope that her previously mentioned topics could be included as part of the stimulus package, Senator Angara said that while he appreciates putting a very comprehensive list on record, he had to stick to what was currently listed in the bill. Still, he assured that the Committee on Finance would convene to discuss the matter with the relevant sectors in the coming days.

*At this juncture, Senate President Sotto relinquished the chair to Senator Tolentino.*

In closing, Senator Hontiveros shared a healthcum-economic observation that in COVID-19, early detection and early response would reduce the need for intubation and possibility of death similar to averting financial distress on firms, employees and workers; thus, early detection and early response must be the first line of defense in the stimulus package bill. But she conceded that without Malacañang's support to an economic stimulus act, time lost would cost lives and jobs, and jobs would cost lives.

#### MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR MARCOS

Senator Marcos said that she would place on record her comments at the time of voting, and pledged the constant review and consultation by the Committee on Economic Affairs with the economy's stakeholders. She agreed that there was yet no stimulus program for the country.

#### INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO

Senator Cayetano adverted to page 4(d) as regards the provision of an emergency subsidy to 18 million low-income households under ECQ. Asked whether the subsidy was just a carryover from Bayanihan I or was a new amount intended for low-income households under ECQ, Senator Angara replied that the emergency subsidy is a carryover.

Senator Cayetano thus noted that the intention was not necessarily that whenever there is a declaration of an ECQ, this subsidy would kick in. Senator Angara said that he would welcome any suggestion to ensure that the language used in the bill is clear.

Senator Cayetano further noted that the recurring concern regarding the disbursement of the subsidy was that the recipients that were identified by DSWD were different from those considered by their respective barangays and LGUs as low-income recipients, and in view of the economic team's request to make the amount more general so that they could have flexibility in delivering it, she said she was inclined towards giving a sense of flexibility to the implementors of the bill. Senator Angara said that the Committee on Finance had already instructed the budget office to work with DSWD in preparing the amount of disbursement, and that he would welcome

suggestions from Senator Cayetano who has been monitoring the implementation of the Bayanihan I every week.

On contact tracing, Senator Cayetano pointed out that Germany and South Korea were particularly highlighted by WHO for their success in manual contact tracing. Thus, she enjoined everyone in the Philippines, Filipinos and foreigners alike, to keep a record of the places they go to and step out from so that there is information available in case the contract tracer calls.

Moving on, Senator Cayetano asked how much flexibility a Cabinet secretary has in realigning the budget given the change in circumstances for many agencies. She stated that Secretary Briones had laid down different strategies in the DepEd depending on the students' circumstances, their locality, and internet availability. She also cited a teacher who diligently went to the home of her students in far-flung areas so she could teach them one-on-one. She then asked how major adjustments could be done in consonance with Section 25(5), Article VI of the Constitution which provides that: "No law shall be passed authorizing any transfer of appropriations: however, the President, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and the heads of Constitutional Commissions may, by law, be authorized to augment any item x x x."

In reply, Senator Drilon, to whom the Sponsor yielded the floor, explained that as provided in the Constitution, the power to realign is lodged in the President and in the heads of the departments, the Senate President, the House Speaker, the Chief Justice, and the heads of Constitutional bodies. He recalled that when he was in the Executive branch, as a matter of practice, the President would not realign unless recommended by the secretary concerned who is supposed to know exactly the situation in the agency that he/she leads.

Senator Angara added that there are limits from jurisprudence, one of which was the *Araullo* case decided in 2014, as to when the Executive branch could declare savings which, in a sense, has made the transfer of funds stricter because of the Disbursement Acceleration Program (DAP) situation which set very specific requirements that must be obtained before declaring savings. He said that such types of constraints are relaxed under the proposed measure

to exact responsiveness and flexibility from the Executive branch.

Senator Cayetano recalled that the constitutional provision regarding the transfer of appropriations was already discussed in Bayanihan 1, and that the consensus then was to give the President flexibility. In crafting Bayanihan 2, she pondered if the language used in Bayanihan 1, which authorizes the President to do certain acts, would allow the agencies to realign certain things, upon recommendation to the President, to meet the demands of COVID-19.

Senator Drilon stated that the flexibility on the power to realign was crafted with the end in view of providing as much flexibility to the President within the constitutional bounds and the decision of the Supreme Court. He said that the Executive branch has utilized the said provision to enable them to realign the programs and projects in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that while the said provision in Bayanihan 1 could be revised or amended, they are limited by the decision of the Supreme Court on the *Araullo* case which involved an interpretation of the Constitution that could not be revised since the jurisdiction to interpret the Constitution belongs to the Supreme Court.

Asked by Senator Cayetano if there would be difficulty on the part of DepEd and CHED to realign some of their budget to procure more computers and laptops, Senator Drilon stated that the Education Secretary could not do such without the approval of the President, being the one given the exclusive power to realign the agency's budget.

Asked if the departments could realign funds as long as they get the approval of the President, Senator Drilon replied that the departments can recommend to the President who would have the power to approve or disapprove it. He emphasized that realignment cannot be done without the approval of the President.

#### INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR GORDON

Asked by Senator Gordon on the target or goal in testing, Senator Angara replied that there were numerous goals, including the ability to test 30,000 people in one day, as well as testing one million individuals by July.

Senator Drilon recalled that during the Committee of the Whole hearings, Secretary Duque said that

11,500 people were being tested per day, and that the goal was 30,000 tests per day by the end of May; on the other hand, Secretary Dizon said that the ultimate goal was 50,000 tests per day to achieve the testing of two percent of the population, with 10 percent coming from the NCR.

Senator Gordon pointed out that the testing goal prescribed by the World Health Organization is 13 percent of the population, the reason they in the Red Cross were awestruck as they were aiming for two percent, so they had to change their plans and add more machines.

*At this juncture, Senator Tolentino relinquished the Chair to Senate President Sotto.*

Senator Gordon stated that Metro Manila is the epicenter of the pandemic in the country and the hub for people all over the country. To achieve the WHO testing goal, he said that around 1.7 million of the 12.8 million population of Metro Manila need to be tested, and for the whole country, around 14.3 million people should be tested; and to achieve the 13 percent goal for Metro Manila, it would require testing 30,000 people per day for 56 days. He disclosed that the Red Cross would have 22 machines in Metro Manila by the end of the following week and that there would be four machines for Region III in Subic, Zambales and Clark, Pampanga, as well as for Batangas and Laguna, and that at present, the PRC was busy testing OFWs and seafarers. To achieve the testing goal, he said that the local governments would have to cooperate and bring the people to all the testing centers. He hoped that the DILG Secretary would be able to give them the order so that they would be able to achieve the testing goal as prescribed by the WHO.

Since the Red Cross would have about 46 machines, Senator Gordon said that 14.3 million people from all over the country could be tested in 304 days, but the process could be accelerated with the support of other testing centers. He lamented that so far only 23,000 persons from Quezon City, Mandaluyong, Caloocan, Makati, San Juan, Pateros, Las Pinas and Paranaque have been tested. He hoped that the DILG Secretary would signal all the local government units to start testing. He admitted that it would be a difficult task because there will be another 40,000 OFWs coming in next week, which would total to around 500,000 in the next couple of months.

Senator Angara commended Senator Gordon for the efforts made by the Red Cross and expressed willingness to help in communicating the message to the DILG.

At this juncture, Senator Recto said that with the prescribed 13 percent testing, 14 million people would have to be tested in the whole country. Asked on the cost per test, Senator Gordon said that it can be done at P3,500 per test, and because of the economies of scale, the cost could be brought down a bit more if all the machines are already in place. Senator Recto pointed out that the allocated budget for testing is only P10 billion, but testing 14 million people at P3,500 each would be equivalent to about P49 billion. Senator Gordon said that some people would pay for themselves, or some business communities would fund them. He also cited the standby fund of P30 billion. He said that the capacities of the machines that are already in place, must be measured to determine if more would be needed. On the part of the Red Cross, he said that they intend to have 46 machines which could conduct 46,000 tests per day and achieve the goal in 304 days. He mentioned that rapid testing could be done since it is cheaper; however, positive cases need to be retested so the cost might increase. He said that those decisions would have to be made by the planners in the government, particularly DOH and the DILG.

Senator Recto reiterated that the budget for testing indicated in the bill was only P10 billion down from the original committee recommendation of P30 billion, so it was quite far from the general cost to test 13 percent of the population which would amount to about P50 billion; thus, the need to look into the matter. Senator Gordon surmised that it could be for the procurement of PCR testing and extraction kits. He disclosed that he had spoken with Sansure and he was told that they would only buy what they need. He said that they would not be overcharged in buying the testing kits, noting that the price ranges from \$15 to \$16, and \$24 are already high. He reiterated the need to look tightly into the matter, otherwise some people would gain in the process.

Regarding the livelihood assistance provided to the people, especially to the displaced OFWs, Senator Gordon said that there is a crisis and an opportunity at hand. He said that a lot of OFWs, like the domestic workers in Hong Kong, speak very good English and the government could put them in BPOs where they would be trained. He warned that there would be about one million workers who would lose their jobs

between 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 crisis, with the number of people without jobs at present at 2.6 million, and the estimated number of employees to be jobless estimated to be four to five million. Thus, he said that the government must do something immediately to help those who would lose their jobs.

Regarding the price of the swabbing system, Senator Lacson asked if \$32 per piece would be considered overpriced. Senator Gordon answered in the affirmative.

Senator Gordon mentioned that an article came out accusing the Red Cross of trying to hoard testing machines. He denied that the Red Cross has dealings with the alleged supplier, pointing out that there was, in fact, a cabal that was investigated by the Senate in the past as they had been involved in various issues including Dengvaxia, barangay health centers, and unutilized 400 dental trucks. He clarified that the Red Cross only has dealings with Sansure, going directly to the factory, to a Chinese Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross with the people from Sansure. Furthermore, he said that the Red Cross never bought any major machines, such as extraction machines and PCR, from any local supplier. He disclosed that each test kit is worth \$15 while consumables are at about two to three dollars.

Moving on, Senator Gordon asked how the government can provide livelihood assistance to returning OFWs in terms of generating jobs and investments. He believed that the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Local Government should encourage local government units to start generating livelihood trainings in coordination with TESDA. He said that he was preparing an omnibus bill recommending certain livelihood opportunities including the establishment of bicycle factories. He hoped that the government would be influenced to move a bit faster considering the severe global challenge in terms of investments.

Senator Angara commended Senator Gordon for having the foresight to prepare for such an eventuality in the next two years. He explained that the proposed measure gives the President the power to ensure that repatriated and returning OFWs have access to livelihood assistance, skills and training programs, loan assistance, and employment opportunities and to ensure their reintegration, as well as the power to reprogram or repurpose any funds or programs in the 2020 General Appropriations Act. Moreover, he said that the bill provides for a number of programs where

OFWs could apply for aid, like the emergency subsidy or the cash-for-work program to workers. He added that OFWs can also apply for loans since the proposed measure would infuse capital into government financial institutions like the LandBank, Development Bank of the Philippines and PhilGuarantee as they are intended to act as wholesale banks which lend even to rural banks. As such, he said that people who want to put up small businesses could apply for loans. He said that the measure also provides support to the Department of Agriculture for those who want to engage in agriculture in the province.

For his part, Senator Villanueva associated himself with the statements made by Senator Gordon on the need to help the OFWs, 40,000 of whom are returning to the country and need help. He welcomed the increase in the COVID Assistance Program for OFWs (CAMP) to P7 billion from the original P4 billion that was requested by the Department of Labor and Employment. He also supported Senator Gordon's view on the importance of TESDA amid the current economic crisis. He informed the Body that TESDA, which has 125 training institutes around the country, specializes in the upscaling and rescaling of workers to transition to new jobs. However, he said that more than P2 billion of the TESDA budget for scholarships had been realigned. He asked how the government could help OFWs find new jobs amid the new development.

Senator Gordon noted that Section 3 provides a compensation of P100,000 to those who are severely ill and P1 million to the families of those who have died from COVID-19. He asked whether the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) for the provision had been crafted as well as how many had received such compensation. Senator Angara explained that no one has availed of the benefit since the IRR has not been issued.

Senator Gordon decried what he considered to be a serious neglect on the part of the government. He urged the Senate to call the attention of the agency responsible for providing such compensation since 32 frontliners have already died from the disease. He said that the PRC was taking care of its 18 frontliners who had been affected by COVID-19, but he believed that support must be extended to others who had fallen ill from the disease.

Expressing his own disappointment over the response of the DOH regarding the issue, Senator Angara noted that the Senate had labored and even

burned the midnight oil to pass Bayanihan I only to learn that the DOH has yet to craft the IRR. He said that Senator Gordon had a hand in introducing the said provision when he intervened to provide for the health workers. He recalled that even Senator Lacson had pointed out that many health workers had either died or had been severely afflicted by the virus. He pointed out that he would do what he can to nudge the DOH in the right direction.

Asked by Senator Lacson on the number of front-line healthworkers that have died from COVID-19, Senator Angara replied that there had been 32 deaths; thus, the government owes the families a total of P32 million as stipulated in the law. Senator Lacson noted that Senator Gordon had even inserted a provision that the absence of the IRR should not be an excuse for not complying with the law.

Senator Angara believed that the neglect that resulted in the delay to release the benefits is tantamount to a criminal act. He believed that praising health workers as heroes is mere lip service if they are not given anything material.

Relative thereto, Senator Gordon informed the Body that about 2,602 health workers have been afflicted by COVID-19 but are not severely ill, while 952 of 1,172 active cases are mild, 218 are asymptomatic and two are severely ill. He agreed that the IRR was not necessary for purposes of compensating the afflicted frontliners, particularly since those who died did so while in the line of duty. He noted that the implementing rules and regulations have always been an excuse to delay the wheels of justice and the wheels of health in the country.

For his part, Senator Pangilinan said that such neglect was not only unacceptable and unforgiveable but was also indicative of the lack of compassion of whoever in the DOH was responsible for addressing the issue on the IRR. He said that the frontline health workers had died and their families had suffered and yet such failure and inaction on the part of the DOH caused them to suffer even more. He urged the Senate leadership to intervene and make certain that the matter was addressed immediately.

Responding to Senator Angara's suggestion that the Senate write a letter signed by all the Members underscoring the urgency of the situation, Senate President Sotto said that he will take the necessary action as soon as possible.

On another matter, Senator Gordon proposed a rejuvenation of the domestic tourism industry. He said that the Red Cross will put up a PCR unit in areas like Boracay, Bohol, and Palawan to facilitate the testing and to revive tourism and economic activities in tourist destinations. He also requested the assistance of the other senators in ensuring that the doctors and frontliners in COVID hospitals are tested every 15 days lest they carry the disease and pass it on to high-risk individuals. Senator Angara expressed willingness to extend any assistance needed for the purpose. He noted that Boracay and Bohol receive international flights and, as such, are at risk for infection once they are opened to international tourism. Senator Gordon said that the PRC would immediately put up machines in the aforesaid areas to assure the tourists that they are not only safe from physical harm but even from the challenges of the time. He added that the PRC was also planning to extend such project to Siargao and Batangas.

As regards the plight of returning OFWs, Senator Gordon expressed concern over the slow disbursement of assistance to them, noting that only 128,000 of the 250,000 individuals targetted for assistance had received financial aid necessary for starting a business and getting livelihood training. He believed that the government ought to offer livelihood trainings to returning OFWS instead of just handing them doleouts.

In this regard, Senator Gordon disclosed that he has refiled the RIICH bill and has sought the help of Finance Secretary Dominguez about the lessening of the incentives. He believed that the RIICH bill, if enacted into law, would be of much help to start industrial parks outside of Subic and Clark in order to decongest Metro Manila. He said that it would not cost much to establish an industrial estate in the area and that all it takes is for government to establish a good corporation so that business would start very quickly.

Agreeing with Senator Gordon, Senator Angara said that in China, the industrial zones were the engines of growth in the last two decades, while in Indonesia, no less than President Widodo was the one courting the US corporations to relocate their businesses in one of the islands there.

Senator Gordon said that he would love to go with a Senate delegation to sell the country especially since each senator belongs to a region. He then reiterated his request for Senator Angara to check

on the slow disbursement of the assistance guaranteed to the OFWs under Bayanihan 1.

### SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, the session was suspended.

*It was 7:16 p.m.*

### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 8:04 p.m., the session was resumed.

### INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR RECTO

Adverting to the proposals that were submitted during the caucus, Senator Recto noted that from eight items in the committee report, Senator Angara recommended to collapse them into four, and that the Members also agreed to limit the amount that could be realigned in the 2020 budget to P140 billion. He said that in the recommendation, the biggest item (Support Programs for Impacted Sectors) amounted to P65 billion, while items (d), (e), (g), and (h) were lumped together. He stated that at the appropriate time, he would propose that out of the P65 billion, P20 billion would be for assistance to the agricultural sector so that the farmers and fisherfolk could increase their productivity.

With regard to the DOTr, Senator Recto observed that the committee report allotted P25 billion to “finance the programs of the DOTr to assist the critically impacted business in the transportation industry.” He then inquired how the department intends to help the business in that particular sector. In reply, Senator Angara cited the operative provision found on page 11, starting on line 4 which directs the DOTr to extend a menu of assistance including the grant of the following: emergency credit lines for purposes of funding operations; low interest loans or long-term credit facility to allow the restructuring of existing debts and assist in rehabilitation; credit guarantee schemes to guarantee bank loans and credit lines; and provide grants for applicable regulatory fees. He informed the Body that the Executive branch wanted to course the assistance through the government financial institutions (GFIs), the reason why the Committee lumped them together because most of them would be for support of impacted sectors.

Senator Recto posited that there would be changes on the provision since, as Secretary Dominguez has

pointed out, the DOTr should not have anything to do with loans.

Agreeing with Senator Recto, Senator Angara stated that the DOTr would only identify the actors or stakeholders of the industry. He said that during the period of amendments, much of the provision would be preserved, except for the provision that the loans would be processed by the GFIs since most of the agencies lack the capacity to do so.

Senator Recto stated that it would be wise to unbundle the grouping presented during the caucus, similar to what was done with the agricultural sector when P20 billion was carved out of the P65 billion that was allotted for the impacted sectors. Thus, he proposed that P20 billion be allotted for transportation and P10 billion for tourism, and how said amounts should be utilized should be up to Congress to decide, for instance, whether to provide grants to the airline industry or provide assistance to the jeepney drivers.

Senator Angara believed that all of the concerns mentioned by Senator Recto are all possibilities. He said that in the measure, the Executive branch is given the maximum discretion and flexibility to react.

Referring to paragraph (d) on page 21, Senator Recto stated that the provision talks about displaced OFWs and displaced employees in the formal and informal sectors. He recalled Senator Gordon and the DOLE mentioning that 2.5 million jobs have been permanently lost during the lockdown and that 500,000 OFWs are expected to lose their jobs within the year and another 500,000 the following year. He said that the DOLE also reported that out of the 1,200 employment agencies in the country, roughly a handful would survive. He supposed that if each of the identified three million workers were to receive P10,000 employment assistance relief, the necessary funding would be P30 billion; at P8,000 each, it would be a total of P24 billion. He expressed hope that at the proper time, the Committee would incorporate the proposal as a committee amendment.

Asked by Senator Angara if the amendment on the assistance to the agriculture, transportation, tourism, and labor sectors would change the P140 billion funding, Senator Recto assured the Sponsor that it would remain the same.

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Senator Recto also noted that the P50 billion capital infusion to LandBank, DBP and PhilGuarantee was the second biggest item in the bill, as suggested by the Executive branch. He recalled that during the Committee of the Whole, the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (BSP) informed the Members that the total monetary policy response — the increase in liquidity — was at P1.1 trillion, P300 billion of which was used in advance or used as repurchase agreement, also known as printing money, which was given to the Treasury, and the remaining P800 billion to the banks. He explained that normally, the government would infuse capital to a government bank so that it can lend it out to sectors which the private banks avoid lending to, as he recalled that during the same hearing, Senator Angara pointed out that private banks would only lend to big players. He said that currently, the government has P10 trillion in loans, only P1 trillion is for the MSMEs, the balance for the bigger players and consumers.

Moving on, Senator Recto proposed that a limit should be set on paragraph (b)ii, as practically every industry is affected by the pandemic. He suggested limiting it to a specific industry like MSMEs.

Senator Angara said that the Committee kept the language as general as possible to give maximum flexibility to the lending institutions.

Senator Recto proposed to reduce the allocation from P50 billion to P30 billion, with P15 billion going to LandBank, P10 billion to DBP, and P5 billion to PhilGuarantee. He explained that the reason for the proposal was that there was already P800 billion additional liquidity to private banks, and to the Land Bank and DBP. He said that the difference could be used for the cash-for-work for contact tracing and for TUPAD. He said that while Senate President Sotto, Senators Drilon and Lacson believe that it would be better to use technology instead of hiring contact tracers, there is a need to have a cash-for-work program not only for contract tracers since many people have lost their jobs. He said that the government could also do some interventions in providing jobs for the people who are willing to work.

Senator Angara assured the Body that the Committee would be open to suggestions at the proper time.

Adverting to the statement of Senator Gordon on testing, Senator Recto noted that 13% of the population

needed to be tested for COVID-19. He stated that with a machine in place, the variable cost for each test would cost P3,500, or almost P50 billion. He noted that under paragraph (c) of the original committee report, P10 billion was needed for health testing and other diseases. However, he said that it must be P30 billion because of the large number of sick people who do not want to go to the hospitals for fear of being infected by COVID-19. He observed that the DOH has many unsuccessful programs because their focus is on COVID-19. Incidentally, he said that many hospitals have also closed down because of COVID-19.

Senator Recto believed that the P10-billion budget proposal of Senator Gordon would not be enough for testing but if the capital infusion with the banks would be reduced, more funds could be added for testing. He hoped that the DOH could still have the necessary funds to perform their mandates. He said that even with only P140 billion as initial funds, it would be more of a relief for the government than a stimulus.

With the proposed measure, Senator Recto said that the people would know, especially the three million workers who would lose their jobs because of COVID-19, that the government would give them assistance even for one time only; that there is also the Cash-for-Work Program; that the allocation for testing has been increased because more people have to be tested; that there is the need to feed the people, thus the government was making the necessary investments in agriculture, including the logistics line in the Bayanihan measure because of the global food supply chain problem; and that there would also be assistance for the transportation and tourism sectors, the most critically impacted sectors.

Finally, Senator Recto asked where the P140 billion would be sourced, given that 90% of the national budget had already been allotted, leaving only P400 billion from the P4.3 trillion budget. He said that it is important that the allocation of the proposed measure should not be taken from the productive portions of the national budget and instead source the fund from the travel expenses or utility expenses of the government, considering the current four-day workweek or the work-from-home schemes which would lessen their expenses. He also suggested saving funds by decreasing the government's purchases of supplies and materials. Senator Angara replied that he was still waiting for the data on such concern from the Department of Finance.



Senator Recto noted that in Bayanihan 1, the government realigned P352 billion, of which P100 billion was realigned as the standby fund, and of the P200 billion Unprogrammed Fund for 2020, P100-billion was realigned for Social Amelioration Program (SAP) which has not been fully released; thus, only P252 billion was released. He suggested using the P100 billion Unprogrammed Fund for the proposed measure and sourcing the P40 billion from the budget for the non-essentials purchases of the government. Senator Angara agreed with Senator Recto's suggestion of realigning the funding of the non-essentials purchases than sourcing them from the productive portions.

Senator Recto disclosed that the P150 billion taken away from the DPWH could have created 600,000 jobs. He said that if economic managers would say that they would source the P100 billion of the P140 billion needed fund from the Unprogrammed Fund, there would then be no need to put them in the bill, unless they want it provided in the bill. He then thanked Senator Angara for his able leadership in pushing for Bayanihan 2. Senator Angara said that he would furnish Senator Recto with the information he requested as soon as they are available.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO**

Senator Cayetano stated that earlier, Senator Recto mentioned the big budget needed to test 10% of the population; on the other hand, according to Deputy Chief Vince Dizon of IATF, it is 10% of the COVID-19 dense population which is the NCR. She then asked what really the 10% should refer to – whether it is 10% of the 12 million population of the NCR or 10% of the entire 109 million population of the country. She said that the goal was to test 30,000 people a day nationwide which would go up to 50,000 a day when COVID-19 dense areas are covered. This, she said, is the differentiation she would like to make based on the statements of the IATF.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR RECTO**

At this juncture, Senator Recto suggested the following allocations of the P140 billion budget: RT-PCR – P20 billion; Testing – P10 billion or P20 billion; Capital Infusion – P30 billion; Unemployment Assistance – P20 billion or P28 billion for three million unemployed workers; Agriculture Support – P20 billion; transportation industry – 20 billion; and tourism industry – P 10 billion.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON**

Senator Drilon confirmed the statement of Senator Cayetano quoting Mr. Vince Dizon, that the target of the testing was 2% of the entire population of the country and 10% of the NCR population. He said that assuming Mr. Vince Dizon and the IATF would insist on such figures, it would be possible that its appropriation could be much less than P10 billion. He suggested asking the IATF to confirm the figures because should the IATF would say they would only test 2% of the entire population, they could start amount at P3,500 per test and whatever leeway is available, they could use it in some areas where they could specify the support for a particular area rather than appropriate at 10% which would give so much discretion to the IATF because they would only test 2%.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PANGILINAN**

Senator Pangilinan recalled the explanation of Senator Angara that 70% of those who would need assistance are the unbankable sectors of the population. Thus, he believed that putting a large chunk of the appropriations in government banks would actually be depriving them of the help they need. He said that he supported the proposal to reduce the amounts to be appropriated for the government banks and would probably include it in his amendments if Senator Recto would specifically spell out clearly the appropriations for the agriculture industry in the budget.

Relative to the lapse of emergency powers, Senator Pangilinan stated that the Government Procurement Policy Board (GPPB) came up with a resolution allowing emergency purchases and direct purchases from the farmers' organizations during the pandemic, and he recalled that in the Committee of the Whole hearing, the secretary of agriculture said that 407 LGUs purchased P2.25 billion worth of agricultural products directly from farmers' enterprises and organizations because of the emergency situation due to COVID-19. He asked if Senator Angara would accept a provision, subject to style, that would encourage the LGUs and the national government to continue their direct purchases from the farmers and fisherfolk organizations even in the absence of emergency situation or even after the lapse of the Bayanihan Law as a form of direct assistance to the farmers. Senator Angara replied in the affirmative.

Senator Pangilinan then requested some data from the Land Bank of the Philippines and the

Development Bank of the Philippines on the number of people who availed of loans during the quarantine period so that he would know the effectiveness of providing capital infusion into the banks. He thanked Senator Angara for being flexible and hoped that his proposed amendments would be accepted to ensure that the measure would clearly provide support to those who truly need it. Senator Angara said that he would furnish Senator Pangilinan with the data he requested regarding the LBP and DBP loans during the quarantine period.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR VILLAR**

At this juncture, Senator Villar sought confirmation whether the Sponsor had indeed mentioned that the P130 billion would come from the GOCC. Senator Angara replied he could not recall saying that such amount would come from the GOCC.

On whether he has already read the Apple and Google contact tracing technology that she had sent him through text message, Senator Angara said that the software on the contact tracing technology was quite a long read and that he has not yet finished reading it.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO**

On the number of the population targeted to be tested for coronavirus, Senator Cayetano placed on record that the goal is to test two percent (2%) of the population, 10% of which would come from the National Capital Region (NCR).

Senator Angara stated that following the matrix set forth by Senators Cayetano and Drilon, the total would be about 14.6 million because 2.16 million Filipinos at 2% is 7.56 million; for the NCR, 10% of its population would be around 1.7 million which is equivalent to 5.84 million; and for Metro Cebu, at 10% of its population would be 1.19 million.

Senator Drilon explained that 2% of the entire population of 100 million would mean two million Filipinos would be targeted for testing; however, 10% of the 2% would involve testing those from the NCR, which means that if the NCR has 12 million people, then 1.2 million from the NCR would be tested. Thus, he said that computing it at P3,500 per test multiplied by two million would roughly be P7 billion.

#### **TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS**

There being no further interpellation, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the period of interpellations was closed.

#### **INQUIRY OF SENATOR ZUBIRI**

Asked by Senator Zubiri if Senator Angara would like to suspend consideration of the bill while his Committee was collating all the amendments and to come up with a substitute bill later that evening, Senator Angara said he would want to know if the other Members are amenable to the P140-billion worth of financing provided in the bill. According to him, so far it was only Senator Recto who has given detailed amendments which he was inclined to accept. He said that he would prefer amending the committee report since there was just one section of the bill which has five to seven amendments.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR LACSON**

Senator Lacson requested that the Members be given a clean copy of the bill with the individual amendments already included since the Committee Chairman has already accepted these amendments.

Senator Angara agreed with Senator Lacson's manifestation, saying that a reasonable deadline for the submission of other amendments could be set later that evening; they could then be reconciled and inputted in the clean copy.

#### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

Upon motion of Senator Angara, there being no objection, the session was suspended.

*It was 8:57 p.m.*

#### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 9:02 p.m., the session was resumed.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF THE SENATE PRESIDENT**

Senate President Sotto said that much as the Body would want to pass the proposed measure that evening, it would be difficult to do so because of the number of amendments that some Members would like to include.

He then suggested that all individual amendments be submitted to the chairman of the Senate finance committee by 11:00 p.m. in the evening; a clean copy could then be made available by 9:00 a.m. the next day and the Chamber could convene by 1:30 p.m. and make final the amendments and then approve the bill on Second Reading and, if possible, on Third Reading.

Senator Drilon stated that the schedule proposed by the Senate President was feasible. According to him, all amendments should be submitted by 11:00 in the evening, clean copies can be availed of by 9:00 a.m. the next day, and the Chamber could convene by 1:00 p.m. to thresh out the amendments.

Senate President Sotto reiterated the 11:00 p.m. deadline for submission of amendments, after which the Committee, with the assistance of the LBRMO, would incorporate them so that the Members can have clean copies by 10:00 a.m. the next day, and the Body could then convene by 1:30 p.m.

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1564**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, consideration of Senate Bill No. 1564 was suspended.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI**

At this juncture, Senator Zubiri informed the Body that Senator Go, the chairperson of the Committee of Health and Demography, would sponsor seven local bills for Second Reading, House Bill Nos. 2444, 6218, 6035, 6365, 6499, 6036 and 6144, with Senator Drilon.

Senator Drilon stated that he had the floor when consideration of the seven hospital bills was suspended and he disclosed that Senator Go called him the previous night, and that he committed to Senator Go that he has no more questions on the said local bills which have been calendared for interpellation. He added that said he has no objection to the bills being approved on Second Reading.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 68 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 2444**

*(Continuation)*

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 2444 (Committee Report No. 68), entitled

**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PAMPLONA IN THE PROVINCE OF CAMARINES SUR, TO BE KNOWN AS THE BIOL WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.**

Senator Zubiri stated that the parliamentary status was still the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Go, sponsor of the measure.

#### **TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS**

There being no further interpellation, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of committee amendments.

#### **COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS**

As proposed by Senator Go, there being no objection, the following amendments were approved by the Body, one after the other:

1. On page 1, line 2, replace the phrase "Secretary of the Department of Health" with PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF CAMARINES SUR;
2. On page 2, after line 3, insert a new Section 3, to read as follows:

SEC. 3. THE PROVINCE SHALL DEVELOP A HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN TO REFLECT THE DEVELOPMENT GOALS OF THE HOSPITAL INCLUDING ITS BED CAPACITY AND SERVICE CAPABILITY. REQUEST FOR THE STAFFING REQUIREMENTS, CAPITAL OUTLAY INVESTMENTS AND BUDGETARY NEEDS FOR OPERATIONS SHALL BE BASED ON THE HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN.;

3. Renumber the succeeding sections accordingly;
4. On the same page, after line 8, insert two new sections, to read as follows:

SEC. 5. IF ANY PROVISION OR PART OF THIS ACT IS DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL, THE REMAINING PARTS

OR PROVISIONS NOT AFFECTED SHALL REMAIN IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT.

SEC. 6. ALL OTHER LAWS, DECREES, EXECUTIVE ORDERS, ISSUANCES, RULES AND REGULATIONS, OR PARTS THEREOF WHICH ARE INCONSISTENT WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT ARE HEREBY REPEALED, AMENDED OR MODIFIED ACCORDINGLY; and

5. Renumber the succeeding section accordingly.

#### **TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS**

There being no other committee amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of committee amendments and proceeded to the period of individual amendments.

#### **TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS**

There being no individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of individual amendments.

#### **APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 2444 ON SECOND READING**

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 2444 was approved on Second Reading.

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 2444**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 88 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6218**

*(Continuation)*

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6218 (Committee Report No. 88), entitled

AN ACT RENAMING THE MALITA DISTRICT HOSPITAL IN BARANGAY

POBLACION, MUNICIPALITY OF MALITA, PROVINCE OF DAVAO OCCIDENTAL TO MALITA WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S WELLNESS CENTER.

Senator Zubiri stated that the parliamentary status was still the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Go, sponsor of the measure.

#### **TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS**

There being no further interpellation, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of committee amendments.

#### **COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS**

As proposed by Senator Go, there being no objection, the following amendments were approved by the Body, one after the other:

1. On page 2, after line 9, insert two new sections, to read as follows:

SEC. 6. IF ANY PROVISION OR PART OF THIS ACT IS DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL, THE REMAINING PARTS OR PROVISIONS NOT AFFECTED SHALL REMAIN IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT.

SEC. 7. ALL LAWS, EXECUTIVE ORDERS, ISSUANCES, RULES AND REGULATIONS INCONSISTENT WITH THIS ACT ARE HEREBY REPEALED OR MODIFIED ACCORDINGLY; and

2. Renumber the succeeding section accordingly.

#### **TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS**

There being no other committee amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of committee amendments and proceeded to the period of individual amendments.

#### **GO AMENDMENTS**

As proposed by Senator Go, there being no objection, the title of the bill was reworded as follows:

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AN ACT EXPANDING THE SERVICES OF THE MALITA DISTRICT HOSPITAL IN BARANGAY POBLACION, MUNICIPALITY OF MALITA, PROVINCE OF DAVAO OCCIDENTAL RENAMING IT AS THE MALITA WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S WELLNESS CENTER.

**TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS**

There being no other individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of individual amendments.

**APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6218 ON SECOND READING**

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6218 was approved on Second Reading.

**SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6218**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

**COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 92 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6035**

*(Continuation)*

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6035 (Committee Report No. 92), entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE BED CAPACITY OF THE WESTERN VISAYAS MEDICAL CENTER MANDURRIO, ILOILO CITY FROM FOUR HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE (425) BEDS TO SEVEN HUNDRED (700) BEDS, UPGRADING ITS PROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND FACILITIES, AUTHORIZING THE INCREASE OF ITS MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Zubiri stated that the parliamentary status was still the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Go, sponsor of the measure.

**TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS**

There being no further interpellation, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of committee amendments.

**COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS**

As proposed by Senator Go, there being no objection, the following amendments were approved by the Body, one after the other:

1. On page 2, line 3, after the word "capacity," insert a comma (,) and the phrase SERVICE CAPABILITY AND STAFFING REQUIREMENTS; and
2. On the same page, line 4, replace the article "a" with THE and insert a comma (,) after the word "plan."

**TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS**

There being no other committee amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of committee amendments and proceeded to the period of individual amendments.

**TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS**

There being no individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of individual amendments.

**APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6035 ON SECOND READING**

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6035 was approved on Second Reading.

**SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6035**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

*ps net*

**COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 93  
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6365**

*(Continuation)*

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6365 (Committee Report No. 93), entitled

AN ACT UPGRADING THE SIARGAO DISTRICT HOSPITAL IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF DAPA, PROVINCE OF SURIGAO DEL NORTE INTO A LEVEL II GENERAL HOSPITAL TO BE KNOWN AS THE SIARGAO ISLAND MEDICAL CENTER, INCREASING ITS BED CAPACITY, UPGRADING ITS PROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND FACILITIES, AUTHORIZING THE INCREASE OF ITS MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Zubiri stated that the parliamentary status was still the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Go, sponsor of the measure.

**TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD  
OF INTERPELLATIONS**

There being no further interpellation, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of committee amendments.

**COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS**

As proposed by Senator Go, there being no objection, the following amendments were approved by the Body, one after the other:

1. On page 2, line 10, after the word "hereof," insert a comma (,) and the phrase CONSISTENT WITH THE HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN;
2. On the same page, line 13, after the word "Act," insert a comma (,) and the phrase CONSISTENT WITH THE HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN, and add a second sentence to Section 3, to read as follows: THE DOH, IN COORDINATION

WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT (DBM) AND THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (CSC), AND IN CONSULTATION WITH THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SIMC, SHALL DETERMINE THE ADDITIONAL PLAN-TILLA POSITIONS TO BE CREATED AND FILLED UP;

3. Still on the same page, after line 17, insert a new Section 5, to read as follows:

SEC. 5. WITHIN NINETY (90) DAYS FROM THE EFFECTIVITY OF THIS ACT, THE DOH SHALL PROMULGATE THE IMPLEMENTING RULES AND REGULATIONS (IRR), UPON CONSULTATION WITH THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF SURIGAO DEL NORTE AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS. THE IRR SHALL BE IMPLEMENTED CONSISTENT WITH THE HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN;

4. Renumber the succeeding sections accordingly;
5. On the same page, after line 20, insert a new Section 7, to read as follows:

SEC. 7. ALL LAWS, EXECUTIVE ORDERS, ISSUANCES, RULES AND REGULATIONS INCONSISTENT WITH THIS ACT ARE HEREBY REPEALED OR MODIFIED ACCORDINGLY; and

6. Renumber the succeeding section accordingly.

**TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD  
OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS**

There being no other committee amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of committee amendments and proceeded to the period of individual amendments.

**TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD  
OF INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS**

There being no individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of individual amendments.

**APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6365  
ON SECOND READING**

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6365 was approved on Second Reading.

**SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION  
OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6365**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

**COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 89  
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6499**

*(Continuation)*

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6499 (Committee Report No. 89), entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE BED CAPACITY OF THE QUIRINO MEMORIAL MEDICAL CENTER IN QUEZON CITY, METRO MANILA FROM FIVE HUNDRED (500) BEDS TO ONE THOUSAND (1,000) BEDS, UPGRADING ITS PROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND FACILITIES, AUTHORIZING THE INCREASE OF ITS MEDICAL PERSONNEL COMPLEMENT AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Zubiri stated that the parliamentary status was still the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Go, sponsor of the measure.

**TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD  
OF INTERPELLATIONS**

There being no further interpellation, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of committee amendments.

**COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS**

As proposed by Senator Go, there being no objection, the following amendments were approved by the Body, one after the other:

1. On page 1, line 9, after the phrase "Section 1," insert a comma (,) and the phrase CONSISTENT WITH THE HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN; and
2. On page 2, line 2, after the word "corres-

pondingly," insert a comma (,) and the phrase CONSISTENT WITH THE HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

**TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD  
OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS**

There being no other committee amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of committee amendments and proceeded to the period of individual amendments.

**TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD  
OF INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS**

There being no individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of individual amendments.

**APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6499  
ON SECOND READING**

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6499 was approved on Second Reading.

**SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION  
OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6499**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

**COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 96  
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6036**

*(Continuation)*

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6036 (Committee Report No. 96), entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE BED CAPACITY OF THE LAS PIÑAS GENERAL HOSPITAL AND SATEL-LITE TRAUMA CENTER IN LAS PIÑAS CITY, METRO MANILA FROM TWO HUNDRED (200) TO FIVE HUNDRED (500) BEDS, UPGRADING ITS PROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE AND SERVICES AND FACILITIES, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Zubiri stated that the parliamentary status was still the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Go, sponsor of the measure.

#### **TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS**

There being no further interpellation, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of committee amendments.

#### **COMMITTEE AMENDMENT**

On page 2, line 6, after the word "capacity," as proposed by Senator Go, there being no objection, the Body approved to insert a comma (,) and the phrase SERVICE CAPABILITY AND STAFFING REQUIREMENTS.

#### **TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS**

There being no other committee amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of committee amendments and proceeded to the period of individual amendments.

#### **TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS**

There being no individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of individual amendments.

#### **APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6036 ON SECOND READING**

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6036 was approved on Second Reading.

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6036**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 97 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6144**

*(Continuation)*

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, OF House Bill No. 6144 (Committee Report No. 97), entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE BED CAPACITY OF THE CAGAYAN VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER (CVMC) IN TUGUEGARAO CITY, PROVINCE OF CAGAYAN, FROM FIVE HUNDRED (500) TO ONE THOUSAND (1,000) BEDS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Zubiri stated that the parliamentary status was still the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Go, sponsor of the measure.

#### **TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS**

There being no further interpellation, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of committee amendments.

#### **COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS**

As proposed by Senator Go, there being no objection, the Body approved the following committee amendments, one after the other:

1. On page 2, line 2, after the word "hereof," insert a comma (,) and the phrase CONSISTENT WITH THE HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN;
2. On the same page, line 5, after the word "correspondingly," insert a comma (,) and the phrase CONSISTENT WITH THE HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN;
3. Still on the same page, after line 13, insert two new sections, to read as follows:

SEC. 5. IF ANY PROVISION OR PART OF THIS ACT IS DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL, THE REMAINING PARTS OR PROVISIONS NOT



AFFECTED SHALL REMAIN IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT.

SEC. 6. ALL LAWS, EXECUTIVE ORDERS, ISSUANCES, RULES AND REGULATIONS INCONSISTENT WITH THIS ACT ARE HEREBY REPEALED OR MODIFIED ACCORDINGLY.;

- 4. Renumber the succeeding sections accordingly.

**TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS**

There being no other committee amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of committee amendments and proceeded to the period of individual amendments.

**TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS**

There being no individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of individual amendments.

**APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6144 ON SECOND READING**

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6144 as amended was approved on Second Reading, taking into consideration Senate Bill No. 1103.

**SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6144**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

**CHANGE OF COMMITTEE REFERRAL**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the change of referral of Senate Bill No. 1522 (Provisional Licenses to Radio Stations with Pending Franchise Renewal Applications) from the Committee on Rules to the Committee on Public Services.

**SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no

objection, the Chair declared the session suspended until one-thirty in the afternoon of the following day.

*It was 9:29 p.m.*

**RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 3, 2020, the session was resumed.

**FIFTH ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS**

The Secretary of the Senate read the following matters and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

**BILLS ON FIRST READING**

Senate Bill No. 1566, entitled

AN ACT SEPARATING THE HAPID NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ANNEX IN BARANGAY BIMPAL, MUNICIPALITY OF LAMUT, PROVINCE OF IFUGAO FROM THE HAPID NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS BIMPAL NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committee on Rules**

Senate Bill No. 1567, entitled

AN ACT REESTABLISHING THE GENERAL VITO BELARMINO NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND ENHANCING ITS SPORTS CURRICULUM AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committee on Rules**

Senate Bill No. 1568, entitled

AN ACT SEPARATING THE DUCLIGAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ANNEX

IN BARANGAY KINAKIN, MUNICIPALITY OF BANAUE, PROVINCE OF IFUGAO FROM THE DUCRIGAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS THE KINAKIN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committee on Rules**

Senate Bill No. 1569, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A HUNDREDBED EXTENSION OF THE LUIS HORA MEMORIAL REGIONAL HOSPITAL IN THE PROVINCE OF IFUGAO, TO BE KNOWN AS THE LUIS HORA MEMORIAL REGIONAL HOSPITAL – IFUGAO EXTENSION HOSPITAL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committee on Rules**

Senate Bill No. 1570, entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE KALINGA PROVINCIAL HOSPITAL IN TABUK CITY, KALINGA INTO A LEVEL 3 REGIONAL HOSPITAL TO BE KNOWN AS THE NORTHERN CORDILLERA REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER UNDER THE SUPERVISION, CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committee on Rules**

Senate Bill No. 1571, entitled

AN ACT SEPARATING THE LAWIG NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL EXTENSION IN BARANGAY PANOPDOPAN,

MUNICIPALITY OF LAMUT, PROVINCE OF IFUGAO FROM THE LAWIG NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS BIMPAL NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committee on Rules**

Senate Bill No. 1572, entitled

AN ACT SEPARATING THE STA. MARIA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL EXTENSION IN BARANGAY POTIA, MUNICIPALITY OF ALFONSO LISTA, PROVINCE OF IFUGAO FROM STA. MARIA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS POTIA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committee on Rules**

Senate Bill No. 1573, entitled

AN ACT SEPARATING TABUK CITY NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL-BANTAY EXTENSION IN BARANGAY BANTAY, CITY OF TABUK, PROVINCE OF KALINGA FROM THE TABUK CITY NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS BANTAY NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committees on Basic Education, Arts and Culture; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1574, entitled

AN ACT SEPARATING PASAY CITY

NORTH HIGH SCHOOL – TRAMO CAMPUS IN BARANGAY 57, TRAMO, PASAY CITY FROM PASAY CITY NORTH HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS PASAY CITY NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committee on Rules**

Senate Bill No. 1575, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN BARANGAY MAGANHAN, BAYBAY CITY, PROVINCE OF LEYTE TO BE KNOWN AS MAGANHAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committees on Basic Education, Arts and Culture; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1576, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN BARANGAY PUNTA, BAYBAY CITY, PROVINCE OF LEYTE TO BE KNOWN AS PUNTA JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committees on Basic Education, Arts and Culture; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1577, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FORENSIC DNA DATABASE IN THE PHILIPPINES, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

Introduced by Senator Dela Rosa

**To the Committees on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs; Justice and Human Rights; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1578, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7305 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE MAGNA CARTA FOR PUBLIC HEALTH WORKERS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Dela Rosa

**To the Committees on Health and Demography; Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1579, entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS IN BASIC EDUCATION GOVERNANCE BY EMPOWERING THEM AS PARTNERS IN EDUCATING THE LEARNERS, ENGAGING THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE DELIVERY OF BASIC EDUCATION SERVICES AND ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVITY AND EFFECTIVENESS THEREFOR, AND INTEGRATING THEIR INTERVENTIONS TO ACHIEVE THE SHARED GOAL OF QUALITY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTIONS 98, 99, 100, 101 AND 272 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991, AS AMENDED, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Gatchalian

**To the Committees on Local Government; Basic Education, Arts and Culture; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1580, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11469 TO ADDITIONALLY ADDRESS INTERNET CONGESTION

*MS net*

AND HOME AND MOBILE COMMUNICATION UNIT PROBLEMS IN THE COUNTRY

Introduced by Senator Pacquiao

**To the Committee on Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1581, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL POLICE CLEARANCE SYSTEM, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

Introduced by Senator Dela Rosa

**To the Committees on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs; and Finance**

**RESOLUTIONS**

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 435, entitled

A RESOLUTION SEEKING A LEGISLATIVE INQUIRY ON AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF CELL SITES PROVIDING BANDWIDTH FOR INTERNET CONNECTIVITY ACROSS THE COUNTRY”

Introduced by Senator Pacquiao

**To the Committee on Public Services**

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 436, entitled

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND COMMENDING THE HEROIC SERVICES OF THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD IN THE COUNTRY’S FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19 UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF ADMIRAL JOEL SARSIBAN GARCIA, PCG, PH.D., H.D., AL-HAJ AND CONGRATULATING THE LATTER ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD

Introduced by Senator Gordon

**To the Committee on Rules**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Committee Report No. 99, submitted jointly by the Committees on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs; and Public Services, on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 325, introduced by Senator Dela Rosa, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ORDER AND DANGEROUS DRUGS TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE SERIES OF VEHICULAR ACCIDENTS INVOLVING DRIVERS WHO TESTED POSITIVE FOR DRUG USE, AND WHOSE RECKLESS, IRRESPONSIBLE AND NEGLIGENT DRIVING RESULTED TO THE DEATH OF, OR HAVE INFLICTED CRITICAL INJURIES TO A NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS, AND HAVE CAUSED DAMAGE TO PROPERTY, FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECOMMENDING FURTHER REMEDIAL MEASURES TO ENSURE ROAD SAFETY, AND END THE PROLIFERATION OF DRUG USE IN THE COUNTRY, PARTICULARLY IN THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SECTOR,

recommending the adoption of the recommendations and their immediate implementation.

Sponsor: Senator Dela Rosa

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 100 submitted jointly by the Committees on Constitutional Amendments and Revision of Codes; and Public Services on Senate Bill No. 1530 introduced by Senator Drilon, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 18, BOOK VII, CHAPTER 3 OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES”

recommending its approval with amendments

Sponsor: Senator Pangilinan

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Thereafter, the Chain recognized Senator Drilon for a manifestation on the Minority's representation in the Commission on Appointments and the Senate Electoral Tribunal representation.

#### MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON

Senator Drilon stated that as reflected in the Journal and the Record of the Senate, during the session on July 23, 2019, the Senate elected him and Senator Hontiveros to the Commission on Appointments, and Senator Pangilinan to the Senate Electoral Tribunal for the period July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. He then requested the Senate President to direct the Senate Secretary to notify the Commission on Appointments and the Senate Electoral Tribunal accordingly of the said changes in the membership of the Minority bloc.

Thereupon, Senate President Sotto directed the Secretariat through the Senate Secretary to inform the Commission on Appointments and the Senate Electoral Tribunal of the changes in the Minority representation therein as manifested by Senator Drilon.

#### MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

At this juncture, Senator Zubiri stated that there were two senators who wished to deliver a privilege speech while awaiting the completion of the report of the Committee on Finance, namely, Senators Hontiveros and Tolentino.

#### PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Availing herself of the privilege hour, Senator Hontiveros delivered the following speech:

The last four months has shaken the world in proportions previously unimaginable in our lifetime. While the world is no stranger to pandemics, what makes COVID-19 extraordinary is that it comes at a time of immense global economic and social interconnectedness brought about by the unprecedented advancement in technology. This same extraordinary level of interlinkages that has generally worked to our advantage is also what enabled the rapid spread of the virus and brought much of the world to a standstill. For the most part of this year, so far, Filipinos have joined the rest in this global paralysis. *Isang napakalaking sakripisyo ng mga mamamayan.*

More than two months since the implementation of the Enhanced Community Quarantine

and the enactment of the Bayanihan Heal as One Act, we have seen the disarray that accompanied its implementation. The different guidelines issued by government agencies and conflicting pronouncements of top officials created confusion on the ground. As documented by the press, law enforcement and some local government officials have generally displayed heavy-handedness in executing quarantine procedures. While there have been instances when violators were made to plant vegetables and watch COVID-related instructional videos, the dominant stories are those of abuse and violence. Who can forget the story of Mang Dodong Jimeda who became the face of the daily injustice the poor are experiencing in this pandemic? The 58-year old fish vendor was detained when he failed to present a travel pass while trying to buy fish to sell. It took his family a week before they were able to locate him and raise P3,500 for bail. However, he had to wait two more days before being released as his family failed to submit a photo of their house, one of several requirements in posting bail. The stark contrast between Mang Dodong's ordeal and the President's defense of a PNP general's *mañanita* fiasco did not escape the attention of the public. In a rare move, business groups issued a joint statement criticizing this appalling unequal treatment and called for the upholding of the rule of law.

Section 4 (c) of the Bayanihan Act mandates the President to provide emergency subsidy to low income households. At P270 billion (per COVID-19 Philippines Citizens' Budget Tracker), the Social Amelioration Package is the largest slice of the COVID response budget pie. *Ngunit nakapanlulumong malaman na ang tulong pampinansyal para sa mga pinakanangangailangan ay hindi pa rin naipamimigay sa kabuuang 18 milyong pamilya.* The 10<sup>th</sup> Presidential Report to Congress showed that there is still P2B that has yet to be distributed in the SAP of the DSWD — that is almost 360,000 families who have not yet received assistance. This leaves me with the many distressing images of our *kababayan* lining up in droves for their financial assistance, making physical distancing a cruel joke. They wait in line, sometimes from sun-up to sundown, under the oppressive heat of the sun, some of them fainting and even dying while waiting for their turn, with some even being turned away at the end. *Nagtitiis silang pumila para sa kaunting ayuda. Sa Pilipinas ganito kahirap ang maging mahirap.*

Metro Manila and other high risk areas are on the third day of our shift to General Community Quarantine and it has been made apparent

that the Bayanihan Act failed to prepare the country for reopening. The downgrading of our level of quarantine has been met with general skepticism and anxiety that adequate safeguards are in place to ensure the safety of the people. As soon as the President made the announcement, creative minds in social media went on overdrive by re-branding GCQ as Get COVID Quickly, and calling the public's impending daily life "Survivor Philippines," an obvious dark reference to the Darwinian concept of survival of the fittest. These memes may be couched in black humor but the fear is real. And that fear is not unfounded.

As of yesterday, the total number of confirmed cases was 18,997 according to the DOH, and we can expect the numbers to climb as more testing is being done and adjustments to the backlogs are being settled. On the same day the IATF announced its recommendation to ease quarantines to jumpstart the economy, the DOH registered 539 new infections and 17 more COVID-19-related deaths, the largest number of cases reported in a single day since the virus was first detected in the country. While this may be an artificial surge given the backlog in testing and validation, it is also revealing of the gap in our official data, data that is supposed to guide us in making sound policy decisions. In explaining this growing disparity in the data, the DOH pointed to the "long and tedious" process of verification and the lack of personnel ensuring the accuracy of the data. Considering that data is paramount in battling this pandemic, logic points us to closing this gap by making sure that the "long and tedious" process shall be mitigated by increasing the number of laboratories that conduct testing without sacrificing the integrity of the verification process. Needless to say, logic also points to the obvious solution to the shortage in personnel. It has been four months, four long months since we reported our first case of COVID-19 infection in January. Public health authorities squandered the first few weeks of the ECQ by overlooking the need to upgrade our health system capacity. By now, we should have established sufficient infrastructure and mustered enough human resources to adequately respond to this health crisis. There is no doubt that there has been a ramping-up of health facilities, and that public-private partnerships have been effective in improving the capacity for testing, isolation and quarantine. However, this is clearly not enough. Our public health facilities, the last line of defense of the poor who are the most vulnerable sector, are still far from target in raising the line of our health system capacity.

Among the emergency powers the Bayanihan Act vested in the President is to implement measures to prevent the further spread of the virus through detection, protection and treatment. He has also been given the power to "expedite and streamline the accreditation of testing kits and facilitate prompt testing by public and designated private institutions." But what many have been calling for in the past several months, mass testing has been agonizingly slow in coming. With the empty Presidential bluster that tried to downplay the threat of the virus combined with government's low testing capacity, what is supposed to be crucial to a strategic viral containment was at a crawl for months. What we can learn from the success of Vietnam or New Zealand is that testing is key to any COVID-19 strategy. Testing is the key because it will lead us to the necessary isolation of those who tested positive, and to contact tracing. But even our contact tracing efforts are too sluggish that the World Health Organization acting representative could not help but urge us to "push harder" and "work harder" because any delay in contact tracing will make it hard for us to catch up with the rate of transmission.

*Again, higit apat na buwan na ang nakaraan. Kamakailan lang natin napunuan ang kapasidad upang maabot ang sapat na bilang ng mga mate-test. Yet, this is not to say that we have actually started maximizing this increased testing capacity as we have yet to hit the target 30,000 tests per day.*

On our 3<sup>rd</sup> day of GCQ, we have what can be considered a COVID-19 testing and tracing crisis as manifested by testing backlogs, conflicting claims on testing capacity of the country and non-optimal use of testing laboratories, allegations of overpriced testing kits and price manipulation of testing equipment, slow contact tracing efforts, and delays in the release of test results.

*Masakit man sabihin ngunit hindi natin maikakaila. If there is something this public health delays have shown us, and what this pandemic has exposed is that our healthcare system is ill-equipped and unfit to deal with an outbreak of this magnitude. It lacks the demonstrated capacity to test, trace and treat to keep pace with the spread of the virus.*

Public health experts lack the flexibility and decisiveness to implement the necessary mass testing for all high-risk and exposed individuals due to the lack of testing kits, limited capacity of laboratory facilities as testing centers, and insufficient hospital bed capacities and quarantine facilities.

Our healthcare system also failed to set up contingency measures to ensure that healthcare services of other non-COVID diseases remain uninterrupted. It failed to recognize early on the fundamental importance of research on the production and manufacturing of local testing kits and upgrading testing centers for an effective public health response.

It is also painful to be reminded that we hold the distinction of having the highest number of virus-hit health workers in which 13% of all confirmed cases are doctors, nurses, and other health service providers. What makes this more excruciating is that this high rate of infection is attributed to a shortage in personal protective equipment, and a clear lapse in observing infection protection and control protocols.

And talking about PPEs, I would also like to join other senators in bringing up the issue of the purchase of PPEs and testing kits at questionable prices. *Dahil sa Bayanihan Act, isinuko ng Kongreso ang ating "power of the purse" pagdating sa pagtalaga ng mga gagastusan ng gobyerno. Kaya kailangang bantayan nang maigi kung saan napupunta ang pera. Mahalaga na naibunyag ni Senator Ping Lacson na doble ang halaga ng pagkakabili ng DOH ng mga PPEs para sa ating mga frontliners kumpara sa mga pribadong organisasyon. Ayon nga kay Senator Grace Poe, mula P400 hanggang P1,000 ang presyo ng isang set ng PPE sa merkado. Ngunit kung titingnan natin ang report ng DOH na bumili ng isang milyong set ng PPEs sa halagang P1.8 billion, bawat set ay pumapatak na P1,800, halos doble na ng presyo ng pinakamahal na PPE.*

On another item Senator Lacson raised, government purchased nucleic acid extractors used in COVID testing for P4 million. On the other hand, Project Ark purchased the same for P1.75 million. Even the swabbing system has discrepancies: the private sector procured theirs for \$16 per unit while the government purchased it for twice the amount, at \$32. If one is aware of how things like these go, PPEs and testing kits MIGHT JUST BE THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG. *Paano natin mapagkakatiwalaan ang isang gobyerno na gamitin sa maayos ang pera ng bayan kung may mga taong walang konsensyang pinagkakakitaan pati ang isang pandemya tulad nito?*

Now that we have relaxed restrictions under GCQ, there is still that lingering question of whether we abided by the conditions and guidelines set up by the WHO since the motivation driving this easing up is to restart economic

activity. Foremost among the conditions WHO has set is the evidence that viral transmission has been controlled. The latest forecast report from the University of the Philippines covering April 1 to May 25 in NCR alone, shows there is indeed an indication of a flattening of the curve; however, lag in the validation process with still a few thousand cases waiting to be validated is keeping many from being entirely optimistic. In fact, having no reliable data, there has been no definitive statement among health experts and data scientists about a flattening of the curve lest they unceremoniously find themselves falling flat on their faces.

In the face of the apparent weaknesses of our COVID-19 response, I do recognize the enormity of the challenge and the best efforts being exerted by our national and local health authorities. That despite working within a weak and fragmented health system and facing immense pressure from all fronts, we acknowledge their work and thank them for not giving up and for continuing the fight. But just like in any fight, we need inspirational and innovative public health leaders who will rise to the occasion.

Fighting this COVID war is unthinkable without proper data to guide us. It is therefore imperative to have an honest-to-goodness and better data analytics and information management — *malinis, matapat, maasahan at napanahong datos at impormasyon na siyang gagamitin para sa maayos na pagpapasya at pagbuo ng mga epektibong polisiya.* This data, which must be fully and clearly disclosed to the public, would give us a better picture of where we are in this fight and help us navigate the new normal.

I am also heartened by the news that government intends to get more contact tracers. With proper training and protection, they can help improve our contact tracing efforts. To complement efforts of contact tracers, I urge the DILG to review and revise its guidelines for Barangay Health Emergency Response Teams (BHERTs) and encourage people's participation. *Iwanan na po natin ang naratibo na pasaway lang ang ating mga kababayan, at pagkatiwalaan silang makakapag-ambag sa isang community-based promotive, preventive and protective response sa COVID-19. Ang mga registered at accredited people's organizations at civil society organizations sa ating mga komunidad are in the best position to complement local epidemiological and surveillance units.*

Yesterday, Thailand became the second large economy in Southeast Asia next to Vietnam

to bring down the number of infections. With zero new confirmed cases for the first time in over two months, they are allowed the luxury of planning for a four-phase easing process. I point this out as I recall images of our *kababayan* crowding the streets and scampering for a ride on the first day of GCQ, damning physical distancing, damning safety just to get to work. And, yes, we are nowhere near zero confirmed cases. Our unpreparedness is extremely appalling. Our people's safety must be of primary concern; saving lives, our goal.

We have been talking about flattening the epidemic curve for more than two and a half months now. It is time we also paid close attention to the congestion in our economic emergency rooms that is about to happen. Financial distress is now very high among Philippine firms, just as oxygen shortage signals the need for intubation and intensive care. We need to talk about the flattening of the economic curve so that preventable job losses resulting from business demise can be avoided.

The flattening of the economic curve will initially be about assisting distressed businesses. But it will ultimately be about individuals and families who will be losing their jobs and incomes. That distinction between firms and their workers is important—some businesses can and should be saved while others might be too far down an irreversible path to insolvency. Firms may or may not survive, but people will need to survive.

I would like to credit the *Bangko Sentral* for acting quickly to ensure that our economic protective equipment would be available to the banks that would be approached by firms in distress. Yet despite the BSP's support, the banks are still charging high interest rates, fearful they will be exposed to the economic contagion if they offer relief to everyone. The banking system may be an essential industry but even the shift from MECQ to GCQ will not lead to a reopening of their doors.

On the other hand, businesses, both large and small, also hesitate to get help from the banks. There is an out-of-pocket cost since banks will only lend a small amount to a distressed enterprise or a little at a time, even as the revenues in the coming months might not be enough to pay for recurring costs such as wages, rents, and utilities. A loan taken out today by an enterprise owner will require risking and taking out even more out-of-pocket capital to repay fresh loans that will be due next month and certainly much sooner than the hoped-for recovery of the business.

In other words, the BSP can bring water to the horse but the horse must want to drink the water: the bank must want to lend and the firm must want to take the risk associated with borrowing. The deputy governor of the BSP admitted as much to the joint meeting of the Finance and Economic committees last Friday—he said that the BSP has done its part, it has made money available to the banks but the horse will not live if it hesitates to drink. If the BSP were the only doctor in the economic emergency room, soon enough this is what it would tell us—"*Pasensya na po, ginawa na po namin ang lahat ng aming maaring gawin upang buhayin siya.*"

I think we now understand that further actions on the monetary side will only make sense if other things are done that will address the hesitation of the banks that is also in turn related to the hesitation of firms. To my mind, this means that the proposed Bayanihan to Recover as One bill, which I call BARO for short, for now as it is will not yet provide reassurance — neither on the challenge of keeping the health epidemic curve flat nor on the challenge of keeping the economic epidemic curve flat.

Many senators have questioned the competence and faithfulness of the Health Secretary, and for good reasons. But since he is still there at the helm, it is incumbent upon us to scrutinize how he intends to provide the assurance, secure the resources and strengthen the organizational set-up that will assure us that we are not risking a second wave or a costly relapse in the coming months.

The credibility of the action plan of our health authorities is also important in addressing the uncertainties that concern the economic sector. The latest issue of the *Economist Magazine* informs us that countries like Sweden, Finland, and China have seen a reduction in economic activity in key sectors of 30%, 20%, and 10% respectively. These numbers give us a sense of the magnitude of jobs that may be lost until everybody is vaccinated, especially if a second wave of infections spreads. What will those numbers be for the Philippines?

I therefore appeal to all of us in the Senate to exercise the oversight mandates that the Filipino people have assigned to us. Should the BARO law be passed, it is necessary to complement it with a program of action and a Budget of Expenditures and Sources of Financing (BESF) document that is based on our own best understanding of what needs to be done.



The country's health is too important to leave to Secretary Duque alone, especially if the country's economic health will also be infected by the inadequacies of his leadership. The same could be said of Secretary Dominguez. The country's economic health is too important to be left in the hands of government economic managers alone who may not be willing to spend more now in order to save lives and save jobs.

Just as our colleagues in the Lower House have worked tirelessly to craft a Philippine Economic Stimulus Act or PESA, the Senate too will want to scrutinize and deliberate on the paradox of how we should get the horse to drink the water that it has been served. Passing the BARO bill alone will simply not cut it and the total of eight bills filed by the members of the Senate need to be synthesized into a counterpart bill for PESA now and in the near future.

Three things are becoming clear to me.

*First*, the BSP and banks can only do so much in terms of providing credit; fiscal policy must step up.

*Second*, government spending needs to make up for the economic stimulus that has disappeared when investors stopped spending, when consumers including OFW families became cautious, and tourists stopped coming. The Bayanihan Law only authorizes the Executive to move money around but not really to spend more than what it and the GOCCs were authorized to spend for fiscal years 2019 and 2020. That is a fundamental flaw of the Bayanihan Law.

*Third*, NEDA and the Economic Cluster of the Cabinet must quickly put together a Plan B — a Plan B that will generate new sources of employment and new investments destinations that will be ready to replace those that will be lost. These new drivers of growth can be seen in the areas of:

1. ICT and digital transformation for education, working from home, telemedicine, logistics, and public services;
2. Agriculture and food manufacturing;
3. The health sector, of course, but based on a program of work that ensures adequacy of preparedness of infrastructure not just at the national aggregate level but at the level of every metropolitan and regional hospital catchments;
4. A fourth sector, which is about smaller urban

developments and urban-rural transport networks, can attract the interest of investors anxious to pivot towards opportunities outside Metro Manila.

Whether we admit it or not, the decision to restart economic activity at a time when the flattening of the epidemic curve is still unclear, is to transfer much of the responsibility from the State to the public. The sacrifice this government has exacted from our people has been extremely high especially from the poor in terms of loss of daily income, job insecurity, and hunger. Now that we have shifted to GCQ and asked them to go back to work, without mass testing we are putting their lives at risk. *Nakakadismaya na ipinasa din natin sa mga employer ang responsibilidad na ito.*

It does not take an expert to realize that this administration's crisis leadership is abysmal. The absence of a coherent masterplan, the contradicting statements coming from our public officials, the inefficient implementation of the Social Amelioration Program, the excesses of our law enforcement are just a few examples of the short-sightedness of government in dealing with this pandemic. What could actually have been a great opportunity to slow down and contain the infection, the ECQ — that great opportunity — was left on its own without the aid of mass testing.

But the challenge now for government is to step up and employ the whole-of-society approach to the crisis. It must realize that COVID-19 is first and foremost a health problem, and that putting the police and military in the forefront is fighting the wrong war. It must provide a wide berth to include more health professionals and scientists, get the involvement of development workers, and synchronize efforts with the private sector. It must allow the empowerment of and capacitate LGUs and communities, as we have seen in the larger role the BHERT has played, and by capacitating local resources such as giving *Kaligtasan Tanods* information and education functions. It is also imperative that government must be willing and ready to spend more.

While the pandemic has kept the world at a standstill, we cannot be paralyzed by it for long. Restarting the economy is necessary but it must come with the appropriate protection for our people. Health and economic safeguards must be put in place before we send them out to what is called "the new normal." Fiscal responses to the clear and present danger of a deep economic recession need to be aggressive. Let our rallying cry be, "Save lives, save jobs."

## REFERRAL OF SPEECH TO COMMITTEE

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Chair referred the privilege speech of Senator Hontiveros to the Committee on Health and Demography and the Committee on Finance.

## PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR TOLENTINO

Likewise, availing himself of the privilege hour, Senator Tolentino delivered the following speech:

I rise to stipulate, affirm, and reaffirm a recent event of national and historical significance.

We received news last night of the suspension of the abrogation of the Philippines-US Visiting Forces Agreement, which we entered in 1998 and renewed in 2000. This is indeed an extremely positive development as it affirms, first and foremost, that in our country, the separation of powers is one of the cornerstones of our constitutional democracy as stated by the Supreme Court case, *Angara v. Electoral Commission*, 68 Philippine Reports 139, 156 [1936]; and, second, that the President of the Philippines as chief executive and head of state, is the sole organ and authority in the external affairs of the country as affirmed by the Supreme Court in *Pimentel Jr. v. Executive Secretary* 2005, GR. No. 158088.

As the Philippines and the rest of the global community are in the midst of COVID-19, as mentioned even by the previous speaker, and to quote the DFA Secretary Teddy Boy Locsin in his *note verbale*: “In the light of political and other developments in the region,” there is sufficient legal basis under international law for the President to perform such act.

Under the international law principle of *rebus sic stantibus*, which is codified in Article 62 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, a party may invoke the “fundamental change of circumstances with regard to those existing at the time of the conclusion of a treaty.” The said Article 62(3) provides:

If under the foregoing paragraphs under Article 62 of the said Convention on the Law of Treaties, “a party may invoke a fundamental change of circumstances as a ground for terminating or withdrawing from a treaty, it may also invoke the change as a ground for suspending the operation of the treaty.”

Now, as that doctrine *rebus sic stantibus* has been recognized as one of the grounds to terminate or even suspend the operation of a treaty, I propose now this legal and academic question: Can *rebus sic stantibus* be used as a basis to renew a treaty or an international agreement?

My question is this — with all due respect to my esteemed colleagues, I do not even profess to have the answers: Do we have a new agreement because of the suspension of the termination? Or do we comply with what is contained in the *note verbale* that after six months, which is renewable for another six months by the Philippines, “the tolling of the initial period in the *note verbale* dated 11 February 2020 shall resume”?

Again, I do not have the answer to this academic question, but I rely on the strong friendship between the Philippines and the United States, specifically the people-to-people partnership which we still maintain.

*Naaalala ko pa nga habang nagsasalita iyong previous speaker na napakaraming Pilipino na frontliners ngayon sa America— 150,000 nurses are in the United States, not to mention doctors or caregivers. In California alone, for example, 20% of the registered nurses are Filipinos. And because they are most likely to work in acute care, medical or surgical, or even ICU, or even nursing homes, many Fil-Ams are on the frontlines, not just taking care of the American patients but even as Covid-19 patients themselves.*

*Binabanggit ko ito dahil ang kasaysayan natin ay punong-puno ng halimbawa kung bakit masasabi nating napakalapit ng Estados Unidos at ng bansang Pilipinas. An appreciation of past international practice has recognized that the fundamental change of circumstances can be used as a cause for the revival of a treaty and, in this case, the Visiting Forces Agreement. It so happened that the Visiting Forces Agreement was signed on October 9, 1998, which was on the same year — and I would like to quote a specific example — that the Kosovo War started. The Kosovo War, which separated Kosovo from Yugoslavia and even Albania, resulted in the abrogation of the United Kingdom-Yugoslavia Air Services Agreement in 1998. After two years, because of a mere exchange of notes which took effect on March 17, 2000, the same agreement was revived. What I am saying is that international practice would show that even after a severance of relations, an agreement could be renewed by mere exchange of notes. And that*

is what happened last June 1, 2000, which was also a very significant date for one of our colleagues here.

June 1, 2020 marked the resumption — because of this *note verbale* — of the VFA. The first week of June has been very significant for our country. The first week of June in 1942 was the date when General Douglas MacArthur abandoned Corregidor after struggling against great odds to save the Philippines from the Japanese occupation, leaving 90,000 Americans and Filipinos soldiers behind. The first week of June in 1945 was again a very critical part of the process towards the Philippine campaign and the liberation from the Japanese during World War II. *Kung kaya nga siguro nagkataon lang na napabalik muli ang VFA nitong June 1, 2020.* Again, this recent development opens a multitude of fresh opportunities which strengthen national security and help deter threats from outside our boundaries for the time being.

If I recall during the meeting of the Committee of the Whole, this Representation insinuated several confidential national security matters which the DFA Secretary nodded in approval, perhaps, one of the reasons why we revived the VFA. I am just looking in hindsight and looking forward.

The President's announcement, through the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, imparts a glimpse of his sincere dedication to the welfare of our nation, relaxing his otherwise firm stand on the issue of sovereign ties with the United States and keeping national interest at the forefront of his executive power.

Similarly, it reflects the humility of the Chief Executive in assigning greater weight to the long history of alliance and strong relations that we have established with the United States, this country being one of the first and oldest U.S. allies in Asia.

I recognize and admire the wisdom of the President as the chief architect of the country's foreign policy for keeping his judgment anchored on the supremacy of national interest and affirming his resolve to safeguard the life and liberty of the Filipino people. The decision of the President is perhaps akin to his adjusting his sail, so to speak, in order to be able to navigate his ship through dangerous waters, having premised his decision on "prevailing political and other developments in the region." Flexibility is at the heart of effective leadership, and effective leadership is central to good governance.

As we reforge our ties with our oldest ally, we must not forget arguably the oldest principle

of international law: *pacta sunt servanda*. "Agreements must be kept." *Pacta sunt servanda* governs many international agreements and treaties, including the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969), which concerns treaties between states and the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties Between States and International Organizations (1986). Well settled is the principle that the enforcement of obligations by states largely depends on their commitment to these agreements. Without such doctrine, international agreements would lose their binding effect.

As the world enters into this new normal, we welcome this recent development of the renewal of the VFA which serves us an opportunity for both nations to foster a more strengthened bond of friendship between the Philippines and the United States, a pact forged by the blood of our forefathers for the peace and security in the country and the region.

#### REFERRAL OF SPEECH TO COMMITTEE

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Chair referred the privilege speech of Senator Tolentino to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

#### COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 98 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1564 (Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of Senate Bill No. 1564 (Committee Report No. 98), entitled

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES TO EXERCISE NECESSARY POWERS TO CARRY OUT THE DECLARED NATIONAL POLICY TO RESPOND TO CRISIS BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE 2019 CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) PANDEMIC AND PROVIDING MECHANISM TO ACCELERATE THE RECOVERY AND BOLSTER THE RESILIENCY OF THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMY, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Senator Zubiri stated that the parliamentary status was the period of individual amendments.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Angara, sponsor of the measure.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ANGARA**

Senator Angara thanked his colleagues for submitting their proposed amendments within the deadline that was given the previous night which enabled the Committee to send out the draft substitute bill that morning. As the Committee and the LBRMO were still finalizing the draft substitute bill, he suggested that the Chamber suspend consideration of the bill and take up other matters on the floor in the meantime or suspend to allow the senators to discuss some issues among themselves.

Asked by Senator Zubiri how much time would be needed to come up with the committee report together with its substitute bill and its amendments so they could plan accordingly, Senator Angara replied that less than an hour would be enough to finalize the last-minute submissions and to proofread the committee report.

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1564**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

#### **SPECIAL ORDER**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 67 on Senate Bill No. 448 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 67 ON SENATE BILL NO. 448**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 448 (Committee Report No. 67), entitled

AN ACT PROHIBITING THE USE OF WORDS THAT WOULD DENOTE RELIGIOUS, REGIONAL OR ETHNIC AFFILIATION IN PRINT, RADIO, TELEVISION INCLUDING CABLE TELEVISION AND OTHER FORMS

OF BROADCAST MEDIA TO REFER TO OR DESCRIBE ANY PERSON SUSPECTED OR CONVICTED OF A CRIME OR UNLAWFUL ACT AND PROVIDING PENALTIES THEREFOR.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, with the permission of the Body, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, only the title of the bill was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the Record of the Senate.

The Chair recognized Senator Revilla for the sponsorship.

#### **SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR REVILLA**

Senator Revilla said that if there was anything that people realized in this time of crisis, it would be the importance of unity as a nation in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, he urged everyone to set aside differences in personal beliefs and to push for and prioritize policies that would promote unity instead of personal interests and disunity.

He stated that the Body may have heard news referring or identifying people with terms such as Muslim *na terorista*, *mandurukot na Mangyan*, and Tausug *na pirata*. He said such ways of media reporting do not contribute in promoting national healing and national unity. This negative tagging and discrimination, he said, is what Senate Bill No. 448 seeks to prevent.

*The rest of Senator Revilla's sponsorship and speech follows:*

As state party both to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, it is the State's obligation to take the necessary steps to adopt such laws as may be necessary to give effect to everyone's civil and political rights and the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

This proposed measure seeks to achieve just that. It is a move towards the elimination of profiling based on religious and ethnic affiliation and a move on the protection and preservation of our civil and political rights. This proposal seeks to prohibit the use of words that denote religious, regional, and ethnic affiliation in print, radio, television, and other forms of broadcast

media to refer or to describe any person suspected or convicted of a crime, or unlawful act and provide penalties for each violations.

Fortunately, the practice is not that evident anymore in news reporting. Self-regulation by media practitioners has been a great help towards eradication of this type of profiling. This proposal aims to institutionalize the prohibition so that future reference to suspects and convicts will not use religious, regional, or ethnic affiliation as an adjective.

According to the Commission on Human Rights, religious and cultural profiling can be traced as the effect of historical bias by one group against another arising out of previous occurrences that resulted in negative impressions, leading further to false generalization that has become an obstacle to their growth and development both as a group and in their individual capacity. *Sa panukalang ito, sinisiguro nating napapangalagaan ang karapatang-pantao ng lahat, kahit pa mga suspek o convicts ang mga ito.*

I first filed this measure in 2004 during the 13<sup>th</sup> Congress. Under then Senate Bill No. 1215, I proposed the prohibition on the use of the word "Muslim" or "Islamic" in mass media to describe crime suspects or convicts as "the practice is highly prejudicial and extremely injurious to the Islamic religious culture, Muslim individuals and their collective image, and the Muslim's social well-being as respectable citizens of the country."

Unfortunately, the bill did not progress in the legislative mill. I, along with fellow senators, refiled the same during the 14<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2007, during the 15<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2010, and during the 16<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2013.

I believe that this measure would definitely contribute and result in increased positive social space and understanding between and among us, Filipinos. This will help drive the path towards a just, culturally sensitive, fair, and lasting peace and development in the country.

In this time when the importance of national reconciliation need not be overemphasized, this move sends a strong message that religiously and culturally-biased practices have no room in our society.

The National Press Club and the *Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas*, the major umbrella groups covering our media practitioners, both expressed their full support to this proposal. The Movie and Television Review and Classification Board and Commission on Human

Rights, along with other stakeholders also conveyed their support. It is in this light that I am also seeking and respectfully appealing to this Chamber's support of this proposal.

## MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PACQUIAO

Senator Pacquiao expressed his support for Senate Bill No. 448, saying that he too feels bad when media practitioners would use words such as Muslim, Islam, Mangyan or Badjao as adjectives to describe criminals and suspects because, to him, such practice of labeling is derogatory and discriminating to religious and ethnic groups and creates a social construct of biases and assumptions. He believed as a Christian that people should respect one another regardless of religious affiliation or ethnic group connection, and that they need to manifest respect to create a just and fair society.

## COSPONSOR

Upon their request, Senators Zubiri and Pacquiao were made cosponsors of Senate Bill No. 448.

## SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 448

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

## SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 99 Re: Proposed Senate Resolution No. 325, from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

## COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 99

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered Committee Report No. 99 Re: Proposed Senate Resolution No. 325 DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ORDER AND DANGEROUS DRUGS TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE SERIES OF VEHICULAR ACCIDENTS INVOLVING DRIVERS WHO TESTED POSITIVE FOR DRUG USE, AND WHOSE RECKLESS, IRRESPONSIBLE AND NEGLIGENT DRIVING RESULTED TO THE DEATH OF, OR HAVE

INFLICTED CRITICAL INJURIES TO A NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE CAUSED DAMAGE TO PROPERTY FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECOMMENDING FURTHER REMEDIAL MEASURES TO ENSURE ROAD SAFETY, AND END THE PROLIFERATION OF DRUG USE IN THE COUNTRY, PARTICULARLY IN THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SECTOR.

With the permission of the Body, only the title of the committee report was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the Record of the Senate.

The Chair recognized Senator Dela Rosa for the sponsorship.

#### **SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR DELA ROSA**

Senator Dela Rosa, on behalf of the Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs, submitted for plenary consideration Committee Report No. 99 Re: Proposed Senate Resolution No. 325 “Directing the Senate Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs to Conduct an Investigation, in Aid of Legislation, into the Series of Vehicular Accidents Involving Drivers who Tested Positive for Drug Use, and Whose Reckless, Irresponsible and Negligent Driving Resulted to the Death of, or Have Inflicted Critical Injuries to a Number of Individuals who have Caused Damage to Property for the Purpose of Recommending Further Remedial Measures to Ensure Road Safety, and End The Proliferation of Drug Use in the Country, particularly in the Public Transport Sector.”

*The full text of Senator Dela Rosa’s sponsorship speech follows:*

As Chairman of the Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs, it is my honor to report back to this august Chamber Committee Report No. 99, filed by this Representation directing the Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs to conduct an inquiry on the series of vehicular accidents involving drivers who tested positive for drug use.

Let me begin my speech by quoting the Code Commission’s statement in justifying the requirement on extraordinary diligence to a common carrier under the New Civil Code, to wit: “The high standard of care is imperatively demanded by the precariousness of human

life and by the consideration that every person must in every way be safeguarded against all injury.”

Commuting has become part of daily lives of our *kababayans*. Thus, our laws and several Supreme Court jurisprudence have consistently reiterated the importance of ensuring that the public transportation sector exercise such extreme care and caution in order to protect its passengers and the public from tragic mishaps which could cause not only damage to property but most importantly, loss of innocent lives. In ensuring that drivers exercise extraordinary diligence in the transport of their passengers, we are likewise able to provide safe roads for our children, many of whom walk or commute going to school, thus hitting two birds with one stone.

Significantly, one of the causes of road mishaps is drugged driving, which has plagued our country for decades, thus giving birth to R.A. 10586 otherwise known as the “Anti-Drunk and Drugged Driving Act of 2013”.

Notwithstanding these prevailing laws, several accidents attributed to drugged driving are still continuously being reported, one of which was the case of Jules Villapando, the 13-year-old Grade 8 student of General Pio del Pilar National High School who died after he was hit by a speeding jeepney while crossing a pedestrian lane at the corner of J.P. Rizal Avenue and Mabini Street, Barangay Poblacion, Makati City. The driver was found positive for drug use.

It can be seen in the video *na may isang grupo ng mga bata na tumawid sa kalsada* via the pedestrian lane *na sinagasaan ng jeep na walang pakundangang tumakbo. Parang walang nakitang mga tao na tumawid at walang nakitang pedestrian lane. Kaya, ubos iyong mga bata. Tinamaan lahat iyong isang grupo ng mga bata.* Luckily, *isa lamang ang namatay. Iyong iba ay seriously injured.*

It is very disturbing that almost on a daily basis there are still reports of vehicular mishaps that claim lives and inflict critical injuries to bystanders and passengers, damaging several other vehicles and properties along the site of the accidents. Worse, some are still due to drug use of specific people who are mandated by law to exercise extraordinary diligence.

It is of no question that the impairment from drug use is a serious danger to transportation safety. In fact, its adverse effect is even more extensive than using illegal substance in one’s

home as it exposes imminent threat to innocent lives regardless of age.

Unfortunately, among the findings of this Committee is the inefficiencies in the implementation of the Anti-Drunk and Drugged Driving Act of 2013, the law which could have prevented several road crashes attributed to drugged driving.

Since my stint as PNP chief, I have consistently overemphasized the importance of the role of all government agencies in addressing drug problems in the country because I believe that it is a united and strong front against illegal drugs which will help us win this one.

It is the goal of this Committee to ensure that the implementation of existing laws will be effectively enforced, sustained and not short-lived, a wish that Mr. Rene Villapando, the father of the victim expressed during the committee hearing.

We need to address the issue urgently as discussed in Committee Report No. 99. We owe it to our countrymen to provide safe roads most especially to the children, the future of this nation. Let us not wait until another innocent life is put at stake for us to realize the need to proactively enforce our existing laws.

As discussed in the committee report, without visible enforcement and swift penalties, a drug-driving law has little chance of changing behavior. With this, this committee mostly respectfully recommends that the following actions be adopted:

- Pursue the prosecution of cases against the jeepney driver Crisalde Tamparong;
- Ensure constant monitoring, implementation and enforcement of the law and conduct a comprehensive review of the IRR for provisions that may need amendments;
- Identify the proper procedure in handling persons in violations of RA 10586 and other related laws;
- Undertake investigation for possible administrative action on law enforcement officers who failed to implement the unenforced RA 10586;
- Amend Section 10 of RA 10586 to make deputation of law enforcement officers, especially the PNP, MMDA, and local traffic enforcement officers in cities and municipalities mandatory, and if possible, through an agency-to-agency memorandum of understanding;

During the committee hearing, *noong tinanong natin ang LTO kung deputized ba nila ang MMDA, sabi nila hindi raw dahil hindi nag-apply ng deputation. Tinanong ko iyong MMDA kung nagpa-deputize ba sila, sabi nila hindi rin daw sila nagpa-deputize dahil ang dami raw requirements. So, kailangan talaga ito kasi parang mayroong turf war. Para mawala ito, dapat magkaroon ng agency-to-agency memorandum of understanding:*

- Strengthen the drug-free policy of public utility vehicle operators with constant monitoring of DOLE, LTO, PDEA, and DOH;
- Increase the minimum amount of civil damages that can be awarded in case of deaths arising from vehicular accidents in addition to the criminal liabilities provided in Section 12 of RA 10586 and other related laws;
- Strictly monitor and implement the deputy's training seminar in order to strengthen the education of awareness campaign among the law enforcement officers;
- Integrate road safety and driver's education into K-12 curriculum so that awareness of the ill-effects of drunk and drugged-driving is instilled in child development state; and
- Effectively implement nationwide random terminal inspection and quick random test as mandated under Section 15 of RA 10586.

*Hindi iyong ningas kugon lamang, dahil after that incident doon sa Makati, nagkakaroon kaagad sila ng random terminal inspection at nag-drug test ang mga drivers at nakita roon na may mga positive. Afterwards, wala na naman. So, may problema talaga tayo sa enforcement.*

I most respectfully submit this committee report for the consideration of this august Chamber. Our country has strong legislations but a continuous call on the government is necessary to ensure effective implementation and enforcement of this laws. Otherwise, it is nothing but a futile attempt to address the problem it seeks to prevent.

*Hindi ko man maibabalik ang buhay ni Jules, nawa ay sa pamamagitan nito, maisakatuparan natin ang kahilingan ng kaniyang ama na magsilbi itong aral upang hindi na maranasan ng ibang magulang ang hindi matatawarang sakit na dulot ng pagkamatay ng isang anak.*

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 99**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no

objection, the Body suspended consideration of Committee Report No. 99

### **SPECIAL ORDER**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 100 on Senate Bill No. 1530 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

### **COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 100 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1530**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No 1540 (Committee Report No. 100), entitled

#### **AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 18, BOOK VII, CHAPTER 3 OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES.**

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, with the permission of the Body, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, only the title of the bill was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the Record of the Senate.

The Chair recognized Senator Pangilinan for the sponsorship.

### **SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR PANGILINAN**

Senator Pangilinan, on behalf of the Committee on Constitutional Amendments and Revision of Codes, submitted for plenary consideration Senate Bill No. 1530, entitled “An Act Amending Section 18, Book VII, Chapter 3 Of The Administrative Code Of The Philippines,” under Committee Report No. 100.

*The full text of Senator Pangilinan’s sponsorship speech follows:*

A franchise is a privilege granted by Congress to public services and utilities. These include power and water, transport and communications — services vital to the survival and progress of a nation and its people.

By its very definition, legislative franchises are imbued with public service, with Congress

bearing responsibility for granting and extending such franchises.

Today, we seek to rectify a small omission that has been corrected in practice but not in law.

Today, we seek to correct this error not only to uphold the right to free speech and expression, but equally important, the right of the people to correct, relevant, timely, and accurate information.

Today, in the age of massive disinformation and misinformation at the speed of thought, we seek to promote truth-telling. Because truth is the handmaiden of democracy. Truth has saved us from thieving and tyrannical governments. Truth, as the Bible says, will set us free.

This right to truth is especially important now as the pandemic continues to claim lives, because truth and accurate information save lives. And especially as our country continues to face typhoons, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions, we, our people, need to know what to do before, during, and after such calamities. This right literally saves the lives of those who rely only on free radio and TV especially in the so many remote, isolated, hard-to-reach islands of our archipelago.

Today, we also seek to protect and defend the right to decent work of approximately 11,000 employees of the ABS-CBN Corporation and the workers among their suppliers in their business ecosystem, especially amid a pandemic that has already cost our people over two million jobs. The Department of Labor and Employment has said that in the coming months, anywhere between five million to seven million of our *kababayans* will also be losing their jobs. We cannot add to that suffering.

Senate Bill 1530 authored by Sen. Franklin Drilon proposes to amend Section 18, Book VII, Chapter 3 of the Administrative Code of the Philippines to include franchises, stating that “where a licensee or franchisee has made timely and sufficient application for renewal of a franchise or license, the same shall not expire until after finally determined by the relevant department, agency, or branch of government.”

The bill amends an existing provision under the Revised Administrative Code to include franchises, “making it incumbent upon the issuing authority to act on an application and avoid situations where silence or inaction could effectively bar the operations of an enterprise.”

In a hearing for this bill held last week, all of our resource persons that included legal luminaries and government agencies regulating

*MS*



licenses and franchises support this amendment and agree that it will indeed bridge the gap between law and practice and law. We are also enlightened on how this measure will help in the pursuit of the rule of law and democratic accountability.

Hence, I urge the swift passage of this measure.

### **COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR DRILON**

As principal author of Senate Bill No. 1530, Senator Drilon said that he was pleased to cosponsor Committee Report No. 100 which recommends the approval with amendments of Senate Bill No. 1530, which seeks to amend Section 18, Book VII, Chapter 3 of the Revised Administrative Code of the Philippines providing for the non-expiration of license where the licensee has made a timely application or renewal by extending its application to franchises granted by Congress. He believed that this simple yet cogent amendment would fill the gap in cases where the franchise had expired while its renewal remains pending.

*The full text of Senator Drilon's cosponsorship speech follows:*

The *Journals* of the Senate will show that Congress has applied considerations of equity in previous similar occasions, and this measure seeks to institutionalize that practice. This is consistent with the equal protection clause under our Constitution which mandates public bodies and institutions to treat similarly-situated individuals in a similar manner.

The proposed amendments would clarify that franchises shall not be barred from operating while the Congress hears the application for its renewal. This is a fair and equitable measure, because it is not the fault of the franchise applicant that Congress could not find the time to hear the application for renewal which is filed on time. And, therefore, we have proposed in this amend-ment that the franchisee will be allowed to operate as in the past they have been allowed to operate.

This amendment states that if a timely and sufficient application for renewal of a franchise has been filed, the license of franchise shall not expire until a final determination by the agency, department or branch of the government has been made.

In case of legislative franchises, there is a final determination when the franchise bill is passed, when the applicant is given a written notice of denial, or when the application is *ipso facto* denied upon the adjournment of Congress *sine die* without having approved the application.

We would like to state on record that *sine die* adjournment here refers to the end of a particular Congress, not when Congress adjourns its first and second regular sessions. So that today, as we are about to adjourn *sine die* the first regular session of the Eighteenth Congress, the franchise applications pending will not be deemed denied. The amendment applies to all applications for the renewal of franchise filed on or after July 1, 2019, to coincide with the first full day of the Eighteenth Congress.

During the hearing, all regulatory agencies, as well as legal experts invited, expressed their unanimous support for the measure.

Article XII, Section 11, of the Constitution provides, that "No franchise or right can be granted except under the condition that it has been subject to amendment, alteration or repeal by Congress when the common good so requires."

We have seen how well-meaning constitutional directives to Congress can result not just in destruction of services but also in the loss of livelihood of thousands of Filipinos. While it is recognized that a franchise, license or certificate is not a privilege, this rule must be tempered with considerations of equity, fairness, due process, and equal protection, especially and particularly when the service being provided has been so woven into everyday life and that its abrupt cessation will give rise to devastating consequences.

The Supreme Court, in the case of *Associated Communications & Wireless Services vs. National Telecommunications Commission*, has said that there is no reason for imposing a prior congressional franchise on public utilities except to impose an added burden and expenses on the part of the applicant. It quoted Justice Holmes who said that, "It is revolting to have no better reason for a rule of law than that it was laid down in the time of Henry IV."

The criticism of the court notwithstanding, the bill does not propose to do away with the legislative franchise requirement. The amendment would merely encourage the concerned agency or branch of government to act decisively on an application for renewal and ensure that the applicant is not punished for the authority's indecision or inaction.

At times Congress is accused of not doing enough — a criticism which springs mainly from a misunderstanding or a misappreciation of what we are mandated to do. Laws tediously crafted and debated may not resonate with the common man's expectation of a tangible contribution to governance and public service. This notwithstanding, the fact that the laws we craft can affect every facet of life, they can compel governments to take action. These laws can spell the difference between freedom or liberty, liberalization or restriction of commerce, and promotion or loss of livelihood.

This measure, while affecting all franchises similarly situated, would, in the light of recent events, be one that our people will be able to see and the 11,000 of our countrymen and their families will directly grasp and benefit from.

We will be judged not just by how heavily we wielded our constitutionally mandated powers but also by how much restraint we were able to muster—that our legislative powers, while so plenary, are capable of being subjected to our own evaluation and refinement, if necessary. While the legislative power of Congress is plenary, our ability to temper the use of these powers and to serve the ends of justice will be the measure of our leadership.

It is for these foregoing reasons that I join our colleague, Senator Pangilinan, in seeking your valuable support for the timely passage of this measure.

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1530**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

#### **SIXTH ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS**

The Secretary read the following committee reports which the Chair assigned to the Calendar for Ordinary Business:

Committee Report No. 101, prepared and submitted jointly by the Committees on Sustainable Development Goals, Innovation and Futures Thinking; Public Works; and Finance, on Senate Bill No. 1582, with Senators Cayetano, Tolentino, Pacquiao and Angara as authors thereof, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NETWORK OF POP-UP BICYCLE LANES AND EMERGENCY PATHWAYS FOR USE DURING THE DURATION OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,

recommending its approval in substitution of Senate Bill No. 1518, taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution No. 411.

Sponsor: Senator Cayetano

Committee Report No. 102, submitted by the Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture, on House Bill No. 4953, introduced by Representative Fortun, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE BALANGAY AS THE NATIONAL BOAT OF THE PHILIPPINES,

recommending its approval with amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Gatchalian

#### **COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 98 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1564 (Continuation)**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of Senate Bill No. 1564 (Committee Report No. 98), entitled

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES TO EXERCISE NECESSARY POWERS TO CARRY OUT THE DECLARED NATIONAL POLICY TO RESPOND TO CRISIS BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE 2019 CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) PANDEMIC AND PROVIDING MECHANISM TO ACCELERATE THE RECOVERY AND BOLSTER THE RESILIENCY OF THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMY, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Senator Zubiri stated that the parliamentary status was the period of amendments.

**AMENDMENT BY SUBSTITUTION**

Upon motion of Senator Angara, there being no objection, the Body approved the amendment by substitution to Senate Bill No. 1564 without prejudice to the introduction of additional individual amendments.

Likewise, Senator Angara asked that said amendment by substitution be made the working draft for further individual amendments and that copies thereof be furnished the Members.

Senate President Sotto noted that the substitution of the entire text below the enacting clause of Senate Bill No. 1564 was in the nature of an amendment by substitution.

**INQUIRY OF SENATOR PANGILINAN**

Asked by Senator Pangilinan that he be furnished with an electronic copy of the substitute bill, Senator Angara replied that e-copies had been sent to the chiefs of staff of all the senators. He thanked Senator Pangilinan for his amendments, most of which had been adopted by the Committee.

Senator Pangilinan said that he would await his electronic copy to see which of his proposals had been adopted.

Senator Angara explained that his Committee had to trim various amounts such as those proposed for the Department of Agriculture due to certain limitations.

**RECTO AMENDMENTS**

On page 6, as proposed by Senator Recto, and accepted by the Sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved the substitution of lines 17 to 23 with the following:

M. PROVISION OF COMPENSATION OF P100,000 TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HEALTH WORKERS WHO HAVE CONTRACTED OR WHO MAY CONTRACT SEVERE COVID 19 INFECTION WHILE IN THE LINE OF DUTY; *PROVIDED*, THAT A COMPENSATION OF P1 MILLION SHALL BE GIVEN TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HEALTH WORKERS WHO HAVE DIED AND MAY DIE WHILE FIGHTING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC; *PROVIDED*, *FURTHER*, THAT THIS SHALL HAVE

RETROACTIVE APPLICATION FROM FEBRUARY 1, 2020; *PROVIDED*, *FURTHERMORE*, THAT A COMPENSATION PROVIDED HEREIN SHALL BE EXEMPT FROM THE APPLICABLE TAXES UNDER THE NATIONAL INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1997, AS AMENDED; *PROVIDED*, *FINALLY*, THAT THE COMPENSATION PROVIDED HEREIN SHALL BE GIVEN TO BENEFICIARIES NOT LATER THAN THREE (3) MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF CONFINEMENT OR DEATH.

**POE AMENDMENTS**

Preliminarily, Senator Poe thanked Senator Angara for accepting her amendment to the qualifications that would be required for any applicant of a loan from the DOTr or the DOT and her other amendment to include a business plan as the minimum requirement for the loan. Relative thereto, she noted that even though her proposed amendment on the debt-to-equity ratio had not been accepted because it might be different for MSMEs, requiring transparency is as important as part of oversight practice, because it would allow a review of the records on how the DOTr came up with the decision of recommending the loan with the DBP and the Land Bank of the Philippines. She said that she proposed the amendments in consideration of the fact that the government has limited resources; thus, they have to ensure that the government could offer loans to business owners who are seriously considering the turnaround of the company for the benefit of their employees and productivity, at the same time doing away with “*palakasan*” and preventing fly-by-night companies that will simply pocket public money to be given to them by the government.

On the matter of cell towers, Senator Poe said that even though President Duterte seemed serious about encouraging a hybrid education modality, many places in the country have poor cellphone signals and weak internet infrastructure.

Thus, on page 15, line 19, after the word “infrastructure,” as proposed by Senator Poe and accepted by the Sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the phrase PARTICULARLY ADDITIONAL CELL TOWERS.

She explained that the amendment aimed to prioritize the construction of additional cell towers

because it is key to better internet access in the country. She said that according to the DICT, the Philippines has only 20,000 towers and would need an additional 50,000 towers to be at par with Vietnam which has 70,000 cell towers.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR REVILLA**

Senator Revilla commended Senator Angara, chair of the Committee on Finance, for efficiently sponsoring the bill and accepting his proposed amendments.

#### **PROPOSED AMENDMENT OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS**

Senator Hontiveros thanked Senator Angara for accepting one of her proposed amendments, found on page 5, line 20 up to page 6, line 3, which she read for the record, to wit: "and repatriated OFWs, including OFWs whose deployment were suspended due to a government-imposed deployment ban; PROVIDED, that any assistance given to OFWs shall be separate and distinct from the benefits or assistance, if any, they receive as members of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA): PROVIDED, FURTHER, That any subsidy previously received under Republic Act No. 11469 does not preclude the displaces worker or employee, the freelancers, self-employed, and repatriated OFWs from receiving the unemployment or involuntary separation assistance provided herein."

Senator Hontiveros said that she wanted to make of record that some of the amendments which she proposed did not require additional budgets because they are simply for disaster relief and for preserving pre-COVID 19 jobs.

Senator Hontiveros said that in the committee meetings, the chairs of the Committees on Finance and Economic Affairs committed to help the Senate develop a real stimulus package bill that would include the new drivers of growth. Relative thereto, she proposed the following amendment on page 6, line 3, after the word "herein," to add the following proviso: *PROVIDED, FINALLY, THAT THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM SHALL TAKE PROACTIVE STEPS TO ENSURE THAT ALL QUALIFIED MEMBERS SHALL BE GIVEN UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS AS PROVIDED UNDER RA 1199.*

Senator Angara said that he was inclined to accept the proposed amendment but he requested more time to consult first with the SSS on the proposal.

#### **VILLANUEVA AMENDMENT**

On page 25, as proposed by Senator Villanueva and accepted by the Sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved to delete all the words from line 16 up to line 21, and in lieu thereof, to add the following: AS ADDITIONAL SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS OF TESDA UNDER ITS TRAINING FOR WORK SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM AND SPECIAL TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (STEP) FOR RETOOLING, RETRAINING, AND UPSKILLING OF DISPLACED WORKERS INCLUDING RETURNING OFWS, AS WELL AS PROVISION OF TOOLKITS UNDER THE STEP.

He said that he proposed the amendment after learning that more than P2 billion of TESDA's budget was realigned in the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act.

#### **GORDON AMENDMENTS**

Senator Gordon expressed his appreciation for the adoption of his suggestions the previous day particularly on tourism, public and private health, and testing centers for tourism.

As proposed by Senator Gordon and accepted by the Sponsor, there being no objection, the following amendments were approved by the Body, one after the other:

1. On page 3, line 4, after the word "infections," insert a comma (,) and the phrase STARTING IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, CENTRAL VISAYAS, CALABARZON, AND CENTRAL LUZON; and
2. On page 4, line 22, after the word "targets," add the period semicolon (.), and insert the phrase TO ADDRESS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND IN PREPARATION FOR FUTURE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES, BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH, TRAINING AND PROGRAMS FOR SKILLED MEDICAL TECHNOLOGISTS, MOLECULAR BIOLOGISTS, AND OTHER SKILLED LABORATORY TECHNICIANS SHALL BE IMPLEMENTED STARTING WITH THE MOLECULAR LABORATORY INFRASTRUCTURE.

## DRILON AMENDMENT

As proposed by Senator Drilon and accepted by the Sponsor, there being no objection, approved to delete lines 18 to 28 of page 21.

Senator Drilon explained that the provision could be a source and a basis for cases that could be filed in court if the concerned banks or financial institutions would not relax a regulatory or statutory restriction as provided in the measure. He believed that the provision is an overreach because it would practically direct how the banks would conduct business.

## SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Drilon, the session was suspended.

*It was 3:36 p.m.*

## RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:39 p.m., the session was resumed.

## PROPOSED AMENDMENTS OF SENATOR DRILON

On page 24, Senator Drilon proposed to rephrase lines 18 to 29, to read as follows:

2. THIRTY BILLION PESOS (P30,000,000,000) TO SUPPORT WHOLESALE BANKING AND EQUITY INFUSION TO A SPECIAL HOLDING COMPANY TO BE CREATED UNDER THE REVISED CORPORATION CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES FOR THE PURPOSE OF REHABILITATING COMPANIES CLEARLY AFFECTED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND PROVISION FOR LOW INTEREST LOANS TO BE EXTENDED TO PERSONS AND ENTITIES ENGAGED IN INDUSTRIES SEVERELY AFFECTED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, AIR, LAND AND SEA TRANSPORTATION, RETAIL TRADE, ACCOMMODATION AND TOURISM SERVICES AND MSMEs;
3. FIFTEEN BILLION PESOS (P15,000,000,000) FOR THE DEVELOPMENT BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES TO SUPPORT WHOLESALE BANKING AND EQUITY INFUSION TO A SPECIAL HOLDING COMPANY TO BE CREATED UNDER THE REVISED

CORPORATION CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES FOR THE PURPOSE OF REHABILITATING COMPANIES SEVERELY AFFECTED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND PROVISION FOR LOW INTEREST LOANS TO BE EXTENDED TO PERSONS AND ENTITIES ENGAGED IN INDUSTRIES AFFECTED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, AIR, LAND AND SEA TRANSPORTATION, RETAIL TRADE, ACCOMMODATION AND TOURISM SERVICES AND MSMEs.

Senator Recto questioned why it was the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) and not the Department of Finance that made the recommendation that does not concern monetary policy. He recalled that earlier, certain provisions were deleted because they infringe on the right of the Bangko Sentral which is an autonomous and independent institution of government.

Senator Drilon explained that the BSP simply wanted a clear policy direction for the LandBank to create a special holding company that lend to industries. Senator Recto assumed that special holding companies are neither banks nor financial institutions but possibly government institutions which could be used to buy equity into companies.

Senator Angara informed the Body that the Department of Finance and the Bureau of Treasury have endorsed the amendment.

Senator Recto pointed out that if the purpose was not to lend but to infuse equity, then such government entity is going to be a new government institution.

Asked whether the new government institution would be a subsidiary of LandBank or of DBP and whether it would make investments into certain corporations, Senator Drilon replied that the amendment that the BSP proposed would only be to create special holding companies which would help distressed banks, the reason for the endorsements of the Bureau of Treasury and the Department of Finance.

Senator Recto asked if said special holding companies would be created not to help distressed banks but to help distressed enterprises. He pointed out that insofar as credit is concerned, it would be Land Bank and DBP that are the lending institutions and that the putting up of a company that could buy shares would be another entity.

Senator Angara said that the proposal of Senator Drilon would be wide enough to cover both equity infusion as well as the loans to the various sectors cited in the bill; thus, the amendment would just be an expansion of the purpose.

Senator Recto stated that clearly, a new government entity that could buy equity would be created through Land Bank and DBP as part of the government's response.

Senator Villar, however, believed that the government should not infuse equity to a private company as she pointed out that many unproductive government agencies were already sold to the private sector. She said that she would rather give low interest credit rather infuse equity since government is not good in managing companies. She agreed with Senator Recto that the setup would be very difficult to do so, and she urged that the proposal to create a company that would infuse equity should be well-thought out – what it is going to be, who would manage it, what its composition is, and what policy it would follow; otherwise, government's money would be transferred by the private companies to their camps especially if there is no transparency.

Senator Drilon explained that what the BSP was simply proposing was for the equity infusion to be done through a holding company which is still a government-owned and controlled corporation. He pointed out that Senator Recto had already placed his views on the amendment and has posed no objection to the proposal. He then moved to adopt the amendment.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR LACSON**

Senator Lacson reminded the Body not to lose sight of the fact that the *Bayanihan 2* bill, once approved into law, would be time-bound, lasting up to September 30 only. And he noted that several proposed amendments may not be realistic because they would involve either long-term implementation or would entail planning, including a study, before it is implemented.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLAR**

Senator Villar noted the absence of a provision in the bill creating a holding company that would provide equity infusion from the government to private entities. She said that she was made to believe that it would

be a simple transaction wherein Land Bank and DBP would provide credit to a distressed company. She opined that the proposed provision was complicated and should be abandoned.

#### **INQUIRY OF SENATOR PANGILINAN**

Asked by Senator Pangilinan how the proposed amendment would be applied given the country's situation, Senator Recto explained that the capital to be given to Land Bank and DBP would be placed in a subsidiary that would act as its holding company. He said that the holding company would be used like a special vehicle to buy equity and preferred shares from distressed companies. He clarified that he was not totally against the amendment since there are certain strategic companies that may need assistance from government like banks and airline companies, for as long as it is done properly, stating, however, that he was under the impression that the purpose of giving capital to DBP and Land Bank was to principally help MSMEs and for commercial banks to be able to take care of the bigger companies. He reiterated that he was not totally against the infusion as long as government banks, and with possible funding from the BSP, as well as commercial banks, could also help MSMEs.

#### **INQUIRY OF THE CHAIR**

Asked by Senate President Sotto what would happen to the holding company in October when the law would lapse, Senator Recto stated that it would continue for as long as the company has been put up and has given the capital prior to October.

Senator Drilon affirmed that the equity infusion would survive the cessation of the law. He explained that the change being sought is that investment should be made through a holding company; there is no change in the substance and the power, and that it could even be done with the present wording of the law.

At this juncture, Senator Pangilinan expressed his concern on the danger of rushing the capital infusion before the law would lapse. Senator Recto assured the Body that the capital infusion would be from the government to the banks and that all the banks have do is to put up a company. He expressed hope that the MSMEs would be provided with credits as well; and while the airlines and banks are also strategic as they are important in the logistics trade,

it would be best that they inform the government what they plan to do.

Agreeing with Senator Recto, Senator Pangilinan stated that the amounts to be put into the banks would address those that are most vulnerable. He said that it would defeat the purpose of the infusion if the big companies would secure funding at the expense of the MSMEs that are struggling. He clarified that while he does not object to the intent of the amendment, the infusion and the amounts being appropriated should address those that are the most vulnerable in the business sector.

Senator Recto proposed that the DBP and Land Bank create a special vehicle and one of the banks would fund the MSMEs.

Senate President Sotto suggested that the provision include giving priority to MSMEs.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLAR**

Senator Villar informed the Body that 95% of the businesses in the Philippines are small and micro; 4% medium; and 1% are large businesses. Thus, she insisted that the allocation be given to the small and micro businesses and not to the large companies.

As regards airlines, Senator Villar stated that such companies are considered net losers, meaning, their losses are bigger than their earnings. She said that the only reason why people invest in the airline industry is for prestige. She stressed that there are more losers in the airline business than winners and that the money invested in it would only go to waste.

Senate President Sotto agreed with Senator Villar as he recalled that when he asked Ramon Ang why he bought PAL, the latter said that he was not making money out of it and that he only bought it for PR purposes which he sold again eventually.

#### **WITHDRAWAL OF THE AMENDMENT**

Thereupon, Senator Drilon withdrew his proposed amendments.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR MARCOS**

Senator Marcos shared the concerns and doubts of Senators Villar and Recto on the issue of capital infusion to large corporations because, to her, they

are in their prime and are too big to fail. She said that since the measure would only last until September, the money should go to businesses that need medium-term solutions. She noted that the portion on the SMEs was written at the very end of the bill as if it was a mere afterthought when, in fact, they should be the most significantly targeted and addressed.

#### **TOLENTINO AMENDMENT**

On page 15, line 9, after the acronym "LGUS," as proposed by Senator Tolentino and accepted by the Sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of a comma (,) and the words UNDER REPUBLIC ACT 9178.

#### **GATCHALIAN AMENDMENT**

On page 20, line 7, as proposed by Senator Gatchalian and accepted by the Sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved the deletion of the acronym "CQ" and to change it to "ECQ OR MECQ".

#### **HONTIVEROS AMENDMENT**

On page 6, line 3, after the word "herein", as proposed by Senator Hontiveros, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of a proviso to read as follows: *PROVIDED, FINALLY, THAT THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM SHALL TAKE PROACTIVE STEPS TO ENSURE THAT ALL QUALIFIED MEMBERS SHALL BE GIVEN UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS AS PROVIDED UNDER RA 1199.*

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR LACSON**

At this juncture, Senator Lacson said that the sentence starting with the words "The BIR" on page 26, line 24, up to the word "operate" on line 27, however laudable, might run counter to Article VI, Section 26 (1) of the Constitution which provides that "Every bill passed by Congress shall embrace only one subject which shall be expressed in the title thereof." Senator Angara replied that it was Senator Drilon's amendment.

Acknowledging that it was his proposed amendment, Senator Drilon explained that he wanted to emphasize that the BIR has the power to close entities which are guilty of tax evasion and tax avoidance, adding that the taxes collected therefrom would be

for the funding requirements under the bill. He said that the order does not grant any new authority and that it is germane to the principal purpose of the bill which is to provide funds for the recovery plans and programs of the government, as enumerated in the bill. However, Senator Lacson maintained that the provision was redundant because the BIR already has the inherent power to issue closure orders.

Senator Drilon maintained that the provision is germane to the principal purpose of the law because it provides an enforcement mechanism to achieve its purpose, and that even if the Bayanihan Law 2 shall have expired by September 30, the BIR would still continue to exercise such power because it is their inherent power.

Senator Lacson said that he was not objecting to the rider provision, except that he was just concerned since the BIR would still have such power even when the COVID-19 crisis is over.

He then thanked Senator Angara for accepting his amendments to add the words "JUDICIOUS, ECONOMICAL AND EXPEDITIOUS MANNER" so that overpricing would no longer be a free-wheeling enterprise.

#### MARCOS AMENDMENT

On page 10, line 20, as proposed by Senator Marcos and accepted by the Sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved to replace the period (.) after the word "Philippines" with a semicolon (;) and to insert the following provisos: "*PROVIDED, THAT THE LOWEST DOMESTIC BID IS NOT HIGHER THAN OR 20% IN EXCESS OF THE LOWEST FOREIGN BID; AND PROVIDED, FURTHER, THAT THEY MUST SECURE FROM THE DTI A CERTIFICATION,*" subject to style.

Senator Angara clarified that there was no need to bid PPEs precisely because they were already exempted from the operation of RA 9184.

Senator Marcos said that she was told that the DTI, in partnership with the DOH, went through the Philippine Trade Training Center to bid with the exporters. Senator Angara believed that Senator Marcos was referring to soliciting three offers which is called "shopping." He said that he could craft the applicable language together with Senator Marcos, subject to style.

#### PIMENTEL AMENDMENT

On page 19, line 24, after the word "applicable," as proposed by Senator Pimentel and accepted by the Sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved the deletion of the Roman numeral four "(iv)" and the phrase "Exemption from related party transaction restrictions."

Senator Pimentel explained that he proposed the deletion because it would encourage the BSP to give banks and other non-bank financial institutions which agree to further loan extension some regulatory relief, including exemption from related party transactions and restrictions. Senator Angara said that the provision might affect the prudential policies of bank.

Senator Pimentel asked whether the bill prioritizes "non-essential businesses" as he noted that they were repeatedly mentioned on page 11, paragraphs (z) and (aa) and whether the "essential businesses" were taken care of. Senator Angara replied that there was no intention to favor any particular non-essential business but mainly because they are collegial products. He said that essential industries, like food and groceries, were among those flourishing during the current pandemic as well as some pharmaceutical companies, which seemed to be profitable than other industries.

Noting that the bill seemed to have the impression that it has taken care of the essential businesses already and is taking the next step to support non-essential businesses, Senator Pimentel suggested to delete the distinction because if they were willing to introduce a low-interest loan program on non-essential businesses, they should also be willing to do the same to essential businesses.

Senate President suggested to delete the word "non-essential" on page 10, lines 30 and 32.

At this juncture, Senator Recto explained that one of the reasons the non-essential businesses or industries were supported in the proposed measure was that they were the ones most hit by the current pandemic. As an example, he cited the restaurants that could only sell food through take-out but no dine-in, making their business earn less.

#### MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

At this juncture, Senator Zubiri informed the





Body that the Department of Finance (DOF) has numerous comments on the amendments proposed by the Body. He suggested that the Body suspend the session to go into a caucus to discuss the issues.

### SUSPENSION OF SESSION

With the permission of the Body, the session was suspended.

*It was 4:27 p.m.*

### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:39 p.m., the session was returned.

### ANGARA AMENDMENTS

As proposed by Senator Angara, there being no objection, the Body approved the following amendments, one after the other:

#### *Page 5*

- On lines 5 to 8, delete the proviso "PROVIDED, That the subsidy shall amount to a minimum of Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000) to a maximum of Eight Thousand Pesos (P8,000) a month;"
- On lines 21 to 22, delete the phrase "amounting to Ten Thousand Pesos (P10,000);"
- On line 27, delete the word "formal;"

#### *Page 7*

- On lines 6 to 7, delete the phrase "in the amount of Eight Thousand Pesos (P8,000) per student;"
- On line 17, delete the phrase "in the amount of Three Thousand Pesos (P3,000) per student;"

He said that the deletion of the figures was in accordance with the comment of the DOH that the subsidy might be too big financially and should be left to the executors or implementers of the law. For instance, he said that in the case of the educational institutions and subsidies, CHED would be given a leeway or some elbowroom to prescribe what assistance to give depending on the financial capacity. He assured the education advocates like Senators Gatchalian, Villanueva and Cayetano that the nature of support and subsidy was still there.

#### *Page 23*

- On lines 22 and 23, replace the words and figure "One Hundred Fifty Seven Billion Pesos (P157,000,000,000)" with ONE HUNDRED FORTY BILLION PESOS (P140,000,000,000);
- On line 26, replace the words and figure "Twelve Billion Pesos (P12,000,000,000)" with TEN BILLION PESOS (P10,000,000,000);
- On line 32, replace the words and figure "Eight Billion Pesos (P8,000,000,000)" with FIFTEEN BILLION PESOS (P15,000,000,000);

#### *Page 24*

- On line 3, replace the words and figure "Twenty One Billion Pesos (P21,000,000,000) with SEVENTEEN BILLION PESOS (P17,000,000,000);
- On line 30, replace the words and figure "Twenty One Billion Pesos (P21,000,000,000) with SEVENTEEN BILLION PESOS (P17,000,000,000);
- On line 9, delete the word "formal;" and
- Reword the title, to read as follows:

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY INTERVENTIONS AND PROVIDING MECHANISMS TO ACCELERATE THE RECOVERY AND BOLSTER THE RESILIENCY OF THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMY, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES."

### INQUIRY OF SENATOR POE

At this juncture, Senator Poe asked if the amended amounts based on the recommendation of the DOF would also be read out as well as the business plan as a requirement to avail of the loans. Senator Angara replied that there was no change in the amendment and that it had already been accepted earlier.

### INQUIRY OF SENATOR DRILON

Senator Drilon noted that on page 19 of the measure, the law would encourage the extension of terms or the restructuring of existing loans such as commercial loans, consumer loans, or fund activities or investments therein, as well as local government loans, among others. Relative thereto, he said that he could not recall a law using the word "encouraged,"

because the law could either direct institutions to or prohibit them from doing something.

Senator Angara replied that there are parts of laws which may not be mandatory or may not give rise to effects but are just expressions of legislative policy. As in the case of the bill, he said that the intent is simply to express a policy that institutions should exercise some form of relaxation or compassion given the difficult times.

Asserting that they could not pass a law which would merely encourage, Senator Drilon maintained that it should not be placed as a specific and substantive provision but rather be included as part of the explanatory note or declaration of policy.

#### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

At this junction, the Chair suspended the session.

*It was 5:50 p.m.*

#### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 5:53 p.m., the session was resumed.

Continuing, Senator Drilon stated that the way the provision was worded on page 19, from line 3 to the succeeding lines was difficult to understand. For instance, he said that on line 2, it stated that the institutions are encouraged to agree and yet there are specific grounds for the encouragement such as the loan must be falling within a certain period, the loan term may be extended for a period of one year and may be extended for another one year, and the principal payment may be suspended in case of a moratorium, among others. He then asked if it would be an actionable cause for the borrower to go to court after having met all the conditions enumerated on lines 12 to 17 but the bank would not agree although it is "encouraged." Senator Angara replied in the negative, saying that it is not actionable in court and that it is really just an expression of legislative policy. That being the case, Senator Drilon reiterated his suggestion to instead place it as a policy pronouncement if it is just an expression of policy.

Asked by Senate President Sotto if it could be done even without placing the provision in the Bayanihan 2, Senator Angara replied in the affirmative, saying that there is no prohibition on the institutions to do it.

As regards the specific lines he was objecting to, Senator Drilon said that he objects to the provisions on lines 3 to 28 of page 19.

Senator Angara asked if Senator Drilon would be amenable to the deletion of lines 3 to 18 but the retention of lines 19 to 26 which pertain to the BSP giving regulatory relief since banks would also be giving some concessions to those who have suffered during the pandemic and given that banks are highly regulated wherein there are a lot of ratios and reserves that must be met.

Senator Drilon agreed, noting that there is an agreement among banks and other non-banking financial institutions to granting further loan-term extensions which is a decision that Congress should not interfere.

#### **DRILON-ANGARA AMENDMENT**

On page 19, as proposed by Senator Drilon and amended by Senator Angara, there being no objection, the Body approved to delete lines 3 to 18.

#### **HONTIVEROS AMENDMENT**

On page 6, line 3, after the word "herein," as proposed by Senator Hontiveros and accepted by the Sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following proviso:

*PROVIDED, FURTHER, THAT MEMBERS OF THE SSS WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT UNDER SECTION 14-B (UNEMPLOYMENT, INSURANCE, OR INVOLUNTARY SEPARATION BENEFITS) OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11199, OR THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT OF 2018, DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC SHALL NO LONGER BE ELIGIBLE TO AVAIL OF THE BENEFITS UNDER THIS SUBSECTION; PROVIDED, FINALLY, THAT THE SSS SHALL TAKE PROACTIVE STEPS TO ENSURE THAT ALL QUALIFIED MEMBERS BE GIVEN UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS UNDER RA 11199 (SOCIAL SECURITY ACT OF 2018).*

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR GORDON**

Senator Gordon informed the Body that on June 1, 2020, it was reported that BSP Governor Diokno was quite cool or reticent to further the loan payment

*R. J. M.*

extensions under the Bayanihan Act in view of the need to ensure the health of the banking system, the reason why he was initially in agreement with Senator Drilon's opinion that there are conditionalities in the encouragement.

He said that he was putting the matter on record to warn that the BSP, which is in charge of monetary and banking policy, might again thwart the intent of the Body. He said that should the secretary of Finance disagree, the Senate must assert its integrity and independence and go on a bicameral conference with the House of Representatives. He reminded the Body to be aware of where the government is taking them.

#### **ANGARA AMENDMENT**

On page 7, line 28, as proposed by Senator Angara, there being no objection, the Body approved the deletion of the phrase "amounting to Ten Thousand Pesos (P10,000)."

#### **TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS**

There being no other individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Gatchalian, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of individual amendments.

#### **APPROVAL OF SENATE BILL NO. 1564 ON SECOND READING**

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, Senate Bill No. 1564 was approved on Second Reading, *as amended*.

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1564**

Upon motion of Senator Gatchalian, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

#### **PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 436**

Upon motion of Senator Gatchalian, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 436, entitled

#### **RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND COMMENDING THE HEROIC SER-**

**VICES OF THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD IN THE COUNTRY'S FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19 UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF ADMIRAL JOEL SARSIBAN GARCIA, PCG, PH.D., H.D., AL-HAJ AND CONGRATULATING THE LATTER ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD.**

With the permission of the Body, only the title of the resolution was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the Record of the Senate.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Gordon for the sponsorship.

#### **SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GORDON**

Senator Gordon presented for plenary consideration Proposed Senate Resolution No. 436, commending the men and women of the Philippine Coast Guard under the leadership of Admiral Joel Sarsiban Garcia, for their valuable participation in the fight against COVID-19.

He said that it has been the practice of the Senate to recognize citizens who performed extraordinary deeds despite the challenges that life poses on everyone. He said that in the last two or three months since COVID-19 struck, he watched a group of disciplined forciers of the coast guard led by Admiral Garcia, climb aboard ships to swab thousands OFWs who were coming home from sea, and who were arriving through airports.

He admitted that the swabbing and encoding of the report has not been perfect, the reason the Red Cross volunteers wrestle with difficulty when they get to the testing facilities as they had to search for names which were not properly encoded. Nonetheless, he noted that without the coast guards, the 41,465 OFWs coming from highly dangerous territories like Italy, Spain, England, Hongkong and Macau would not be tested.

On another note, he said that he would submit another resolution for Admiral Garcia who retired last Monday, so he could cite in the sponsorship speech the Admiral's curriculum vitae showing the educations he pursued to become an excellent leader

from the Philippine Navy to the Philippine Coast Guard where he did lots of improvement. He believed that the leadership of Admiral Garcia deserves the recognition of the State and the Philippine Senate.

He likewise lauded the men and women of PCG—all 709 of them—who became swabbers, encoders and administrative staff for taking courage to expose themselves to the pandemic, and also Admiral Garcia who he retired with a “bang,” for providing the necessary leadership to make the swab testing in the PCG successful and for helping save lives.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR REVILLA**

Senator Revilla commended Senator Gordon’s remarkable leadership in the Philippine Red Cross, saying that he greatly admires Senator Gordon’s efforts in helping the Filipino people.

#### **ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 436**

Upon motion of Senator Gatchalian, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 436 was adopted by the Body, subject to style.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR GORDON**

As he thanked Senator Revilla, Senator Gordon said that the spotlight should really be upon the men and women of the Coast Guard, who worked in shifts, swabbing the returning OFWs and encoding the specimens until the wee hours of the morning.

#### **SPECIAL ORDER**

Upon motion of Senator Gatchalian, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 101 on Senate Bill No. 1582 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 101 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1582**

Upon motion of Senator Gatchalian, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 1582 (Committee Report No. 101), entitled

#### **AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NETWORK OF POP-UP BICYCLE LANES AND**

#### **EMERGENCY PATHWAYS FOR USE DURING THE DURATION OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, with the permission of the Body, upon motion of Senator Gatchalian, only the title of the bill was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the Record of the Senate.

The Chair recognized Senator Cayetano, chairperson of the Committee on Sustainable Development Goals, Innovation and Futures Thinking, for the sponsorship.

#### **SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR CAYETANO**

Senator Cayetano presented for plenary consideration Senate Bill No. 1582, entitled “Safe Pathways Act,” under Committee Report No. 101, which took into consideration Senate Bill No. 1518 which she filed and Senate Resolution No. 411 filed by Senator Francis Tolentino. She thanked Senator Grace Poe, who expressed her intent to be a coauthor and cosponsor of this bill, and Senator Francis Tolentino, Senator Manny Pacquiao, and Senator Sonny Angara, who are coauthors of this measure.

*The full text of Senator Cayetano’s sponsorship speech follows:*

There is no better time to sponsor this measure than today, as we join other nations in celebrating World Bicycle Day (June 3).

As a health advocate, biker, and triathlete, I have been fighting for this cause for as long as I can remember.

For almost a decade, I have been advocating for bike lanes and sustainable transportation. I filed my first Sustainable Transportation Bill in this chamber, with the help and support of my fellow advocates in 2011. I refiled similar bills in succeeding Congresses.

The benefits of cycling and walking are known to many, if not all, and yet, many metropolitan centers like ours fail to change gears and disrupt the current transportation system, even if that system does not work.

Fast forward to today... suddenly, we are living in the time of COVID-19, which has forced us into a new normal. All over the world, public

transportation systems were shut down in an effort to flatten the curve.

But people have adapted. In lieu of buses, trains, and cabs, many, including our very own health [care] workers and frontliners, have turned to more resilient and safer “alternatives” like biking and walking.

The World Health Organization, in its technical guidance on moving around during the pandemic, advocates cycling and walking as an alternative for people to “reach workplaces when possible, meet essential daily needs, or provide assistance to the vulnerable.”

In Europe, China, and the United States, and all over, urban cycling networks surged after lockdowns were imposed. In cities like New York, Mexico, and Berlin, they set up temporary bicycle lanes to facilitate people’s mobility.

And amid the continuous threats of COVID-19, we are gradually realizing the upside to our shift towards sustainable transportation.

The decrease in the number of motorized vehicles has allowed us to see the clear blue skies, a sight we have missed in the city for years. Environmental groups and government agencies, including our own Department of Environment and Natural Resources, confirm that the air is cleaner.

In a time of high anxiety, biking and walking provide more comfort as it is easier to social distance this way. They also promise better physical and mental well-being because of the physical activity involved. Moreover, the cost of buying and maintaining a bike is very low compared to owning a private vehicle and even commuting.

Sustainable transportation is now part of the “new normal”, and we welcome this change in people’s mindset. But we cannot simply put cyclists and pedestrians on the road without ensuring their safety. We need to be able to support them with the right infrastructure, which we sadly lack in our car-centric streets.

I bring the attention of the body to the photo, which is a photo of medical frontliners from St. Luke’s Medical Center in Quezon City. They are testing out the new bicycles donated through the Life Cycles PH community.

The fact that most of our healthcare workers and frontliners are using these modes of transportation stresses the urgency of our call. Every day, they face risks apart from COVID-19, as they continue to traverse unsafe roads while going to work. We need to protect them.

This is the objective of the measure we are proposing today.

The Safe Pathways Bill seeks to create a network of pop-up bicycle lanes that can be used by our essential workers during the pandemic. The lanes shall strictly be for bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles, and shall connect users to essential destinations like medical facilities, among others. The lanes shall also have enough space to accommodate one meter physical distancing.

One of the recommendations made by Dr. Antonio Dans from the UP College of Medicine is to prioritize building loops of bikeway systems that link roads along hospitals, such as those within the City of Manila. This will guarantee that our frontliners will remain safe even before they reach the hospitals where they work.

This objective of our proposed measure is aligned with the call of our colleague, Senator Francis Tolentino, who filed Senate Resolution No. 411 urging the DPWH, DILG, and MMDA to designate, develop, and improve bicycle lanes in Metro Manila, which transitioned to General Community Quarantine beginning last Monday, June 1.

The bill shall also create a designated network of emergency pathways along local roads, to give pedestrians, cyclists, and non-motorized vehicle users safe and convenient access to frequented destinations. Motorized vehicle passage shall be restricted in these pathways during peak hours.

Meanwhile, public places, government offices, schools, places of work, and commercial establishments like malls, banks, and hospitals shall provide adequate parking spaces for bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles.

The public and private sectors shall develop the necessary infrastructure and facilities to promote the use of these modes of transportation, including parking spaces, showers, changing areas, and hydration facilities.

Furthermore, the bill mandates cyclists and other non-motorized vehicle users to obey existing traffic laws, rules, and regulations.

As Chair of the Committee on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Innovation, and Futures Thinking, I am also duty-bound to ensure that the government remains cognizant of its goals of creating a more sustainable future for all. This bill shall mandate our appropriate agencies to permanently adopt these networks of bike lanes and walkways even after the



pandemic, as part of our long-term solution to address congestion and pollution.

The call of our advocates in the health, environment, and even sports sectors is stronger now than ever before. Various government agencies, both local and national, have expressed their commitment to immediately implement our proposals; some cities have made their own initiatives, like Taguig and Iloilo.

Iloilo City has a dedicated bike lane along its Diversion Road and on selected thoroughfares in the downtown area. Its bike lane stretches more than 11 kilometers. Taguig City also has a 6.9-kilometer protected bike lane on the stretch of Laguna Lake Highway in Bicutan. Our bike lane is also separate from the pedestrian sidewalk, and then there is also a permanent lane that separates these bike lanes from the road used by motor vehicles for protection, as you can see in the photo.

Moreover, in time for the World Bicycle Day today, the Taguig City government has set up additional bike lanes along Cayetano Boulevard and Bayani Road. It is also set to launch a comprehensive bike program, which includes the creation of an office dedicated to biking, the establishment of new bike routes in the city, and a bike lending program for city employees.

The time is now. This crisis presents us with opportunities we must take now. We can seize the moment and institutionalize policy changes that will leave our children with cleaner air, a healthier future with bike lanes, pedestrian lanes, and emergency pathways.

#### **COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR TOLENTINO**

Senator Tolentino joined Senator Cayetano on the initiative to establish pop-up bicycle lanes and a network of permanent bicycle lanes. He said that in the recently passed second Bayanihan bill, a provision for accommodating alternative modes of transportation was specified, including a network of bicycle lanes in all roads in every city and municipality, for the people who may opt to use the bicycle as an alternative mode of transportation to address health, environment, and traffic concerns. Since the imposition of the community quarantine, he stated that the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases has encouraged the use of bicycle lanes as one of the primary modes of transportation and that, through the DILG, it also required local government units to put up bicycle lanes, and comple-

menting this effort, the DOTr had promised to put up bicycle lanes within Metro Manila.

Senator Tolentino believed that bicycles are a necessity at this point in time. He said that since his stint in the MMDA, he has always dreamt of putting up bicycle lanes and that, in fact, the agency was able to establish bicycle lanes along Adriatico in Manila, Roxas Boulevard, portions of EDSA, and Commonwealth Avenue, Pasig and portions of Marikina, among others.

Senator Tolentino said that even as the World Bicycle Day was being celebrated, he was told that the MMDA was planning to sue and slap a P1,000 fine for the alleged misused of Commonwealth Avenue. He said that as reported in an article from the *Inquirer.net*, some members of the Bike United Marshalls (BUM) put up some temporary bicycle cones utilizing plastic bottles along Commonwealth Avenue on June 1 from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. He believed that there was nothing wrong with what the BUM did because they only wanted to protect themselves as bicycle users because the concerned government agencies have failed to put up the bicycle temporary markers. He opined that it was too harsh a penalty to imposed on well-meaning citizens who were just going to work. He reminded the MMDA that there is a principle in criminal law, *nullum crimen sine lege*, that a person cannot or should not face criminal punishment except for the act that was criminalized by law before he performs the act. He reiterated that he saw nothing wrong in what the bikers did as they just wanted to protect themselves.

Senator Tolentino hoped that permanent bicycle lanes would be installed not only in Metro Manila but also all over the country.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON**

Senator Drilon expressed his full support for the timely measure. As Senator Cayetano mentioned Iloilo, he confirmed that it is one of the few cities in the country which have dedicated bike lanes. He said that he has a personal attachment to the project which the Iloilo City started eight years ago when the bicycle lanes formed an integral part of the city's road widening project, where two or three meters were devoted to bike lanes. He said that the bike lane was previously 11 kilometers long, but more have been added in the past three years and was currently nearing 20 kilometers long, including that



in the esplanade along the Iloilo River. He also mentioned the city's support to the sport of bicycle riding and that an annual bicycle festival is held where Senator Cayetano had been invited several times.

He reiterated his support for the measure and hoped that Iloilo can set the model for that activity nationwide. He added that in other countries, biking is resorted to as a principal mode of transportation.

Senator Cayetano lauded the accomplishments in Iloilo City and thanked Senator Drilon for providing updates on the details of the Iloilo bike lane and bike community.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DELA ROSA**

Senator Dela Rosa expressed his support for the measure, saying that he too is a cycling enthusiast. He lauded the Committee's effort to give priority to the bicycle riders by keeping them safe in the streets. He reiterated the importance of the measure especially given the effect of the pandemic on the mass transportation system.

#### **COSPONSOR**

Upon their request, Senators Recto, Dela Rosa, Revilla, and Gordon were made cosponsors of Senate Bill No. 1518.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR GORDON**

Relative to Senate Bill No. 1518, Senator Gordon informed the Body that he was preparing a bill to establish a bicycle industry in the country and ensure that the infrastructure that must accompany bicycle use are put in place. For instance, he said that security is important because there have been instances of bicycle snatching and theft in Metro Manila. He stressed the need to come up with support structures. He added some benefits to riding bicycles, including health as it is a form of exercise, and economic as it will lead to savings on fare.

He reiterated that cycling is not only an affordable, reliable, clean, environmentally-fit and sustainable mode of transportation but it is an opportunity for the country to make bicycles because it is an industry with a potential for high growth. He said that Taiwan is the biggest manufacturer of bicycles. Because of

the pandemic, he said that many countries would be switching to bicycles as a mode of transportation and it would be an excellent opportunity for the country to manufacture bicycles and allow people who are currently unemployed to train for it. He recalled that in Seville, Spain in 2015, the average number of bicycle usage started from just over 6,000 to more than 70,000 at present.

Apart from protecting the environment because of less pollution, Senator Gordon stated that there would be a communion among people; people will feel safer if there are fellow bicycle riders going to work, and it can also be considered as an economic equalizer. He added that it is also an opportunity for local governments to provide bicycle parking areas where pedestrians can borrow bikes and go to their destination. Also, he said that it could be an opportunity for bikes to be used in deliveries.

Senator Gordon reiterated his support for the measure.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS**

Senator Hontiveros expressed her support for the bill, and hoped that it will help evolve the infrastructure so that bicycle lanes would become a permanent feature in more cities and urban centers in the country. She likewise agreed with the sentiments of Senator Tolentino that the anticipated punishment of MMDA for the bikers who put up temporary lane protectors along EDSA made of plastic bottles is excessive. She then urged the MMDA to be more lenient toward cyclists who are merely trying to travel amid the lack of public transportation.

#### **COAUTHOR**

Upon his request, Senator Villanueva was made a coauthor of Senate Bill No. 1582.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO**

Senator Cayetano thanked Senators Gordon, Hontiveros, and Villanueva for their expressions of support, saying that their support gave her the assurance that it could be realized. She believed that all bikers who were hoping that they could continue using the makeshift pathways would finally have hope of having a lane of their own.

In a related matter, she wondered if it would have been more acceptable to the MMDA if the biking groups had not put up the makeshift cones to protect them. She said that she was not aware that bikers are prohibited from passing through these areas. In fact, she recalled that it was during one hearing that Senator Tolentino had called upon the MMDA to revive the MMDA circulars aimed at protecting cyclists. She said that she did not see how putting water bottle bikelane markers could have further endangered the cyclists rather than having nothing to separate their lane from the cars.

She also thanked Senator Gordon for reminding her of the famous bicycle stores and how Subic had been one of the places where she had enjoyed taking bike rides as it is a model in terms of protecting and respecting bikers. She also pointed out that adapting to the use of alternate modes of transportation like bicycles involves a mindshift. She informed the Body that her committee hearing not only discussed the use of emergency pathways but also included bills on sustainable transportation. She said that her Committee would continue technical working group meetings on the measures during the recess.

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1582**

Upon motion of Senator Gatchalian, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

#### **SPECIAL ORDER**

Upon motion of Senator Gatchalian, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 102 on House Bill No. 4953 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 102 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 4953**

Upon motion of Senator Gatchalian, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, House Bill No. 4953 (Committee Report No. 102), entitled

#### **AN ACT DECLARING THE BALANGAY AS THE NATIONAL BOAT OF THE PHILIPPINES.**

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, there being no objection, upon motion of Senator Gatchalian, only the title of the bill was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the Record of the Senate.

The Chair recognized Senator Gatchalian for the sponsorship.

#### **SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GATCHALIAN**

Senator Gatchalian stated that House Bill No. 4953, authored by Agusan Del Norte representative Lawrence "Law" Fortun, and 23 other representatives, seeks to declare the *Balangay* as the National Boat of the Philippines, as well as declare every May 19 as *Balangay* day in order to promote public awareness and educate the people on the historical and cultural significance of the *Balangay*.

*The rest of Senator Gatchalian's sponsorship speech follows:*

The *Balangay* is the historic, free-colonial flat boat used by our *Malay* forefathers to sail from the shores of Borneo and settle on the Philippine archipelago. Several ancient *Balangay* boats were discovered in the vicinity of Butuan City, Agusan del Norte during the 1970s and 1980s and are noted to be the first wooden water craft excavated in Southeast Asia.

The so-called Butuan boats were later declared as National Cultural Treasures by Presidential Proclamation No. 86, series of 1987. These precious relics were continuously safeguarded by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts by virtue of the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009.

The *Balangay* is not only a symbol of our origins as a people. It is also a testament to the early Filipinos' boat-building genius and seafaring expertise and an embodiment of the Filipino community's ideals of solidarity, unity, resilience, courage, and bravery.

The importance of the *Balangay* to pre-Hispanic Philippine civilization is further elucidated by historian William Henry Scott, as quoted by Paulita Roa in a 2010 Sunstar Op-Ed. Scott said that the *Balangay* empowered pre-colonial Filipino to be: "A vigorous and mobile population adjusting to every environment in the archipelago, creatively producing local variations in response to resources, opportunities, and culture contacts, able to trade and read, eat and

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defend themselves. The facts stand in sharp contrast to the passive Philippine population depicted in great school text. A kind of formless culture clay ready to be stamped with patterns introduced from abroad."

As an advocate of education as a means of instilling patriotism and national pride in the youth, I believe that the image of the pre-colonial Filipino intertwined with narrative of the *Balangay* is a worthy subject for us to recognize and teach to future generation of Filipino leaders. Therefore, I gladly sponsor this measure and enjoin our fellow senators to support its approval by the Body.

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 4953**

Upon motion of Senator Gatchalian, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

#### **SEVENTH ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS**

The Secretary read the following matters and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

#### **MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Letter from the House of Representatives, informing the Senate that, on 1 June 2020, the House of Representatives passed the following House bills, in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate:

House Bill No. 6095, entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE AMOUNT OF AUTHORIZED ELECTION CAMPAIGN EXPENSES OF CANDIDATES AND POLITICAL PARTIES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 13 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7166, ENTITLED, "AN ACT PROVIDING FOR SYNCHRONIZED NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS AND FOR ELECTORAL REFORMS, AUTHORIZING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES"

**To the Committees on Electoral Reforms and People's Participation; and Ways and Means**

House Bill No. 6222, entitled

AN ACT REAPPORTIONING THE SECOND LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF THE PROVINCE OF RIZAL INTO THREE (3) LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS

**To the Committees on Local Government; and Electoral Reforms and People's Participation**

House Bill No. 6430, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A REINVESTMENT FRAMEWORK FOR REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT TRUST (REIT) SPONSORS, AMENDING SECTIONS 3, 8, AND 9 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9856, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "THE REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT TRUST (REIT) ACT OF 2009"

**To the Committees on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies; and Economic Affairs**

House Bill No. 159, entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE RIGHT OF GOVERNMENT TO EXPROPRIATE LANDS FOR SOCIALIZED HOUSING, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTIONS 9, 10, AND 11 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7279, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING ACT OF 1992"

**To the Committee on Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement**

House Bill No. 6456, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING AUGUST 12 OF EVERY YEAR AS NATIONAL YOUTH DAY

**To the Committee on Youth**

House Bill No. 6522, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JANUARY 16 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL WORKING HOLIDAY, TO BE

KNOWN AS "NATIONAL BAPTIST DAY"

**To the Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture**

House Bill No. 6553, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING FEBRUARY 23 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY TO BE KNOWN AS THE "NATIONAL ROTARY DAY"

**To the Committee on Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development**

House Bill No. 6496, entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR THE ELIMINATION OF TUBERCULOSIS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10767 OR THE "COMPREHENSIVE TUBERCULOSIS ELIMINATION PLAN ACT"

**To the Committees on Health and Demography; Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; and Finance**

House Bill No. 6497, entitled

AN ACT MODERNIZING THE REGULATION OF HEALTH FACILITIES AND SERVICES, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, REPEALING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 4226, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "HOSPITAL LICENSURE ACT"

**To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance**

House Bill No. 6505, entitled

AN ACT GRANTING FULL INSURANCE COVERAGE TO ALL QUALIFIED AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES OF THE COMPREHENSIVE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 14 OF REPUBLIC ACT

NO. 9700, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "COMPREHENSIVE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM EXTENSION WITH REFORMS"

**To the Committees on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform; and Finance**

and House Bill No. 6413, entitled

AN ACT DIVIDING THE PROVINCE OF MAGUINDANAO INTO TWO (2) PROVINCES, NAMELY: NORTHERN MAGUINDANAO AND SOUTHERN MAGUINDANAO

**To the Committees on Local Government; and Electoral Reforms and People's Participation**

Letter from the House of Representatives, informing the Senate that, on 1 June 2020, the House of Representatives concurred with the Senate amendments to the following House Bills:

House Bill No. 4463, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO FIRST UNITED BROADCASTING CORPORATION, PRESENTLY KNOWN AS GLOBAL SATELLITE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES INC., AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8079, AS AMENDED, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING THE FIRST UNITED BROADCASTING CORPORATION (FUBC) A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE, AND MAINTAIN FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS ANYWHERE IN THE PHILIPPINES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES";

House Bill No. 4582, entitled

AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO GOLD LABEL BROADCASTING SYSTEM, INC. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8087, ENTITLED "AN ACT

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GRANTING TO THE GOLD LABEL BROADCASTING SYSTEM, INC., A FRANCHISE TO ESTABLISH, MAINTAIN AND OPERATE RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN DUMAGUETE CITY AND OTHER AREAS IN THE VISAYAS AND MINDANAO WHERE FREQUENCIES AND/OR CHANNELS ARE STILL AVAILABLE FOR RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING”;

House Bill No. 4583, entitled

AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO BROADCAST ENTERPRISES AND AFFILIATED MEDIA, INC. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8098 TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES;

House Bill No. 4584, entitled

AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO CRUSADERS BROADCASTING SYSTEM, INC., UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8091, ENTITLED “AN ACT GRANTING THE CRUSADERS BROADCASTING SYSTEM, INC., A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, ESTABLISH, OPERATE, AND MAINTAIN COMMERCIAL RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS WITHIN THE PHILIPPINES”; and

House Bill No. 5490, entitled

AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO BICOL BROADCASTING SYSTEMS, INC. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8092, ENTITLED “AN ACT GRANTING THE BICOL BROADCASTING SYSTEMS, INC. (BBSI), A FRANCHISE TO ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN COMMERCIAL RADIO AND

TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN REGION V.”

**To the Archives**

**BILLS ON FIRST READING**

Senate Bill No. 1583, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LIFELINE RATE, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 73 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9136, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ELECTRIC POWER INDUSTRY REFORM ACT OF 2001, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10150

Introduced by Senator Gatchalian

**To the Committees on Energy; and Public Services**

Senate Bill No. 1584, entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE SCHISTOSOMIASIS CONTROL AND RESEARCH HOSPITAL IN PALO, LEYTE INTO A GENERAL HOSPITAL TO BE KNOWN AS THE GOVERNOR BENJAMIN T. ROMUALDEZ GENERAL HOSPITAL, INCREASING ITS BED CAPACITY FROM TWENTY-FIVE (25) TO ONE HUNDRED (100), UPGRADING ITS SERVICES AND FACILITIES AND PROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE, AUTHORIZING THE INCREASE OF ITS MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committee on Rules**

Senate Bill No. 1585, entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM FOR AGRICULTURE FISHERIES, AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE RA NO. 10000 OR “THE AGRI-AGRA CREDIT LAW OF 2009”

Introduced by Senator Villar

**To the Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform; and Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies**

**RESOLUTION**

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 437, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN, CHILDREN, FAMILY RELATIONS AND GENDER EQUALITY TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED CASES OF SEXUAL EXTORTION BY MEMBERS OF THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE (PNP), WITH THE END VIEW OF EXACTING ACCOUNTABILITY FROM THE PERPETRATORS AND IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING GAPS IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER-BASED POLICIES AND PROGRAMS OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT DURING THIS TIME OF CRISIS

Introduced by Senator De Lima

**To the Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality; and Public Order and Dangerous Drugs**

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Letters from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, transmitting to the Senate copies of the following certified and authenticated BSP issuances, in compliance with Section 15 (a) of Republic Act No. 7653 (The New Central Bank Act):

Circular Letter Nos. CL-2020-015, 016, 017, 018, 019, 020, 021, 022, 023, 024, 025 and 026 dated 3, 24, 27 March; 14, 7, 23, 27 April; 10 May 2020;

Memorandum Nos. M-2020-007, 008, 009, 010, 011, 012, 013, 014, 015, 016, 017, 018, 019, 020, 021, 022, 023, 024, 025, 026, 027, 028, 029, 030, 031, 032, 033, 038, 039, 040, 041, 042, 043 dated 13, 14,

18, 19, 20, 24, 30, 31, March; 1, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29 and 30 April; 1, 4, 5, 15, 18 May 2020; and

Circular Nos. 1079, 1080, 1081, 1082, 1083, 1084, 1085, 1086 dated 9, 27, 4, 31 March; 22, 28, 29 April; 6 May 2020.

**To the Committee on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Committee Report No. 103, submitted by the Committee on Local Government, on House Bill No. 5692, introduced by Representative Gonzales (A.), entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JUNE 15 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE PROVINCE OF PAMPANGA TO BE KNOWN AS THE "MT. PINATUBO MEMORIAL DAY,"

recommending its approval without amendment.

Sponsor: Senator Tolentino

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 104, submitted by the Committee on Local Government, on House Bill No. 5682, introduced by Representative Tolentino, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JUNE 21 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN TAGAYTAY CITY, PROVINCE OF CAVITE IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION DAY TO BE KNOWN AS "CHARTER DAY OF TAGAYTAY CITY" OR "ARAW NG LUNGSOD NG TAGAYTAY," AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10775,

recommending its approval without amendment.

Sponsor: Senator Tolentino

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

**SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

Upon motion of Senator Gatchalian, the session was suspended until two o'clock in the afternoon of Thursday, June 4, 2020.

*It was 6:59 p.m.*

**RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION**

At 2:00 p.m., Thursday, June 4, 2020, the session was resumed with the Senate President presiding.

**EIGHTH ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS**

The Secretary of the Senate read the following matters and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

**MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Letter from the House of Representatives, informing the Senate that, on 2 June 2020, the House of Representatives passed the following House bills, in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate:

House Bill No. 6817, entitled

AN ACT PROHIBITING THE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PERSONS WHO ARE DECLARED CONFIRMED, SUSPECT, PROBABLE AND RECOVERED CASES OF COVID-19, REPATRIATED FILIPINOS, HEALTH-CARE WORKERS, RESPONDERS, AND SERVICE WORKERS AND PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION THEREOF

**To the Committee on Justice and Human Rights**

House Bill No. 6595, entitled

AN ACT MANDATING THE INCLUSION OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH, AS AN ELECTIVE COURSE IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM

**To the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education**

House Bill No. 6654, entitled

AN ACT REORGANIZING AND CONVERTING THE INSURANCE COMMISSION INTO A COLLEGIAL BODY, AMENDING SECTIONS 437, 438 AND 439 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10607, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "THE INSURANCE CODE," AS AMENDED

**To the Committees on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies; and Justice and Human Rights**

House Bill No. 6816, entitled

AN ACT ENSURING PHILIPPINE FINANCIAL INDUSTRY RESILIENCY AGAINST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**To the Committees on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies; and Ways and Means**

House Bill No. 6470, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10366, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS TO DESIGNATE PRECINCTS ASSIGNED TO ACCESSIBLE POLLING PLACES EXCLUSIVELY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND SENIOR CITIZENS"

**To the Committees on Electoral Reforms and People's Participation; and Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development**

House Bill No. 6599, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK FOR CITIZENS PARTICIPATION IN LEGISLATIVE POLICY-MAKING THROUGH THE USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS

**To the Committees on Electoral Reforms and People's Participation; and Public Information and Mass Media**

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House Bill No. 6554, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JANUARY 22 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY TO BE KNOWN AS "NATIONAL FARMERS DAY"

**To the Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform**

House Bill No. 6570, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE CHINESE NEW YEAR'S DAY A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN THE PHILIPPINES

**To the Committee on Constitutional Amendments and Revision of Codes**

House Bill No. 6768, entitled

AN ACT AFFORDING MORE PROTECTION TO CONSUMERS OF FINANCIAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

**To the Committees on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies; and Trade, Commerce and Entrepreneurship**

and House Bill No. 6803, entitled

AN ACT MANDATING THE PROVISION OF COMPREHENSIVE RENAL REPLACEMENT THERAPY (RRT) TO PATIENTS WITH END STAGE RENAL DISEASE IN NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS, INCREASING FOR THE PURPOSE THE PHILHEALTH PACKAGE RATE FOR MEMBERS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

**To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance**

**BILLS ON FIRST READING**

Senate Bill No. 1586, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE BASILICA

OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY OF MANAOAG IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF MANAOAG, PROVINCE OF PANGASINAN AS A PILGRIMAGE SITE AND TOURIST DESTINATION, PROVIDING FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Revilla, Jr.

**To the Committees on Tourism; Public Works; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1587, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING AUGUST 12 OF EVERY YEAR AS THE NATIONAL YOUTH DAY

Introduced by Senator Revilla, Jr.

**To the Committee on Youth**

**RESOLUTION**

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 438, entitled

RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE TO DIRECT THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO INITIATE A MORE COMPREHENSIVE AND EQUITABLE RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC WITHOUT SACRIFICING THE ATTENTION TO OTHER HEALTH-RELATED CONCERNS

Introduced by Senator Revilla, Jr.

**To the Committee on Rules**

**COMMUNICATION**

Letter from the Executive Secretary of the Office of the President, respectfully transmitting to the Senate the 10th Report of the President to the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee, pursuant to Section 5 of Republic Act No. 11469, otherwise known as the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act.

**To the Committee on Finance**

## PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR GO

Availing himself of the privilege hour, Senator Go challenged all government agencies concerned to immediately release rightful compensation for the health workers who perished or who were infected by the COVID-19 virus.

*Following is the full text of Senator Go's privilege speech:*

On March 24, 2020, we passed the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act to empower the government in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. Now, we will be passing the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act or Bayanihan 2. There are still commitments in the previous law that until now have not been acted upon. It was revealed during the plenary deliberations last Tuesday that the benefits for health workers have not been provided yet. Thirty-two *na ang namatay na health workers, ilang daan na ang nagkasakit, at ilang libong pamilya na ang apektado na pahihirapan pa natin dahil sa matagal na proseso ng pagbibigay ng serbisyo.*

*Bakit po nangyari ito? Dumaan ang Abril, dumaan ang Mayo, ngayon ay Hunyo na. Hanggang ngayon, hindi pa naibibigay ang benepisyo na dapat matanggap ng ating health workers o ng kanilang mga pamilyang naulila.*

*Ang ating mga medical frontliners ang mga bayani sa laban na ito. Sila po ang nagsasakripisyo, nagpapakamatay para iligtas ang buhay ng kapwa nating Pilipino. Ang simpleng benepisyo na nasa batas hindi man lamang mabigyan ng tamang oras o atensiyon ng ating mga opisyal para ayusin at maipamahagi sa kanila.*

As Chair of the Committee on Health and Demography and your former colleague in the Executive, I have always been supportive of our government agencies. I have also been firm in defending the budget. *Magkasama tayo noon at nagtiwala ako sa kakayahan ninyo. Pero kagaya ng sinasabi ko noon pa man, kung may nakikita akong mali, magsasalita ako. Kapag tungkol sa serbisyo at trabaho, para sa tao ang pinag-uusapan, magsasalita ako.*

The President has been very clear against red tape. In fact, he has firmly stated that within 42 to 72 hours, all papers should have been acted upon. *Ang ibig sabihin ay huwag patagalin, huwag patulugin sa lamesa. Dalawang buwan na po, wala pa rin. Bakit matagal o sadya bang pinapatagal o wala pang guma-*

*galaw sa inyo? Pangulo na rin mismo ang nagsabi na dapat mabigyan ng karampatang suporta ang ating mga health workers at ang kanilang mga pamilya. Huwag nating hayaan na mabalewala ang sakripisyo nila dahil lamang sa mabagal na bureaucracy.*

I am also dismayed by the conflicting statements of the DBM and the Department of Health. *Kailangan daw ng guidelines bago ilabas ang pera; ang sabi naman ng DOH, hindi na kailangan. Hoy, DBM at DOH, pati na rin po ang DOLE! mag-usap-usap naman kayo at mag-coordinate kayo sa isa't isa! Marahil ay hindi po alam ng Pangulo. Patay-patayan kayo.*

*Ngayon, na-expose na sa publiko ang problema—mag-i-issue kayo ng joint issuance para i-implement ang isang bagay na noon pa ninyo dapat ginawa. Kung kailan kayo sinabihan, doon pa lamang ninyo ginagawa iyong guidelines. Kung kailan kayo pinuna, doon lang ninyo tatawagan ang mga pamilyang naulila ng frontliners na sinakripisyo ang kanilang buhay para sa bayan. Hindi naman po siguro kayo mga bata na kailangan pang pagsabihan kung ano ang dapat gawin o ano ang mga tama.*

*Sa mga undersecretaries, assistant secretaries, down to the director diyan sa mga opisina, dapat tulungan ninyo naman po ang inyong mga secretaries kasi hindi nila kayang mag-isa sa panahon ngayon. Gumising naman kayo. Nagtutulug-tulugan ba kayo o nagpapatay-patayan kayo o talagang patay na kayo?*

*Kulang ang salapi para bayaran ang kabayanihan nila.*

*Serbisyong maayos lamang naman ang puwede nating maisukli sa mga nagtatrabaho para sa bayan. Kung ayaw ninyong magtrabaho, umalis na kayo. Ginagawa na nga ng Pangulo ang lahat, iyong mga tao sa baba ayaw tumulong, ayaw gumalaw. Umalis na kayo!*

*Ganito ba talaga ang burukrasya? Namatayan na nga, pinapahirapan pa. Dapat nga ihatid ninyo agad ang tseke sa pamilya, mismo sa bahay nila. Iabot ninyo doon. Masasayang lamang ang oras ninyo sa pagsagot ng mga batikos kung kaya sana ay gumalaw na lamang kayo sa lalong madaling panahon. Wala na iyong programang "Hoy Gising" pero, "Hoy, gumising naman kayo!"*

Our health workers are doing one of the most difficult and dangerous jobs against an unseen enemy. The sickness until now has no cure. They have paid the ultimate price — their lives. The rest of our countrymen and women

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will continue to live. *Huwag naman sana kung kayo kaya ang mamatayan at pahirapan pa sa pagbigay ng tulong sa inyo tulad ng ginagawa ninyo sa mga Pilipinong apektado. Ewan ko na lamang kung hindi kayo mamatay sa sama ng loob.*

As the Chair of the Senate Committee on Health and Demography, and as a member of the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee, the implementation of the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act I calls upon the concerned agencies to remedy this immediately and release the rightful compensation for our health workers who have died and have been infected by COVID-19 as provided by law.

*Maawa naman kayo.*

### **PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY OF SENATOR DRILON**

At the outset, Senator Drilon commended Senator Go for expressing his concern as regards the plight of the health workers who died or who were infected by the COVID-19 virus. However, he wondered why Senator Go has requested to not entertain questions or interpellations after his privilege speech.

Senate President Sotto recalled that he and Senator Enrile were also denied the chance to ask questions to Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago during the deliberation on the Reproductive Health bill. However, he said that the usual practice is that an interpellation would follow after each Member delivers a speech. He advised Senator Go to allow interpellations next time, although he admitted that one cannot force anyone to yield the floor to anyone when he rises.

Senator Cayetano believed that Senator Santiago refused interpellation on some issues on RH because she was focusing on theology, being a holder of a master's degree in the field, thus she was lecturing about the Catholic doctrine.

Senate President Sotto said that Senator Santiago refused to be interpellated not because she did not want to or because she was not capable of answering the questions but because she simply refused to talk to Senator Enrile. He said that they understood the point of Senator Santiago as well as the point earlier raised by Senator Drilon, but added that Senator Go also has the prerogative to refuse to answer questions.

Senator Drilon said that his parliamentary inquiry was premised on the privilege of the one who has the floor not to take questions during the period of interpellations, the reason why Senate President Sotto cited the case of Senator Santiago. However, he said that the case of Senator Santiago was a peculiar circumstance as he surmised that she might have already been suffering then from an ailment and did not want to be burdened with additional questions from the likes of Senator Enrile and Senate President Sotto. He stated that he was just putting the matter for discussion in recognition of the parliamentary rules and, the privileges of a senator on the floor.

Asked if such was the new normal in Congress, Senate President Sotto answered in the negative.

For his part, Senator Go expressed his appreciation to Senator Drilon for the reminder. However, he said that he would be willing to be interpellated depending on the issue. He stated that the issue he spoke about on the floor was his privilege.

### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI**

Senator Zubiri said that the Body was actually very appreciative that Senator Go now recognized the shortcomings of the Department of Health (DOH). He recalled that the Body earlier adopted Senate Resolution No. 362, which called for the immediate resignation of Secretary Francisco T. Duque, asking for a leadership change in the DOH. He noted that even though the DOH has good undersecretaries and assistant secretaries, it was the leadership that was giving them direction. He believed that even though President Duterte had promised the families of the deceased doctors and nurses that they would be given P1 million each as stated in the Republic Act No. 11469 or the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, the President may not have been aware that the promise had not yet been fulfilled. He expressed support for Senate President Sotto's own query into what happened to the said funds. He said that he, along with Senators Angara, Binay, Gatchalian, and Villanueva, had come out with a letter asking the DOH to release the funds the soonest possible time, while other Members such as Senator Recto, had also given their comments on the matter.

He hoped that Senator Go, who has seen such shortcomings, would relay to the powers-that-be that it is time to act, rather than turn a blind eye, so that in the coming months – whether there would



be a rise in the wave or decline of the COVID-19 cases – the DOH, with an inspired and renewed leadership, would be able to perform its clean-up operations and implementation of the needed general quarantine. He lamented that the current leadership could not even fulfill the simple granting of the mandated compensation for the public and private health workers who died while fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and that their families have long been waiting for financial support from the government. He believed that Senator Go, who had been a part of the Cabinet before being elected senator, might be in a better position to show the President the lapses in the leadership of the health department.

Senate President Sotto added that he had personally sent yesterday a very strongly worded letter to the DOH concerning the matter.

#### PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY OF SENATOR TOLENTINO

Senator Tolentino said that prior to the resumption of the Senate proceedings on May 4, the Chamber adopted Senate Resolution No. 372, Amending Rule XI, Section 22 and Rule XIV, Section 41 of the *Rules of the Senate*. He said that based on the May 4, 2020 transcripts, there was no definitive closure as to when the hybrid proceedings would end. He then sought clarification on when the effectivity of the hybrid rules would end, and how it would affect the State of the Nation Address which the President would deliver before Congress on the fourth Monday of July. He said that as the records would show, several Members had manifested that the hybrid, the teleconferencing, should end on June 30, while Senator Zubiri stated that it should be contemporaneous with the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ).

Senator Tolentino stressed the need to have the inquiry definitively answered before the *sine die* adjournment since the country which was currently on GCQ, might shift to Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ) by July.

At this juncture, Senate President Sotto asked Senator Tolentino to read the part of the transcript containing the statement of Senator Drilon and Senator Zubiri.

Senator Tolentino read the relevant portion of 118-page transcript, to wit:

**Senator Drilon:** ... My suggestion is that we allow teleconferencing until June 30, the expiration of Congress, and in July when we go back, if that situation calls for it – *there is a qualification* — we can readopt another resolution.

**Senator Zubiri:** ...The members of the majority of the Senate will determine if there is still a national emergency to extend or to cut short the particular teleconferencing rule. If the Senate President will say it will end on June 30, then we will discuss. So, when we go back after the State of the Nation Address,...we can again determine an extension and the majority of the senators will be deciding.

**Senator Drilon:** So, in effect, the resolution allowing teleconferencing will expire on June 30 this year, 2020, and subject again to a debate when the next session convenes on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of July. Is that the correct interpretation, Mr. President?

Asked by Senate President Sotto how the transcript recorded the Chair's response to the exchange between Senator Drilon and Senator Zubiri, Senator Tolentino replied that the Senate President was not part of the parliamentary conversation. He then continued reading:

**Senator Zubiri:** ... We are amending the general rule, our *Rules of the Senate*, which is the mother rule, – mother rule *po natin iyan* – because we have to publish this. After today, we will ask the secretary to publish this... So, what we did was [*I am abbreviating this*] we placed it in our general rule that during national emergencies or due to *force majeure*, we may be allowed to use teleconferencing or other video teleconferencing technology, with the condition that it is approved by the Senate, majority of the senators.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Tolentino said that apparently, the Body was basing all the discussions on the Chief Executive's declaration of a national health emergency, or Proclamation No. 929 (Declaring a State of Calamity Throughout The Philippines Due To Corona Virus Disease 2019) which began in April and would end in September. He reiterated that his question was premised on what would happen after the Body adjourns that day and whether the Senate would reconvene via teleconferencing mode or follow the traditional constitutional mode of convening physically for the traditional State of the Nation Address.

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## REFERRAL OF SPEECH TO COMMITTEE

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Chair referred the privilege speech of Senator Go to the Committee on Accountability of Public Officers and Investigations as the primary committee and the Committee on Health and to Demography as the secondary committee.

## MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ANGARA

Senator Angara asked the Body to consider the plight of many Senate employees who take public transportation since the transportation situation has not yet been fully addressed. He said that he had only asked staff members who have private cars to help him with the Bayanihan Bill. He said that only a few rapid transit buses are available in the current makeshift arrangement for ferrying employees and that transport options were still very limited.

Senate President Sotto noted that the fact that only 43 out of 900 plus employees of the Senate Secretariat — which does not include the offices of the senators — did not physically report for work during the entire ECQ showed diligence on the part of these personnel. He explained that the employees of the Secretariat had alternating on-site work schedules and that they finds ways to physically report for work.

Senator Angara said that half of the 30 plus employees under his office do not have private cars and were availing of the service of private transportation. He reiterated his appeal to the Body to also consider the situation of the employees relying on public transport. Insofar as the work arrangements adopted by the Secretariat are concerned, he suggested that the senators' offices be given the flexibility to make their own policy on work arrangements for their personal staff.

Senate President Sotto said that such arrangements would be left to each individual senator.

## MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Responding to the manifestation of Senator Tolentino, Senator Zubiri stated that even if majority of all the Members of the Senate would prefer to be physically present for the State of the Nation Address (SONA), there was no way to predict the future. For instance, he explained that the Senate offices were directed to return to normal operations on July 27 for

the SONA and if there would coincidentally be a surge or second wave of COVID-19 cases across Metro Manila and the Philippines by that time, it would be very risky for the senators to physically go to the House of Representatives for the SONA. He suggested that the Body make its decision on whether or not to have a full convening of the Senate on the first day of session on July 27 as it is the time when all Members would have to be physically present. He also informed the Body that according to Senator Go, the Presidential Security Group (PSG) did not agree that about 5,000 people — including all members of the Cabinet and all government officials of the land — should be allowed inside the session hall of House of Representatives. He surmised that the joint session for the SONA might be held in a hybrid system wherein the options are either for the President, together with select members of Congress and the Senate, and without any guests, to be present in the House of Representatives or the President to deliver the SONA *via* teleconferencing from Malacañang, while the senators would watch either at the Senate or at the House of Representatives. He said that at the moment there was nothing final on how the SONA of the President would be delivered amid the COVID-19 pandemic. He reiterated his earlier suggestion that the Members act on the query of Senator Tolentino when the Senate convenes in July or when they could have an all-members' caucus before the SONA and prior to the opening of Congress.

## MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON

Recalling the plenary debate last May 4, 2020 and as borne out of the record read by Senator Tolentino, Senator Drilon noted that the consensus then was that the Senate, as an institution, would decide by a majority vote as to whether it would continue holding hybrid sessions or go back to the old rule for Members to be physically present, although the majority decision would inevitably be based on whether or not the country would still be under the period of emergency because of the pandemic. However, he said that by making that decision, the Body must assert that they have full control of their own legislative calendar. He agreed with Senator Zubiri that the issues ought to be re-examined in July since the hybrid session was indeed dictated by necessity. He said that the Members would have to come up with a decision before the start of the Second Regular Session since many questions would crop up if the current setup would still be followed. For instance, he pointed out that principally, the

present *Rules* do not allow the Members to cast their votes even if they are just in the senators' lounge because they must be personally present in the Session Hall while under the new *Rules* they can vote from anywhere.

Senate President Sotto suggested that the Body convene physically on July 27 at 10 o'clock in the morning, as mandated by the Constitution, and then decide if they would continue to allow teleconferencing. He assumed that the community quarantine would be downgraded by that time.

Senator Tolentino agreed that the decision would have to be made a day or earlier prior to the resumption of session.

Senate President Sotto disclosed that the Presidential Security Group and the Office of the President have been communicating with the Senate Secretariat and the Senate Secretary, as well as the Secretary General of the House of Representatives. He said that their initial proposal was for the President to deliver his State-Of-The-Nation address in Malacañang, and that it would be up to the senators and congressmen where they would want to listen. He said that the plans have not yet been finalized, and that the Members would have to agree on what to do.

Senator Zubiri agreed that they could monitor the SONA from the Senate if the President could not be physically present in the House of Representatives.

#### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, the session was suspended.

*It was 2:47 p.m.*

#### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 5:05 p.m., the session was resumed.

#### **PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 430**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 430, entitled

RESOLUTION DECLARING AS READ  
AND APPROVED THE JOURNAL  
OF THE 67<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE  
SENATE.

The Secretary of the Senate read the text of the resolution, to wit:

RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, That the Journal of the 67th Session, June 1, 2, and 3, 2020 be declared, as it is hereby declared, read and approved.

#### **ZUBIRI AMENDMENT**

On the text of the resolution, as proposed by Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the change in the dates from "June 1, 2, and 3 2020" to JUNE 1, 2, 3 AND 4, 2020.

#### **ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 430**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Proposed Resolution No. 430 was adopted by the Body.

#### **PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 431**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 431, entitled

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE  
PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION  
OF TWENTY (20) PRINTED AND  
ONE HUNDRED (100) DIGITAL  
COPIES OF THE JOURNAL AND  
THE RECORD OF THE SENATE FOR  
THE FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF  
THE EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF  
THE PHILIPPINES.

The Secretary of the Senate read the text of the resolution, to wit:

RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, To authorize, as it hereby authorizes, the production of twenty (20) printed and one hundred (100) digital copies of the Journal and the Record of the Senate for the First Regular Session of the Eighteenth Congress of the Philippines, and its distribution under the direction of the Secretary of the Senate.

#### **ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 431**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Proposed Resolution No. 431 was adopted by the Body.

**SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 11**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 11, entitled

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF THE EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE PHILIPPINES NOT LATER THAN TWELVE O' CLOCK MIDNIGHT TODAY, JUNE 3, 2020.

The Secretary of the Senate read the text of the resolution, to wit:

RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives be authorized, as they are hereby authorized, to declare the First Regular Session of the Eighteenth Congress of the Philippines, adjourned sine die, by adjourning the sessions of their respective Houses not later than twelve o'clock midnight today.

RESOLVED FURTHER That a committee of three (3) Members of the Senate, appointed by the Senate President, join a committee of the House of Representatives to inform the President of the Republic that the First Regular Session of the Eighteenth Congress is about to close, and that the two (2) Houses are ready to adjourn unless the President has a message or communication to transmit to them.

**ZUBIRI AMENDMENT**

On the title of the resolution, as proposed by Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the change in the date from "JUNE 3, 2020" to JUNE 4, 2020.

**ADOPTION OF SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 11**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection. Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 11 was adopted by the Body.

**COMMITTEE TO NOTIFY THE PRESIDENT**

Pursuant to Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 11, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Senate President appointed Senators Binay,

Cayetano and Tolentino as members of the committee, on the part of the Senate, to notify the President that the First Regular Session of the Eighteenth Congress was about to adjourn *sine die*.

**CLOSING STATEMENT OF SENATE PRESIDENT SOTTO**

As the First Regular Session of the 18th Congress was about to close, Senate President Sotto delivered the following speech:

My esteemed colleagues in the Senate, hardworking civil servants of the Senate and other government agencies, my fellow citizens:

Today, on the part of the Senate, we hold the last plenary of the First Regular Session of the Eighteenth Congress of the Philippines.

First, I raise up to God our thanks for the gift of life in these trying times, when the spectre of morality hovers above the world like a cloud and eternity threatens to visit like a thief in the night. It is a time where social interaction is the disruption point; when news may be real or fake; when everyone is a broadcaster in three seconds by pressing a "send" button; and also when fine dining food is brought home by motorcycles. We can say that we are going through an episode of turbulence, and hope that it will soon be over.

Many thanks too to our people who honored us with a chance to serve in the Legislative department. My heartfelt thanks to my esteemed colleagues, Senator "Never Absent" Tolentino during the ECQ; and of course, the physically present, Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, Senators Gatchalian, Villanueva, Lapid, Zubiri, Dela Rosa, Binay, Pimentel, Angara, Hontiveros, Revilla, and Poe for being physically present here in the session hall despite all the health hazards and risks during the ECQ period. And of course, allow me to convey my appreciation to my colleagues who have been actively participating through the Webex teleconferencing and they were never absent. Senators Ralph Recto, Franklin Drilon, Pia Cayetano, Bong Go, Richard Gordon, Imee Marcos, Manny Pacquiao, Francis Pangilinan, and Cynthia Villar, thank you to all of you.

And on a personal note, again, my deep gratitude to you my esteemed colleagues for a year of trust and confidence to be at the helm of this revered democratic institution.

In this regard, I stand with the Senate in the creation of a legislative agenda that is committed to saving lives and maintaining growth in the economy, and for as long as the coronavirus poses



a threat to the world by unifying government policy in anticipation for living in a new world.

With the people's interests in mind, your Senate deemed it appropriate to respond to this pandemic within our mandate and in the best and most efficient way possible. Even before the lockdown was over, your Senate conducted a number of hearings, convened for a special session, and resumed in regular sessions. This resulted in, among others, the signing by the President of Republic Act No. 11469 or the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act authorizing the President limited powers and only for a period of time to exercise powers necessary to carry out a declared national policy to deal with the national emergency and address the urgent needs of the nation arising from the pandemic.

Your Senate received the weekly reports relative to the implementation of the law and as part of our oversight functions, your senators have submitted a number of reports to the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee by way of improving the implementation of Republic Act No. 11469 which was diligently headed by Sen. Pia Cayetano, our Oversight Committee chairperson.

On 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020, the Senate convened into the Committee of the Whole where in a series of hearings, your senators met with economic managers, key members of the interagency task force and other stakeholders. This is to keep us abreast of the current situation and to give our comments and suggestions on how the national government can best respond to the coronavirus pandemic. The whole nation also tuned in as we livestreamed these hearings to be informed of the actual state of our country during its battle against COVID-19.

Before the lockdown, your Senate worked hard on other legislative measures. It is my duty and also my pride to report on the accomplishments of your Senate in the First Regular Session of the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress, as follows:

- Eight (8) bills had been signed into law;
- Two (2) bills are pending approval of the President;
- One (1) Senate Joint Resolution;
- Ten (10) Senate bills and eleven (11) bills originating from the lower house or a total of 21 bills have been passed on Third Reading;
- Ten (10) bills had been approved on Second Reading;
- Twenty-six (26) bills are pending discussion on Second Reading;
- Fifty-two (52) resolutions have been adopted of which fifty (50) were simple resolutions; and
- Five (5) concurrent resolutions have been passed.

The bills that have been signed into law are the "Act Postponing The May 2020 Barangay And Sangguniang Kabataan Elections"; the "Act Establishing Malasakit Centers in all Department of Health hospitals in the country"; the "Act Extending Availability of the 2019 Appropriations to December 31, 2020"; the "Act Appropriating Funds for the operation of the government of the Republic of the Philippines from January 1 to December 31, 2020"; the "Act Modifying the Salary Schedule for Civilian Government Personnel and Authorizing the Grant of Additional Benefits"; the "Act Increasing Excise Taxes on Alcohol and E-cigarettes"; the "Act Designating the Third Sunday of November Every Year as the National Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims, Survivors and their Families"; and the "Bayanihan to Heal as One Act."

I am grateful for the cooperation of my colleagues in shepherding and shaping the legislative outputs that I have mentioned.

On home ground, I would like to commend the Senate Secretary for leading the team of the officers and staff of the Senate Secretariat that has ensured the Senate's continued service to the people.

Thank you to the Medical and Dental Bureau, especially to Dr. Cristeta Cocjin and Dr. Renato Sison, for being on the frontline in implementing sound health protocols for our employees.

Thank you also to the officers and staff of the Administration and Finance headed by Dep. Sec. Arnel Bañas, for ensuring that the employees are well taken care of during the height of the pandemic, and making certain that the Senate premises is at par with the best practices in minimizing the COVID-19 infection.

I would also like to commend the EDP-MIS Bureau for easing us into digital transition. They are the people whom we should thank for arranging our meetings, hearings, and sessions via the Internet. To them and to all other Senate services—the OSAA, the Sergeant-at-Arms, and all the other people who have given services to the Senate—thank you for coming up with our protocols for survival and continued service.

In closing, I would like to express, in behalf of the Senate, the nation's appreciation to our

frontliners in so many fields of endeavor—from health to sanitation, from social welfare to public transport, from local governments to police personnel—your nation salutes you.

Let me assure the Filipino people that the Senate is here to ensure that government continues to serve the public's interest. But let me also say that as dutiful citizens, the Filipino must likewise contribute to this endeavor.

There is no challenge greater than this—to wean away from our old and familiar ways and see the old world wither behind us. With the Filipino nation, I am ready to face the challenge of being reborn in a new world with you as new men and women invigorated with the mission of working together for a better and safer future.

*Maraming salamat po, at mabuhay ang Senado!*

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI**

Senator Zubiri reminded the Members of Senate Resolution No. 15 (Resolution authorizing all regular, standing committees, and special committees of the Senate to conduct hearings, meetings, and consultations during every recess of the Senate to have continuity in the process of passing pending proposed legislation, and to conduct investigations on issues of national interest to aid in crafting relevant legislation) which allows the committees to continue conducting hearings during the break.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATE PRESIDENT SOTTO**

At this juncture, Senate President Sotto also gave special thanks to the Legislative Department, headed by Deputy Secretary Edwin B. Bellen, for their services.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ANGARA**

Senator Angara likewise commended the Legislative Budget Research and Monitoring Office (LBRMO) for working overtime on important measures.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI**

For his part, Senator Zubiri thanked the Secretariat for all their work and sacrifice, particularly those who burn the midnight oil in the Senate.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO**

Senator Cayetano expressed her gratitude to the legislative support team for their service. She also reminded the committee secretaries to continue to abide by the three-day notice rule since most of the senators work from home even while the Senate is in recess. She requested that the Secretariat notify the senators earlier so that they can avoid having several committee hearings scheduled on the same date. She said that it would allow the Members to attend more hearings than they normally would.

Senator Zubiri also expressed his appreciation to Senator Angara and his other colleagues who worked double time the past week.

#### **SINE DIE ADJOURNMENT**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Senate President Sotto declared the First Regular Session of the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress, on the part of the Senate, adjourned *sine die*.

*It was 5:26 p.m.*

I hereby certify to the correctness of the foregoing.



**ATTY. MYRA MARIE D. VILLARICA**

*Secretary of the Senate*

*Approved pursuant to Senate Resolution No. 54  
(Proposed Senate Resolution No. 430)*