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SESSION NO. 53
Wednesday, February 22, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

At 3:11 p.m., the Senate President, Hon. Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri, called the session to order.

PRAYER

Sen. Ronald “Bato” Dela Rosa led the prayer, to wit:

“Our help is in the Name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear God, we stand before You today, humbled and grateful. Humbled by Your mercies that know no end. Grateful for today’s opportunity to be a channel of those mercies to others.

We know, Father, that You are a God of order, not unrest, and of peace, not confusion. You have declared that in Your love for us, You have laid down plans for our hope, for the future that we long for.

Forgive us, then, o Lord, for all the times that we have attempted to take matters into our own hands. If we get overwhelmed by what little power or position we have, remind us that we are nothing without You. If our pride gets in the way of our humble acceptance of Your ways, put us back in our place and create clean hearts in us, Lord. Restore Your order, in ourselves, in our homes, in our country, and in our world.

We know also, Father, that Yours is the kind of love that does not put oneself first. Your own beloved Son, Jesus Christ, came to serve, and not to be served. Instill in us, at every opportunity, the mind and heart to do the same.

May we never forget that anyone who seeks to lead must be the first to wash the feet of their brothers and sisters. Especially in today’s world, when we are threatened by war, disease, misinformation, disinformation, poverty — may we, the elected leaders, be the first to work out ways for reconciliation, health, truth, and love. May we always be the first to serve, and the last to be served. All these we ask in Your Mighty Name.

Amen.

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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.	Marcos, I. R.
Binay, M. L. N. S.	Padilla, R. C.
Cayetano, A. P. C. S.	Pimentel III, A. K.
Dela Rosa, R. B. M.	Poe, G.
Ejercito, J. V. G.	Revilla Jr., R. B.
Escudero, F. J. G.	Tolentino, F. T. N.
Estrada, J.	Tulfo, R. T.
Gatchalian, W.	Villanueva, J.
Go, C. L. T.	Villar, C. A.
Hontiveros, R.	Villar, M. A.
Legarda, L.	Zubiri, J. M. F.

With 22 senators present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum.

Senator Lapid arrived after the roll call.

Senator Cayetano (P) was absent and out of the country as indicated in the February 14, 2023 letter of her chief legislative officer.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

Senator Villanueva acknowledged the presence in the gallery of the following guests:

- Mr. John Arcilla, award-winning actor;
- Mr. Laurenti Dyogi, film director;
- Mr. Ed Capulong;
- Officers and staff of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority, Administrative and General Services Department, headed by Engr. Datu Jun M. Madrama;
- Mr. Mari and Mr. Luis Oquinena of Gawad Kalinga;
- Atty. Maisara Latiph, Chairperson of the Marawi Compensation Board (MCB);
- Dr. Jamaica Lamping-Dimaporo, MCB member;
- Atty. Sittie Hassan, MCB Board Secretary;
- Mayor Germinio Relampagos of Dagohoy, Bohol;
- Vice Mayor Gina Gonzales of Burdeos, Quezon; and
- 1-Rider Partylist Representative Ramon Gutierrez.

Senate President Zubiri welcomed the guests to the Senate. He also admitted to being a fan of Mr. Arcilla whose films had such a big impact on him.

DEFERMENT OF APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body deferred the consideration and approval of the Journal of Session No. 52 (February 21, 2023).

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 3:17 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:25 p.m., the session was resumed.

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 490

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 490, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING FILIPINO ACTOR ROMEO "JOHN" GONZALES ARCILLA FOR WINNING THE COVETED VOLPI CUP FOR BEST ACTOR IN THE 78TH ANNUAL VENICE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL.

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*.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR LAPID

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following sponsorship speech of Senator Lapid on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 490, into the *Record of the Senate*:

Mga kagalang-galang na mga kasama sa Bulwagang ito, Ginoong Tagapangulo, hayaan ninyo akong bigyan ng pagkilala at pagpupugay ang isa sa pinakamahusay na aktor ng ating bansa, walang iba kundi si John Arcilla.

Si Romeo "John" Gonzales Arcilla ay tubong Baler, Aurora. Unang nahubog ang kanyang galing sa pag arte nang maging kasapi ng Philippine Educational Theater Association-Metropolitan Teen Theater League (PETA-MTTL) noong kanyang kabataan. Siya ay naging bahagi ng Dulaang U.P. kung saan niya nakatrabaho ang National Artist for Theater na si Tony Mabesa, bago nagpatuloy at naging kasapi ng Actors' Company, ang resident theater company ng Cultural Center of the Philippines na Tanghalang Pilipino na lalo pang luminang sa kanyang kakayahan bilang aktor.

Mula sa dulaan, si John ay matagumpay na nakatawid sa larangan ng pelikula. Siya ay mahigit apat na dekada nang nagtatanghal sa pinilakang tabing mula pa noong dekada otsenta (1980s). Mula sa minor role sa pelikulang "Orapronobis" ng National Artist for Film na si Lino Brocka noong 1989, ay natunghayan ang transpormasyon ng kanyang sining na lalong humusay at tumalas sa paglipas ng mga taon. Noong 1995, siya ay nagwagi bilang best actor sa Metro Manila Film Festival para sa pelikulang "Mulanay." Siya naman ay nagwagi ng Best Supporting Actor para sa kanyang pagganap sa pelikulang "Ligaya Ang Itawag Mo sa Akin" noong 1997. Noong 2010, siya ay muling nagwagi bilang best actor para sa kanyang mahusay na pagganap sa pelikulang "Halaw" na bahagi ng Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival.

Sino ba naman ang makakalimot sa mga linyang "Negosyo o kalayaan, bayan o sarili? Pumili ka!" ang mga linya na mahusay at marubdob na binigkas ni John sa pelikulang "Heneral Luna," na kinilala bilang highest grossing Filipino historical film of all time. Dahil sa kanyang hindi malilimitang pagganap bilang Heneral Luna, siya ay nagwagi bilang Best Actor sa 34th Film Academy of the Philippines Awards at tumanggap ng nominasyon sa 10th Asian Film Awards.

Sa sumunod na taon, siya ay muling nagwagi bilang Best Actor sa 35th Film Academy of the Philippines Awards para sa pelikulang "Bird Shot," na official entry ng Pilipinas sa kategoryang Best Foreign Language Film sa 90th Academy Awards na kilala rin bilang Oscars. Noong 2020, nang muli siyang magwagi ng Best Actor para sa pelikulang "Suarez: The Healing Priest" sa Metro Manila Film Festival. At mula 2017 hanggang 2022, ginampanan ni John ang papel na Renato "Buwitre" Hipolito sa FPJ's "Ang Probinsyano," kung saan ko siya nakatrabaho nang ilang taon.

Taong 2021 nang pagbidahan niya ang pelikulang "On The Job: The Missing 8," kung saan ginampanan niya ang papel ni Narciso "Sisoy" Salas, isang mamamahayag na naging tapat na kaalyado ng inakala niyang mabuting politiko na sa huli ay natuklasang corrupt pala. Sa naturang pelikula, siya ay nagwagi ng Volpi Cup, dahil sa kanyang mahusay na pagganap, bilang Best Actor sa 78th Venice Film Festival na kumilala sa kanya bilang kauna-unahang Filipino at South East Asian na tumanggap ng nasabing parangal sa pag arte. Dahil rin dito ay kinilala rin siya bilang Tatler Asia's Most influential Entertainment Star.

Ating bigyan ng pagpupugay at pagkilala ang isa sa pinakamahuhusay na aktor ng ating henerasyon na nagbigay ng karangalan sa ating bansa at naglagay sa Pilipinas sa mapa ng mundo sa larangan ng sining at pelikula. Ang kanyang pinakitang husay ay mabuting huwaran hindi lamang sa industriya ng pinilakang tabing kundi sa lahat ng mamamayang Pilipino.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECHES ON PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 490

In cosponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 490, the following senators delivered the following speech/remarks:

By Senator Villanueva

Kilala natin si Sir John Arcilla na kahanga-hangang aktor sa kanyang pagganap sa pelikula at telebisyon. He played the titular role in the 2015 blockbuster and critically acclaimed film "Heneral Luna" for which he won several awards.

Noong pinanood ko po itong pelikulang ito, talaga namang tumatatak at tumitimo sa puso ang bawat salita at linyang binitawan ng ating magaling na aktor, Mr. Arcilla. At isa nga po doon ang pinakasikat na linya, "Negosyo o Kalayaan, Bayan o Sarili? Pumili ka!"

His portrayal of Renato "Buwitre" Hipolito in FPJ's "Ang Probinsyano" has been dubbed as one of the 10 most memorable male performances in Philippine history. He also delivered remarkable performances in the films "Birdshot," "Cuarema," "Suarez: The Healing Priest," and "Big Night."

For his stellar portrayal of Sisoy Salas in "On the Job: The Missing 8," he was recognized by several award-giving bodies and took home the Gawad Urian Award for Best Actor and, of course, the Volpi Cup at the 78th Venice Film Festival.

Mr. John Arcilla's win in the world's oldest film festival is a testament to the world-class talent of Filipino actors. The Volpi Cup is even dubbed by the Italian ambassador to the Philippines, his Excellency Marco Clemente, as "another Oscar." With his win, Mr. John Arcilla joined the ranks of renowned actors like Sean Penn, Ben Affleck, Brad Pitt, Colin Firth, Joaquin Phoenix, and many more who previously won the award.

Indeed, Mr. John Arcilla not only showcased his acting prowess to the world stage; he also raised the Filipino flag and brought great pride and honor to our beloved country.

Sigurado po ako na sa mga susunod na gagawing pelikula ni John ay mas marami pang international award-giving bodies ang makakapansin at bibigyang parangal ang kanyang talento. Muli karangalan po nating i-congratulate ang ating kababayang si John.

Mabuhay ka at maraming salamat.

By Senator Revilla

I rise today to cosponsor Proposed Senate Resolution No. 490, commending and congratulating my colleague in the entertainment industry, John Arcilla, for bagging the coveted Volpi Cup for best actor award in the 78th Annual Venice International Film Festival.

Muli ay napatunayan na naman natin na ang talentong Pinoy ay hindi lamang may puwang sa international winning arena, kaya rin natin makipagsabayan sa mga foreign actors. Hindi nga lamang makipagsabayan sa mga foreign actors, kundi mangingibabaw pa.

Once again, the Philippines has been catapulted at the global stage after our *kababayan* was awarded for his stellar performance as “Sisoy Salas” in the movie “On the Job: The Missing 8.” Being recognized by the Venice International Film Festival is truly an honor. The festival is considered the world’s oldest film fest which aims to raise awareness and promote international cinemas in all its forms. Bagging the Volpi Cup is another.

Wika nga mismo ni John, “Copa Volpi is practically another Oscar’s.” Ganyan kahusay si John, ganyan kagaling ang Pilipino. Humanay ang ating kababayan sa malalaking pangalan sa industriya kagaya nina James Stewart, Burt Lancaster, Albert Finney, Marcelo Mastroianni, Jack Lemmon, Liam Neeson, Sean Penn, Gerard Depardieu, Ben Affleck, Brad Pitt, Colin Firth, at Willem Dafoe.

Ang sining at pelikula ay maituturing na kayamanan ng ating bayan. And the talented artists and actors produced by our country may very well be considered as national treasures.

John, you give us pride. *Ang inyong obra at ang iyong talento ay pruwera na basta Pilipino, tunay na mahusay—tunay na primera klase.*

In ending, may I manifest my intent to be a coauthor of this measure.

By Senator Padilla

Senator Padilla stated that it was a symbolic day for the Senate because in its Hall was ‘Antonio Luna,’ played by actor John Arcilla, which signified that in the past, the likes of Antonio Luna, Andres Bonifacio, Juan Luna, and Macario Sakay were artists who expressed their love for country. He stated that Mr. Arcilla’s victory was proof that an artist’s expression of love for country continues to that day.

He stated that while he and Mr. Arcilla do not share the same political beliefs, they both share the same love for country.

In light of Mr. Arcilla’s international honor, he requested that the Members pass a bill to revitalize the Philippine movie industry. He disclosed that Senator Estrada had been asking him how they could bring attention to the plight of the industry. He said that the proposed measure’s success would also depend on the support of artists like Mr. Arcilla.

By Senator Estrada

I would like to associate myself with the manifestations made by my colleagues, and with the indulgence of the author and sponsor, Sen. Manuel “Lito” M. Lapid, I would also like to be made cosponsor of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 490, entitled “Resolution Congratulating and Commending Filipino Actor John Arcilla for Winning the Coveted Volpi Cup for Best Actor in the 78th Annual Venice International Film Festival.”

The many recent victories of our esteemed colleagues in the movie industry in various prestigious international film festivals and award-giving bodies like those of Ms. Dolly de Leon, Ms. Jaclyn Jose, Ms. Eugene Domingo, the late Ms. Cherrie Gil, Mr. John Lloyd Cruz, Ms. Therese Malvar, Mr. Paolo Ballesteros, Mr. Alden Richards, Ms. Belle Mariano, and others—*bakit wala tayo rito Senator Revilla? Saka si Senator Padilla at si Senator Lapid? Siguro sa susunod, makasali na tayo rito*—including this recent win of Volpi Cup awardee, Mr. John Arcilla, all served as a resounding testament that Filipino talent and artistry is absolutely world-class and par excellence.

Ikinararangal po natin ang mga papuri at pagkilala na ito na sana ay magsilbi itong inspirasyon sa ating mga alagad ng sining ng pelikula na patuloy na paghusayin pa ang kanilang talento. Hangad ko rin na magsilbi itong motibasyon para sa ating manunulat, direktor, at producer na patuloy na lumikha ng mga pelikulang may de-kalibreng konteksto,

dahil sa mga ganitong uri ng pelikula lamang may lalabas at maipapamalas ng ating mga aktor at aktres ang kanilang angking henyo sa pag-arte at pagsasabuhay ng mga karakter sa mga de-kalidad na istorya ng kanilang mga pelikula.

As an actor and producer myself, I am aware of the demand and necessity for quality content in order for us to compete globally and get the attention and the following of the international audience who have continuously evolving taste in their preferences in movies and TV series.

Ang sarap po sanang manood ng Netflix, na makita mo na maraming Pinoy-made, Pinoy-starred, Pinoy-produced movies at TV series na ang mga karakter natin ang bida, na ang magagandang lugar dito sa Pilipinas ang ipinapakita, na ang ating mayamang kultura, tradisyon, at makulay na buhay Pinoy ang ipinapalabas sa pandaigdigang madla.

Again, our felicitations to Mr. John Arcilla, the first Filipino to have put our nation's name in the roster of highly acclaimed actors in one of the oldest and prestigious award-giving bodies in the world.

Again, congratulations *at mabuhay ka!*

By Senator Hontiveros

Senator Hontiveros lauded Mr. John Arcilla not only for his performance as an actor and his advocacy for the environment, but also for heeding the call of history. She recalled that when Mr. Arcilla portrayed the role of Gen. Antonio Luna, he uttered the unforgettable lines "*Ang pagpuna ay ating tungkulin bilang nagbabayad ng buwis. Ang pagpuna sa gobyerno ay hindi pagrerebelde o hindi pagrereklamo. Ang pagpuna sa gobyerno ay pagmamahal at bahagi ng ating karapatan bilang mamamayang Pilipino.*"

She believed that those lines have been engraved in the minds of the Filipinos and will never be forgotten. Thereafter, she thanked and congratulated Mr. Arcilla for his victory.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the cosponsorship speeches of Senator Legarda, Poe, and Go on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 490 into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

By Senator Legarda

It is an honor and a privilege, with the permission of Senator Lapid, to be a cosponsor of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 490, "Resolution Congratulating and Commending Filipino Actor Rome "John" Gonzales Arcilla For Winning the Coveted Volpi Cup For Best Actor in the 78th Annual Venice International Film Festival."

Firstly, I would like to congratulate Mr. John Arcilla and the people behind "On the Job: The Missing 8," especially Director Erik Matti for accomplishing such an amazing feat at the world's oldest film festival.

As chairperson of the Senate Committee on Cultural and the Arts, I stand proud among our colleagues and fellow Filipinos that Mr. Arcilla became the first Filipino and Southeast Asian to win the Volpi Cup of the 78th Annual Venice International Film Festival.

His amazing performance gave life to the stories of injustice and freedom of the press in the country today.

"Bayan o Sarili?" Iyan ang dating tanong ni Heneral Luna na naunang binigyang buhay ni Ginoong Arcilla. Tunay na sa kanyang buhay at propesyon, palaging pinipili ang bayan at pagbibigay dangal sa bayan. At ngayon, nakita ng buong mundo ang istorya ni "Sisoy" at ang pagkamulat niya sa mga baluktot na kalagayan ng lipunan.

Maraming salamat sa inspirasyon, Ginoong Arcilla!

Mr. Arcilla's accomplishment and the other successes of our film industry are indications of our world-class talent and skill. This should encourage more of our artists to participate in international film and arts festivals, but this should also tell the relevant government agencies to provide support and aid to our local artists in their pursuit of excellence.

Today, we celebrate and congratulate you, Mr. Arcilla. *Mabuhay ka at maraming, maraming salamat!*

COAUTHORS

Senator Villanueva manifested that all senators are coauthors of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 490.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 490

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 490 was adopted by the Body.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 3:43 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:54 p.m., the session resumed.

SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 6 on Senate Bill No. 1359 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 6 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1359

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 1359 (Committee Report No. 6), entitled

AN ACT PROHIBITING THE IMPOSITION OF A "NO PERMIT, NO EXAM" POLICY, OR ANY POLICY THAT PREVENTS STUDENTS ENROLLED IN PUBLIC OR PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FROM TAKING EXAMINATIONS OR ANY FORM OF EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT FOR REASONS OF OUTSTANDING FINANCIAL OR PROPERTY OBLIGATIONS, SUCH AS UNPAID TUITION AND OTHER SCHOOL FEES.

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

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Escudero for the sponsorship.

MOTION OF SENATOR ESCUDERO

Upon motion of Senator Escudero, there being no objection, the Body approved the

inclusion of House Bill No. 6483 (*Allowing College Students with Unpaid Tuition to Take Periodic and Final Examinations*) under Committee Report No. 6 as the bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education only after the committee had already released the said committee report.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR ESCUDERO

Senator Escudero said that as the title of the bill suggests, the bill seeks to prohibit a “no permit, no exam” policy or procedure in any school, both public and private.

Upon his motion, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of his sponsorship speech into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*.

Following is the full text of his sponsorship speech:

As Chairperson of the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, I rise to sponsor Committee Report No. 6, which recommends the approval of Senate Bill No. 1359, entitled, “An Act Prohibiting the Imposition of a “No Permit, No Exam” Policy, or any Policy that Prevents Students Enrolled in Public or Private Educational Institutions from Taking Examinations or any Form of Educational Assessment for Reasons of Outstanding Financial or Property Obligations, such as Unpaid Tuition and Other School Fees.”

In a country where basic goods are sold in sachets to make them affordable, tuition, too, is paid in the *Pinoy* way of multiple “gives” to make education accessible to many.

Curriculum is not the only thing ladderized in our schools—matriculation, too.

Sadly, many students fall from the rungs, not because they do poorly in class, but because they are poor in life.

The involuntary dropping out happens when tuition and other school fees are not paid in time.

And often, the penalty for that failure is that the student is prohibited from taking the examination.

By any moral yardstick, forcing a student to forfeit an exam is the cruelest of fines.

It triggers a chain of events that is sometimes life-altering for the student, for the worse, not only of denied diplomas but also of dead dreams.

The reasons why this bill must be passed have been argued brilliantly by Senator Revilla, Senator Cynthia Villar, and by the Senate President.

To their cogent explanations, let me add some commonsensical perspectives.

If there is no automatic kill switch on the engine of a car whose owner has missed several months of amortization, why should a student be instantaneously denied from taking an exam for an education that he, too, has been amortizing?

A family who misses paying the mortgage of their condo is not immediately evicted. On the contrary, banks throw them a lifeline.

Now let me ask: If consideration is given to those who have borrowed millions, why can't the same be extended to students whose arrears are in the mere thousands only?

And if you read today's business news, it is rife with accounts of how billionaires are suing and countersuing each other to collect billions they swear are owed them.

Some have succeeded in wangling writs of attachment from courts, but not one so far has tried to enforce it.

Even government has participated in bailouts—legislated even—not just for one company, but entire industries.

If companies viewed as too big to fail must be helped, why can't the same generosity be extended to a student who is too bright to fail but too poor to pay tuition?

Let me make it clear that this bill does not mandate tuition forgiveness.

It does not erase a student's debt to schools. It only calls for the deferment of its payment—while the student is allowed to take the examination.

Para maprotektahan naman ang mga paaralan, may probisyon dito na maaaring pumirma ng promissory note ang mag-aaral o kanyang magulang.

And to guarantee that financial obligations are settled, the educational institution may:

- Withhold the release or issuance of grades, diplomas or certificates.
- Refuse to issue applicable clearances.
- Deny enrolment.

Sapat na po sigurong mga collateral 'yan.

In fact, what is withheld as security guarantee by the school is of high value, because it is a future career that will yield income, and with that at stake, it is guaranteed that it will be redeemed.

To recap, this bill prohibits a school from:

- Disallowing any student with outstanding financial or property obligations from taking examinations with the rest of the student body.
- Requiring any student to secure a permit from school authorities prior to an examination or assessment.
- Compelling any student or their parents or guardians to pay a portion of the outstanding obligations before allowing the student to take the test.

In closing, let me point out a very important context of this bill, which could be the answer to comments that we are mandating a financial imposition on private entities on whose operations government has zero equity.

In the 2023 national budget we are debating, there is P53 billion in state assistance to private basic education under the budget of DepEd.

On top of this are billions in the Tertiary Education Subsidy that will go to private higher education institutions next year.

Let us pass this bill.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AS COSPONSORSHIP REMARKS

Upon motion of Senator Escudero, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the explanatory notes of Senate Bill Nos. 787 (Senate President Zubiri), 524 (Senator Cynthia Villar), and 507 (Senator Revilla)—as the original authors' respective sponsorship speeches—into the *Journal* and *Record of the Senate*.

On Senate Bill No. 787 (Senate President Zubiri)

Article XIV, Section 1 of the Philippine Constitution states that “the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.”

This bill upholds this right especially in cases where students are not allowed to take exams or attend classes due to non-payment or late payment of tuition fees and other school fees. It also seeks to prohibit such act and penalizes educational institutions found to have committed such practice.

No one can deny that school tuition fees have been going on a steady rise. Considering the other expenses a family has to spend on, it has become difficult for some parents to pay for

their children's tuition fee on time. No child should be denied his or her right to education due to financial troubles. It is the hope of this bill to ease the worry of parents with respect to their children's education and ultimately protect every student's right to education as they continue to learn, grow, and participate in and outside of school.

In view of the foregoing, the approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

On Senate Bill No. 524 (Senator (C)Villar)

To most Filipino parents, education is the most precious inheritance they can pass on to their children. They consider it important to send their children to school, and this comes with hope that the educated children can help in improving their quality of life to a level that is more comfortable. In the Philippine setting, it is not peculiar that families mortgage a piece of their lands or homes, and even sell a few of their possessions in order that their children could pursue college or tertiary education. In short, it is typical for Filipino parents to sacrifice so much so that their children could get quality education.

It is a good thing that Republic Act No. 10931 or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, which institutionalizes free tuition and exemption from other fees in state universities and colleges (SUCs), and local universities and colleges (LUCs) in the Philippines was enacted. The law was passed to give underprivileged Filipino students a better chance to earn quality higher education.

However, not all children get to attend public schools, universities and colleges (SUCs). Some modest families send their children to private schools. And at times, these schools can be quite exacting when it comes to tuition, and this becomes more apparent during examinations. While families understand that tuition and other fees are necessary for schools to provide the service required of them, they encounter unavoidable circumstances at times when they could not meet the obligation to pay the tuition fee on time. And while CHED has issued a Memorandum Order requiring colleges and universities to provide a Student Affairs and Services (SAS) office that will provide its students a package of services, including guidance and counseling, career and job placement, economic enterprise development and scholarship and financial assistance, it does not categorically prohibit the "no permit, no exam policy" and so this does not effectively stop schools from practicing it.

Sometime in 2013, we were quite distressed when we heard about a promising student in a premier state university who allegedly committed suicide because she was not allowed to take her college examination due to her inability to pay the school fees. To my mind, this could have been avoided, if only we have in place a more considerate policy towards students undergoing financial difficulties.

The proposed legislation seeks to prohibit public/private higher education institutions (HEIs) and technical-vocational schools from enforcing the "No Permit, No Exam" policy which essentially denies students the right to take examinations unless tuition fee payments are updated. Parents and students, who are facing financial difficulties, time and again suffer emotional stress under this seemingly unfair practice.

It is therefore recommended that the foregoing bill be approved.

On Senate Bill No. 507 (Senator Revilla Jr.)

In our culture, education is the most precious inheritance most Filipino parents believe they can pass on to their children for the benefit of their own future. No matter which social class you belong to in society, education is considered important. Especially to the lower class, it gives them hope that their educated children can help improve the quality of life of their families.

Unfortunately for students and their parents, schools can be quite exacting when it comes to tuition, and this could not be any more apparent than during examinations. While families understand that tuition and other fees are necessary for schools to provide the service required of them, they encounter unavoidable circumstances at times when they could not meet the obligation to pay the tuition fee on time. And while CHED has issued a Memorandum Order requiring colleges and universities to provide a Student Affairs and Services (SAS) office that will

provide its students a package of services, including guidance and counseling, career and job placement, economic enterprise development and scholarship and financial assistance, it does not categorically prohibit the “no permit, no exam policy” and so this does not effectively stop schools from practicing it.

Prohibiting students from taking examinations solely because of the non-payment of tuition and/or other school fees is a violation of the rights of students to education. The State has the urgent duty to protect these rights and provide students with the means to access quality education. Hence, this measure seeks to protect the rights of students and aims to provide schools with adequate protection to ensure the payment of tuition and other school fees.

In view of the foregoing, the urgent approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECHES

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the cosponsorship speeches of Senators Villanueva, Dela Rosa, Estrada, Go, and Senate President Zubiri on Senate Bill No. 1359, which were deemed read and inserted into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

By Senator Villanueva

It is this Representation’s honor and privilege to coauthor and cosponsor Senate Bill No. 1359 under Committee Report No. 6, prohibiting the imposition of a “No Permit, No Exam” policy in public and private educational institutions for reasons of outstanding financial or property obligations, such as unpaid tuition or other school fees.

We commend and thank the sponsor, Sen. Francis “Chiz” Escudero, Chairperson of the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, for this very important piece of legislation.

Article XIV, Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution provides that “the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.” *Kaya naman nararapat lang na magkaroon tayo ng mga batas na sisiguruhing hindi magiging hadlang ang katayuan sa buhay upang makapagtapos sa pag-aaral ang mga kabataang Pilipino.* The passage of Republic Act No. 10931 or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, which is coauthored by this Representation, is a step towards ensuring access to quality education for all.

However, in some cases, there are times when families experience unavoidable socioeconomic circumstances that prevent them from paying their children’s school fees on time. Many students lose their focus and cannot concentrate during reviews for their exams because they worry that their teachers or the school administration would not allow them to take the examinations because of outstanding financial obligations. In addition, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority, financial concerns and high cost of education are among the top reasons in 2020 why Filipino children and youth do not attend school. In the same year, about one in every four persons aged 6 to 24 years old was out-of-school.

That is why we need to pass this measure which seeks to prohibit the “No Permit, No Exam” policy in all public and private educational institutions for reasons of financial or property obligations, including unpaid tuition and other school fees. But at the same time, we also endeavor to provide adequate protection to private schools to ensure the payment of tuition and other fees through alternative methods. We believe that this proposed measure can serve to balance the interests of both our students and our educational institutions.

Palagi po nating naririnig, “Edukasyon ang susi sa tagumpay.” Kaya naman hindi dapat maging hadlang kailanman sa pagpapatuloy at pagtatapos ng pag-aaral ang kahirapan o anumang suliranin sa buhay. We need to ensure that quality education is truly accessible to all, at all times. We owe this to our children and future generations of Filipino youth.

Maraming salamat. May God bless us all



By Senator Dela Rosa

Today it is my honor to co-sponsor Senate Bill No. 1359 under Committee Report No. 6, which prohibits the imposition of no permit, no exam policy in Public or Private Educational Institutions from taking Examinations or any form of educational assessment for reasons of outstanding financial or property obligations, such as unpaid tuition and other school fees.

It is always a good beginning to start with small, simple steps. For, as it is said, it is in small and simple things that great things are brought to pass.

Truly, even though prohibiting a No Permit No Exam Policy will hardly eradicate our country's major problems, it will effectively send a message. It will send a message, loud and clear, that this Senate knows where it stands: beside our children. This will strengthen and prove the fact that we are doing all that we can, even in the seemingly simplest of matters, to secure the future of our children.

Taglay po ng ating mga kabataan ang sipag at determinasyon na makapagtapos ng pag-aaral at maabot ang kanilang mga pangarap. Ngunit may mga pagkakataon na ang kanilang kakapusan ang kanilang nagiging katapusan. Tunay po na hindi madali ang landas patungo sa tugatog ng tagumpay. Pero hindi katanggap-katanggap kung kakulangan sa salapi ang balakid at hindi kakayahan.

There is no easy way to console a person who failed to pass an examination. But perhaps, it is more comforting to know that even though he or she came up short, he or she was given the opportunity to give it a try. Schooling is a journey and examinations are checkpoints. However, it should not be money that get one pass the gates but his or her knowledge.

Mapupunta lamang po sa wala ang lahat ng inaral ng isang estudyante kung hindi siya mapapayagan makapag-exam sa kadahilanang wala siyang permit. Masasayang lamang ang kaniyang pagpupuyat kung tutulugan ng ating pamahalaan ang isyung ito. Mababalewala ang pagsusunog ng kilay kung mauupos ang alab sa kanilang puso.

How many of the students who were prohibited to take their exams would have been Presidents of the Philippines, Senators or public servants? How many who were prohibited to take their exams because they did not have the permit quit school and chose a life of crime? We may never know—but we have a choice.

With the proposed measure, all children who are struggling to make ends meet but still hope for a better future will not be denied the opportunity to take their exams. Believe me when I say, I know what it is like to struggle. But I also know what it is like to hope for a better future. And if, the only thing that stands between the present struggle, and the future you hope for, is an unjust No Permit, No Exam Policy, then let us do our job and get rid of the injustice. Let us take the responsibility of giving our children the ample space to dream, and to make those dreams come true.

Gusto ko pong isipin na ang pangarap ng ating mga magaaral ay pangarap din natin. Dahil ang kanilang tagumapy ay tagumpay ng ating bayan. Ang atin pong pamahalaan ay mahuhusgahan ngayon kung paano nito ipinaglaban ang kinabukasan.

We are not a government that limits the dreams and aspirations of our children but helps fulfill them.

We are doing this because we want all of our children to continually have hope in themselves. To say that their government supports them, down to the smallest, simplest of steps.

By Senator Estrada

With the consent of the good sponsor, Sen. Francis “Chiz” Escudero, this Representation wishes to be a coauthor and cosponsor of Senate Bill No 1359 under Committee Report No. 6 submitted by the Committees on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education and on Basic Education. The enactment of the “No Permit, No Exam’ Prohibition Act” is long overdue, and I am lending my full support to its passage in the Nineteenth Congress.

Noon pa mang Sixteenth Congress, naghain na po ang inyong lingkod ng “Anti No-Permit, No-Exam Act” upang alisin ang balakid sa mga mag-aaral na kumuha ng kanilang pagsusulit

dahil lamang sa kakulangang pinansyal. Sa mga pagkakataon pong ganito, ang kailangan ng ating mga mag-aaral ay suporta, hindi panggigipit o diskriminasyon.

A genuine inclusive education embraces all learners who are in need, including those who are financially distressed. Their inability to pay their tuition and other fees should never be a hindrance to the completion of their education. Instead, it should be a signal that these students need assistance from the government and its partners in the education system.

Especially during these times that we are still recovering from the wrath of the COVID-19 pandemic, there remains a large number of families who are still struggling to make both ends meet. Earning a living may be difficult, and yet they still give priority to the education of their children in the hope of a better and brighter future for them.

Now that we have just resumed to conduct face-to-face classes, our learners are encountering new challenges. Undeniably, it is not easy to shift back to such mode of learning after two (2) years of being restricted by the pandemic. Hence, during these times and beyond, it is our duty to allow them to focus on overcoming the challenges of learning and not the cost of learning.

This measure does not grant financial assistance or discount to the students. It neither entails any funding or allocation from the government. *Ang tanging ibinibigay lang po natin sa ating mga mag-aaral ay ang pagkakataon na makapag-exam kahit hindi pa sila bayad o kulang pa ang kanilang bayad sa kanilang paaralan. Gayunpaman, malaking tulong na ito sa ating mga kababayan na naghihikahos, ngunit patuloy na umaasa at nangangarap para sa mas magandang buhay.*

Let us support our students who strive to finish their studies. *Tulungan din natin ang kanilang mga magulang na nagsusumikap na sila ay magkaroon ng magandang edukasyon.*

It is an honor to be a coauthor and cosponsor of this measure and I am calling on my colleagues to support the same.

By Senator Go

I would like to cosponsor and coauthor Senate Bill 1359 or the Act Prohibiting the Imposition of a No Permit No Exam Policy.

First, I cannot overemphasize the importance of education in our country. Education is a constitutionally enshrined right which the State must protect and promote which is why it is one of those departments which has the biggest chunk of our country's annual budget. For these duties to be achieved, it is vital that opportunities to receive quality education are accessible to all Filipinos.

Second, hammered by natural disasters and COVID-19, our Philippine economy remains to be more vulnerable. It is understandable that students and their parents struggle to pay tuition and other school fees. Adding burden to this, is the imposition of a "No Permit, No Exam" Policy. *Kailangan po natin tanggalin ang ganitong klaseng burden sa students at kanilang mga magulang.* The primary objective of schools is to provide learning opportunities for the development of the students' intellectual, moral, physical and cultural aspects and not the other way around. By imposing this unreasonable policy, schools are putting additional unnecessary pressure to students when they should be focusing on studying.

This is the reason why I support the prohibition of imposing the "No Permit, No Exam Policy." Private Higher Institutions should unburden the students of worries about their unpaid tuition and school fees ahead of taking exams / which can affect their mental state.

As chair of the Senate Committee on Health, my primary interest is the physical and mental health ng mga students natin. *Dapat hindi malipat sa kanila ang burden. Lagi po natin unahin ang kapakanan ng ating mga estudyante bago ang lahat.*

By Senate Villar

I am pleased to sponsor today Senate Bill No. 1359, under Committee Report No. 6, referring to "AN ACT PENALIZING THE IMPOSITION OF A 'NO PERMIT, NO EXAM' POLICY OR ANY POLICY THAT PREVENTS STUDENTS ENROLLED IN PUBLIC OR PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL

INSTITUTIONS FORM TAKING EXAMINATIONS OR ANY FORM OF EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT FOR REASONS OF OUTSTANDING FINANCIAL OR PROPERTY OBLIGATIONS, SUCH AS UNPAID AND OTHER SCHOOL FEES”, being reported out by the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, joint with the Committee on Basic Education.

To most Filipino parents, education is the most precious inheritance they can pass on to their children. They consider it important to send their children to school, and this comes with hope that the educated children can help in improving their quality of life to a level that is more comfortable. In the Philippine setting, it is not peculiar that families mortgage a piece of their lands or homes, and even sell a few of their possessions in order that their children could pursue college or tertiary education. In short, it is typical for Filipino parents to sacrifice so much so that their children could get quality education.

It is a good thing that Republic Act No. 10931 or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, which institutionalizes free tuition and exemption from other fees in state universities and colleges (SUCs), and local universities and colleges (LUCs) in the Philippines was enacted. The law was passed to give underprivileged Filipino students a better chance to earn quality higher education.

However, not all children get to attend public schools, universities and colleges (SUCs). Some modest families send their children to private schools. And at times, these families encounter difficulties when it comes to paying the tuition fees, and this becomes more apparent during examinations. While families understand that tuition and other fees are necessary for schools to provide the service required of them, they encounter unavoidable circumstances at times when they could not meet the obligation to pay the tuition fee on time. And while CHED has issued a Memorandum Order requiring colleges and universities to provide a Student Affairs and Services (SAS) office that will provide its students a package of services, including guidance and counseling, career and job placement, economic enterprise development and scholarship and financial assistance, it does not categorically prohibit the “no permit, no exam policy” and so this does not effectively stop schools from practicing it.

Sometime in 2013, we were quite distressed when we heard about a promising student in a premier state university who allegedly committed suicide because she was not allowed to take her college examination due to her inability to pay the school fees. To my mind, this could have been avoided, if only we have in place a more considerate policy towards students undergoing financial difficulties.

Senate Bill No. 1359 endeavors to prohibit the imposition of a “no permit, no exam” policy or any policy that prevents students enrolled in public or private educational institutions from taking examinations or any form of educational assessment for reasons of outstanding financial or property obligations, such as unpaid tuition and other school fees. This will essentially avoid parents and students, who are already facing financial difficulties, from suffering additional emotional stress under this seemingly unfair practice.

For a country that gives priority to education and makes it the State’s constitutional duty take appropriate steps to make education accessible to all, this legislation is certainly a move in the right direction.

By Senate President Zubiri

It is my honor to cosponsor Senate Bill No. 1359, or the “No Permit, No Exam” Prohibition Act, for all our students in all our schools. This will apply across all levels, in both public and private institutions alike.

Examinations serve an important role in the educational journey of a student, allowing for their assessment and advancement into the next phase of their learning. *Kung walang exam, hindi makatutulong ng pag-aaral ang ating mga estudyante. Kahit gaano kagaling, katalino, at kasipag pa nila, kayang-kayang harangin ng “No Permit, No Exam” policy ang progreso nila.*

Education is a right, so it follows that all facets of an educational program must be accessible to our students. *Kasama diyang karapatan nilang makapag-exam sa tamang panahon, kasabay ng kanilang mga kaklase.*

I understand that this is more difficult to enforce in private institutions, but we cannot allow profit to triumph over the right to education. There are more equitable ways to deal with delinquent payments—such as holding back clearances until proper payment is made—but we must allow our students to take their exams in the proper, timely manner, as laid out in the educational curriculum.

So I urge all our colleagues to see to the passage of this bill, *para po sa lahat ng ating mga estudyante at pati na ang kanilang mga pamilya na kumakayod para mapag-aral sila.*

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1359

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

SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 7 on Senate Bill No. 1360 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 7 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1360

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 1360 (Committee Report No. 7), entitled

AN ACT EXPANDING THE COVERAGE OF THE TERTIARY EDUCATION SUBSIDY, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10931, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE “UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO QUALITY TERTIARY EDUCATION ACT.”

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

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Escudero for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR ESCUDERO

Senator Escudero stated that the bill seeks to expand the coverage of the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) in order to benefit more students who are deserving and in need.

Upon his motion, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of his sponsorship speech into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*.

Following is the full text of sponsorship speech of Senator Escudero on Senate Bill No. 1360:

As Chairperson of the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, I rise to sponsor Committee Report No. 7 which recommends the approval of Senate Bill No. 1360, entitled “An Act Expanding the Coverage of the Tertiary Education Subsidy, Amending for the Purpose Republic Act No. 10931, Otherwise Known as the “Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act.”

Laws are like apps: they have to be updated to retain their effectiveness when such has been degraded by developments, either new or unforeseen at the time the laws were passed.

This is so because while Congress writes laws with clarity of vision, they do not, however, use crystal balls.

It is only when laws are being implemented when their shortcomings emerge, or untapped potentials become apparent.

Some laws, on the other hand, are victims of their own success, that the demand to expand the benefits they provide surge, putting pressure on Congress to amend them so that more people gain from the social good they create.

The Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act is one of those.

This bill responds to the pleas of those who have been left out and left behind by the promise of this good law.

They have argued that if the law truly lives up to its banner billing as "universal" in scope, then amendments proposed in this measure I am sponsoring should be passed.

This bill could be the 2.0 version of the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) component of Republic Act 10931.

It provides a raft of provisions whose common denominator is expansion—of putting more beneficiaries, putting more financial help for students, putting more schools under the state program.

It expands the TES coverage to students in private higher educational institutions (HEIs) and private technical-vocational institutes (TVIs).

It establishes a system of prioritization in identifying TES beneficiaries in which no one, for as long as they are deserving and dedicated, will be left behind.

It brings under the program students who are enrolled in private HEIs and TVIs in cities and municipalities where there is no established SUC, LUC, or public TVI.

It also brings under the program those who are studying in private HEIs and TVIs in towns and cities where there are existing SUCs, LUCs, or public TVIs.

This effectively ends the embargo of granting TES to students of private colleges or vocational schools in towns where state funded schools exist.

We, however, have assigned to the CHED the power to determine the amount of subsidies to be granted, and the eligibility of TES beneficiaries.

But what we have also enumerated in this bill are the benefits the CHED may grant, and these are:

- Tuition and other school fees, to include those in private HEIs, and private or LGU-operated TVIs;
- Allowances for books, school supplies, transportation to and from school, and reasonable allowance for the documented rental or purchase of computers and other education-related expenses, if applicable;
- Allowances for student room and board, if applicable;
- Allowances for students with disability, which may include special services, transportation, equipment, and supplies reasonably incurred; and
- One-time cost of obtaining the first professional credentials, which may include application fees, notarial fees, review class fees, insurance premium fees.

This bill also allows TES beneficiaries to continually receive assistance under the program until the completion of their respective undergraduate, post-secondary tertiary education or technical-vocational programs, subject of course to rules.

As I close, let me reiterate one salient provision of this bill, and that is to put students of private technical vocational schools at par with other tertiary students.

This bill ends this class discrimination, where schools are stratified like cruise ships, with many lodged in suites, while others sweat in steerage, such as tech-voc students.

Our economy is reeling from skills shortage, lacking proficient craftsmen, short of professional technicians, that it is said to be easier to find an *abogado* than hire the services of a *maestro karpintero*.

Let us pass this bill.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AS COSPONSORSHIP REMARKS

Upon motion of Senator Escudero, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the explanatory notes of Senate Bill Nos. 279 and 29 as cosponsorship speeches of Senators Estrada and Revilla, which were deemed read and inserted into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

On Senate Bill No. 279 (Senator Estrada)

Quality, accessible, and inclusive education has always been among the priorities of the government pursuant to the constitutional mandate that the State shall “establish and maintain a system of scholarship grants, student loan programs, subsidies, and other incentives which shall be available to deserving students in both public and private schools, especially to the underprivileged.”

In 2017, Republic Act No. 10931, otherwise known as the “Universal Access to Quality Education Act,” was enacted to make education, particularly higher and technical-vocational education, accessible to all through adequate funding and partnership with private educational institutions. By virtue of the said law, Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) was established in all state universities and colleges (SUCs), local universities and colleges (LUCs), private higher education Institutions (HEIs) and all technical-vocational Institutions (TVIs).

In light of making education more inclusive, this proposed measure seeks to amend R.A. 10931 by also giving proportional budgetary allocation to poor and academically competent students who opt to study in private institutions even if there are existing public institutions in their areas. Further, TES beneficiaries with good scholastic records and who comply with residency requirements of HEIs and TVIs will continue to receive the benefits under the law until they complete post-secondary technical-vocational course or higher education degree program.

This measure was approved on by the House of Representatives on Third Reading during the 18th Congress.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is highly recommended.

On Senate Bill No. 29 (Senator Revilla)

Article XIV Section 2 (3) of the Constitution provides that the State shall “establish and maintain a system of scholarship grants, student loan programs, subsidies, and other incentives which shall be available to deserving students in both public and private schools, especially to the underprivileged.”

Republic Act No. 10931, otherwise known as the “Universal Access to Quality Education Act,” was enacted on 2017 pursuant to that Constitutional mandate. It declared that quality education is an inalienable right of all Filipinos. Also, it recognizes the complementary roles of public and private higher education institutions (HEIs) and technical-vocational institutions (TVIs) in the educational system.

This bill proposes the expansion of the coverage of the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) as provided under RA10931 by introducing the voucher system to allow indigent and academically competent students to enroll and study in private schools in cities and municipalities where there are existing state universities and colleges (SUCs), local universities and colleges (LUCs) and public TVIs.

The Department of Education (DepEd) is already implementing the voucher system as a program of financial assistance wherein subsidies in the form of vouchers are provided to qualified Senior High School (SHS) learners in participating private or non-DepEd public SHSs. The subsidy

is not given to the learner as cash and DepEd instead pays directly to the non-DepEd SHS where the learner enrolls. It aims to increase access to SHS and provide greater choice to learners and their families in deciding the SHS program that caters to their needs and career goals.

As stated in the updated Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022, the United Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST) Board is encouraged to consider “implementing a voucher system and improve the loan system to give students a choice in school (whether public or private) and educational tracks (whether TVET or higher education) prior to the enrollment period.” Further, it stated that “[s]uch would also level the playing field among quality private and public HEIs and TVIs.”

Under this proposed bill, all TES beneficiaries shall continue to receive such benefits or subsidy until they complete their higher education degree program, provided that they do not fail in any of their subjects and comply with the residency requirements. This measure was already approved on Third and Final Reading by the House of Representatives during the Eighteenth Congress.

In this light, the immediate passage of this bill is highly recommended.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECHES

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the cosponsorship speeches of Senators Villanueva, Estrada, and Go on Senate Bill No. 1360, which were deemed read and inserted into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

By Senator Villanueva

This Representation is one of the authors of Republic Act No. 10931, or the “Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act,” which became a law in 2017. According to the Commission on Higher Education, as of 2022, over two million students have benefitted from the free tuition and other school fees, as well as the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES), mandated under the law. Indeed, this landmark legislation has helped uplift the lives of many Filipino students and made it easier for them to achieve their dreams.

It is therefore my honor and privilege to cosponsor Senate Bill No. 1360, under Committee Report No. 7, which seeks to expand the coverage of the tertiary education subsidy under the current law to make education even more inclusive. We commend and thank the sponsor, Sen. Francis “Chiz” Escudero, chairperson of the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education for his hard work on this measure.

Under this bill, the coverage of the TES will be expanded to allow students to enroll and study in private higher educational institutions even when there are existing state universities and colleges (SUCs), local universities and colleges (LUCs), and public technical vocational institutions (TVIs) in the area. Prioritization will still be given to qualified students enrolled in SUCs, LUCs, and public TVIs who are part of households included in the most recent Listahanan of the DSWD. Further, all TES beneficiaries will continue to receive subsidy until they complete their respective programs, provided that they comply with the retention and residency requirements of their schools.

Umaasa po tayo na sa panukalang ito, mas marami pang matutulungang kabataang Pilipino na makapagtapos ng pag-aaral at makamit ang inaasam na magandang bukas.

Muli, maraming salamat sa ating sponsor at sa ating mga kasama.

May God bless us all.

By Senator Estrada

It is an honor to be a cosponsor of Senate Bill No 1360 under Committee Report No. 7 submitted by the Committees on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education and on Finance, chaired by Sen. Francis “Chiz” Escudero. This measure seeks to expand the coverage of the Tertiary Education Subsidy or TES as provided in Republic Act No. 10931 or the “Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act.”

The enactment of RA10931 is an important milestone in the State's unceasing endeavor to provide quality and accessible education for our people. It strengthened the complementary roles of public and private higher education institutions in the country. Particularly, the TES allowed eligible students to avail of the financial assistance extended by the government.

However, there is more that should be done. According to the Commission on Higher Education, the possible beneficiaries for TES coming from Listahanan 2.0 of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) alone is 1.6 million. However, at present, there are only approximately 500,000 beneficiaries of the subsidy program, around 70% of whom are in private higher educational institutions while 30% are in state universities and colleges.

These figures show that five (5) years after the passage of the said law, we should reach out to more learners. One way to achieve this is to expand the coverage of the subsidy. *Sa pamamagitan ng pagpapalawig ng TES, maaari nang maging benepisyaryo ang mga kwalipikadong mag-aaral sa private schools sa kanilang bayan o lungsod. Dahil dito, mas malawak na ang oportunidad na ibinibigay natin sa ating mga kabataan at mas pinagtitibay natin ang pagtutulungan ng pamahalaan at pribadong sektor.*

Rightfully, one of the recommendations of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies in a forum just recently held is to "prioritize educational support for poor children and develop and adopt credible systems for targeting government education subsidy to poor beneficiaries to enable them to go to better public or private schools of their choice."

The provision of expanded TES is a crucial step towards realizing our constitutional mandate of protecting and promoting the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and taking appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. It is one vital instrument that will lead us to achieving the country's objective to establish and maintain a system of subsidies available to deserving students in both public and private schools.

This is our investment for the future of our children. I, therefore, enjoin my colleagues to support the passage of this very important measure.

By Senator Go

It is my honor to co-sponsor and co-author the Senate Bill expanding the coverage of the tertiary education subsidy.

Ang edukasyon ang tanging puhunan natin sa mundong ito. Kaya sisiguraduhin nating makakapagtapos ng pag-aaral ang ating mga anak upang magkaroon ng mas maginhawang kinabukasan. Sa administrasyon ni Pangulong Duterte, sinikap nating mabigyan ng libreng edukasyon ang lahat ng maipasa ng Kongreso ang Universal Access To Quality Tertiary Education Act, to make education, particularly higher and technical-vocational education accessible to all, through adequate funding and partnership with private educational institutions. Last year, an estimated 1.6 million poor Filipino students are in school without the need to pay for tuition and miscellaneous fees because of this beneficial act.

Sa dami na ng ating natulungan dahil sa batas na ito, hindi tayo dapat tumigil, kung maari, i-expand pa natin at gawin nating mas inklusibo sa mga academically competent students na nais mag-aral sa mga pribadong institution. Malaking tulong ito sa mga qualified Filipino students dahil magkakaroon na sila ng option upang makapag-aral sa institution na mas naangkop sa mga kursong nais nilang kuhanin. Patuloy tayong maghahanap ng paraan na mabigyan ng suporta ang ating mga estudyante upang hindi matigil ang pag-aaral ng ating mga kabataang Pilipino.

Furthermore, through the passage of this act, Tertiary Education Subsidy beneficiaries with good scholastic records and who comply with residency requirements of the school will continue to receive the benefits under the law until they complete postsecondary technical-vocational course or higher education degree program.

With this, I express my full support to the expansion of the coverage of the tertiary education subsidy.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1360

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

SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 9 on Senate Bill No. 1470 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 9 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1470

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 1470 (Committee Report No. 9), entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE MECHANISM FOR LAND USE DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING AND BUDGETING FOR STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11396, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "SUCS LAND USE DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (LUDIP) ACT."

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

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Escudero for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR ESCUDERO

Senator Escudero stated that the bill seeks to amend the LUDIP Act by providing or requiring that all SUCs come up with their master development plan and providing funds therefore chargeable against the General Appropriations Act of succeeding years.

Upon his motion, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of his sponsorship speech into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*.

Following is the full text of sponsorship speech of Senator Escudero on Senate Bill No. 1470:

As Chairperson of the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, I rise to sponsor Committee Report No. 9, which recommends the approval of Senate Bill No. 1470, entitled "An Act Strengthening the Mechanisms for Land Use Development and Infrastructure Planning and Budgeting for State Universities and Colleges, Amending for the Purpose Republic Act No. 11396, Otherwise Known as the "SUCs Land Use Development and Infrastructure Plan (LUDIP) Act".

Universities are bastions of strategic visions. But they cease being academic citadels once they become bastions of planning myopia.

Our SUCs cannot claim to be schools of—and for—the future, if they themselves cannot imagine what they will become five or 10 years from now.

They should be the last to fall prey to the bureaucratic culture which resorts to the ad hoc and prizes the band-aid, and whose planning platform largely follows the election calendar.

They should be the last to be afflicted with the handicap we see in many public offices of not being able to see beyond three years, of collapsing all programs within one electoral term, and of favoring the quick-gestating to the grand.

Amidst these, state universities and colleges or SUCs should champion long-term planning, generational projects, and programs that seamlessly transcend administrations, for these are what a make a nation great.

But to do the above, they should be able to practice what they preach.

They should hoist themselves up as examples of strategic planning that spans years, instead of merely lurching from one fiscal year to another, with no grand picture to guide them along.

This bill mandates SUCs to each craft a Land Use Development and Infrastructure Plan every—and valid for—five years.

This blueprint can be an SUC's syllabus for progress.

By identifying key result areas, priorities are set, resources are channeled to where they can be most impactful, and progress is measured.

Hindi bara-bara. Hindi bahala na. Hindi bukas na.

Having this plan also benefits national government, including Congress, because in the annual identification of projects to be funded under the GAA, for example, there will already be a menu to choose from.

This takes the whims out of appropriating funds, and allows virtuous projects chosen by the community to take precedence over vanity projects fancied by the powerful few.

By linking land, infrastructure, and capital outlays to the goals set by the SUC for itself, taxpayer's money is properly invested and is expected to yield high social returns for the community and country.

The bill seeks to amend Republic Act 11396, or the SUCs Land Use Development and Infrastructure Plan Act, by effecting the following changes:

- Mandate SUCs to prepare and implement a LUDIP that includes all land use and priority infrastructure projects to be implemented within five years;
- Require the governing boards of the SUCs to review and update their respective LUDIPs every five years;
- Establish an Inter-Agency Committee to monitor the implementation of land use and infrastructure projects of the SUCs. This shall be composed of the Chairperson of the Commission on Higher Education, and the Secretaries of Budget and Management, Public Works and Highways, and Socioeconomic Planning; and
- Direct the CHED to prepare a comprehensive five-year LUDIP and submit the same to Congress and other agencies concerned to serve as a guide in the annual allocation of funds for SUC infrastructure projects on an annual basis.

As we all know, SUCs require many of their students to write and defend a thesis before they can graduate.

As we funnel tens of billions of pesos to SUCs yearly, this LUDIP is in effect a thesis submitted by the SUCs to all their stakeholders that proves their proficiency in strategic planning and in the stewardship of funds.

Let us pass this bill.

EXPLANATORY NOTE AS COSPONSORSHIP REMARKS

Upon motion of Senator Escudero, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following explanatory notes of Senators Cayetano (A) and Cayetano (P) as a cosponsorship on Senate Bill No. 251, which was deemed read and inserted into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

Studies show that quality infrastructure facilitates better instruction and leads to the improvement of student outcomes. However, our State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in a great number of areas grieve for educational infrastructure and facilities. During the annual deliberations on the budget, SUCs lament the dismal funding given to them and lobby for additional capital outlay for the construction or improvement of their facilities, such as classrooms, dormitories, libraries, laboratories, and sports facilities. Without such facilities, the conditions in which the youth are expected to learn the skills that will allow them to thrive and actively participate in designing their futures is not optimal for knowledge and skills acquisition. In fact, poor educational infrastructure is believed to Impede learners' holistic growth and overall well-being.

This proposed measure, thus, aims to establish a five- (5-) year priority infrastructure plan for SUCs, which shall be consistent with the national priorities, goals, and objectives as well as regional needs as determined by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and the Land Use Development and Infrastructure Plan of each SUC. This bill also provides a fixed annual budget of twenty-five billion (25,000,000,000) pesos for the next five years for the implementation of this priority infrastructure plan.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of the bill and approval of the same is earnestly sought.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1470

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

SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 18 on House Bill No. 4635 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 18 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 4635

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, House Bill No. 4635 (Committee Report No. 18), entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE ADIONG MEMORIAL STATE COLLEGE FROM THREE (3) YEARS TO FOUR (4) YEARS IN ACCORDANCE WITH REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8292, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "HIGHER EDUCATION MODERNIZATION ACT OF 1997", FURTHER AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7935, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8651.

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

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Escudero for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR ESCUDERO

Senator Escudero stated that the local bill seeks to extend the term of the state college president from three (3) to four (4) years in order to align it with Republic Act No. 8292.

Upon his motion, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of his sponsorship speech into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*.

Following is the full text of sponsorship speech of Senator Escudero on House Bill No. 4635 under Committee Report No. 18:

As Chairperson of the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, I rise to sponsor Committee Report No. 18, which recommends the approval of House Bill No. 4635, entitled "An Act Extending the Term of Office of the President of the Adiong Memorial State College from Three (3) Years to Four (4) Years in Accordance with Republic Act No. 8292, Otherwise Known as the "Higher Education Modernization Act of 1997", Further Amending for the Purpose Republic Act No. 7935, as Amended by Republic Act No. 8651".

This is a simple bill which at its core involves only one word: four, or changing from three years to four years the term of a state college president.

This bill prescribes a four-year term for the President of the Adiong Memorial State College in the great province of Lanao del Sur, thereby aligning it with the CHED standard that a state college or university president's one term shall be four years, which may be extended by another term.

However, this goes beyond an editorial correction, for the word in question is not a typographical error, but is a policy rectification.

This is akin to creating a city but whose officials have a term of two years.

But we could have been spared of the rigmarole of acting on this measure if due diligence had only been exercised in the past.

There were three missed opportunities.

One, when the bill creating the Adiong Memorial Polytechnic College was deliberated in Congress, and became Republic Act No.7935

Second, when its charter was amended by Republic Act No. 8651, when, to reflect its expanded course offerings, it became the Adiong Memorial Polytechnic State College.

Third, and this is most recently, when the college was renamed as Adiong Memorial State College by virtue of Republic Act No. 11756, which was signed into law last April.

Either of the three would have been a perfect vehicle of the provision sought in this bill.

As it is true with the production of goods and laws, when oversight is committed, overtime is required.

I move for the approval of this simple bill.

EXPLANATORY NOTE OF HOUSE BILL NO. 4635

Upon motion of Senator Escudero, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the explanatory note of House Bill No. 4635, filed by Representative Zia Alonto Adiong, into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*.

Following is the full text of the explanatory note:

The Adiong Memorial State College is a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in the Municipality of Ditsaan-Ramain, Province of Lanao del Sur that offers graduate, undergraduate, and diploma courses in education, agriculture forestry, fisheries business administration, and information technology, as well as junior and senior high school programs to deserving students.

Section 9 of Republic Act No. 8651, as amended, provides that the Adiong Memorial State College shall be headed by a president to be appointed by the Board of Trustees, subject to a selection process and shall hold office for a term of three (3) years, and is renewable for another three (3) years. However, Section 6 of Republic Act No. 8292, otherwise known as the Higher Education Modernization Act of 1997, provides that the president of a university or college shall have a term of four (4) years and shall be eligible for reappointment for another term.

To harmonize the charter of Adiong Memorial State College with the provisions of the Higher Education Modernization Act of 1997, this bill seeks to change the term of office of the president from three (3) years to four (4) years.

In view of the foregoing, the approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 4635

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

SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 26 on Senate Bill No. 1864 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 26 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1864

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 1864 (Committee Report No. 26), entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A MORATORIUM ON THE PAYMENT OF STUDENT LOANS DURING DISASTERS AND OTHER EMERGENCIES.

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

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Escudero for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR ESCUDERO

Senator Escudero stated that the bill seeks to suspend the payment of student loans during disasters and calamities.

Upon his motion, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of his sponsorship speech into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*.

Following is the full text of the sponsorship speech of Senator Escudero on Senate Bill No. 1864:

As Chairperson of the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, I rise to sponsor Committee Report No. 26, which recommends the approval of Senate Bill No. 1864, entitled "An Act Providing for a Moratorium on the Payment of Student Loans During Disasters and Other Emergencies."

The Philippines is globally reckoned as the fourth most calamity-hit in the world, although one study places us on the second spot.

This geographical bad luck of sitting atop the Ring of Fire and serving as gateway to typhoons born in the Pacific account for this annual parade of natural disasters.

But man's practices lead to manmade disasters as well, such as building settlements on natural flood catchment areas and turning them into disasters waiting to happen.

While the usual post disaster reports tally school buildings destroyed or damaged, they do not, however, enumerate the number of students affected.

Specifically absent from the infra-centric count is the magnitude of students dropping out because a typhoon has altered their families' fortunes for worse.

A school may survive a howler intact, but not all its students could. They are a disaster's unreported collateral damage.

This bill provides a lifeline to a calamity's hidden victims.

It declares a moratorium on the payment of what tertiary students financially owe their schools when these are within the jurisdiction of a national or a local declaration of a state of calamity.

That this is not loan forgiveness but a payment freeze is made abundantly clear in Section 5.

As this section forms the essence of this bill, let me highlight its salient points.

One, the moratorium covers all fees, charges, and costs relating to the student loans incurred for higher education and TVET programs.

Two, these obligations include those administered by the HEIs or TVIs themselves or by the Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST) Board, the CHED or any other government agency or instrumentality.

Three, it shall be in effect during the State of Calamity or Emergency and for 30 days after its lifting.

Four, availing the moratorium shall not adversely affect the students' eligibility for re-enrollment or for graduation.

Five, deferred obligations shall bear no penalties or interests.

Six, nothing prevents schools from granting favorable payment terms or other forms of aid to their students.

Seven, it also does not prohibit students from not applying for moratorium, or in availing other forms of assistance from the government.

But this bill's merits are not only found on its fair provisions – which strikes a balance between the need of students for relief and the need to survive by schools during hard times which impoverish them both – but in the philosophy which underpin them.

And this about the Filipino culture of “*damayan*” whenever a misfortune strikes, which schools, as beacons of enlightenment, should not only preach but practice.

And Congress has a history of coming to the aid of those in distress, be they towns submerged by floods, or banks swimming in a sea of red.

In fact, government had bailed out companies owned by billionaires, and Congress, in laws too many to count, has granted tax breaks and fiscal incentives, to industries too big to fail.

On this floor alone, not too long ago, provisions in the Bayanihan Law I and II were hammered out to provide billions in assistance to distressed companies, in amounts that dwarf the proposed Sovereign Wealth Fund.

Yung extended NOLCO or net operating loss carryover na lang, P1.6 billion ang estimated foregone losses; merong P459 billion loan window to MSMEs; may P46 billion para sa Small Business Wage Subsidy, at marami pa. Mahaba ang listahan ng pautang.

Ang bill na ito, hindi nagpapautang. Walang cash-out. No debt erasure. Ang sinasabi lang, habang sa panahon ng may kalamidad, panandalian munang ihinto ang pagbayad ng mga school loans.

No massive restructuring of loans of the country club and the jet-set types.

Only a rescheduling, in weeks even, of payables of students, the future of this country who should be treated as the real “too big to fail” constituency.

Let us pass this measure.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR ESTRADA

Pursuant to the manifestation of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of Senator Estrada, and Go on Senate Bill No. 1864, which were deemed read and inserted into the *Record of the Senate*:

With the permission of our good sponsor, Sen. Francis G. Escudero, this Representation would like to be a coauthor and cosponsor of the “Student Loan Payment Moratorium During Disasters and Emergencies Act” submitted by the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education as Senate Bill No. 1864 under Committee Report No. 26.

The Philippines is often struck by calamities and disasters that not only cause serious disruption in our communities but also result to danger or loss of lives and properties. As a matter of fact, the United Nations Population Fund ranked the Philippines as the third most disaster-prone country in the world in the 2018 World Risk Index.

One of the most affected sectors of our community during the occurrence of disasters and calamities are the students. Apart from the anxiety brought about by the concerns to meet the needs of their families, their schedules in schools are disrupted. Hence, their worries are multi-faceted: physical, emotional, psychological, and financial.

Isa sa mga maliliit na paraan para maibsan natin ang pag-aalala ng ating mga mag-aaral at ng kanilang pamilya ay sa pamamagitan ng pagpapaliban sa pagbabayad ng kanilang mga bayarin sa paaralan.

The “Student Loan Payment Moratorium During Disasters and Emergencies Act” seeks to implement “a moratorium on the enforcement of payment of all fees, charges, and costs relating to the student loans incurred for higher education, and technical and vocational education and training programs.” Such moratorium will be in place for the duration of the state of calamity or emergency and thirty (30) days after the lifting of such state of calamity or emergency.

Isinasaad din po sa panukalang batas na ito na hindi maaapektuhan ng nasabing moratorium ang katayuan ng mag-aaral para sa re-enrollment at graduation. Wala rin pong interes na sisingilin mula sa kanila dahil sa pagpapaliban ng pagbabayad sa kanilang mga loan.

Simple as it may seem, this form of support to our students will redound to their personal welfare and that of their families. It will positively channel their focus to their studies and enable them to flourish in a learning environment free of worries and troubles. With this, we will be able to produce more competent and confident graduates who will, in the long term, be the enablers in achieving our aspiration for a prosperous society.

EXPLANATORY NOTE OF SENATE BILL NO. 975 BY SENATOR LAPID

Upon motion of Senator Escudero, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the explanatory note of Senate Bill No. 975, as Senator Lapid’s cosponsorship speech, into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*.

Following is the full text of the explanatory note:

The relationship between disasters and poverty incidence has long been established in the Philippines. The yearly occurrence of devastating typhoons caused crippling and periodic setbacks to our farmers and fisherfolks. Earthquakes destroyed the economic foundations built by families and businesses through years of hard work. Volcanic eruptions literally turned to ashes cityscapes, industries and neighborhoods.

The Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic is just the recent iteration of this disaster-poverty nexus. In a recent discussion paper published by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), it was found that one of the projected economic impacts of the pandemic and the restrictions imposed to contain its spread is on employment—a potential 50% reduction in the country’s number of workers at the peak of the pandemic. The paper also estimated that three (3)



in five (5) Filipinos have limited capacity to subsist during a lockdown period that extends beyond one month, without additional support from the government. On a macroeconomic level, it was projected that the Philippine economy stands to lose between Php 276.3 Billion (best-case scenario) and Php 2.5 Trillion (worst-case scenario) due to COVID-19.

Thus, it is imperative that the government should extend as much economic assistance and protection as possible, especially to the poor who bear the risk of not being able to survive with continued work, economic activity and mobility restrictions. This proposed measure aims to contribute to this social welfare mission.

With most families left without stable sources of income and livelihood during major disaster and calamities, priorities for expenses are restrained to the most basic needs such as food, medicines and other daily needs. Non-essential expenses like those pertaining to education, tuition and other school fees may temporarily be disregarded and set aside. To ease the burden to families who have incurred student loans and debts, this bill provides for a moratorium on the enforcement of payment of all fees, charges, and costs relating to the student loan programs for Higher Education and Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The moratorium covers the period from the declaration of a national and local State of Calamity or Emergency up to thirty (30) days from the termination thereof. In case this period exceeds a total of 60 days, the payment of the student loan and related fees is further deferred until the next semester or term. The enrollment or graduation eligibility of the student is likewise protected if the moratorium would be availed of. If passed, the bill also mandates the retroactive application of the moratorium to students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through this measure, the student loan liabilities are temporarily eased off from the minds of disaster-stricken families as they focus more on the more basic and essential daily expenses.

In view of this, early passage of this bill is sought.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GO

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following cosponsorship speech of Senator Go on Senate Bill No. 1864 which was deemed read and inserted into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*.

It is my honor to co-sponsor Senate Bill No. 1864 granting moratorium on student loan payment during disasters and other emergencies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put the Filipino youth's mental health and well-being under immense strain. *Alam n'yo, umpisa pa lang ng pandemya, marami na pong naiulat na nakaka-experience ng depression. Umpisa pa lang ng krisis, talagang maraming apektado lalo na sa mga estudyante at teachers to the point na tumataas rin ang kaso ng depression and, worse, suicide cases. Ganito po ang naging kalagayan sa COVID-19 crisis, ganito rin po ang kadalasang sitwasyon sa panahon ng kalamidad at krisis.*

Makakatulong po sa ating mga kabataan at kanilang mga pamilya na mabigyan sila ng palugit sa pagbayad ng student loans. Hanggat maaari bawasan na natin ang iniisip nila.

For the past six years, the administration of former President Duterte intensified its move to ensure no one is left behind on access to quality education. The Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act enabled a more inclusive and equitable education.

This proposed measure will provide huge relief to our students and is a step to ensure that they would be able to remain in schools and pursue education. It is for this reason that I wish to be a coauthor of this measure.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1864

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

REMARKS OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

On House Bill No. 4635 under Committee Report No. 18, Senate President Zubiri stated that no copy of the explanatory note of the bill was given to the Senate as only the Third Reading copy was sent by the House of Representatives. Senator Escudero replied that he would be submitting the copy to the Office of the Senate Secretary as he had earlier manifested that the explanatory note would be inserted into the records.

SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 27 on House Bill No. 1456 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 27 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 1456

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, House Bill No. 1456 (Committee Report No. 27), entitled

AN ACT RENAMING THE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES, LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF ALUBIJID, PROVINCE OF MISAMIS ORIENTAL, CREATED AND REFERRED TO AS SUCH PURSUANT TO REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10919, AS THE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY 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 Villanueva, only the title of the bill was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the *Record of the Senate*.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Escudero for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR ESCUDERO

Senator Escudero stated that the one-page bill sought to rename a school in Misamis Oriental.

Upon his motion, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of his sponsorship speech into the *Journal* and *Record of the Senate*.

Following is the full text of the sponsorship speech of Senator Escudero on House Bill No. 1456:

As Chairperson of the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, I rise to sponsor Committee Report No. 27, which recommends the approval of House Bill No. 1456, entitled "An Act Changing the Name of the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines into the University of Science and Technology of the Philippines, Amending for the Purpose Republic Act No. 10919."

If you have been to Cagayan de Oro, one of the most impressive public buildings there belongs to the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines or USTSP.

However, as a book is not judged by its cover, a school should not be rated by its edifices alone too.

And by the yardstick of what makes a great school, USTSP checks all the boxes.

It has a great faculty. It performs well in Board exams. And its graduates are said to have landed jobs even in tight labor markets.

A great school also practices the same innovation it preaches, which USTSP does.

Since its founding as a trade school in 1927—yes, it is old, but Juan Ponce Enrile is older—it has reinvented and reoriented itself many times in order to meet the challenges at hand and ahead.

But this adeptness to change did not sacrifice the one hallmark it has embraced throughout the years—the commitment to excellence.

This remains its anchor principle, of doing the best, as what an institution of higher learning should.

And Congress, from the Commonwealth era of the telegram to the incoming age of ChatGPT, has been a handmaiden of USTSP's evolution.

To date, some six legislative acts have been passed to effect USTSP's progression to a better institution.

This bill will be the 7th, and while it appears not too consequential on paper, this actually bodes well for its future.

The fact is, rebranding is essential to any entity, be it commercial or academic.

But this name change of USTSP to University of Science and Technology of the Philippines is no mere rechristening but will be accompanied by a great leap forward in the quality of education it offers.

The administration promises that this is no mere *karatula* change, but mirrors essential improvements that the school is actually doing.

And, in fact, that is the only precondition I asked of them before I sponsored this bill: that this is not about signage change, but substantial improvement on what the school can offer.

And most important, that this is about the legacy it should sustain: that the Made-in-USTP professionals should forever be among Mindanao's best products and exports to the world.

A USTSP with another name should not remain as it is. It should be better.

With this promise they have given, I call on our colleagues to approve this bill which came from our friends in the House.

EXPLANATORY NOTE OF HOUSE BILL NO. 1456

Upon motion of Senator Escudero, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the explanatory note of House Bill No. 1456, filed by Representative Mariano Hernandez, into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*.

Following is the full text of the explanatory note:

This bill was filed during the Eighteenth Congress and was approved by the House of Representatives.

When House Bill No. 6144 was being deliberated on, the idea was to have the amalgamation of the Mindanao University of Science and Technology (MUST) and the Misamis Oriental State College of Agriculture and Technology (MOSCAT) to one university which will be the preeminent university dedicated to science and technology in the entire Philippines. However, what came out from the deliberations and the eventual law (Republic Act No. 10919) was the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines.

The word "Southern" in the name of the university sometimes gives the impression that it caters to and focuses on students coming from the South of the Philippines. We want to remove this impression. The performance of the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines has clearly shown that it is the foremost university focused on science and technology in the Philippines.

In view of the foregoing, immediate approval of this measure is earnestly requested.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 1456

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

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 24 ON PROPOSED SENATE BILL NO. 1850

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of Senate Bill No. 1850 (Committee Report No. 24), entitled

AN ACT EMANCIPATING AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES FROM THE DEBT BURDEN ARISING FROM THE AWARD OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS UNDER THE COMPREHENSIVE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Villar (C), sponsor of the measure, and Senator Hontiveros for her interpellation.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Senator Hontiveros noted that Section 2 of Senate Bill No. 1850 explicitly stated the "condonation of the P57.557 billion principal debt of 610,054 agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs), tilling a total of 1,173,101.57 hectares of agrarian reform lands." She said that she wanted the total principal debt to be clarified in terms of the indebtedness of each ARB.

As to whether an ARB, for instance, who received a CLOA three years ago and who consistently paid dues could have his remaining balance condoned, such that he would no longer have to pay again, Senator Villar (C) replied in the affirmative.

On whether an ARB who has fully paid his balance would not be receiving a reimbursement from the government, Senator Villar (C) replied affirmatively as the bill was about the condonation of debt and not rewarding fully paid ARBs.

Asked to clarify if ARBs who have not yet received their respective CLOAs as of December 31, 2022 would have to continue paying the amortization, Senator Villar (C) stated that ARBs who still do not have a CLOA need not pay the amortization. She explained that the bill provided that the DENR, together with the Department of Agrarian Reform under a project with World Bank, shall, within three years, split the collective CLOA into individual CLOAs in order to identify the individual loans to be condoned.

Senator Hontiveros said that at the proper time, she would propose a clearer language to ensure that all the qualified ARBs would be covered. Senator Villar (C) stated that the committee had an amendment to clarify the matter but she would welcome the amendment to be proposed by Senator Hontiveros.

On Section 5, Senator Hontiveros asked for clarification as regards the provision that the "awarded land subject of this Act shall not be sold, transferred, or conveyed except through hereditary succession, or to the government, or to the LBP, or to other qualified beneficiaries through the DAR for a period of ten years from the issuance of Certificate of Condonation or the CLOA." Senator Villar (C) explained that it should be ten years from the issuance of the CLOA, not the Certificate of Condonation.

Asked whether the provision referred to all the CLOAs or only the CLOAs issued after the passage of the Act considering that there were CLOAs issued in the 1990s and the ten-year period not to sell the land had already lapsed, Senator Villar replied that the provision referred to the original issuance of the CLOA. She added that the measure did not intend to repeal the law, RA 6657, but simply a condonation bill and all the provisions of RA 6657 would stay, except that the loans would be condoned.

Senator Hontiveros proposed the use of the phrase "issued after the passage of this Act." However, Senator Villar pointed out that the reference to the issuance of the CLOA was a provision of RA 6657 and the bill would not touch it.

Senator Hontiveros then stated that agrarian reform advocates raised the fear that the condonation might become a double-edged sword: on one hand, it would freeze the payment of the amortizations and allow the farmers to use the money as additional capital for farm productivity; on the other hand, it might lead to indiscriminate and widespread leasing, selling, pawning, and conversion. She proposed that lease, mortgage, and encumbrances be included as prohibited acts. In reply, Senator Villar (C) reiterated that the measure did not intend to repeal RA 6657 and that it only sought the condonation of the loans.

Senator Hontiveros, however, pointed out that Section 65 of RA 6657 and the amendments thereto introduced other restrictions on conversion that were not time related, such as "the land ceases to become economically feasible and sound for agricultural purposes or the locality has become urbanized and the land will have a greater economic value for residential, commercial or industrial purposes." Senator Villar (C) again clarified that such provisions of law would remain as the measure under consideration would not repeal RA 6657.

Adverting to the concern of agrarian reform advocates that the prohibition period against conversion was too short, Senator Hontiveros asked whether the sponsor would consider an amendment to extend the prohibition against conversion to 20 years. Senator Villar (C) explained that the subject matter of the bill was only condonation of loans and did not propose amendments to, nor repeal, RA 6657.

On Senator Hontiveros' proposal to set a 60-day deadline for the submission of the list of beneficiaries by DAR and LANDBANK, Senator Villar (C) pointed out that the bill provided not only 60 days but three years to split the collective CLOAs into individual CLOAs in order to have a list of individual beneficiaries for the purpose of loan condonation. She said that the farmers who would not be included in the list under the SPLIT Program would have to ask another Congress to condone their loans.

Senator Hontiveros, however, stated that another 60 days might have to be provided for the ARBs to check whether they are in the list submitted by DAR and LANDBANK. Senator Villar (C) informed the Body that there was already an initial list of 10,201 ARBs whose loans amounted to P206,247,000.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

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

It was 4:22 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:24 p.m., the session was resumed.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1850

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

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 23 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1849

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of Senate Bill No. 1849 (Committee Report No. 23), entitled

AN ACT AMENDING SECTIONS 2, 6, 10, 11, AND 15 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11709 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "AN ACT STRENGTHENING PROFESSIONALISM AND PROMOTING THE CONTINUITY OF POLICIES AND MODERNIZATION INITIATIVES IN THE ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES, BY PRESCRIBING FIXED TERMS FOR KEY OFFICERS THEREOF, INCREASING THE MANDATORY RETIREMENT AGE OF GENERALS/FLAG OFFICERS, PROVIDING FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE ATTRITION SYSTEM, AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR."

Senator Villanueva stated that the period of interpellations had been closed.

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

PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body proceeded to the period of committee amendments.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

There being no 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.

ESTRADA AMENDMENTS

As proposed by Senator Estrada, there being no objection, the Body approved the following amendments in consideration of the recommendations of Senator Cayetano (P):

1. On page 3, line 2, after the article "THE," delete the word "TENURED" and after the word "OFFICERS," insert the phrase WITH MAXIMUM TOUR OF DUTY;
2. On the same page, line 8, after the article "THE," delete the word "TENURED," and after the word "POSITIONS," insert the phrase WITH MAXIMUM TOUR OF DUTY. ;
3. On the same page, line 19, delete the word "TENURED," and after the word "POSITIONS," insert the phrase WITH MAXIMUM TOUR OF DUTY.

Furthermore, consistent with the policies being espoused by the bill and considering the responsibilities given to those occupying certain military ranks, as proposed by Senator Estrada, there being no objection, the Body approved the following amendments:

4. On page 4, line 5, after the word "earlier," insert a comma (,) and the phrase OR UPON RELIEF BY THE PRESIDENT;

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5. On the same page, line 10, after the word "EARLIER," add a comma (,), and the phrase OR UPON RELIEF BY THE PRESIDENT;
6. On the same page, line 17, after the article "a," delete the word "TENURED," and after the word "position," insert the phrase WITH MAXIMUM TOUR OF DUTY.
7. On page 6, line 3, after the article "THE," replace the phrase "ACTIVE SERVICE-IN-GRADE" with TENURE-IN-GRADE; and
8. On page 9, lines 5 to 15, delete Section 7 on the creation of the congressional oversight committee, in line with the intervention of Senator Cayetano (P).

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1849

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

CLEAN COPY

The Chair directed the Secretariat to prepare a clean copy of the bill incorporating therein the approved amendments.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Gatchalian, the session was suspended.

It was 4:33 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:34 p.m., the session was resumed.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR GATCHALIAN

Senator Gatchalian spoke about Global ComCRI Consortium, the third-party auditor contracted by PAGCOR to determine the gross gaming revenues of offshore gaming operations in the Philippines.

Following is the full text of Senator Gatchalian's speech:

POGO-related crimes have been a hot button issue in the Senate as of late. During the joint investigation conducted by the Committees on Ways and Means, and Public Order and Dangerous Drugs, convincing data was presented to show that POGO-related cases of kidnapping for ransom and other serious crimes have imposed serious social and economic costs on the Philippines. I will discuss this more when the committee report on the social and economic costs of POGOs is ready for discussion in the plenary.

Today, however, I stand before you to reveal what we have discovered so far regarding a very different kind of wrongdoing in the POGO industry. This controversy revolves around the very entities which are tasked by law to ensure that POGOs play by the rules of the game— the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation, and the POGO third-party auditor known as the Global ComRCI Consortium.

Under its charter, the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) is mandated to regulate, authorize, and license all forms of legal gambling in the Philippines. Executive Order No. 13, series of 2017, authorizes PAGCOR to license offshore gaming operations located outside of freeport areas. In essence, PAGCOR is the primary regulator of POGOs.

Karamihan sa mga kumpanya ng POGO ay nasa pangangasiwa ng PAGCOR kaya malaki ang responsibilidad ng PAGCOR sa pagsisiyasat ng operasyon ng mga POGO sa bansa. Sa pag-

usbong ng mga POGO, kailangang balansehin ng PAGCOR ang pagtiyak na sumusunod ang mga ito sa mga kaukulang batas at regulasyon at pagtiyak na laging tama ang binabayad na buwis ng mga POGO.

One important role of PAGCOR as POGO regulator is to determine with accuracy the gross gaming revenues or receipts of offshore gaming licensees. In general, POGO licensees are required to pay a five percent (5%) gaming tax on their revenues under the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997, as amended by Republic Act No. 11590. This is an important source of government revenue because, according to the law, 60% of gaming taxes collected are earmarked to fund the implementation of social development initiatives, such as the Universal Health Care Act, the Health Facilities Enhancement Program, and other government programs targeted at meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

PAGCOR also collects up to an additional two percent (2%) of the GGR as regulatory fees, which shall also be used to fund government programs.

Determining the actual amount of gross gaming revenues is a complicated and highly technical operation. Bets and payouts are made through the POGO's online gaming platforms at lightning speed around the clock, and anywhere around the globe. At the POGO investigation hearing on January 23, 2023, PAGCOR admitted that from the time POGOs officially came under its regulatory jurisdiction until now, the regulator does not have the technical know-how and expertise to determine the GGR itself. This is why as early as 2017, it procured the services of a third-party auditor to determine and report the GGR of POGOs.

According to the Terms of Reference of the public bidding under ITB No. PB17-035COR-06a-07, the aim of the procurement was to "develop, operate, and manage an efficient, accurate, and reliable intermediation platform for PAGCOR operated by a competent and independent consultant to conduct real time audit for its POGOs." According to the TOR, this would allow PAGCOR to make "precise collection of the required fees and revenues from operators based on accurate audit report" generated by the audit platform.

By assisting PAGCOR in calculating precise gross gaming revenue figures, the third-party auditor's operations are meant to increase PAGCOR revenues and raise additional funds for government subsidization of basic social services. The third-party auditor is also an important safeguard to ensure that POGOs are paying the correct amount of taxes and fees to the government.

From the description in the TOR, we can see just how vital the operations of the third-party auditor are to regulating POGOs. Given PAGCOR's lack of expertise with back-end offshore gaming operations, it is the third-party auditor that enables the government to correctly assess and impose gaming taxes and regulatory fees. This is why RA 11590 requires the third-party auditor to be "independent, reputable, internationally known, and duly accredited as such by an accrediting or similar agency recognized by industry experts."

Sa madaling salita, dahil kulang sa kakayahang teknikal ang PAGCOR na mangasiwa ng offshore gaming operations, kailangan nitong kumontrata ng isang third-party auditor para bantayan kung nagbabayad ng tamang buwis ang mga POGO na nasa kanilang hurisdiksiyon at para matukoy kung magkano ang kinikita nila.

Dahil nakasalalay sa third-party auditor ang pagtiyak sa kredibilidad ng ginagawang operasyon ng mga POGO sa bansa, klarong-klaro ang nakasaad sa batas na ang third-party auditor ay dapat lehitimo, garantisadong mapagkakatiwalaan, at hasang-hasa sa paghimay at pagpataw ng mga buwis. Kaya naman naglaan ang gobyerno ng pondo para sa isang third-party auditor.

After an initial failed bidding, the audit contract was finally awarded to the Global ComRCI Consortium on October 26, 2017. The consortium is made up of three corporations: Global Myoho Renge Copy Inc. (Global MRCI), Highweb Trade Ltd., and Comfac Corporation. Global MRCI and Comfac are Philippine corporations, while Highweb is based in Malta.

The consultancy agreement entered into between PAGCOR and the consortium is for a period ten (10) years. Under the contract, the consultant earns a minimum consultancy fee of P552,215,322 per annum. This means that the contract was worth more than P5.5 billion over the ten-year effectivity period. To date, the government has already paid P842 million to the consortium.

Malinaw na malaki ang naging tiwala ng PAGCOR sa third-party auditor na Global ComRCI Consortium dahil hindi biro ang higit limang bilyong pisong iluluwal ng gobyerno para lamang dito.

According to the consortium agreement entered into by the three members, Highweb is the technical partner in charge of the development, installation, testing, and initial operation of the third-party audit platform. Comfac is the operating partner that will manage the day-to-day operations of the consortium under the consultancy agreement with PAGCOR. Meanwhile, Global MRCI is charged with providing the bulk of the capital to finance the operations of the consortium.

Based on the consortium agreement, the three parties committed to raising capital contributions amounting to P2.2 billion which, according to their own words, should have been paid before entering into the contract with PAGCOR. Global MRCI was obligated to put in P1.1 billion, while Highweb and Comfac were obligated to raise P440 million and P660 million, respectively.

The capital commitments agreed upon by the consortium members were necessary to meet an important requirement under the PAGCOR TOR: that the winning bidder must have operating capital of at least P1 billion. This would ensure that the winning bidder has sufficient capital to fund the expensive, technology driven development and operation of the third-party audit platform.

Unfortunately, this is where the problems with the third-party auditor began. A review of the evidence on hand shows that the Global ComRCI Consortium did not come even close to meeting the P1 billion capitalization requirement. What is worse is that it appears that the consortium submitted a falsified bank document to fool the government into believing that it met the capitalization requirement under the TOR.

The 2016 audited financial statements of the three consortium members show that their total equity only amounted to P228.1 million. This is less than one-fourth of the required capitalization under the PAGCOR TOR.

To make up for the lack of capital, the consortium submitted a document titled "Bank Certification" dated June 15, 2017, allegedly issued by a certain Soleil Chartered Bank. The certification reads: "We hereby certify the Twenty-Five Million US Dollars (US\$25,000,000) is for the account of Global MRCI in compliance with the PAGCOR POGO Consultancy Bidding as required Operating Capital for the award."

That is equivalent to more than P1.2 billion based on the exchange rate on that date. The document is allegedly signed by the CEO of Soleil Chartered Bank, Govind Srivastava, and a certain Raj Asta, Executive Operations, Asia Pacific.

According to its website, Soleil Chartered Bank is licensed in the Union of Comoros, with trade correspondence offices in Romania and the United States. However, according to the letterhead on which the bank certification was issued, the bank has an office at Suite 2704-A West Tower, Philippine Stock Exchange Center in Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

There is overwhelming evidence indicating that the so-called bank certification is fraudulent. *Sa ating pagsusuri, napag-alaman natin na ang bangkong nag-isyu umano ng bank guarantee sa Global ComRCI ay hindi naman pala umiiral sa Pilipinas. Kaya lumalabas na kwestionable ang kakayahan ng Global ComRCI na mag-operate bilang isang third-party auditor.*

In a letter addressed to the Committee on Ways and Means dated February 1, 2023, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Felipe Medalla confirmed that Soleil Chartered Bank is not, and has never been, a registered financial institution in the Philippines. Therefore, Soleil Chartered Bank cannot operate in the Philippines and certainly cannot issue bank certificates or letters of credit.

In fact, based on the onsite visit conducted by BSP, Soleil Chartered Bank cannot be found at the Tektite Office. Suite 2704-A, West Tower, is occupied by Soleil Capitale Corp. It should be noted that the stamp or seal of Soleil Capitale Corp also appears on the alleged bank certificate.

According to the PAGCOR evaluation report dated February 2, 2023, Soleil Capitale Corp. CEO Raj Astavakra disavowed any knowledge of the bank certificate and categorically denied its authenticity. In the BSP letter, it was mentioned that Astavakra admitted that Soleil Capitale Corp. is a sister company of Soleil Chartered Bank but stressed that the bank does not operate in the

Philippines. However, PAGCOR personnel was able to take a photo of the International Banking License of Soleil Chartered Bank on display at the Tektite office during their first onsite inspection. It had mysteriously vanished by their second visit.

Meanwhile, in a letter addressed to yours truly dated February 13, 2023, Govind Srivastava of Soleil Chartered Bank alleged that the bank does not engage in the banking business in the Philippines and did not issue the bank certification. It also stated that the bank has no record of any account under the name "GLOBAL COMRCI" or "GLOBAL MRCI". Attached to the letter was a sworn statement dated February 7, 2023, executed by Srivastava in New York, United States of America, attesting these same facts.

Based on the circumstances, there are still many questions surrounding Soleil Chartered Bank and Soleil Capitale Corp. What is clear, however, is that the bank certificate, submitted by the Global ComRCI Consortium to PAGCOR as evidence of their financial capacity to qualify as third-party auditor, is fake.

This is the same conclusion drawn from the evidence by the BSP, represented by Atty. Florabelle M. Santos-Madrid at the January 23 hearing.

At this juncture, a video clip of the hearing was shown on the screen.

Limang taon na ang nakalilipas mula nang magpirmahan ng kontrata ang PAGCOR at Global ComRCI. Wala man lamang ni isa sa ahensiya ang nakasilip sa mga kaduda-dudang ginagawa ng Global ComRCI. Kaya ang tanong dito, nabudol nga ba ang PAGCOR, o sadyang nagpabudol? Dahil mismo ang bangkong nasasangkot ay pinabulaanan ang nasabing sertipikasyon. Hindi raw galing sa kanila ang bank guarantee na naging basehan ng PAGCOR para maigawad ang kontrata sa Global ComRCI.

This alone constitutes probable cause for filing criminal charges against the consortium members for falsification of private documents, as well as several other offenses under the Government Procurement Reform Act. It also completely erases the credibility of the consortium as a consultant enjoying a multi-billion-peso contract with the government.

Unfortunately, the fraudulent bank certification is not the only issue observed during the bidding process.

The PAGCOR TOR requires the winning bidder to have implemented a similar project in at least three other gaming jurisdictions with standards at par with or higher than the Philippines. To prove this, the consortium submitted a statement of all ongoing and completed government and private contracts during the bidding process. This list included three ongoing contracts at the time, and six completed contracts accomplished in several gaming jurisdictions.

However, a simple reading of these statements reveal that the subject contracts were with private companies. None of these were government contracts to serve the needs of a public regulator. In addition, only one project—for EBWL Gaming Ltd. in the Bahamas—mentions the deployment of an "audit and management platform." The other contracts were for the design and deployment of online gaming websites only.

Once again, based on a plain reading of a document submitted during the bidding process, we can see that the consortium does not meet the three-project requirement. There is only one project on the list, completed in a single jurisdiction, that involves any sort of audit platform. Additionally, the project was undertaken for a private offshore gaming company, to achieve purposes completely different from the stated objectives under the TOR.

And yet, PAGCOR still awarded the contract to Global ComRCI notwithstanding this clear deficiency.

Another issue is the failure of the Global ComRCI Consortium to register with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Under the "Request for Expression of Interest" section of the third-party auditor bidding documents, it is specifically stated that should the winning bidder intend to implement the project under a joint venture agreement, the JVA must be registered with the SEC prior to contract execution with PAGCOR.

However, in a certification dated November 25, 2022, the SEC confirmed that the Global ComRCI Consortium is not registered with them. Despite this fact, however, PAGCOR still entered into the Consultancy Agreement with the unregistered consortium in defiance of their own requirement.

It is clear from our discussion that both PAGCOR officials involved in this procurement and the Global ComRCI Consortium have some explaining to do. However, while PAGCOR has regularly attended our hearings, Global ComRCI has been nowhere to be found. And I mean this literally, their offices are nowhere to be found.

Over the past several months, members of my office have attempted to track down the Global ComRCI Consortium at multiple offices where it allegedly houses its third-party audit operations.

According to the consultancy agreement, the consortium's address is at 18F World Center Building in Makati. However, when Senate personnel went to check, the office was occupied by Comfac Global Group. No luck in finding the third-party auditor.

Next, Senate personnel attempted to check a second address at 39F Century Peak Tower in Ermita, Manila. This address was found on letters sent by Global ComRCI addressed to PAGCOR. On separate instances—November 22, December 15, and January 20—Senate personnel were denied entry to the office due to a number of flimsy excuses.

However, Ms. Jackie Lou Rivera of PAGCOR testified during the January 23, 2023 hearing that she personally inspected the Century Peak Tower office on November 29, 2022. According to Ms. Rivera, the third-party auditor had just recently moved their operations from Goodland in Makati. This was her testimony:

At this juncture, a video clip was shown on the screen.

Kaduda-duda nga naman talaga, Senator Dela Rosa. How can the office of the third-party auditor be only partially operational, when POGO bets are placed online 24/7, 365 days of the year?

Senate personnel also inspected the registered address of consortium member Global MRCI, which has now changed its name to Global ComRCI, Inc.—similar to the name of the consortium. As it turns out, the address provided is in Don Bosco Village, Parañaque City. This is a residential neighborhood. In the inspection report submitted by the Parañaque LGU, they noted that there was no sign of any commercial or business operations, whether during day or at night.

Is it not strange that the 50% owner of the consortium, which is supposed to contribute more than a billion pesos in capital under the consortium agreement, does not appear to be conducting any business whatsoever at its registered address?

Additionally, the consortium is not registered as a business enterprise in Makati, Manila, or Parañaque. Meanwhile, Global ComRCI, Inc. is only registered in Parañaque, where it has been delinquent in paying local taxes since 2021.

Where in the world is the third-party auditor that has collected almost a billion pesos from the government to date?

Tila nabale-wala ang mga kwalipikasyon na nakasaad sa terms of reference at iba pang bidding documents tungkol sa pagpili ng third-party auditor. Una, peke ang bank guarantee. Pangalawa, bagsak sa three-project requirement. Pangatlo, hindi rehistrado sa SEC. At panghuli, walang matinong opisina. Pero ibinigay pa rin ng PAGCOR ang kontrata sa Global ComRCI.

I must stress again, that the third-party auditor plays a vital role in regulating the POGO industry. The government stands to lose billions of pesos if gross gaming revenues are incorrectly computed. In fact, our preliminary calculations indicate that underreporting of POGO revenues between January to August 2022 may have allowed POGOs to evade P1.9 billion worth of tax liabilities to the government.

At this juncture, Senate President Zubiri relinquished the Chair to Senator Dela Rosa.

In the Management Letter on Audit of PAGCOR for 2021 dated June 13, 2022, the Commission on Audit attributed a net loss of PAGCOR revenue amounting to P717.13 million in

2018 to inaccurate billing reports on gross gaming revenue of POGOs submitted by the third-party auditor.

What has the third-party auditor been doing all this time while collecting fat paychecks from the government?

Based on all the evidence we have collected so far, it is clear that there is something very suspicious about the third-party auditor. The third-party auditor needs to be audited itself. At this point, it looks like a third-party scammer.

I have much more evidence to present on the matter at hand, which could not be covered in this speech due to the lack of time. Therefore, I respectfully move that this speech be referred to the Senate Committee on Accountability of Public Officers and Investigations for immediate action.

It is imperative for the Blue Ribbon Committee to dig even deeper into this issue, and ensure that those guilty of administrative and criminal offenses are brought to justice.

Kung hindi natin mahuhuli ang mga sangkot sa anomalyang ito, magpapatuloy lamang ang kanilang pambubudol, hindi lamang sa PAGCOR, kung hindi maging sa taong bayan. Patunayan natin na walang sino man ang makalalamang sa batas. Panagutin natin ang dapat managot.

Perhaps, more importantly, we must also ensure that the billions of pesos potentially missing from government coffers are promptly collected so that they can fund the delivery of quality social services to the people, as originally envisioned under RA 11590.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva thanked Senator Gatchalian for bringing to light yet another anomaly in the gaming industry. He recalled that when he and Senator Gatchalian were tackling the PAGCOR franchise in the House of Representatives, they had already been pointing out the intricacy and absurdity of having a State gaming entity that was not only a regulator but an operator as well.

He then asked Senator Gatchalian if PAGCOR did not conduct due diligence in obtaining the services of Global ComRCI, Senator Gatchalian responded that in his analysis, PAGCOR had endeavored to conduct bidding, and the terms of reference (TOR) specified the need for a third-party auditor. He informed the Body that PAGCOR had stated categorically that it lacked the technical capacity to monitor the Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGOs) so it had to rely on a third-party auditor to provide the industry's gross gaming revenue figures. He then stressed the importance of informing the government of the accurate gross gaming revenues because it would serve as the basis for the 5% tax collected by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), and the 2% PAGCOR regulatory fee. In addition, he disclosed that there were numerous violations of the TOR, including the minimum P1 billion capitalization requirement. He added that upon perusal of the annual financial statements in 2016, the capitalization of three-member consortium was only P240 million.

In relation to capitalization, Senator Gatchalian mentioned that the consortium provided the PAGCOR with a P1 billion bank guarantee that was denied by the issuing bank because Global ComRCI was not on its list of clients. He also informed the Members that the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) did not have the registration details of Soleil Chartered Bank in its database. He then surmised that the bank guarantee, deemed to be an important basis for PAGCOR to award the third-party auditor contract, was spurious.

At this point, Senator Dela Rosa remarked that fraud appeared to have escalated from one level to another, as evidenced by Senator Gatchalian's description of anomalous occurrences. Senator Villanueva concurred with the observation, citing the PAGCOR TOR's minimum requirements. He stated, however, that he could not recall a single provision in the PAGCOR Charter that would grant the organization the authority to regulate the POGO industry.

Senator Gatchalian stated that a certain Soleil Chartered Bank allegedly issued a bank certificate in the amount of US\$25 million, or approximately P1.3 billion, in favor of Global ComRCI. However, he stated that he emailed the bank for verification and received a response stating that it did not issue such a guarantee. He said that even though PAGCOR has pictures of the bank's nameplate in its Tektite office in Ortigas, he said bank officials clarified that Soleil was not operating in the Philippines.

Upon further query, Senator Gatchalian surmised that PAGCOR has a conflict of interest because it wants to increase revenues while also regulating games of chance, which entails very strict compliance and could result in the cancellation of licenses and the closure of offices.

He acknowledged that many regulatory bodies, including PAGCOR and the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP), have the dual operational and regulatory functions. In fact, he noted that the agency's involvement in a conflict of interest was uncovered during the investigation of the Committee on Public Services on the CAAP. However, he noted that PAGCOR has a significantly larger operation, earning P15 billion a year.

On whether the P600 million annual projected service fee to a third-party auditor was the usual payment for such a service, Senator Gatchalian replied that it was extremely difficult to determine a market price because it involves an intangible asset, which is a computer software. He said it is crucial to adhere to the TOR's minimum requirements, as it ensures that the selected auditor can perform its duties. He emphasized the importance of the credibility of the third-party auditor in ensuring the accuracy of the reporting of gross gaming revenues. Regarding the agency's selection of its third-party auditor, he lamented that every provision of the TOR was disregarded.

Senator Gatchalian disclosed that it was while he was reviewing some documents that he discovered that Soleil Chartered Bank was not registered or operating in the Philippines. He said that BSP sent his office a certification that no such bank was registered and operating in the country. He said that it meant that Soleil cannot issue any form of bank guarantee to any entity in the country.

Noting Global ComRCI's use of fake documents, Senator Dela Rosa surmised that the company may have connived with some POGOs run by unscrupulous businessmen. He also surmised that the company would resort to fraud in future transactions to the detriment of the government. Senator Villanueva stated that PAGCOR should perform its job as the State's gaming regulator.

Senator Gatchalian opined that it was possible that the gross gaming revenue would be undervalued so that the POGO would pay less and, in return, the third-party auditor might get a rebate.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR POE

At this juncture, Senator Poe expressed her support for Senator Gatchalian's unwavering commitment to establishing an effective governance regime for the country's casino industry.

She hoped that the committee's report on the economic and social causes of POGO would be circulated soon to the Senate for approval. She believed that PAGCOR's dual role as regulator and operator of POGO created a conflict of interest that, if left unresolved, would place Filipinos on the losing side.

She reiterated her gratitude to Senator Gatchalian for his insightful and exhaustive investigation into the POGO industry and PAGCOR's failure to regulate the said industry. She hoped that

whoever approved the contract between PAGCOR and the third-party auditor would be held accountable. She also reminded the Members that the amount of money handled by PAGCOR was even greater than that of the country's most established banks.

Senator Gatchalian thanked Senator Poe for her encouraging words and for her reminder that the issues in the country's gaming industry must be addressed.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

(Continuation)

Senator Villanueva stated that he had yet to hear of an effective PAGCOR management in his 29 years of public service, and hoped that the new administration would improve PAGCOR's management. He believed it was time to determine on whether the gaming agency is a regulator or an operator, and whether it will continue to promote games of chance at the expense of the young people who may be enticed by the possibility of winning easy money rather than earning a living through hard work.

He suggested that the Commission on Audit (COA) conduct a special audit of the Global ComRCI and PAGCOR transaction.

Senator Dela Rosa expressed hope that the new president of PAGCOR would be physically present during the committee hearing so that he could be informed of the anomalies that had been uncovered. Senator Gatchalian responded that the PAGCOR president had never attended a hearing of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Senator Dela Rosa also stated that the head of the gaming agency had failed to show up during the hearings of his committee. He lamented that the senators wanted to help him in improving the performance of his agency, but he did not appear interested.

Senator Gatchalian noted that the fact that PAGCOR was under new management presents an excellent opportunity for the agency head to shed light on all anomalies. In addition, he believed that the senators would be interested to hear how PAGCOR intends to address various concerns, such as conflicts of interest and POGOs. Senator Dela Rosa believed that their Members' appeals had never been considered.

Senator Gatchalian believed that PAGCOR president Alejandro H. Tengco considers such public appearances to be more important than the Senate hearings. He hoped that the PAGCOR president would also grant the senators some of his time.

Senator Villanueva stated that the appointment of Mr. Tengco as PAGCOR head gave him hope that the agency's management and operations would change. However, he expressed disappointment because he had not heard of any reforms implemented by the management to rectify their errors.

In reply to Senator Villanueva's previous query, Senator Gatchalian explained that under RA 11590, the COA may conduct a post-audit or independent verification of the gross gaming revenue, and the Senate may also request the COA to conduct a fraud audit as well.

Senator Villanueva expressed alarm over PAGCOR's admission that it had learned Soleil Chartered Bank had issued a statement denying the issuance of a bank certificate to Global ComRCI. He stated that it may be necessary to conduct a parallel revalidation of documents submitted by Global ComRCI in addition to its audit of POGOs.

At this juncture, Senator Dela Rosa relinquished the Chair to Senator Legarda.

Senator Villanueva inquired whether the consultancy contract between Global ComRCI and PAGCOR had been amended, reviewed, or reassessed since 2017. He explained that it was during his review of some documents where he learned that it was not the first time that Global ComRCI had been flagged by the government. He said that COA's observations and recommendations following its 2019 annual audit report flagged the contract price stipulation in the consultancy contract which was apparently unfavorable to the government. He explained that the total annual amount was P552.215 million, or 10% of PAGCOR's net monthly gaming revenue earned from the existing POGOs being audited within the month.

He further explained that the COA had also noted that the consultant's price was extremely favorable whenever a substantial increase in the audited income was reported. He stated that PAGCOR had signed an agreement with the consultant on July 23, 2020 to implement the recommendation to amend the contract price in response to COA's comment. He believed that the new findings would shed more light on the agreement between PAGCOR and Global ComRCI.

Senator Gatchalian confirmed that the COA flagged PAGCOR, disallowing the provision that the third-party auditor would get 10% of the 2% regulatory fees based on the aggregate Gross Gaming Revenue. He explained that there had been initiatives to amend the contract between Global ComRCI and PAGCOR but that the matter was still under consideration.

Senator Villanueva expressed dismay that PAGCOR appeared to be complicit in the unethical actions of Global ComRCI, and emphasized the need for truly independent auditors to safeguard the integrity and fairness of government contracts.

Asked how the government can promote auditor independence with regard to contracts with third-party auditors, Senator Gatchalian surmised that the situation could have been avoided if government agencies had remained true to their mandate of protecting the interests of the Filipino people and the country. He stated that it would increase the public's trust and confidence that the contracts entered into by the government are what it deems to be best for the country.

He pointed out that the situation was as straightforward as PAGCOR not adhering to its own terms of reference. He also noted that PAGCOR did not exercise vigilance when it awarded a multi-billion contract to Global ComRCI without verifying the submitted documentation. He stated that a simple investigation by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) would have revealed that the documents were inaccurate or spurious.

He also expressed his dismay at the situation, which involved a multi-billion industry. In addition, he noted that POGOs appeared determined to reduce the amount they paid government, as evidenced by documents showing that the declaration of gross gaming revenue with the BIR versus PAGCOR was grossly understated declarations of gaming revenue with the BIR and PAGCOR. He stated that it meant that the POGOs paid more to PAGCOR than to the BIR, and that the undervaluation cost the government approximately P1.9 billion in gaming taxes.

In this regard, he referred to RA 11590 as the law that would allow the government to earn revenues from POGOs. However, he noted that the law's potential earnings were contingent on a single entity, which was the third-party auditor. He lamented that in the case of PAGCOR, the third-party auditor lacked both the capacity and credibility to carry out the task, especially in terms of verifying the 2019 revenues of a massive industry, which were reported to be P200 billion. He stated that it was nearly half of the P500 billion estimated for the power sector.

He underscored that with an industry of such size, the possibility of undervaluing practices being done by the companies, including the third-party auditor, must not be taken lightly.

Senator Villanueva recalled that the Department of Energy was previously tasked with ensuring that all generation companies, transmissions, service providers, systems operators, and distribution utilities undergo performance evaluations and audits once every three years, or as directed by the Department for transparency and accountability.

He emphasized the importance of credible third-party auditors to ensure transparency and accountability in all dealings, particularly for agencies with broad discretionary authority. He stated that such assurance could not be obtained if the third-party auditors were not credible.

Senator Gatchalian opined that it was precisely why investigating the matter was of utmost importance. He said that the Senate was mandated to investigate such violations and hold the parties accountable, as doing so would foster public confidence in government.

REFERRAL OF SPEECH TO COMMITTEE

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair referred the privilege speech of Senator Gatchalian and the interpellations thereon to the Committee on Accountability of Public Officers & Investigations.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR PADILLA

Availing himself of the privilege hour, Senator Padilla delivered the following statement in connection with a resolution he filed to defend former President Rodrigo Duterte from prosecution by the International Criminal Court.

Following is the full text of Senator Padilla's privilege speech:

A'oodhu billahi min ash-shaytaan-ir-rajeem. Bismillah er rahman er rahim alham dulillahi rabbil alamin. Bismillahi wassalatu wassalamu 'Ala rasulillah. Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

Ako po ay tumitindig sa pulpito na ito sa personal at kolektibong pribilehiyo upang manindigan patungkol sa isyung dapat sana ay noon pa ay natuldukan na.

Ang tinutukoy ko po ay ang pilit na pagbubukas ng usapin kung nararapat bang usigin ng International Criminal Court ang dating Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte – na tila ba nakakalimutan ng ilan ang negatibong implikasyong dala nito sa isang bansang buong pusong pinagsilbihan ng dati nitong pinuno.

Taong 2016 nang pagkatiwalaan ng 16.6 milyong Pilipino si Mayor Rody mula sa siyudad ng Davao upang maging ika-labing anim na Pangulo ng Republika. Ang tiwalang ito ay bumukal mula sa masidhing pagkauhaw ng ating mga kababayan para sa pagbabago.

Hindi po natin nalilimot ang pagod na nararamdaman ng ating mga kababayan pagdating sa isyu ng kriminalidad at ilegal na droga na isa sa mga nagiging matinding hadlang tungo sa ating pag-ahon mula sa kahirapan at pag-unlad bilang isang lipunan.

Dala ang pangakong dadating ang pagbabago, lahat tayo ay naging saksi kung paano pinagkatiwalaan ng sambayanang Pilipino si dating Pangulong Duterte simula ng mahalal siya sa pwesto hanggang sa pagtatapos ng kanyang termino.

Dalawang taon matapos ng kanyang tagumpay noong 2016 na halalan, ayon sa resulta ng Pulse Asia survey noong 2018 – sa ikalawang taon ng termino ng dating Pangulo, 69% ng mga Pilipino ang nagsasabing ang pagsupil sa ilegal na droga ang pinaka-importanteng pinagtagumpayan ng ating dating Pangulong Duterte.

Maging sa kasagsagan po ng pandemya na masasabi nating humamon sa tatag ng ating pamunuan, nanatiling mataas ang rating ni dating Pangulong Duterte sa gradong 91% noong Setyembre 2020 at Nobyembre 2020 ayon rin sa ulat ng Pulse Asia.

Kaya naman nakakadismaya po, hindi lamang para sa inyong lingkod kundi sa milyon-milyong Pilipinong na nagtitiwala kay dating Pangulong Duterte, na ang balita ay ibinubuhay na naman ng International Criminal Court ang mga issue nila.

Sa kasamaang palad, nalulungkot po tayo sapagka't itong kanilang isinaalang-alang at binibintang na kaso, ito daw po ay ang krimen laban sa sangkatauhan o crime against humanity sa ilalim ng Art. 7, Talata 1-8 ng statute. Para po sa kaalaman ng marami, ang krimen na sinumite sa ICC ay sinasabing naging laganap po sa buong Pilipinas sa pagitan ng ika-1 ng Hulyo 2016 hanggang ika-16 ng Marso 2019, sa konteksto ng tinatawag na digmaan laban sa droga. Gayundin sa lugar ng Davao sa pagitan ng ika-1 ng Nobyembre 2011 hanggang ika-30 ng Hunyo, 2016.

Ito po ang isang statement ng ating kalihim mula po sa executive, mula po sa secretary ng DOJ na siyang dapat magbibigay po ng pahintulot sa ICC. Ang sabi niya: "Malaking insulto sa ating lahat!" Sapagka't pag pinapasok daw po natin ang ICC, para na po nating sinasabi na walang kwenta ang ating hustisya sa bayang ito.

Atin pong pinupunto lamang na siya ring pinanindigan ng ating Kagawaran ng Katarungan, walang jurisdiction ang ICC sa sitwasyon sa ating bansa sa ilalim ng prinsipyo ng non-intervention o hindi panghihimasok o pangingialam sa sovereign equality, gaya ng nakasaad sa United Nations Charter.

Para po sa kaalaman ng ating mga kababayan, lahat po ng estado ay may karapatan na magsagawa ng kanilang mga gawaing panloob nang walang panghihimasok mula sa labas — ito po ang prinsipyo ng non-intervention o hindi pangingialam. Ang sovereign equality naman po ay kumikilala sa pantay na katayuan ng mga estado sa loob ng internasyonal na komunidad. Sa madaling sabi po, dapat kilalanin ng ibang bayan o pandaigdigang hukom man tulad ng ICC na tayo, bilang isang bansa, ay may sariling kasarinlan, pagkakakilanlan, at soberenya; tayo po ay bansang malaya at kumikilos — at higit sa ano pa man, ay hindi dapat basta-bastang panghimasukan. Higit sa lahat, hindi po tau-tauhan ang ating mga tao sa gobyerno. Hindi po mga kengkoy ang mga nasa loob ng Kagawaran ng Hustisya.

Lalong lalo na po kung tayo ay una nang tumugon sa mahahalagang hinaing ng ilan sa ating mamamayan sa harap ng International Criminal Court.

Alinsunod po sa principle of complementarity na kinikilala rin po ng mismong ICC, ang ating pamahalaan ay may karapatan at dapat na maunang umako ng responsibilidad na usigin ang ano mang naiulat na international crime.

Hindi po tayo nagkulang. Alinsunod sa Artikulo 18, Talata 2 ng Statute, ang atin pong gobyerno ay humiling ng agarang pagpapaliban sa nasabing pag-uusig.

At this juncture, Senator Legarda relinquished the Chair to Senator Angara.

Nariyan po ang pagsusuri na isinagawa ng ad hoc panel ng DOJ na nagrepaso pa sa mga kasong administratibo at kriminal laban sa mga tauhan ng Philippine National Police na sangkot sa anti-illegal drug operation ng nagdaang administrasyon.

Kinatigan din po ng ating Kagawaran ang Writ of Amparo na nagbibigay ng proteksyon sa mga petisyoners ng kaso.

Binigyang-buhay din po ng inter-agency committee sa pamumuno ng Kalihim ng DOJ sa ilalim ng Administrative Order No. 35 at ng United Nations Joint Program on Human Rights ang pagtutok sa mga kaso ng extrajudicial killings, sapilitang pagkawala, tortyur, at iba pang malubhang paglabag sa karapatan sa buhay, kalayaan, at seguridad ng mga tao.

Bukod pa po ito sa agarang pagsisiyasat na isinagawa ng Internal Affairs Service ng PNP para disiplinahin ang diumano'y mga may kinalaman na tauhan ng pulisya.

Malinaw po — ang ICC ay maaari lamang magkaroon ng jurisdiction kung saan nabigo ang sistema ng hustisya ng bansa. Tinatanggap po ba natin na walang saysay ang ating pampublikong institusyon? Ang ating Kagawaran ng Katarungan? Ang kalipunan ng ating sektor para sa pampublikong seguridad?

Kung atin pong maalala, pormal na tayong humiwalay sa Rome Statute ng ICC noon pang ika-17 ng Marso 2018. Ganap na po itong nagbisa matapos ang isang taon. Samakatuwid, hindi na po tayo tali sa ICC.

Gayon man, ang ating paghiwalay ay hindi nangangahulugan ng pagpapabaya. Hindi po ibig sabihin nito na tayo po ay tumatalikod sa isyu at hinahayaan na lang po natin ito. Hindi po.

Patuloy pa rin ang pagsisikap ng gobyerno ng Pilipinas na ganap na palakasin ang mekanismo para tunay na mausig ang nagkasala. Patuloy pa rin pong gumagana ang ating hustisya. Hinding-hindi po natin sisiilin ang kalipunan ng ating karapatang pantao.

Higit sa lahat, hindi po tayo isang demokratiko at malayang bansa kung hahayaan nating makulong sa pang-uusig at paglilitis ng mga banyaga. Tayo po ay hindi na alipin ng mga banyaga. Tayo po ay hindi na pwedeng utus-utusan ng mga banyaga. Hindi po papayag si Andres Bonifacio. Hindi rin papayag si Jose Rizal.

Mga mahal kong kababayan, sa punto pong ito, akin pong iniakda ang Resolusyon Bilang 488 na nagsusug ng mariing pagtatanggol sa Dating Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte, ang ika-16 na Pangulo ng Republika ng Pilipinas, sa anumang imbestigasyon o pag-uusig ng International Criminal Court.

Bilang panghuli, akin pong lilinawin na kahit sino pong naging Pangulo ng Pilipinas, kahit sino pa po, akin din pong ihahain ito kung darating ang mga dayuhan dito at kanilang iimbestigahan. Sapagka't ito po, mga mahal kong kababayan, kahit kanino po nilang gawing pangulo, isa pong malaking insulto ito sa atin kapag may dumating dito na banyaga at utus-utusan po tayo at sila mismo ang magkukulong sa ating Pangulo.

Tapos na po ang panahon ni Sakay. Maraming salamat po.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ESTRADA

Senator Estrada, in associating himself with the speech of Senator Padilla, stated that he had filed Proposed Senate Resolution No. 492, "A Resolution Expressing the Strong Opposition of the Philippine Senate to the Resumption of the International Criminal Court Investigation on Crimes Committed in the Philippine territory Relative to the War on Drugs Campaign of the Duterte Administration," earlier that week.

He recalled that, during the 15th Congress, he voted in favor of the country's accession to the Rome Statute, which established the ICC to investigate the most heinous crimes, including genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression, with the understanding that the ICC would respect the country's institutions. He stated that the Complementarity Principle governs the exercise of the ICC's jurisdiction and that the statute would recognize that, as was currently the case, states have the primary responsibility and right to prosecute crimes. In addition, he stated that the ICC would only exercise jurisdiction if the domestic legal system failed, which was not the case in the Philippines.

Senator Estrada stressed that the country's justice system remains highly active and operational. He then quoted President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr., who stated: "The investigation would be an intrusion into our internal matters and a threat to our sovereignty. I feel that we have in our police and our judiciary a good system. We do not need assistance from any outside entity."

He stated that no representative from the ICC should be permitted to enter the country as it will be an exercise in futility.

He believed that the DOJ was not remiss in its primary mission of upholding the rule of law. He emphasized that the people should have faith in the justice system and that it should not be duped into obeying orders from any foreign entity.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

At the outset, Senator Hontiveros stated that as with any resolution, Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 488 and 492 will be referred to the appropriate committee, heard by the committee, and brought before the Body in Plenary for consideration. She then discussed three aspects of Senator Padilla's privilege speech:

First, with regard to the ICC, she stated that she continues to appreciate the Justice Secretary's statement that the DOJ will provide information to the ICC not out of compliance but out of comity and courtesy that it would furnish the ICC information. She also welcomed the PNP Internal Affairs' investigation mentioned in the speech.

Second, she stressed the significance of the dates. She stated that while the government notified the ICC of its withdrawal in March 2018, the withdrawal did not take effect until March 2019. She averred that the period of time from March 2019 to 2021 that the ICC wants to investigate is not covered due to the withdrawal. However, she said that the ICC can still investigate from 2011 to March 2019.

Third, she stated that according to the PNP-IAS, it was reported that around 6,000 deaths were attributed to anti-drug operations, and that the DOJ has filed cases against those who were found to be involved in the killings, particularly in the deaths of Kian Delos Santos, Carl Arnaiz, and Reynaldo "Kulot" De Guzman. She believed that a parallel investigation by the ICC would help in bringing out the truth and justice to the families of the victims if three convictions were handed down by the judiciary based on the investigations of the PNP-IAS.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DELA ROSA

Senator Dela Rosa lauded the bravery, courage, and dignity exhibited by Senators Padilla and Estrada in pursuing and defending the nation's sovereignty. He thanked the two senators not because he would be one of the principal subjects of the ICC investigation if given the opportunity, but as Filipinos who show their patriotism by refusing to give up the nation's independence and sovereignty in the face of foreign pressure.

REFERRAL OF SPEECH TO COMMITTEE

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair referred the privilege speech of Senator Padilla and the manifestations thereon to the Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR TOLENTINO

In associating himself with the privilege speech of Senator Padilla, Senator Tolentino stated that the Senate Committee on Human Rights had a dialogue with the subcommittee on Human Rights of the European Union earlier that day. He stated that most of the matters tackled were issues raised by Senator Padilla in his privilege speech.

Upon motion of Senator Tolentino, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of his manifestation on the dialogue of the Philippine senators with the members of the European Parliament, into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

Following is the full text of Senator Francis Tolentino's manifestation:

Earlier today, I, together with Senators Ronald "Bato" Dela Rosa and JV Ejercito, and two Officers from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Raymond Toledo and Sheila Marie Chan Tario, who were both actually confirmed as Career Ministers, met with the Members of the European Parliament (MEP)—Honorable Hannah Neumann, Isabel Wiseler-Lima, Karsent Lucke, Ryszard Czarnecki, and Miguel Urban Crespo—and had an informal discussion in relation to

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our views on the Philippines longstanding initiatives and engagements towards the promotion and protection of human rights domestically and internationally; positive developments on the Philippine human rights situation; and the retention and possible renewal of the EU's grant to the Philippines of the Generalized Scheme of Preference Plus (GSP+) status which might lead to the possible negotiations and conclusion of the PH-EU Trade Agreement.

On the discussion of the standing of the current administration with regard to the issue of extrajudicial killings and the war on drugs, we discussed and clarified with the EU delegation that there is a shift in the approach to the problem by the administration of President Ferdinand "Bong-Bong" Marcos. We informed them that the government is now adopting a holistic approach to include rehabilitation, education, and assistance to victims and their families; that President Marcos reminded the Philippine National Police that the use of force in relation to the war on drugs must always be within the framework of the law, reasonable, accountable, justifiable, and only utilized when necessary. Protection of the suspects' human rights should always be taken into account. However, we also reiterated that the shift in style and administration does not amount to an admission that what transpired before was wrong.

Sen. Bato Dela Rosa added that the war on drugs generated the following numbers: 1.3 million surrenderees, 300,00 arrested and jailed, and 50% decrease in drug cases during the first six (6) months of the implementation of the previous administration's war on drugs.

With this, we reiterated that the war on drugs is not yet over. Cases of those jailed and arrested are still pending in courts which actually shows that their rights are being taken into account. In fact, there is even current news of the resurgence of drug lords in some areas and due to this, the need for institutionalization of body cameras to protect our law enforcement officers.

The parties were also able to discuss the current status of the GSP+ and negotiations and conclusion of the PH-EU Free Trade Agreement. And in relation to this subject matter, we did not fail to mention that last night we finally ratified the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement.

On the status of the GSP+, it was asserted that the Philippines appreciates its benefits to the country's micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and most especially, our small communities. The GSP+ Program contributes to socio-economic development in the country while ensuring compliance with communities to international core conventions on human rights, labor, good governance, and environment.

With the EU as a big export market and as a key investment partner, we hope to continue availing of the benefits of these trade agreements to boost inclusiveness for business, among others. Although, we did express our concern of re-establishing and improving these trade agreements particularly to include the trade of agricultural products of the Philippines with the member-countries of the European Union.

Lastly, we had a discussion on the protection of the rights of our Overseas Filipino Workers working in their jurisdictions. We further agreed that there is a need to review the current agreements for the further protection and safety of our fellow Filipinos.

The informal dialogue ended with a hope by all participants that a stronger relationship can be forged between the European Union and the Republic of the Philippines.

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. 1905, entitled

AN ACT RESTRUCTURING THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTIONS 25, 26, 29, 30, 31, 35, 36, AND 67 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6975, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "DEPARTMENT OF THE

INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT OF 1990," AS AMENDED, AND SECTION 32 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8551, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE REFORM AND REORGANIZATION ACT OF 1998," AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Dela Rosa

To the Committees on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs; Local Government; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1906, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR GERIATRIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE, DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, CREATING REGIONAL GERIATRIC SPECIALTY CENTERS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH-RETAINED HOSPITALS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Villar (M)

To the Committees on Health and Demography; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1907, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING MIGRANT FILIPINO YOUTH DESKS IN ALL PHILIPPINE EMBASSIES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Villar (M)

To the Committees on Foreign Relations; Youth; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1908, entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE EXPANDED TERTIARY EDUCATION EQUIVALENCY AND ACCREDITATION PROGRAM (ETEEAP) AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Villar (M)

To the Committees on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1909, entitled

AN ACT MANDATING THE INCLUSION OF SOCIAL AWARENESS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES AS PART OF THE CURRICULUM IN ALL SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL,

Introduced by Senator Villar (M)

To the Committee on Basic Education

Senate Bill No. 1910, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF REGISTRIES OF SKILLED WORKERS IN BARANGAYS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Villar (M)

To the Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development; Local Government; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1911, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE MAGNA CARTA OF BARANGAY HEALTH WORKERS

Introduced by Senator Lapid

To the Committees on Health and Demography; Local Government; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1912, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A REVISED NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM REPEALING FOR THE PURPOSE CHAPTERS I AND II OF TITLE II, BOOK II OF PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 442, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LABOR CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES

Introduced by Senator Lapid

To the Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development

RESOLUTIONS

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 493, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING THE PROVINCE OF KALINGA FOR BAGGING THE GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS OF THE LARGEST GONG ENSEMBLE AND THE LARGEST *BANGA* DANCE THROUGH THE PERFORMANCE OF ITS CONSTITUENTS DUBBED AS "*AWONG CHI GANGSA, AGTU'N CHI BANGA*" OR "THE CALL OF A THOUSAND GONGS, DANCE OF A THOUSAND POTS" DONE DURING THE CELEBRATION OF THE 28TH FOUNDING ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROVINCE OF KALINGA ON 15 FEBRUARY 2023

Introduced by Senator Villar (C)

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 494, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING EUMIR FELIX MARCIAL FOR HIS FOURTH STRAIGHT PROFESSIONAL BOXING VICTORY AFTER CONQUERING A MIDDLEWEIGHT MATCH IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, USA

Introduced by Senator Villanueva

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 495, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED PLANS OF THE BUREAU OF CORRECTIONS TO BUILD A NEW HEADQUARTERS AT THE MASUNGI GEORESERVE

Introduced by Senator Binay

To the Committees on Tourism; and Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 496, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEES TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REPUBLIC ACT 10928, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF ADAPTING THE PHYSICAL SPECIFICATIONS OF THE PHILIPPINE PASSPORT IN LINE WITH THE TEN (10) YEAR VALIDITY AND THE PRESENT NEEDS OF OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS

Introduced by Senator Binay

To the Committee on Foreign Relations

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 497, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND INVESTIGATIONS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO REPORTS ON THE ENTRIES OF SUGAR SHIPMENTS IN PHILIPPINE PORTS AHEAD OF SUGAR ORDER (S.O.) NUMBER 6 AND ON POSSIBLE PROVISIONS IN S.O. 6 THAT MAY BE OPEN TO ABUSE, PATRONAGE AND CARTELIZATION

Introduced by Senator Hontiveros

To the Committees on Accountability of Public Officers and Investigations; and Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 498, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT CONTINGENT FOR THEIR VALOR AND ACTS OF SERVICE IN THE RESCUE AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS CURRENTLY BEING CONDUCTED IN TÜRKIYE, FOLLOWING THE MAGNITUDE 7.8 EARTHQUAKE THAT STRUCK THEIR COUNTRY AND SYRIA

Introduced by Senator Lapid

To the Committee on Rules

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS**MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Letter from the House of Representatives, informing the Senate that on 15 February 2023, the House of Representatives passed the following House bills, in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate:

House Bill No. 6512, entitled

AN ACT REQUIRING PERSONNEL OF THE BUREAU OF FIRE PROTECTION TO BE CERTIFIED MEDICAL FIRST RESPONDERS AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIANS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 4 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11589, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE 'BUREAU OF FIRE PROTECTION MODERNIZATION ACT'

To the Committees on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs; and Health and Demography

House Bill No. 6715, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES IN THE COUNTRY

To the Committees on Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement; Sustainable Development Goals, Innovation and Futures Thinking; and Ways and Means

House Bill No. 6994, entitled

AN ACT MANDATING THE PHILIPPINE MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY TO ADMIT AT LEAST ONE CADET FROM EACH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT EVERY SCHOOL YEAR TO COMPRISE ITS FRESHMAN CLASS

To the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education

House Bill No. 7012, entitled

AN ACT CREATING A BARANGAY IN THE CITY OF TAGUIG, TO BE KNOWN AS BARANGAY NORTH SIGNAL VILLAGE

To the Committees on Local Government; and Electoral Reforms and People's Participation

House Bill No. 7013, entitled

AN ACT CREATING A BARANGAY IN THE CITY OF TAGUIG TO BE KNOWN AS BARANGAY SOUTH SIGNAL VILLAGE

To the Committees on Local Government; and Electoral Reforms and People's Participation

House Bill No. 7005, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING AUGUST 5 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF ANINI-Y, PROVINCE OF ANTIQUE,

IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY, TO BE KNOWN AS THE 'ARAW NG ANINI-Y'

To the Committee on Local Government

House Bill No. 7014, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JUNE 29 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF KORONADAL, PROVINCE OF SOUTH COTABATO, IN CELEBRATION OF THE TREE GROWING FESTIVAL

To the Committee on Local Government

House Bill No. 5282, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN JOSE, POPULARLY KNOWN AS ISLA DE CARABAO, PROVINCE OF ROMBLON, A TOURISM DESTINATION

To the Committees on Tourism; and Finance

House Bill No. 5515, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE BATTLE OF THE SIBUYAN SEA MEMORIAL SHRINE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CAJIDIOCAN, PROVINCE OF ROMBLON, AND DECLARING IT A TOURISM DESTINATION

To the Committees on Tourism; and Finance

House Bill No. 6368, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE SIKI IT ELEPANTE ROCK FORMATION LOCATED IN THE COAST OF BARANGAY LABNIG, MUNICIPALITY OF CORCUERA, PROVINCE OF ROMBLON, A TOURISM SITE

To the Committees on Tourism; and Finance

House Bill No. 6369, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE PAYAYASOG BEACH LOCATED IN BARANGAY MANGANSAG IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CORCUERA, PROVINCE OF ROMBLON, A TOURISM DESTINATION

To the Committees on Tourism; and Finance

House Bill No. 6370, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE COLONG-COLONG BEACH LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CORCUERA, PROVINCE OF ROMBLON, A TOURISM DESTINATION

To the Committees on Tourism; and Finance

House Bill No. 6371, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE SUBA COVE LOCATED IN BARANGAYS SAN ROQUE, MANGANSAG AND MABINI, MUNICIPALITY OF CORCUERA, PROVINCE OF ROMBLON, AN ECOTOURISM ZONE

To the Committees on Tourism; Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change; and Finance

House Bill No. 6467, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE LOOC BAY AREA LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF LOOC, PROVINCE OF ROMBLON, AN ECOTOURISM DESTINATION

To the Committees on Tourism; Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change; and Finance

House Bill No. 6927, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING BARANGAY MANAGA IN SITIO BALUTAKAY, MUNICIPALITY OF BANSALAN, PROVINCE OF DAVAO DEL SUR, A FARM TOURISM DESTINATION

To the Committees on Tourism; and Finance

House Bill No. 6928, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING LAKE APO, LOCATED IN BARANGAY GUINOYORAN, CITY OF VALENCIA, PROVINCE OF BUKIDNON, AN ECOTOURISM ZONE

To the Committees on Tourism; Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change; and Finance

House Bill No. 6929, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONS OF THE SAINT MARY MAGDALENE PARISH CHURCH, LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KAWIT, PROVINCE OF CAVITE, A TOURISM DESTINATION

To the Committees on Tourism; and Finance

House Bill No. 6930, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONS OF OUR LADY OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY PARISH CHURCH, LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF ROSARIO, PROVINCE OF CAVITE, A TOURISM DESTINATION

To the Committees on Tourism; and Finance

House Bill No. 6931, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONS OF THE SAN ROQUE PARISH CHURCH, ALSO KNOWN AS THE DIOCESAN SHRINE OF NUESTRA

SEÑORA DELA SOLEDAD DE PORTA VAGA, LOCATED IN THE CITY OF CAVITE, PROVINCE OF CAVITE, A TOURISM DESTINATION

To the Committees on Tourism; and Finance

House Bill No. 606, entitled

AN ACT RENAMING THE BOHOL ISLAND CIRCUMFERENTIAL ROAD, WHICH COMMENCES IN BARANGAY POBLACION III TOWARDS THE NORTH OF THE CITY OF TAGBILARAN, AND RETURNS TO BARANGAY POBLACION III FROM THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE CITY OF TAGBILARAN IN THE PROVINCE OF BOHOL, AS THE PRESIDENT CARLOS P. GARCIA CIRCUMFERENTIAL ROAD

To the Committee on Public Works

House Bill No. 1028, entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE SAWANG-MACALAS ROAD IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF ROMBLON, PROVINCE OF ROMBLON, INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

To the Committees on Public Works; and Finance

House Bill No. 1029, entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE ROAD STRETCHING FROM BARANGAY TUGUIS, MUNICIPALITY OF ODIONGAN TO BARANGAY TUGDAN, MUNICIPALITY OF ALCANTARA, ALL IN THE PROVINCE OF ROMBLON, INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

To the Committees on Public Works; and Finance

House Bill No. 1030, entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE ROAD STRETCHING FROM SITIO BOLIGANAY, BARANGAY PANIQUE, MUNICIPALITY OF ODIONGAN TO SITIO KABALIWAN, BARANGAY BACHAWAN, MUNICIPALITY OF SAN AGUSTIN, ALL IN THE PROVINCE OF ROMBLON, INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

To the Committees on Public Works; and Finance

House Bill No. 1031, entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE SABLAYAN-AGPANABAT-BAGACAY ROAD, A SECTION OF THE ROMBLON CIRCUMFERENTIAL ROAD, INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

To the Committees on Public Works; and Finance

House Bill No. 6914, entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE CEBU TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY INTO A

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM TO BE KNOWN AS THE CEBU TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY SYSTEM, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

To the Committees on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; Ways and Means; and Finance

House Bill No. 7011, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE ELECTION BY DISTRICT OF MEMBERS OF THE SANGGUNIANG PANLUNGSOD AND MEMBERS OF THE SANGGUNIANG PANLALAWIGAN FOR THE CITY OF IMUS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 10 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10161, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF IMUS

To the Committees on Local Government; and Electoral Reforms and People's Participation

RCEP SPECIAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

Pursuant to the adopted Resolution No. 42 (Resolution Concurring in the Ratification of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement), upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the following senators were elected to the Senate Special Oversight Committee on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement:

Chairperson: Senator Legarda (Senate President Pro Tempore)

Members: Senator Villanueva (Majority Leader)
 Senator Pimentel (Minority Leader)
 Senator Marcos (chairperson, Committee on Foreign Relations)
 Senator Villar (C) (chairperson, Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform)
 Senator Poe (chairperson, Committee on Economic Affairs)
 Senator Villar (M) (chairperson, Committee on Trade, Commerce and Entrepreneurship)
 Senator Angara (chairperson, Committee on Finance)
 Senator Gatchalian (chairperson, Committee on Ways and Means)
 Senator Estrada (chairperson, Committee on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development)
 Senator Cayetano (A) (chairperson, Committee on Science and Technology).

MARAWI JOINT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

Pursuant to Section 20 of Republic Act No. 11696 (Marawi Siege Victims Compensation Act of 2022), upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the following senators were designated to the Senate panel in the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on the Marawi Siege Victim's Compensation:

Chairperson: Senator Dela Rosa

Members:

Majority: Senator Angara
 Senator Padilla

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Minority: Senator Pimentel
Senator Hontiveros

CHANGE OF REFERRALS

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the change of referrals of the following:

1. Senate Bill No. 1414 (*Barangay Adan, Barangay Bucarot, and Barangay Malasin*) from the Committee on Rules to the Committee on Local Government as the primary committee; and to the Committee on Electoral Reforms and People's Participation as the secondary committee;
2. Senate Bill Nos. 480 (*Mabca National High School, Sagñay, Camarines Sur*) and 481 (*Hibao-An Integrated School, Mandurriao, Iloilo City*) from the Committee on Rules to the Committee on Basic Education as the primary committee; and to the Committee on Finance as the secondary committee; and
3. Senate Bill No. 121 (*Multi-Species Marine Hatchery in Baybay City, Leyte*) from the Committee on Rules to the Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform as the primary committee; and to the Committee on Finance as the secondary committee.

COAUTHOR

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, Senator Go was made coauthor of Senate Bill No. 1850 under Committee Report No. 24 (New Agrarian Emancipation Act).

CHANGE OF REFERRAL

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the change of referrals of Senate Bill No. 1151 (Eduardo Cojuangco, Jr. Avenue) and Senate Bill No. 1111 (Ambassador Eduardo 'Danding' M. Cojuangco, Jr. Avenue) from the Committee on Rules to the Committee on Public Works.

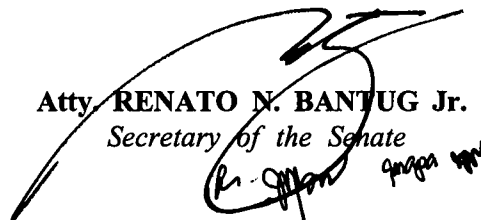
ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair declared the session adjourned until three o'clock in the afternoon of Monday, February 27, 2023.

It was 6:24 p.m.

I hereby certify to the correctness of the foregoing.

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



Approved on February 27, 2023