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SESSION NO. 31
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NINETEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

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Senate of the Philippines

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CALL TO ORDER

At 3:03 p.m., the Senate President, Hon. Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri, called the session to order.

PRAYER

Sen. Joseph Victor G. Ejercito led the prayer, to wit:

Let us put ourselves in the presence of the Lord.

Mahal naming Ama, sana po ay gabayan Mo kami lalo na ngayon na ipapasa na po namin ang aming badyet at marami ho kaming mga dapat talakayin. Nawa ay lagi Ninyo po kaming gabayan, na lagi naming ipaglalaman ang interes ng nakararami at hangarin na maiangat ang antas ng buhay ng bawat Pilipino.

Gabayan Mo po kami na lagi kaming nasa tama at laging ipaglalaman ang interes ng nakararami.

Ang lahat ng ito ay iniaalay namin sa Iyo, aming Ama.

Amen.

ROLL CALL

Upon direction of the Senate President, the Secretary of the Senate, Atty. Renato N. Bantug Jr., called the roll, to which the following senators responded:

Angara, S.	Padilla, R. C.
Binay, M. L. N. S.	Poe, G.
Dela Rosa, R. B. M.	Revilla Jr., R. B.
Ejercito, J. V. G.	Tolentino, F. T. N.
Estrada, J. E.	Tulfo, R. T.
Gatchalian, W.	Villanueva, J.
Go, C. L. T.	Villar, C. A.
Lapid, M. L. M.	Villar, M. A.
Legarda, L.	Zubiri, J. M. F.
Marcos, I. R.	

With 19 senators present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum.

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Senators Cayetano (P), Escudero, Hontiveros, and Pimentel arrived after the roll call.

Senator Cayetano (A) was absent on account of sickness as indicated in the November 23, 2022 letter of the senator's chief of staff.

BIRTHDAY GREETING

At the instance of Senator Villanueva, the Body greeted Senator Padilla on the occasion of his birth anniversary.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

With the permission of the Body, the session was suspended.

It was 3:06 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:07 p.m., the session was resumed.

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body dispensed with the reading of the Journal of Session No. 30 (November 22, 2022) and considered it approved.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

At this juncture, Senator Villanueva acknowledged the presence in the gallery of the following guests:

- Mayor Johnny Flores Bacongallo and Vice Mayor Tomas Bacaoco of Patnongon, Antique;
- Mayor Edgar Rama of Poro, Camotes Islands, Cebu; and
- former Mayor Bernard Dy of Cauayan, Isabela.

Senate President Zubiri welcomed the guests to the Senate.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 10 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 4488

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 4488 (Committee Report No. 10), entitled

AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES FROM JANUARY ONE TO DECEMBER THIRTY-ONE, TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY-THREE.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of committee amendments.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 3:09 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:12 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

Senator Angara presented the highlights of the committee amendments in the following speech:

Pagkatapos po ng mahigit isang linggo ng mga debate at talakayan dito sa plenaryo, handa na po ang inyong Committee on Finance para ihain ang iilang amendments sa Committee Report No. 10 tungkol sa pambansang budget nitong 2023 on House Bill No. 4488.

Karamihan, kung hindi lahat, ng mga senador ay may iminungkahing pagbabago, at sinubukan po nating tulungan ang lahat ng ating kasamahan maging sa Mayorya o sa Minorya. Sinigurado po natin na kahit may mababago sa detalye ng panukala, humahalili pa rin ang kabuuan ng panukalang badyet sa mga adhikain ng bagong administrasyon ni Presidente Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr.

Pinakinggan din natin ang mga naiisip ng ating mga kasamahan tulad ng mga maiinit na isyu, at dahil dito ay naglipat po tayo ng ilang halaga mula sa confidential funds para mailagay sa maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE) ng ibang ahensiya.

Pinagtibay po natin ang mga programa at proyekto para lalong umigting ang food security natin bilang bansa sa pamamagitan ng pagpapalakas ng ating agrikultura.

Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita Program

Sa mungkahi ni Senior Vice Chairperson Imee R. Marcos, nilinaw po natin na ang pondong nakalaan para sa Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita Program ay gagamitin para makapagbuo ng isang distribution system kung saan ang mga ani ng mga magsasaka at huli ng mga mangingisda ay diretsong makakaabot sa mga bibili nito sa murang halaga.

Young Farmers Challenge Fund

Sa rekomendasyon ni Senator Marcos, patuloy ang pondo para sa Young Farmers Challenge Fund na gagamitin para sa mga programang makapaghihikayat sa kabataan na bumalik o lumahok sa agrikultura at bigyan ng pagkakataon na makabili o makaupa ng lupa na maaari nilang taniman.

Different Forms of "Ayuda"

Tuloy pa rin ang Protective Services for Individuals and Families in Difficult Circumstances Program ng DSWD kung saan napapaloob ang assistance to communities in need, o CAN, Community-Based Program, at ang Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) na dinagdagan po ng ating Kamara alinsunod sa hiling, no less, ni Senate President, Sen. Juan Miguel F. Zubiri at Majority Leader, Sen. Joel Villanueva, Minority Leader, Koko Pimentel, Senior Vice Chairperson and Senate President Pro Tempore, Sen. Loren Legarda, Vice Chairperson Sen. Cynthia A. Villar at Sen. Mark A. Villar, Sen. Grace Poe, Sen. Maria Lourdes Nancy S. Binay, Sen. Joseph Victor G. Ejercito, Sen. Francis "Tol" N. Tolentino, Sen. Christopher Lawrence T. Go, Sen. Risa Hontiveros, Sen. Ronald "Bato" M. Dela Rosa, at sina Sen. Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada, Sen. Robinhood C. Padilla, Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla, Sen. Alan Peter S. Cayetano, Sen. Manuel "Lito" M. Lapid, at Sen. Raffy Tulfo.

Sa hiling din po nila, magkakaroon ng mas malaking pondo para sa Government Internship Program at sa Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) Program sa ilalim ng DOLE.

Sinigurado rin po natin na sa susunod na taon, handa ang iba't ibang ahensiya ng gobyerno para tumugon at tumulong kapag may dumating na sakuna o kalamidad sa ating bansa.



Quick Response Fund and NDRRMF

Halimbawa, may malaking pondo para sa siyam na ahensiya bilang Quick Response Fund (QRF) nila. Kasama po rito ang DA, DepEd, DOH, DILG-BFP, DILG-PNP, DND, DPWH, DSWD at DA-NIA. Mananatili rin ang halaga para sa National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Fund (NDRRMF).

Green Evacuation Centers

Naglagay rin tayo ng special provision tungkol sa pagtatayo ng mga green evacuation centers na kung saan bibigyan ng prayoridad ang mga high-risk areas batay sa Georisk Philippines ng DOST-PHIVOLCS.

Assessment and Retrofitting of National Bridges

Nilinaw rin natin na sa ilalim ng Bridge Program ng DPWH, kailangang gastusan ng ahensiya ang pagkakaroon ng assessment ng structural strength, repair, and retrofitting ng mga national bridges ng bansa, lalong-lalo na sa mga lugar na madalas tamaan ng bagyo o kaya may malaking risk sa lindol at iba pang mga seismic activities.

Once again, your committee affirmed that education shall receive the highest budgetary priority in the coming year.

Government Assistance and Subsidies for Education and Training

We have assured that government will pull all the stops it can so that every Filipino is given ample opportunity to gain an education or to receive proper skills training. Funding support shall also be increased for the training programs under TESDA, including the Special Training for Employment Program (STEP) and the Training for Work Scholarship Program (TWSP).

Special provisions have also been included mandating the DOLE and TESDA to work on the convergence of their respective training and livelihood programs to ensure that beneficiaries are able to stay employed or to have a steady source of income.

Tuloy-tuloy rin po ang suporta para sa pagresponde sa pandemya sa pagpapaigting ng ating sistemang pangkalusugan.

Kalusugan Para sa Lahat

Pagdating naman sa pagpapalakas ng ating sistema, popondohan pa rin ng Senado ang Health Facilities Enhancement Program (HFEP) ng DOH. May dagdag rin para sa iba't ibang ospital ng DOH kasama ang National Children's Hospital na sa tingin namin ay ikatutuwa ni Senator Tulfo. Sa pag-uudyok din nina Senior Vice Chairperson Sen. Pia Cayetano, at Vice Chairpersons Sen. Bong Go at Sen. JV Ejercito, naglagay po tayo ng malaking pondo bilang tulong sa pagtatayo ng mga specialty hospital sa iba't ibang rehiyon ng bansa—isang programa na malapit sa puso ng ating Pangulo.

Magkakaroon din ng malaking pondo para sa Benefit Package Improvement sa ilalim ng PhilHealth sang-ayon sa Universal Health Care Law. Ang pondong ito ay pwedeng gamitin sa pag-expand o paglaki ng coverage para sa mga sakit tulad ng dialysis, mental health outpatient services, z-benefits packages, severe acute malnutrition, at iba pang outpatient benefits tulad ng libreng konsulta, libreng lab test at diagnostic services, gamot, at mga emergency medical services.

Nadagdagan din po ang pondo para sa Medical Assistance to Indigent and Financially-Incapacitated Patients (MAIFP) para punan ng gobyerno ang pagpapagamot ng ating mga mahihirap na kababayan. Sa rekomendasyon naman ni Vice Chairperson Sen. Risa Hontiveros, dinagdagan ang pondo ng Philippine National AIDS Council.

Bukod sa edukasyon at kalusugan, mahalaga sa ating kaunlaran ang mabisang sistema para sa pampublikong transportasyon. Kaya bukod sa mga proyekto sa ilalim ng Build, Better More Program (BBM) ng gobyerno, sinigurado rin po natin na nakatuon ang gobyerno sa kapakanan ng ating mga commuters.

Active Transportation Facilities and Commuter Safety

Halimbawa, nakasaad sa isang special provision kung saan gagamitin lamang para sa

paggawa, pag-upgrade, at pag-rehabilitate ng mga kalye, tulay, at road drainage ang koleksyon mula sa Motor Vehicle Users' Charge.

Kasama rito ang paglalagay sa lahat ng mga bridge at road projects ng mga bike lanes, pedestrian walkways, at grade crosswalks, accessibility ramps, open and green spaces, pedestrian refuge islands, at iba pang tinatawag na road safety features at active transportation facilities — alinsunod sa mungkahi ng ating vice chairperson, Sen. Grace Poe.

The committee has also assured several initiatives and support of developing our energy sector.

Total Electrification Project

Upon the initiative of Vice Chairperson Sen. Win Gatchalian, significant funding under the DOE from the fees and revenues earned from the exploration, development, and exploitation of energy resources shall be used exclusively for the Total Electrification Project, specifically the components identified and approved by the National Electrification Administration and National Power Corporation.

Philippine Energy Research and Policy Institute

Funding shall also be provided for the organization of the Philippine Energy Research and Policy Institute, again upon the initiative of Vice Chairperson Senator Gatchalian, pursuant to the law he authored to improve our knowledge and knowhow on energy policy.

We also continue to provide support for our MSMEs and small businesses in support of the administration's drive for inclusion and to transform our economy.

MSME Programs

Upon the recommendation of Senior Vice Chair Marcos, some programs of the DTI will receive increased funding, such as the Shared Services Facilities Program, the Malikhaing Pinoy Program in support of the new Philippine Creative Industries Development Act, also supported by Vice Chair Mark Villar.

Support for Cooperatives

Upon Vice Chair Hontiveros' request, we have also increased appropriations for the Cooperative Development Authority, including its celebration of the National Cooperatives Month—I know this is also dear to our presiding officer—and for the Capacity Development of Cooperative Council (CDCC) and of local cooperative development officers, among many others.

Sa tulong naman po ni Vice Chair Nancy Binay, sinisigurado rin natin na may suporta para sa Department of Tourism para lalong lumago ang turismo sa ating bansa.

Maintenance of Foreign Tourism Offices

Dinagdagan natin ang pondo para sa operational expenses ng mga foreign offices ng DOT.

Ecotourism, Agro-Tourism, and Heritage Tourism

Naglagay din tayo ng special provision kung saan binibigyan ng halaga ang mga ecotourism sites at ang mga green hotels at accommodation facilities para lalong mapangalagaan ang angking ganda ng ating kalikasan alinsunod sa panukala ni Senior Vice Chair Loren Legarda. Hinihikayat din ang DOT na makipag-coordinate sa ibang ahensiya ng gobyerno tulad ng NCCA, DA, DENR, at mga LGU para maitanghal nang tama ang mga magagandang tanawin sa mga bumibisitang turista.

Indeed, our tourism can be bolstered further if significant support is also given to preserving, conserving, and promoting our culture and heritage.

Increases in Cultural Agencies

Notable increases were made in many of our cultural agencies, namely, the National Commission on Culture and the Arts, the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, the National Library of the Philippines, and the National Archives of the Philippines.



Gabaldon Schools

We included a special provision introduced by Senior Vice Chair Pia Cayetano on the continued conservation and restoration of Gabaldon School Buildings and other notable heritage school buildings across the country pursuant to a law we passed a few years ago.

Traditional Skills Training

Cultural and heritage conservation is also about ensuring that traditional skills are not lost. This is why we included a special provision enjoining the TESDA, in coordination with NCCA, the Philippine Textile Research Institute, and the Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority to include in their non-formal technical vocational education and training programs such skills as wood carving, pottery making, weaving, arts and crafts.

Sa larangan naman ng pabahay o housing, tinulungan po tayo ni Vice Chair Hontiveros para siguraduhin na kasabay ng mga malalaking infrastructure project ng bansa, may sapat na lupang nakalaan para sa socialized at economic housing.

Land Use and Zoning Guidelines for Socialized and Economic Housing

Ayon sa isang special provision na isinulong ni Vice Chair Hontiveros, tinatawag ang DHSUD na makipag-usap sa NEDA at DOTr para makabuo ng land use at zoning guidelines at makabili ng mga lupa sa pamamagitan ng mga key shelter agency nito para masigurado na may affordable housing na malapit sa mga tinatawag na transit stations.

National Housing Authority

May dagdag din para sa National Housing Authority (NHA) at kasama rito ang hiling na Badjao housing ng ating birthday boy, Sen. Robinhood Padilla.

Patuloy din pong idinidiin ng ating panukalang budget ang halaga ng decentralization at devolution para sa kaunlaran ng ating bansa.

Funds for Local Development

Tulad ng binabanggit natin noong sponsorship speech, umaabot sa P820 billion plus ang National Tax Allotment na mapupunta sa ating mga local government unit sa darating na taon at umaasa tayong tataas ito sa darating na mga taon. At bukod dito ay mayroon tayong growth equity fund na magsisilbing financial assistance para sa mga dehadong nahuhuling mga LGU na nangangailangan ng tulong para paigtingin ang kanilang kakayanan para makapaghain ng serbisyo sa kanilang mga mamamayan.

National defense, upholding the rule of law, and protecting the lives and safety of our people also remain among our chief budgetary priorities.

Upon the initiative of Vice Chair Go, additional appropriations were given for the modernization of the Bureau of Fire Protection, which includes the acquisition and improvement of facilities, purchase of fire trucks, firefighting, and personal protective equipment, and other necessary emergency and rescue equipment.

We included in their increases, recommended by Minority Leader Koko Pimentel and Vice Chair Risa Hontiveros, the civil works requested by the NBI, also supported by our majority leader and by Sen. Raffy Tulfo.

To ensure greater representation and, perhaps, promote a more compassionate law enforcement regime, we have adopted the proposal of Vice Chair Poe for a special provision that calls on the Philippine National Police to ensure that at least 10% of all new patrol officer recruits shall be female applicants who shall be assigned to fill up vacancies in women and children's desks.

We continue to support all efforts to strengthen our diplomatic corps and to further enable them to project a better image of our country throughout the world. For instance, the DFA-OSEC will receive increases to its diplomacy program, its consular Assistance to National (ATN) program, as well as augmentation for the purchase of various office equipment, and the operational expenses of some strategic foreign posts such as Tokyo, Japan; Brussels, Belgium; and the United Kingdom.

Paiigtingin din po natin ang mga programa at proyekto ng gobyerno para alagaan at protektahan ang ating kalikasan at palawakin pa lalo ang kaalaman ng mga tao tungkol sa climate change.

Sumang-ayon tayo sa special provision ni Senior Vice Chairperson Legarda na minamandato ang DENR na manguna sa pagtatayo at maintenance ng isang Climate Change Information Management System and Network bilang isang plataporma kung saan makikita ang lahat ng climate change risks ng bansa at ang mga activities and investments hinggil dito para magamit sa national at local development planning and program implementation.

Ayon din sa isa pang special provision, galing din kay Senior Vice Chairperson Legarda, minamandato ang Local Government Academy (LGA) na magkaroon ng mga training programs tungkol sa paggawa ng enhanced local climate change action plans at mga batas hinggil sa environmental protection, ecological solid waste management climate change adaptation and mitigation at disaster risk reduction.

Our support for Philippine sports and athletes will also not waiver.

Philippine Sports Commission

For instance, through the support of Vice Chairperson Christopher Lawrence T. Go, significant infusions will be made into the Philippine Sports Commission as support for our elite athletes for training for regional and world competitions such as the Paris Olympics, the Sea Games, the Asian Games, the Asian Indoor Martial Arts Games, the World Beach Games, the Asian Beach Games, the ASEAN Para Games, the Asian Para Games, and other necessary augmentations to further empower our athletes so that they can win even more competitions at the global scale giving prestige and pride to our country.

Additions were also included for training, seminars, and competitions for arnis, something very dear to our Senate President, and for our participation at the Volleyball Nations League upon the initiative of Senators Alan Peter S. Cayetano and Pia S. Cayetano, our senior vice chairperson; for the preparations, training and support for the Samahang Kickboxing and the Philippine ROTC Games as recommended by Vice Chairperson Sen. Francis N. Tolentino.

For our part, we have also included significant additions to the PSC to support the efforts of the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas in hosting the FIBA World Cup here in the Philippines in 2023.

Ilan lamang po ito sa mga highlights ng pag-amyenda natin para sa panukalang budget ng bansa sa susunod na taon. May isinumite rin tayo na mas buong listahan at breakdown ng mga amendments para masiyasat at pag-aralan ng plenaryo.

With the inputs and support of most, if not all, of our colleagues here in the Senate, we have been able to keep this budget aligned with the objectives and the agenda outlined in the Medium-Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF). Let this be a sign of our broad support to the goals set by the Marcos Administration and our principled commitment to promoting a unified government for the betterment of our people.

We thank profusely the Senate leadership, Senate President Juan Miguel F. Zubiri, Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda, and Majority Leader Joel Villanueva, and his deputies Joseph Victor G. Ejercito and Mark A. Villar, also our vice chairperson and Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel III and Deputy Minority Leader Risa Hontiveros, also a vice chairperson, for their very hard work over the last two weeks. Our work would not have been possible also, of course, without the efforts of the staffs of the various senators from our different offices, the Senate secretariat, and most especially the late nights put in by our highly-competent men and women of the LBRMO led by Dir. Irene Palanca.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 3:29 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:32 p.m., the session was resumed with Senator Ejercito presiding.



ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

At this juncture, Senator Villanueva acknowledged the presence in the gallery of the following guests:

- Rep. Juan Fidel Felipe Nograles of the 4th District of Rizal; and
- Mayor Mario “Kokoy” Salvador of San Jose City, Nueva Ecija.

The Chair welcomed the guests to the Senate.

INQUIRIES OF SENATOR PIMENTEL

Preliminarily, Senator Pimentel stated that he would like to gather additional information before deciding whether or not to support the various components of the amendments, particularly on the matter of confidential and intelligence funds.

He also recommended a 10-day period for plenary deliberations in the next budget cycle, running from Monday to Friday. Senator Angara took note of the request.

Senator Pimentel then sought details about the reduction of some confidential and intelligence funds, which were transferred to some agencies' MOOE. Senator Angara stated that P152,668,000 of confidential and intelligence funds had been realigned, as follows:

- P100 million from DepEd to the Office of the Vice President;
- P5 million to the DFA's MOOE;
- P19.2 million to the DOJ;
- P2 million to the DSWD;
- P6 million to other executive offices; and
- P20 million to the Office of the Ombudsman.

In response to the query whether the OVP's confidential fund increased with the transfer of funds from DepEd, Senator Angara stated that the P100 million to be taken from the DepEd's confidential fund would be transferred to the OVP's MOOE, leaving DepEd with P50 million confidential fund.

Senator Pimentel stated that he wanted to be consistent in his definition of “confidential and intelligence funds” and, as such, had submitted his proposed amendments to the committee, with the proposal for confidential funds totaling P3 billion to be reduced to zero and realigned to more worthy programs. Senator Angara stated that the committee had received Senator Pimentel's written proposals.

Senator Pimentel then read into the record the definition of “confidential and intelligence funds,” *to wit:*

“Confidential fund refers to the lump sum amount provided as such in the General Appropriations Act for National Government Agencies (NGAs), for their confidential expenses ... Confidential Expenses refer to those expenses pertaining/related to surveillance activities in civilian government agencies that are intended to support the mandate or operation of the said agency.

Intelligence fund refers to the lump sum amount provided as such in the GAA for the NGAs ... Intelligence Expenses refer to those related to intelligence information gathering activities of uniformed and military personnel and intelligence practitioners that have direct impact to national security.”

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He stated that the debate on the matter was whether the OVP was entitled to intelligence expenses. He then asserted his stand that the office should not be entitled to such funding because it is neither a military agency nor an intelligence practitioner.

Senator Angara stated that he respected Senator Pimentel's position, but could not agree with him.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended..

It was 3:40 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:52 p.m., the session was resumed.

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the committee amendments as presented and contained in the list furnished to the Members.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

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

HONTIVEROS AMENDMENTS

As proposed by Senator Hontiveros and accepted by the sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved the realignment of the P100 million that was previously realigned from the Confidential Fund of the DepEd to the OVP MOOE, back to the DepEd's Healthy Learners Institution Program under the Support to Schools and Learners Program.

Senator Hontiveros believed that the education reform advocates would breathe a sigh of relief that the P100 million was no longer in the confidential fund and had been transferred to the MOOE, particularly the Healthy Learners Institution Program found in the Support to Schools and Learners Program.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Senator Hontiveros proposed that the remaining P50 million from the DepEd's Confidential Fund (page 372, line 55 of the GAB, Volume 1-A), be transferred to the MOOE of the DepEd's Support to Schools and Learners Program (page 194, line 31 of the GAB, Volume 1-A). She stated that the new MOOE amount for the Support to Schools and Learners Program, including the previously-accepted P100 million, would then be P95,852,200,000.

Senator Angara expressed regret that the committee could not accept the amendment. Instead of P50 million, he proposed the realignment of only P20 million, leaving a P30 million balance in the Confidential Fund.



SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Hontiveros, the session was suspended.

It was 3:58 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:05 p.m., the session was resumed.

HONTIVEROS-ANGARA AMENDMENT

As proposed by Senator Hontiveros and accepted by the sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved to realign P20 million from the confidential funds to the Happy Learners' Institution Program.

HONTIVEROS AMENDMENT

As proposed by Senator Hontiveros and accepted by the sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following special provision, subject to style, wherever applicable in the bill:

DEPED WORK PLAN FOR CONFIDENTIAL FUNDS. – THE DEPED SHALL SUBMIT TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS ITS PROPOSED WORK PLAN FOR THE APPROPRIATED CONFIDENTIAL FUNDS OF THE AGENCY.

Senator Hontiveros stated that the special provision would compel the DepEd to develop a work plan for the use of its confidential funds.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Senator Hontiveros expressed her continuing objection to the placement of confidential funds in agencies that are not involved in national security. She said that other agencies legitimately require the funds for surveillance and other national security programs, such as advocating for the end of human trafficking through the implementation of the Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) Law. She also stated that all public funds should be audited and that exceptions to such large-scale spending must be thoroughly scrutinized before they are enforced.

ESTRADA AMENDMENT

As proposed by Senator Estrada and accepted by the sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved the realignment of P23.441 million from the Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) of the Optical Media Board to the Film Development Council of the Philippines.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PIMENTEL

Senator Pimentel stated that he submitted to Senator Angara a written proposal for the deletion of one intelligence fund and nearly all of the confidential funds for consistency purposes. He clarified that he was not singling out the OVP or the DepEd but was simply following the existing law's definitions of the confidential fund and intelligence fund—the confidential expenses being those that can be charged to the confidential fund, and the intelligence expenses being those that can be charged to the intelligence fund.

Given the definitions, he stated that he could not justify as to why certain agencies should be given intelligence funds and confidential funds in the 2023 GAB. He then proposed the deletion of the following confidential funds:

Office of the President	P2,025,000,000
Office of the Vice President	P 500,000,000
Department of Education	P 150,000,000
Department of Environment and Natural Resources	P 13,950,000
Department of Finance	P 1,000,000
Department of Foreign Affairs	P 50,000,000
Department of the Interior and Local Government	P 100,600,000
Department of Justice	P 168,041,000
Office of the Solicitor General	P 19,200,000
Department of National Defense	P 37,000,000
Department of Social Welfare and Development	P 20,000,000
Maritime Industry Authority	P 600,000
Anti-Money Laundering Council	P 10,000,000
Energy Regulatory Commission	P 15,000,000
Games and Amusement Board	P 4,000,000
National Intelligence Coordinating Agency	P 1,000,000
National Security Council	P 90,000,000
Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity	P 60,000,000
Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency	P 380,000,000
Commission on Audit	P 10,000,000
Office of the Ombudsman	P 51,468,000
Commission on Human Rights	P 1,000,000

He stated that the P1 million allocation for NICA is a confidential fund separate from its intelligence fund, just like the DND funding. He stated that in his proposal, he left PDEA with a P120 million fund because it is a civilian agency that is justifiably entitled to confidential funds. He estimated that the total reduction would be P3,932,859,000.

He then thanked the sponsor for granting some of the funding requirements of some agencies that very much needed augmentation for their priority programs.

He disclosed that while the sponsor did not accept the proposed reduction of P3.9 billion in confidential funds, the latter had previously reported that approximately P152 million had been reduced from the confidential funds under Committee Report No. 10.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS OF SENATOR PIMENTEL

In Section 77 (intelligence funds) of the General Provision, Senator Pimentel proposed the deletion of the phrase "including amounts sourced from savings," such that the new paragraph would read as follows: "No appropriations authorized in this Act as intelligence fund shall be released or disbursed for intelligence activities unless approved by the President of the Philippines."

On the same provision, he proposed the deletion of the entire second paragraph and its substitution with the following sentence: THE USE OF SAVINGS TO AUGMENT INTELLIGENCE FUNDS IS NOT ALLOWED.

Senator Angara rejected the proposed amendments, saying that it would limit the President's power to augment or realign savings to specific items in the budget. He stated that the Supreme Court decision under *Gonzales vs. Macaraig*, G.R. No. 87636, November 19, 1990, explained that while Congress may impose conditions or restrictions as part of its inherent power of appropriation, the restriction must exhibit a connection with money items in a budgetary sense and should not be a general law measure that is a proper subject of a separate legislation.

Senator Pimentel argued that as a general rule, the Constitution provides in Article VI, Section 25, paragraph 5, 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 in the general appropriations law for their respective offices from savings in other items of their respective appropriations.”

He explained that the proposed amendment would both regulate and authorize the government’s power to use savings to augment an item, but not intelligence funds.

Senator Angara replied that there is already an existing law on the subject and that Article VI, Section 25, paragraph 5 of the Constitution should be read in conjunction with the case of *Gonzales vs. Macaraig*. He recalled that the Senate included a provision in the budget that stated that if Congress deleted an item from the budget, the President could no longer supplement it with savings, but the Supreme Court struck down the provision in the General Appropriations Act because it was not the proper subject of the GAA but of a separate law.

He also stated that the Revised Administrative Code, which reenacted provisions in the former Presidential Decree No. 1177 that allowed the President to augment agency budgets through the use of savings, is already the law which authorizes the use of savings. He confirmed that the Senate could amend a substantive provision of the Revised Administrative Code to comply with the Supreme Court’s decision on the use of government savings.

PIMENTEL AMENDMENT

As proposed by Senator Pimentel and accepted by the sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the phrase AND BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS after the phrase “President of the Philippines” on the fourth paragraph of Section 77 (intelligence funds) of the General Provision.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 4:25 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:30 p.m., the session was resumed with Senator Ejercito presiding.

PIMENTEL AMENDMENT

As proposed by Senator Pimentel and accepted by the sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following in the general provisions of the bill, subject to style:

WORK PLAN FOR CONFIDENTIAL FUNDS. - AGENCIES RECEIVING CONFIDENTIAL FUNDS SHALL SUBMIT TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS THEIR PROPOSED WORK PLAN FOR THE APPROPRIATED CONFIDENTIAL FUNDS OF THEIR AGENCY.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 4:32 p.m.



RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:33 p.m., the session was resumed with Senate President Zubiri presiding.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS

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

DIRECTIVE OF THE CHAIR

Senate President Zubiri directed the Secretariat to insert the list of committee amendments approved by the Body earlier into the *Record of the Senate*. (See Annex)

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 4488 ON SECOND READING

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 4488 was approved on Second Reading.

PRESIDENTIAL CERTIFICATION

Upon direction of the Chair, Secretary Bantug read the Presidential certification as to the necessity of the immediate enactment of House Bill No. 4488, to wit:

**MALACAÑAN PALACE
MANILA**

SENATOR JUAN MIGUEL F. ZUBIRI
Senate President
The Philippine Senate
Pasay City

Mr. Senate President:

Pursuant to the provisions of Article VI, Section 26(2) of the 1987 Constitution, I hereby certify to the necessity of the immediate enactment of House Bill No. 4488, entitled:

“AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES FROM JANUARY ONE TO DECEMBER THIRTY-ONE, TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY-THREE”

in order to address the need to maintain continuous government operations following the end of the current fiscal year (FY), to expedite the funding of various programs, projects, and activities for FY 2023, and to ensure budgetary preparedness that will enable the government to effectively perform its Constitutional mandate.

Best regards.

Very truly yours,

(Sgd.) FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.
THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES

Copy furnished:

Secretary Mark LLandro L. Mendoza
Presidential Legislative Adviser and Head
Presidential Legislative Liaison Office
2/F Executive Building
Malacañang, Manila

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MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PIMENTEL

Senator Pimentel stated that it would be inappropriate for the Body to simply accept the President's certification because it would unjustifiably rush the enactment of the 2023 GAA. He averred that the Constitution expressly states that the President must certify the need for the immediate enactment of a proposed law, such as the GAA, to address a public calamity or agency. He believed that in the absence of such public calamity or emergency, there was no reason for the certification that would justify the suspension of the three-day rule before Third Reading approval. He pointed out that the communication from the Office of the President did not mention any public calamity or an emergency, but simply stated that the immediate passage of the budget was necessary "to address the need to maintain continuous government operations following the end of the current fiscal year (FY), to expedite the funding of various programs, projects, and activities for FY 2023, and to ensure budgetary preparedness that will enable the government to effectively perform its Constitutional mandate."

Senator Pimentel proposed that the bill be approved on Third Reading on Monday, November 28, 2022, to give the Body more time to review the final version. Senator Villanueva, however, pointed out that based on the records of the Senate, there was no instance when the Body ignored the Presidential certification.

Agreeing with the observation of Senator Villanueva, Senate President Zubiri averred that in his several years as Majority Leader, almost all general appropriations bills were certified as urgent by the President and there were other precedents on the Body's action based on the presidential certification. In fact, he recalled, two budget measures were passed based on presidential certifications during the Senate presidency of Senator Pimentel; thus, the Body would not be violating any rules, but rather following tradition, if it approved the 2023 budget bill on Third Reading.

MOTION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva moved for a division of the House on the proposal of Senator Pimentel to vote on House Bill No. 4488 on Third Reading on November 28, 2022.

Submitted to a *viva voce* vote, with the majority of the senators voting in favor of already passing House Bill No. 4488 on Third Reading that day, the proposal of Senator Pimentel was lost.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 4488 ON THIRD READING

In view of the Presidential Certification, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered House Bill No. 4488 on Third Reading.

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

AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES FROM JANUARY ONE TO DECEMBER THIRTY-ONE, TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY-THREE.

Secretary Bantug called the roll for nominal voting.

RESULT OF THE VOTING

The result of the voting was as follows:

In favor

Angara	Marcos
Binay	Padilla
Cayetano (P)	Pimentel
Dela Rosa	Poe
Ejercito	Revilla
Estrada	Tulfo
Gatchalian	Villanueva
Go	Villar (C)
Hontiveros	Villar (M)
Lapid	Zubiri
Legarda	

With 21 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared House Bill No. 4488 approved on Third Reading.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ANGARA

Senator Angara expressed his gratitude to all the senators, especially under the leadership of Senate President Zubiri and Majority Leader Villanueva, as well as the committee vice chairpersons. Senator Angara hoped that the budget of the new administration would finally be passed on time.

REMARKS OF THE CHAIR

Senate President Zubiri hoped that with the approval of the budget, the senators would no longer receive folders and envelopes containing various funding requests.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 4:45 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:48 p.m., the session was resumed.

EXPLANATION OF VOTE OF SENATOR PIMENTEL

At the outset, Senator Pimentel requested that the full text of his explanation of vote on House Bill No. 4488, the General Appropriations Act of 2023, be inserted into the *Record of the Senate*.

He admitted that he had reservations about the 2023 national budget because it was presented as a P5.268 trillion budget, but there were actually P588 billion in unprogrammed appropriations, resulting in an 11%—not 4%—increase over the previous year's budget. He also mentioned the budget's lump-sum allotments, the "centrally managed items," and the confidential and intelligence funds.

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He stated that given the definition of “confidential fund” from which confidential expenses could be charged, some civilian government agencies could not be justifiable recipients of the said funds.

However, he recognized some positive features in the 2023 budget, particularly the priority given to the Department of Agriculture, which would receive a 44% increase. He stated that the Senate subcommittee chairperson strongly supported the DA budget.

He also stated that the budget adhered to the constitutional priority of education and social services, which was the correct move given the difficult conditions Filipinos were facing.

He also mentioned the support given to the health sector, and stated that, for the very first time, the GAA provided a budget for the OFWs under the Department of Migrant Workers.

He expressed hope that the transportation system would benefit from the budget as a result of the unprecedented outpouring of funds to the Department of Transportation.

Furthermore, he underscored the government’s effort to try extend assistance to local government units as shown in the 2023 budget.

Because the 2023 GAA was the Marcos administration’s first budget, Senator Pimentel urged his colleagues to give the administration the benefit of the doubt and the opportunity to execute it well. He expressed his assurance that the Minority bloc would engage in constructive cooperation rather than obstruction.

He noted that the other positive features of the 2023 budget, which included his amendments, were initiatives to assist the Bureau of Fire Protection purchase much-needed fire trucks, support for the NBI, and the Philippine Creative Industries which was also given its first budget under the DTI. He added that Congress heard the retired employees’ cries and that the IDC was given funding for its much delayed and long-awaited retirement benefits.

Furthermore, he cited three important items in the budget, albeit provided in the unprogrammed funds—health emergency benefits and allowances for health care and non-health care workers, social pension for senior citizens, and reimbursement for the Philippine Postal Corporation to cover its franking privilege expenses. He expressed hope that the efforts would not be in vain and that the administration would actually really fund the items.

REMARK OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI


Senate President Zubiri informed the Body that the budget deliberation for the 2024 GAA would be held for two weeks, five days a week, in order to avoid cramming into one day, allowing the Senate to deliberate more carefully and efficiently.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Senator Hontiveros stated that she would submit a written explanation for her affirmative vote.

REMARKS OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

Senate President Zubiri thanked Minority Senators Pimentel and Hontiveros, for voting in favor of the budget and thereby giving it the benefit of the doubt. He was pleased that each committee would have review functions and the Senate would have oversight functions on the confidential and intelligence funds.



Senator Villanueva lauded the hard work of the Committee on Finance, headed by Senator Angara, and of the cosponsors of the measure.

SENATE CONFEREES

Upon nomination by Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Senate President designated the following to constitute Senate panel in the Bicameral Conference Committee on the disagreeing provisions of House Bill No. 4488 (General Appropriations Act of 2023): Senator Angara as chairperson; Senators Cayetano (P), Legarda, and Marcos as senior vice chairpersons; Senators Villar (C), Dela Rosa, Gatchalian, Go, Hontiveros, Binay, Poe, Tolentino, Villar (M), and Ejercito as vice chairpersons; and Senators Cayetano (A), Escudero, and Estrada as members.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

At this juncture, Senate President Zubiri welcomed and acknowledged the presence in the gallery of Rep. Milagros A. Magsaysay of the Senior Citizens Party List, as well as actor Philip Salvador.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended as the Body awaited the arrival of the People's Socialist Republic of Vietnam delegation.

It was 4:59 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:41 p.m., the session was resumed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

At this juncture, Senator Villanueva acknowledged the presence in the gallery of the delegation from the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam composed of the following:

- His Excellency Vuong Dinh Hue, President of the National Assembly;
- The Honorable Nguyen Khac Dinh, Vice President of the National Assembly;
- The Honorable Bui Van Cuong, Secretary General and Head of the National Assembly Office;
- The Honorable Nguyen Thi Thanh, Head of the Deputies Affairs Commission of the National Assembly;
- The Honorable Major General Le Tan Toi, Chairman of National Defense and Security Committee;
- The Honorable Le Minh Hoan, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development;
- The Honorable Nguyen Thanh Nghi, Minister of Construction;
- The Honorable Pham Dai Duong, Head of Phu Yen Provincial Parliamentary Delegation;
- The Honorable Nguyen Minh Vu, First Vice Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- The Honorable Ngo Thanh Danh, Head of Dak Nong Provincial Parliamentary Delegation;
- The Honorable Major General Nguyen Van Long, Vice Minister of Ministry of Public Security;



- The Honorable Nguyen Manh Tien, Vice Chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly;
- His Excellency, Hoang Huy Chung, Ambassador of Vietnam to the Philippines;
- Honorable Pham Thai Ha, Vice Chairman of the National Assembly Office and Assistant to the President of the National Assembly; and
- The Honorable Tran Thi Hong An, Permanent Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Vice President of the Vietnam-ASEAN Parliamentary Friendship Group.

Senate President Zubiri welcomed the guests to the Senate.

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 303

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 303, entitled

RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SOCIALIST
REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF ITS PRESIDENT,
HIS EXCELLENCY VU'O'NG DINH HUE, FOR STRENGTHENING
PHILIPPINES-VIETNAM INTER-PARLIAMENTARY RELATIONS.

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

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Dela Rosa for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR DELA ROSA

In sponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 303, Senator Dela Rosa delivered the following speech:

I rise today to sponsor Proposed Senate Resolution No. 303, commending the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam under the leadership of our esteemed guest of honor, His Excellency, President Vuong Dinh Hue, in further strengthening Philippines-Vietnam inter-parliamentary relations. Our good Majority Leader has already formally acknowledged the President's presence together with his delegation, and we truly appreciate their timely visit. We warmly welcome you to the Senate of the Philippines.

His Excellency Vuong Dinh Hue is considered the fourth highest-ranking official in Vietnam's political structure, after the General Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party, the President as head of State, and the Prime Minister as head of government. His visit today here in the Senate is a historic one as we aim to forge closer parliamentary ties between our countries and further strengthen our warm and robust relationship, which spans for more than 45 years since 1976.

Yesterday, I reported my official visit to Hanoi, Vietnam, where I was warmly welcomed by two high-ranking officials of the National Assembly, Vice Chairman Lt. Gen. Tran Quang Phuong, as well as Sec. Gen. Bui Van Cuong, and their other colleagues who are members of the Vietnam-ASEAN Parliamentary Friendship Group. During the meetings, we covered many areas of cooperation, and acknowledged the importance of the strategic partnership between the Philippines and Vietnam; and also discussed important topics including defense, maritime security, pandemic recovery, economy and trade, as well as people-to-people exchanges. With Vietnam as our sole strategic partner within the ASEAN, we realize the paramount importance of enhancing our inter-parliamentary relations with Vietnam's National Assembly.

It was a very productive trip. And we thank the National Assembly of Vietnam for their warm hospitality, and for receiving me and my delegation in their beautiful parliament building located in their historic city center.

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This visit of His Excellency President Vuong Dinh Hue is a milestone to our inter-parliamentary relations, being the first head of the National Assembly to ever hold an official visit to the Philippines after 16 years, upon the invitation of our Senate President, Juan Miguel Zubiri. Likewise, it is historic as we are heading toward the 50th anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations.

Philippines-Vietnam Strategic Partnership

For the record, the Philippines and Vietnam became strategic partners on November 17, 2015, after signing a joint statement recognizing the evolving political, economic, and security architecture in the ASEAN region; as well as the consolidation of the ASEAN community amidst an increasingly globalized and interdependent world economy.

This strategic partnership aims to comprehensively elevate political, economic, and cultural cooperation; as well as develop and strengthen engagement in key functional areas. It is envisioned to build upon and enhance existing bilateral mechanisms; operationalize concluded agreements; and explore new avenues to deepen the engagement between our two governments.

Allow me, therefore, to mention the various areas of cooperation we have with Vietnam, which are considered the two main anchors of this partnership:

First, on maritime cooperation.

Maritime security, including cooperation on the South China Sea, is an important anchor of our strategic partnership. A major source of impetus for elevating Philippines-Vietnam ties to a strategic partnership was the shared concern for maritime security, specifically the shared situation of the Philippines and Vietnam as major littoral states in the South China Sea or West Philippine Sea confronting a complex dispute, including the overextended claims of China and its coercive actions to assert these claims.

Given our shared maritime interests and concerns, both countries stand to benefit through constructive maritime dialogues, as well as on the exchange of intelligence and approaches.

On the second main anchor, economic/trade cooperation.

In 2021, Vietnam is the Philippines' 11th largest trading partner (5th largest within ASEAN), 12th export market, and 10th import supplier. Total trade amounted to US\$5.84 billion, with Philippine exports to Vietnam at US\$1.64 billion and Philippine imports from Vietnam at US\$4.196 billion.

As of August 2022, the Philippines was Vietnam's top export market of rice, reaching more than 305,000 tons valued at US\$140 million, accounting for 65% of total volume, and 63% of total value of exports.

We thank Vietnam for the unhampered trade of Vietnamese rice to the Philippines even during the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, and for Vietnam's commitment to be a stable and quality rice supplier of the Philippines. We are truly grateful for making the Philippines a priority when it comes to your rice exports, and for being an important partner in food security. We assure Vietnam that both our governments will maintain close coordination to further facilitate unrestricted rice trade.

The Philippines-Vietnam Parliamentary Friendship Association

I am glad to inform you that our Philippines-Vietnam Parliamentary Friendship Association in the Philippine Senate has 14 senators as members, and this humble representation serving as President.

We assure our counterparts in the National Assembly of Vietnam that through our respective parliamentary friendship groups, we hope to renew our inter-parliamentary friendship and foster more important exchanges in the future.

All these are made possible through the able leadership of President Vuong Dinh Hue and the entire National Assembly of Vietnam, in promoting and further strengthening parliamentary ties. We look forward that both our parliaments will continue to enjoy an excellent working relationship, as we continue to collaborate towards realizing the vast potential of the Philippines-Vietnam strategic partnership.

Given all of these mentioned considerations, I therefore urge this august Chamber for the immediate adoption of this proposed resolution.

Thank you. And to His Excellency and his delegation, we say "*Mãi Mãi là b'n* (forever friend)!" *Kaibigan magpakailanman*.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

At this juncture, Senator Villanueva expressed his gratitude to the Vietnamese government, which he said was very quick to come to the aid of the Filipino people during difficult times. He also hoped that the short visit of His Excellency Vuong Dinh Hue and the rest of the Vietnamese delegation to the Philippines would be fruitful in terms of strengthening and elevating the strategic partnership between the two countries, as well as exploring new areas of cooperation that would benefit both Filipino and Vietnamese peoples.

COAUTHORS AND COSPONSORS

Senate President Zubiri manifested that all the Members are coauthors and cosponsors of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 303.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

In cosponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 303, Senate President Zubiri delivered the following speech:

Last Monday, I had a pleasure of meeting Ambassador Hoang Huy Chung, from which I came away with a renewed appreciation of the deep alliance between the Philippines and Vietnam.

We are, of course, each other's sole strategic partner in the ASEAN. We are actually strategic allies, united in our goal of attaining mutual progress as burgeoning Southeast Asian economies. We are united in our need to fortify our geopolitical powers and maritime security; and we are allied through our economic and socio-cultural cooperation and exchanges.

Our inter-parliamentary relations are central in strengthening our bilateral ties. To this end, I applaud the National Assembly of Vietnam for being our steadfast partner in improving our bilateral cooperation in tourism, education, trade and investment, defense and security, and agriculture and fisheries, to name a few.

This is a momentous visit, marking the first inter-parliamentary exchange between our countries since 2006, when our then Senate President Manny Villar met with his counterpart, His Excellency Nguyen Phu Trong, then president of the National Assembly, during the 27th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-parliamentary Organization.

Let me also highlight the fact that we have in the Senate a parliamentary friendship group, as mentioned by Sen. Ronald Dela Rosa—the Philippines-Vietnam Parliamentary Friendship Association—which was formerly headed by our Senate President Pro Tempore, the Vice President of the Senate, Sen. Loren Legarda, who had gladly passed it on to the equally energetic and dynamic Sen. Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa, as its new president.

I invite our colleagues to join us in our commendation of the National Assembly of the People's Socialist Republic of Vietnam and to its president, Pres. Vuong Dinh Hue. I say to you all: "Welcome to the Senate, and welcome to the Philippines!"

CŪm o'n. Thank you.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 303

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 303 was adopted by the Body.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 5:59 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 6:05 p.m., the session was resumed.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

Senate President thanked all the Members who stayed to await the parliamentary visit of the Vietnamese delegation, which included Members of Parliament and ministers from various departments.

He then invited the senators to join him and the delegates in their bilateral meeting later that evening at Sofitel hotel.

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair declared the session adjourned until three o'clock in the afternoon of Monday, November 28, 2022.

It was 6:06 p.m.

I hereby certify to the correctness of the foregoing.

Atty. **RENATO N. BANTUG Jr.**
Secretary of the Senate

Approved on November 28, 2022

