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FIRST REGULAR SESSION

PREPARED BY THE
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SENATE OF THE PHILIPPINES

SESSION NO. 59
Wednesday, March 8, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

At 3:02 p.m., the Senate President, Hon. Juan Miguel "Migz" F. Zubiri, called the session to order.

PRAYER

Sen. Risa Hontiveros led the prayer, to wit:

Lord, make me an instrument of peace.

Bless all women who daily strive to bring peace to their communities, their homes, and their hearts. Give them strength to continue to turn swords into plowshares.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love. We pray for all women who face prejudice, inequality, and gender disparities. Help us to see and to face the discrimination against women in all the many forms it may take.

Where there is injury, pardon. Comfort all women who suffer from the pain of war, violence, and abuse. Help them to become instruments of their own reconciliation and peace.

Where there is division, unity. Forgive all women and men who let differences breed hate and discrimination. Let Your example of valuing all of creation, help us to see that we are equal partners in the stewardship of your world.

Where there is darkness, light. Where there is untruth, truth. Comfort all women who struggle in the darkness of abuse, poverty, and loneliness. May we stand with them in light to acknowledge their suffering and strive to remove the burdens of shame or embarrassment.

Where there is doubt, true faith. We pray for all women who live in fear of their husbands, fathers, and the forces that control their lives. Help them to be empowered to be their true selves through Your everlasting love and faith.



Where there is despair, hope. We pray for all women who live in the despair of poverty, violence, trafficking, slavery, and abuse. May the light of Your love bring them home.

And where there is sadness, new joy. Help us to see the strength and goodness in all women and men. Transform our hearts to celebrate the love and grace of all people.

Amen.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

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

It was 3:04 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:06 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

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

Senator Tolentino arrived after the roll call.

Senator Cayetano (A) was absent and out of the country as indicated in the March 7, 2023 letter of his chief of staff.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

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

- Michelle Ongpin Callaghan, Frank Callaghan, Luis Ongpin, Maribelle Ongpin, and Dennis Baguio (family of the late Roberto V. Ongpin);
- Mayor Vico Sotto of Pasig City, Dr. Milwilda Guevara, and Mr. Alfredo Ayala, members of the EDCOM II Advisory Council;
- Dr. Emerlinda Roman, Mr. Juan Miguel Luz, Mr. Ernesto Garilao, Mayor Jimuel Que of

Bongao, Tawi Tawi, Dr. Cielito Habito and Dr. Vincent Fabella, members of the EDCOM II Standing Committee on Governance and Finance;

- Rep. Rodolfo Ordañes of Senior Citizens Partylist;
- Mayor Francis Amboy of Maasin, Iloilo;
- Mayor Herminio Penamante of Panukulan, Quezon;
- Mayor Balong Molina and the local government of Zamboanga del Sur;
- Rep. Khalid Dimaporo of Lanao del Norte;
- Mayor Lota Manalo and Vice Mayor Jurly Manalo of Lobo, Batangas;
- Councilors from Sorsogon, Sorsogon; and
- Rep. Marlyn Primicias-Agabas of Pangasinan.

Senate President Zubiri welcomed the guests to the Senate.

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body dispensed with the reading of the Journal of Session No. 58 (March 7, 2023) and considered it approved.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

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

BILLS ON FIRST READING

Senate Bill No. 1966, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JUNE 21ST OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF BAYUGAN, PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL SUR IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS CHARTER DAY

Introduced by Senator Marcos

To the Committee on Local Government

Senate Bill No. 1967, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY DISTRICT OFFICE IN THE CITY OF DAVAO, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Marcos

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

Senate Bill No. 1968, entitled

AN ACT IDENTIFYING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AREAS IN THE PROVINCE OF ISABELA, MANDATING SUPPORT FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT,

CREATING THE ISABELA TOURISM COUNCIL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

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

Senate Bill No. 1969, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING ARTICLE 55 OF EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 209, SERIES OF 1987, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE FAMILY CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES, AS AMENDED

Introduced by Senator Villar (C)

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

Senate Bill No. 1970, entitled

AN ACT REGULATING THE PLANNING, DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION, OCCUPANCY, MAINTENANCE, AND DEMOLITION OF BUILDINGS, PROMOTING BUILDING RESILIENCE AGAINST EARTHQUAKE, FIRE, FLOOD, LANDSLIDE, STORM, VOLCANO, AND MULTIPLE HAZARDS WITHIN AN ALL-HAZARDS APPROACH TO RESILIENCE BUILDING, ENACTING A NEW PHILIPPINE BUILDING ACT, THEREBY REPEALING PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 1096 AND REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6541, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Tolentino

To the Committees on Public Works; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1971, entitled

AN ACT REVISING AND STRENGTHENING THE DEFINITION OF THE CRIME OF RAPE, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE ARTICLES 266-A, 266-B AND 266-D, AND REPEALING ARTICLE 266-C OF ACT NO. 3815, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE REVISED PENAL CODE, AS AMENDED, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Ejercito

To the Committee Justice and Human Rights

Senate Bill No. 1972, entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTING A NATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK ON RESILIENT HOUSING AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Ejercito

To the Committees on Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1973, entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING AN EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES SYSTEM (EMSS), CREATING FOR THE PURPOSE THE NATIONAL EMSS COUNCIL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Ejercito

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

Senate Bill No. 1974, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT TO FOSTER THE GROWTH OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Introduced by Senator Ejercito

To the Committees on Public Works; Economic Affairs; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1975, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING THE CORPORATE LIFE AND STRENGTHENING THE POWERS OF POWER SECTOR ASSETS AND LIABILITIES MANAGEMENT CORPORATION FOR ANOTHER THIRTY (30) YEARS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTIONS 47, 49, 51, 55, 63, AND 70 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9136, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "ELECTRIC POWER INDUSTRY REFORM ACT OF 2001," AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Ejercito

To the Committees on Government Corporations and Public Enterprises; and Energy

Senate Bill No. 1976, entitled

AN ACT ENFORCING FAIR TRAFFIC APPREHENSION, GRANTING FOR THE PURPOSE COMPENSATION TO DRIVERS OF MOTOR VEHICLES FOR IMPROPER TRAFFIC APPREHENSION AND IMPOSING ADMINISTRATIVE SANCTIONS FOR ERRING TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

Introduced by Senator Tulfo

To the Committees on Public Services; Local Government; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1977, entitled

AN ACT REGULATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHECKPOINTS IN CONJUNCTION WITH ONGOING POLICE OPERATIONS

Introduced by Senator Ejercito

To the Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs

Senate Bill No. 1978, entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE TRANSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT TO
E-GOVERNANCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Angara

To the Committees on Science and Technology; Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation; and Finance

RESOLUTIONS

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 534, entitled

RESOLUTION URGING THE EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT TO RATIFY THE
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION WORK IN FISHING
CONVENTION, 2007 (NO. 188)

Introduced by Senator Villanueva

To the Committee on Foreign Relations

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 535, entitled

RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT CONTINGENT
FOR THEIR VALOR AND ACTS OF SERVICE IN THE RESCUE AND
RECOVERY OPERATIONS CONDUCTED FOLLOWING THE MAGNITUDE
7.8 EARTHQUAKE IN TURKIYE AND SYRIA

Introduced by Senator Lapid

To the Committee on Rules

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee Report No. 41, prepared and submitted jointly by the Committees on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality; Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; Health and Demography; and Finance, on Senate Bill No. 1979, with Senators Hontiveros, Marcos, Revilla, Jr., Angara, and Go as authors thereof, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A NATIONAL POLICY IN PREVENTING
ADOLESCENT PREGNANCIES, INSTITUTIONALIZING SOCIAL PROTECTION
FOR ADOLESCENT PARENTS, AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR,

recommending its approval in substitution of Senate Bill Nos. 372, 651, and 1209, taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution No. 462.

Sponsor: Senator Hontiveros

To the Calendar for Ordinary Business

Committee Report No. 42, prepared and submitted jointly by the Committees on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality; Health and Demography; and Finance, on Senate Bill No. 1980, with Senators Hontiveros, Legarda, Revilla, Jr., and Go as authors thereof, entitled

AN ACT TO ENSURE GENDER-RESPONSIVE AND INCLUSIVE PROTOCOLS AND PROGRAMMING TO ADDRESS THE GENDER-DIFFERENTIATED NEEDS OF WOMEN DURING EMERGENCIES INCLUDING PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS, PANDEMICS, AND NATURAL AND MAN-MADE DISASTERS,

recommending its approval in substitution of Senate Bill Nos. 375, 1339, and 1838.

Sponsor: Senator Hontiveros

To the Calendar for Ordinary Business

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 468

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 468, entitled

RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE PROFOUND SYMPATHY AND CONDOLENCES OF THE SENATE OF THE PHILIPPINES ON THE DEATH OF THE FORMER MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY, ROBERTO "BOBBY" VELAYO ONGPIN,

taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution No. 523.

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 VILLANUEVA

In sponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 468, Senator Villanueva delivered the following speech:

I would like to extend my deepest sympathy and sincerest condolences to the family of the late former Minister of Commerce and Industry, Roberto "Bobby" Velayo Ongpin. My thoughts and prayers are with all of you.

Bobby Ongpin or Chairman, or RVO, as he was fondly called, was the country's youngest Minister of Commerce and Industry, assuming the post at the age of 42 during the first Marcos administration. As Minister of Commerce and Industry, he made significant contributions to the development of our nation and defended our currency in the wake of the 1983 financial crisis by establishing the Binondo Central Bank — a parallel exchange rate system that allowed the government to narrow the rate gap between the dollar's official guiding rate and the black market rate by directly intervening in the black market currency prices.

A brilliant businessman, an empire builder, RVO graduated cum laude from the Ateneo de Manila University and earned his MBA from Harvard Business School. He became a Certified Public Accountant in 1958, after which he briefly joined the Philippine Manufacturing Company, now Procter & Gamble Philippines. He eventually led SyCip, Gorres, Velayo, and Company to become Asia's largest accounting firm in the 1970s. SGV founder Washington SyCip called him one of the most aggressive and effective managers he has ever known.

After serving in government, RVO built business empires, orchestrated deals that brought the Shangri-La Group into the Philippines, and founded Tagaytay Highlands, PhilWeb, and Alphaland Corporation. He later built his crown jewel, the Alphaland Balesin Island Club off the coast of Quezon Province. At the time of his passing, he was working on expanding the resort by building another resort on the Patnanungan Island nearby.

Chairman RVO was not only a public servant and a businessman, he was also a philanthropist. Since 1988, he has funded thousands of full scholarships at the Ateneo de Manila in the name of

his brother, Jaime, who passed away in 1987. In 1993, the Jaime V. Ongpin Scholarship Fund was formally established and had grown to fund 200 scholarships in seven Ateneo high schools nationwide. To date, the scholarship fund has helped 2,207 students graduate from high school, enabling them to go to college and have their dreams within their reach.

I cannot forget my birthday celebration last year when Chairman RVO treated this Representation with my dad, and shared a lot of stories, ideas, and wisdom.

With RVO's passing, we lost a great friend, a pillar in the business community, and a great public servant. But his invaluable contributions to the development of our country and to the lives of thousands of scholars will never be forgotten.

Thank you, Chairman.

Thank you, RVO, for your life well lived.

Your legacy will live on forever, and may God bless us all.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR MARCOS

In cosponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 468, Senator Marcos delivered the following speech:

I sponsor, with great pride and joy, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 468, my resolution expressing the profound sympathy and sincere condolences of the Senate of the Philippines upon the death of the former Minister of Trade and Industry, the chairman of Alphaland Corporation, Roberto "Bobby" Velayo Ongpin.

As we know full well, Bobby Ongpin was known for both his brilliance and his guts, and was successful in business as well as in government.

Many years ago, Oliver Wendell Holmes declared in one of his landmark cases, "Rough work, iconoclasm, but the only way to get at the truth." Bobby Ongpin was just such an iconoclast—upsetting, offending, angering many authorities. But he also brought about change, great innovation; and, yes, indeed, he brought forth the truth in many, many cases.

Like his great ancestor who financed the Katipunan, letting the revolutionaries use his store as the secret hideaway, Roberto "Bobby" Ongpin was a true business and government revolutionary, pioneering many industries as well as changes in governance and statecraft.

In 1979, at the age of 42, he became the country's youngest Commerce and Industry Minister—personally invited, with great hesitation, by my father, the late President Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr., to join his Cabinet after a hugely successful stint at SyCip Gorres Velayo & Co. where he converted the accounting firm into the largest professional services firm in Asia.

As the commerce and industry minister from 1979 to 1986, Bobby Ongpin had to grapple with a deteriorating economy and abject shortage in dollars, prohibiting the country from borrowing from lending agencies. Young and brash, he personally led the negotiation for financing from the most unconventional sources at that time through world leaders such as Brunei's Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah, Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, and President Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Ongpin was fearless indeed and, finally, infamous for what became the Binondo Central Bank, the parallel exchange in currency network in November 1983. This unique and innovative solution to the lack of foreign currency that was required to import essential goods following the country's 1983 sovereign debt default became historic and, indeed, game changing.

To the shock and dismay of many naysayers, however, Minister Ongpin's plan was such a resounding success that the World Bank asked his help to save the economy of many others in the same default situation, such as Egypt which was encountering the same problem at the same time.

After leaving government service, Ongpin went to build and rebuild empires, introducing Robert Kuok Shangri-La Group as well as literally groundbreaking developments from Tagaytay Highlands to PhilWeb to Alphaland Corporation where he built his crown jewel, Alphaland Balesin Island Club.



It must be said that, indeed, my father and his then Cabinet Minister Ongpin were great friends beyond work and beyond government. He was his favorite, if only because they shared interest in both women as well as upsetting the establishment in every possible way.

Iconoclast at last to the end, controversial always, offensive to many of the rich and powerful, history will be Bobby Ongpin's final judge. But the indisputable fact is during the 1980s, under my father's administration, Minister Ongpin, without doubt, saved the country's economy from abject and total collapse. For that, all Filipinos, we, should be grateful. Our personal condolences and prayers to his wife, Monica Arellano, his children Stephen, Anna, Michelle who is here with us, and Julian and the four grandchildren.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR CAYETANO (P)

In cosponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 468, Senator Cayetano (P) delivered the following speech:

I rise to cosponsor Proposed Senate Resolution No. 468, which considers Proposed Senate Resolution No. 523 that I filed along with Senate President Zubiri, Majority Floor Leader Joel Villanueva, and Senator Chiz Escudero, expressing the profound sympathy and sincere condolences of the Senate of the Philippines on the passing of Roberto "Bobby" Velayo Ongpin, the former Minister of Commerce and Industry.

I would like to acknowledge the presence of RVO's family who are with us in the Senate today, Michelle Ongpin Callaghan, along with her husband, Frank; Luis Ongpin, his brother; and Maribel Ongpin, his sister-in-law.

Today, I join the nation as we mourn the passing of a man with many talents: a business icon, management expert, public servant, entrepreneur, and an overall visionary who left his mark in finance, business, and the Philippine economy.

On the 5th of February, 2023, Sunday, Bobby Ongpin, also known as RVO, passed away peacefully in his sleep while in Balesin Island at the age of 86.

As a certified public accountant, RVO worked at SyCip Gorres Velayo & Co. in 1964 where he became the firm's youngest managing partner and substantially contributed in making it Asia's largest accounting firm in the '70s. During his years working in the firm, more than 80% of the Philippines' largest corporations had SGV as their auditor.

From 1979 to 1986, at the age of 42, RVO became the country's youngest Minister of Commerce and Industry during the term of former President Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr. where he made invaluable contributions that led to the country's flourishing development.

I must add that he had asked my father to be his deputy minister and that is how I first met RVO when, I believe, I was in college. So, that was my first encounter with RVO.

After his years as a public servant, RVO embarked on building his business empire which was highlighted by bringing the Shangri-La group of hotels and malls into the Philippines and founding Tagaytay Highlands, Alphaland Baguio Mountain Lodges, Alphaland Makati's The City Club, and PhilWeb Corporation, among others.

Let me take time to talk about Tagaytay Highlands.

One day, I visited Tagaytay Highlands with my father, with my family actually. As I said, my father had worked with RVO, so they were friends. And we visited Tagaytay Highlands and my brother Lino was with me. We were all marveling at the beauty of Tagaytay Highlands and my brother Lino said to me, "This is the kind of job you want. You want to be a lawyer in this kind of place." And I said to him, "I am the lawyer of this place. I had just been hired by RVO. I was about to start in a week or two."

RVO and my dad had a meeting a few weeks before that and RVO told my dad, "Rene, I need a lawyer." And my dad said, "I have the best lawyer for you." And that was me. It is yet to have been seen if RVO agreed that I was best lawyer for him.

It was a dream job because of the amazing projects that were already ongoing, some of which I got to work on. But it was not an easy job. RVO was a tough and demanding boss. You could hear his booming voice across the hall with your door closed.

RVO is renowned for expressing his disappointment in his loud booming voice. *Sa Tagalog, sisigawan ka talaga.* I am proud to say, never *niya akong nasigawan.* But I can say I did disappoint him one time when I failed to get a government approval that he was looking for. I explained to him that there was just no way that we could get it. And he was mad, he was mad at me on the phone. That then prompted me to write him a letter wherein I offered to resign. I said, "If I'm not able to do the work, I will resign." Then, I got a call in my room and it is RVO telling me, "Pia, you know I love you. Don't send me that kind of letter." So, as was mentioned repeatedly during the tribute to him last week, he was a tough boss, but inside, he was a softy.

In the mid 1990s, owning a cellphone was still a luxury. Using e-mails was not even the norm, especially if there was an attachment because it became too heavy and you will sit there for an hour sending that attachment. So the mode was fax. When RVO left for Europe, I just assumed my deadlines were extended. Lo and behold, shortly after noontime, his personal assistant, Jojo Manalo, would start sending me notes RVO had dictated to her. She would also send me documents with his scribbled handwriting. And I said to her, "*Hindi ba wala siya?*" And Jojo said, "*Wala.*" But he is already awake in Europe, and he is sending you all these corrections on the document that he already worked on."

Thus, my training in always being ready was solidified under him. There is no such thing as a time difference; there is no such thing as different time zones—work is work if you are with RVO.

I also learned from him never to say "no." That phone call that I mentioned was really just one of the many discussions we had wherein I learned from him to keep on trying, to never leave any stone unturned, to keep on exploring how you can get the job done.

So, to my dear staff, some of whom are here, the others who, I think, are working with me, if you think I am harsh sometimes, take time to talk to the family of RVO because aside from my father, he is another man in my life who really taught me that there is no such thing as saying no. You have to always try and never give up. Thus, ends my short sharing on my experiences with RVO.

In 1993, RVO established the Jaime V. Ongpin Scholarship Fund, a scholarship endowment in memory of his late brother, which has grown to fund 200 scholarships in seven Ateneo high schools nationwide and Xavier School Nuvali. Today, 2,207 students have graduated from high school due to this scholarship fund, which enabled them to pursue further studies and established careers in nursing, engineering, banking, accounting in international organizations.

The nation mourns the loss of RVO, whose enormous contribution to the government service, business, and industry has left indelible marks on the country's economic landscape.

The last thing I want to say is this: I never really knew RVO as a sporty man, correct? Not really a sporty man. I cannot even say he ate healthy, although I do know for a fact that he would always have a sandwich for lunch and not a healthy sandwich, like a bacon sandwich, something like that. But interestingly, he always built amazing sports facilities in all his establishments. So, in Tagaytay Highlands, I had the benefit of working with him there and being able to take time off in between our meetings to work out in the amazing top-of-the-line, state-of-the-art sports facilities. And although I have not been to the Alphaland facility, I saw the listing of the facilities—squash court, badminton court, so on and so forth. That is like so typical RVO, always state-of-the-art, always the best, and though he was not a sportsman, always fitness and health facilities.

On that note, I join my colleagues in expressing our deepest sympathies to the family.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECHES

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the cosponsorship speeches of Senators Binay, Revilla, and Senate President Zubiri on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 468, which were deemed read and inserted into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

By Senator Binay

First of all, I would like to express my sympathy and condolences to the family of the late Tito Bobby. Our family appreciates the friendship that he had extended to us, and especially to my father.

Roberto “Bobby” Velayo Ongpin, or RVO as he is also fondly called, was a pillar of the business sector and the economy. The monuments of his achievements —the various successful companies that continue to blaze the trail in business, the countless lives that he has touched through his philanthropic work— are testament to the vision, grit, and excellence that have been the guiding principles of his life.

No listing of his achievements would be enough to encapsulate RVO’s life, or how just how influential he had been in the course of our nation’s history. These tasks are best left to biographers and historians.

Yet, what I can say for certain is that our country is made poorer by his passing. The nation has lost one of its great leaders and visionaries. I only pray that we who are left behind will step up to fill the void that he has left.

With this, I would like to co-sponsor Resolution No. 468, expressing the profound sympathy and condolences of the Senate of the Philippines on the death of the former Minister of Trade and Industry, Roberto “Bobby” Velayo Ongpin.

By Senator Revilla Jr.

I join our colleagues in expressing our sorrow and deepest condolences to the bereaved family and loved ones of former Trade Minister Bobby Ongpin.

Minister Bobby is a man of his own destiny. *Inukit at nililok niya ang kanyang tadhana sa pamamagitan ng kanyang sipag, determinasyon, at tiyaga.*

Minister Bobby was a Harvard MBA graduate who served as the trade minister during the time of then President Ferdinand Edralin Marcos. At that time, he had a very lucrative position as chairman of one of the leading and biggest business firms in the country. But the call for government service was stronger and Minister Bobby—with a strong passion for public service— heeded that call.

Ang kaniyang karera ay maituturing na higit pa sa matagumpay. He was a prolific businessman—founding and managing businesses that not only earned billions, but more importantly, made a strong and lasting impact in the lives of many Filipinos.

Ipinamalas niya ang husay sa paninilbihan. Katuwang natin siyang tumawid sa mga panahong sinubok ang ating ekonomiya. Walang duda, ang marka at legasiyang iniwan niya ay kasing lalim ng puwang ng kanyang paglisan.

Today, we continue to honor his life and contributions to our nation. *Paalam sa iyo, Minister Bobby.* May your soul rest in eternal peace.

By Senate President Zubiri

I stand here today to honor the rich life and legacy of the late Mr. Roberto “Bobby” Ongpin.

He was a giant among men, and one of our sharpest thinkers, both in business and in government. As Minister of Trade and Industry, he cemented his reputation as an astute, no-nonsense problem solver, whose bold and creative solutions helped stabilize our financial situation.

In business, throughout the many companies he led, one thing was constant: his unflinching belief in delivering nothing but the best to the people. A man of his stature could have probably afforded to leave the daily grind, and the small decisions, to other people. Not so, for Tito Bobby. He was there, doing the work himself, because he believed that people deserved the very best from him and his ventures.

He leaves behind a legacy of unmatched excellence and influence, whose endeavors opened great opportunities for countless Filipinos across the country. For this, we celebrate Tito Bobby Ongpin.



Senate President Zubiri then recalled how he had admired Mr. Ongpin—a very close friend of his parents—since he was young because of the praiseworthy infrastructure developments of the latter: the Tagaytay Highlands, with its golf course on the mountainside and its beautiful landscape; the Alphaland Balesin Island Club, which has been considered to be one of the most visited tourism areas in the country; and the Alphaland Baguio Mountain Lodges. He said that he filed Proposed Senate Resolution No. 468 to honor Mr. Ongpin and his vision for the country with the hope that the next generations of developers and future businessmen would also come up with the same caliber of world-class facilities for the Filipino people.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva then quoted the Bible by saying that “people perish for lack of vision.” He praised Mr. Ongpin for having been a man of vision, which was evident in the Alphaland Balesin Island Club, a 500-hectare private island resort with luxurious villas and amenities patterned after some of the most attractive destinations around the world.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR DELA ROSA

In cosponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 523, Senator Dela Rosa delivered the following speech:

It is with profound grief that I support Senate Resolution No. 523, expressing our sympathies and condolences as one Senate on the loss of Roberto “Bobby” Velayo Ongpin, who died at the age of 86, last February 5, 2023.

A formidable and inspiring figure of competence and excellence—that is how we may best remember Mr. Bobby Ongpin. Whatever aspect of his life we look at, we are bound to discover a story of impeccable performance and subsequent success, be it his academic background, wherein he graduated cum laude from the Ateneo de Manila University; or his success in 1979, when he became the Philippines’ youngest Minister of Commerce and Industry; or when he decided to establish a business empire, bringing to the Philippine shores the Shangri-La Group of hotels and malls, as well as establishing Alphaland and Tagaytay Highlands.

But these achievements, impressive though they may be, have a human face. And they pale in comparison to the human being behind them all—the one who mentored and guided others by teaching them the principle “keep it simple,” the same one who established in memory of his late brother a scholarship fund, which, to date, has helped realize the dreams of 2,207 high school students. *Sa likod ng kaniyang mga nakamit sa loob ng mahigit 80 taon, hindi po nakalimutan ni Bobby Ongpin ang pinakamahalaga sa lahat—ang magpakatao.*

“May the all-powerful Lord grant us a restful night, and a peaceful death.” So goes the night prayer of Catholic priests, which is recited at the end of each day. In many ways, all of us would like to leave this world peacefully. It is not surprising then that this grace of a peaceful death was granted to Mr. Ongpin, who died in his sleep on that night in February. *Marahil pagkatapos ng lahat ng kaniyang nagawa at naitatag, naramdaman niya na panahon na siguro para magpahinga. Panahon naman ng iba na itaguyod ang lahat ng kanyang nasimulan.*

I wish to express my sincere sympathies to the family that Mr. Bobby Ongpin leaves behind. May his legacy always live on in all of them.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 468

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 468, taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution No. 523, was adopted by the Body, subject to style.

COAUTHORS

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, all senators were made coauthors of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 468.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended to allow Senate President Zubiri to hand over the resolution to the family of the late Roberto V. Ongpin.

It was 3:42 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:07 p.m., the session was resumed.

SPECIAL ORDER

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

1. Committee Report No. 30 on House Bill No. 3978;
2. Committee Report No. 31 on House Bill No. 3964;
3. Committee Report No. 32 on House Bill No. 3963;
4. Committee Report No. 33 on House Bill No. 925;
5. Committee Report No. 34 on House Bill No. 3961;
6. Committee Report No. 35 on House Bill No. 3965;
7. Committee Report No. 36 on House Bill No. 3974; and
8. Committee Report No. 37 on House Bill No. 3971.

HOLIDAY BILLS

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

1. House Bill No. 3978 (Committee Report No. 30), entitled
AN ACT DECLARING APRIL 16 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF MARIKINA, AMENDING FOIR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10788, ENTITLED "AN ACT DECLARING APRIL 16 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL HOLIDAY AND NO CLASS DAY IN SCHOOLS IN THE CITY OF MARIKINA IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDING ANNIVERSARY TO BE KNOWN AS "MARIKINA CITY DAY;"
2. House Bill No. 3964 (Committee Report No. 31), entitled
AN ACT DECLARING JULY 28 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CABADBARAN CITY, PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL NORTE, TO BE KNOWN AS "CABADBARAN DAY," IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION DAY;
3. House Bill No. 3963 (Committee Report No. 32), entitled
AN ACT DECLARING NOVEMBER 23 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN THE PROVINCE OF BENGUET TO BE KNOWN AS "BENGUET DAY" IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION DAY;

4. House Bill No. 925 (Committee Report No. 33), entitled
AN ACT DECLARING JULY 2 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN PASIG CITY TO BE KNOWN AS "ARAW NG PASIG";
5. House Bill No. 3961 (Committee Report No. 34), entitled
AN ACT DECLARING APRIL 4 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF ANTIPOLO, PROVINCE OF RIZAL, IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS CITYHOOD ANNIVERSARY;
6. House Bill No. 3965 (Committee Report No. 35), entitled
AN ACT DECLARING JULY 15 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CORDILLERA ADMINISTRATIVE REGION TO BE KNOWN AS "CORDILLERA DAY", IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION DAY;
7. House Bill No. 3974 (Committee Report No. 36), entitled
AN ACT DECLARING AUGUST 11 OF EVERY YEAR AS A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN THE PROVINCE OF SAMAR TO BE KNOWN AS "SAMAR DAY", IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION DAY; and
8. House Bill No. 3971 (Committee Report No. 37), entitled
AN ACT DECLARING MARCH 2 OF EVERY YEAR AS A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN THE PROVINCE OF LA UNION TO BE KNOWN AS "LA UNIION DAY", IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION DAY.

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 bills were read without prejudice to the insertion of their full texts into the *Record of the Senate*.

The Chair recognized Senator Ejercito for the sponsorship.

OMBNIBUS SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR EJERCITO

Senator Ejercito, on behalf of the Committee on Local Government, delivered an omnibus sponsorship speech for House Bills Nos. 3978, 3964, 3963, 925, 3961, 3965, 3974, and 3971.

The full text of Senator Ejercito's omnibus sponsorship speech follows:

As chairperson of the Committee on Local Government, I have the honor to report back to this august Body the following House bills which were referred to and heard by the committee: House Bill No. 3978 under Committee Report No. 30, declaring April 16 of every year a Special Nonworking Holiday in the City of Marikina, amending for the purpose Republic Act No. 10788; House Bill No. 3964 under Committee Report No. 31, declaring July 28 of every year a Special Nonworking Holiday in Cabadbaran City, Agusan Del Norte in commemoration of its foundation day; House Bill No. 3963 under Committee Report No. 32, declaring November 23 of every year a Special Nonworking Holiday in the Province of Benguet in commemoration of its foundation day; House Bill No. 925, taking into consideration Senate Bill No. 1681 under Committee Report No. 33, declaring July 2 of every year a Special Nonworking Holiday in Pasig City; House Bill No. 3961, taking into consideration Senate Bill No. 1828 under Committee Report No. 34, declaring April 4 of every year a Special Nonworking Holiday in the City of Antipolo, Province of Rizal, in commemoration of its cityhood anniversary; House Bill No. 3965, taking into consideration Senate Bill No. 1826 under Committee Report No. 35, declaring July 15 of every year a Special Nonworking Holiday in the Cordillera Administrative Region in commemoration of its foundation day; House Bill No. 3974, taking into consideration Senate Bill No. 1835 under Committee Report No. 36, declaring August 11 of every year a Special Nonworking Holiday in the Province of Samar in commemoration of its foundation day; and, finally, House Bill No. 3971, taking into consideration Senate Bill No. 1834 under Committee Report No. 37, declaring March 2 of every year a Special Nonworking Holiday in the Province of La Union in commemoration of its founding anniversary.



In considering these local holiday bills, we have adopted the following criteria used by the Committee on Local Government in previous Congresses in declaring special nonworking holidays: (1) it is the founding anniversary or charter day of the local government unit concerned; (2) it involves honoring a hero revered in the locality; (3) it involves the commemoration of an event with historical or cultural importance subject to the table of endorsement of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines; and (4) the number of existing legislated nonworking holidays in the locality does not exceed two.

The committee added a fifth criteria, which is the existence of previous executive issuances or proclamations declaring the special nonworking holiday in the locality.

It should be noted that most of the local holiday bills that we have heard in the committee have been previously declared a special nonworking holiday through executive proclamation.

By enacting the present House bills, the local government units concerned are discharged from the yearly requirement of securing an executive issuance just to commemorate their respective local holiday.

All of the local holiday bills that we are sponsoring today seek to celebrate the founding anniversary or charter day of the local government unit concerned and fall under the criteria that we have set.

COSPONSORS

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Senators Go and Lapid were made cosponsors of the bills.

Likewise, Senator Tolentino requested that he be made cosponsor of the bills particularly for the LGUs of Pasig City, Cabadbaran City, Marikina City, Antipolo City, and the Province of La Union.

Senator Tolentino stated that the LGUs deserved their own peculiar local holidays different from the yearly presidential proclamations being given out by the Office of the President. He said that even without the Office of the President's proclamation, the LGUs have institutionalized these holidays and it has served/boost the tourism of the areas concerned.

Also, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Senator Revilla was made cosponsor of the bills.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILLS NO. 3978, 3964, 3963, 925, 3961, 3965, 3974, AND 3971

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

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 5:17 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:18 p.m., the session was resumed with Senator Ejercito presiding.

SPECIAL ORDER

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

of Committee Report No. 14 on Senate Bill No. 1594 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 14 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1594

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 1594 (Committee Report No. 14), entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE ONE TOWN, ONE PRODUCT (OTOP) PHILIPPINES PROGRAM, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

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

The Chair recognized Senator Villar (M) for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR VILLAR (M)

Senator Villar (M), on behalf of the Committee on Trade, Commerce and Entrepreneurship, submitted for plenary consideration Senate Bill No. 1594, entitled "An Act Institutionalizing The One Town, One Product (OTOP) Philippines Program, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and For Other Purposes," under Committee Report No. 14.

The full text of Senator Villar (M)'s speech follows:

As the chairperson of the Committee on Trade, Commerce and Entrepreneurship, it is my honor to present for approval Senate Bill No. 1594 under Committee Report No. 14, in substitution of Senate Bill No. 247 by Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda; Senate Bill No. 260 by Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr.; Senate Bill No. 286 by Sen. Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada; Senate Bill No. 424 by Sen. Christopher Lawrence T. Go; Senate Bill No. 946 by Sen. Win Gatchalian; and Senate Bill No. 1246 filed by this Representation, entitled "An Act Institutionalizing the One Town, One Product (OTOP) Philippines Program, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes".

This is good news for our local producers and inspiring entrepreneurs because, after almost two decades, we are now sponsoring a bill that seeks to institutionalize the OTOP Philippines Program of the Department of Trade and Industry.

But before I discuss the salient features of the bill, allow me to ask first: What product do you want to be known for? *Anong produkto ang gusto mong makilala ang iyong lugar?*

When I started my journey as a senator, I was able to visit industries and MSMEs in different localities showcasing their products that are indeed at par with other international brands.

One event that I attended was the DTI OTOP Footwear Summit. During the said forum, *napansin ko na mas marami pang suporta ang kailangan para sa industriya ng sapatos at ito rin ang aking napansin para sa iba pang industriya.*

I am certain that similar to the quality shoes of Marikina, each town and each province has something to offer, not only to the rest of the country, but also to the global community.

I am also proud to inform the Body that each of our colleagues' hometowns and localities have a different OTOP. To name a few: in Las Piñas, we have Bicol express *santol* and pork, fruit jams in a bottle, *kutsinta*, and *puto bumbong*; in Bukidnon, the hometown of our Senate President, they have *tagoloan* crafts and *Hineleban* coffee; Antique has *buri* products and *hablon* shawls; Malabon has peanut butter and tote bags; Bulacan has leather sandals and mushroom products; they have PUYO handicrafts in Cagayan de Oro; Panay Island has *piña* apparel; Capiz has shell craft; Aurora has Sabutan products; Makati also has salad in a jar; Taguig City has upcycled tire

inner tube bags and crocheted accessories and wallets; Davao has cacao chocolates; Camarines Norte and Sorsogon have pili nuts and abaca products; Ilocos has longganisa and empanada; Iloilo has shawls, chocolate truffles, and turmeric products; Cavite has ocean fresh tahong chips and, of course, Tagaytay's buko tart.

Clearly, this only proves that with our country's rich natural resources, we can create quality goods and products which characterized our creative culture with homegrown talents, artisans, and craftsmen. Indeed, truly, proudly Filipino.

Nakita po natin na ang iba't ibang lokalidad at probinsiya ay mayroong anging produkto na kilalang-kilala sila.

OTOP products assist MSMEs from different provinces and towns, and currently OTOPI covers 16 regions.

Ano nga ba ang OTOPI? The One Town, One Product Program has been in existence since 2002 and it was further strengthened through the promulgation of Executive Order No. 176 of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in February of 2003. This is also known as *Isang Bayan, Isang Produkto, Isang Milyong Piso* to stimulate local economic activity and sustain the anti-poverty thrust of government.

It aims to promote and develop unique quality products intended to specific towns in the country particularly in rural areas. At present, OTOPI remains to be a strategic tool that provides an ecosystem of assistance from national government agencies, local government units, and the private sector.

In understanding OTOPI, we should know that there are two major components of this program: first is the OTOPI Next Gen and the second is the OTOPI Philippines Hub.

OTOP Next Gen is the supplies side of the program. It focuses on product development initiatives, trainings, and referrals with the goal of leveling up products in the areas of design, quality, and volume, among others, while OTOPI Philippines Hub is the demand side of the program. This provides the physical and online channels and market access platform where OTOPI products, especially those which have been assisted via product development, are showcased on a day-to-day basis. We call the people in MSMEs involved in OTOPI as "OTOPpreneurs," and in choosing our OTOPIpreneurs, we need potential, promise, and passion. The growth and market potential of the business or the products, with the end goal of getting mainstream in either domestic or international markets, then MSMEs' promise or level of commitment and track record of participation and cooperation.

The MSMEs should be willing to level up and find ways to grow their businesses. OTOPIpreneurs should be passionate about their business, they should be open to innovation and new models. OTOPIpreneurs demonstrate focus in their business, and have the willingness to learn. These are just some of the important qualities that we need in order to make OTOPI sustainable.

Furthermore, OTOPI products are identified based primarily on five different criteria. First is the culture, or the cultural values—heritage; living and traditions; local customs; practices; recipes; narratives; history; and beliefs. Next is community resources. It is an important component in OTOPI as we need to ensure that raw materials are locally available, and that the skills and network of resources are within the communities.

Another important criterion is the connection. The product should evoke a sense of pride or emotional connection especially among the locals. They are, after all, the chief ambassadors of the localities' OTOPI. Then, our products must be creative, unique, and innovation-driven. We want to leverage reliable Filipino creativity and a sense of adventure. Anything that sparks the interest, original and novel, can be that locality's OTOPI.

And, lastly, competitive advantage. Factors such as tourism, proximity to resources or supply chain, topography, climate, and geographic location provide a certain advantage to a product. The OTOPI covers a wide range of products and services. Processed food includes processed fruits and nuts; delicacies and "*kakanins*"; pastries and bakery goods; preserved food; sauces; beverages; wines; tea; food supplements; and culinary-based specialty products. As for agri-based products, we have coffee, cacao, agricultural produce, agri-processing or processed meats, and seafood. Another product covers arts and crafts. These include weaves, bamboo, paper artistry,

and those made from wood. While home and fashion or creative artisanal products can be the gifts, souvenir items, furniture, décor, houseware, fabrics, garments, and textiles. And, finally, skills-based services, such as the *hilot*, sculpting, wellness products, essential oils, and personal care such as soaps and cosmetics.

Ang mga nasa bayan, lungsod, o probinsya, sila ang nakakaalam kung anong produkto na maipagpamamalaki na galing sa kanila, na may malakas na potensyal sa merkado.

Some challenges encountered by the OTOP are program awareness, product development, sustainability, technological adaptability, facilities, marketing, and budgetary constraints.

Ilan sa mga dahilan kung bakit karamihan sa mga produkto ay hindi lumalayo sa kanilang lugar ay dahil sa packaging and shelf life.

And DTI comes in to ensure and maintain the quality of products. *Inaayos po ng DTI ang quality through product development and to improve the quality, design, trend, packaging, and shelf life of food.*

Tinutulungan din ng DTI na magkaroon ng branding ang mga OTOP kasi naniniwala tayo na magaling ang mga Pinoy at may talento sa pagdisenyo ng produkto.

Like any other industries, OTOP and MSMEs are also affected by the extraordinary challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. This slide will show you that there is a decline in the products and prototypes developed under the OTOP Program: from 2017-2019 or the pre-pandemic years, there were 17,196; during the height of the pandemic, there were 14,425; and from 2022 up to the present, there are 8,039 products and prototypes developed.

Despite these challenges, it is also worth highlighting that the OTOP Program continues to thrive. In fact, the DTI reported that there were 18 OTOP Hubs established and 99 OTOP Hubs maintained in 2022. Additionally, there are 417 product development and design sessions conducted.

The sales generated from 2022 up to this present year amounts to P3.91 billion. This is expected to increase, as more locals and tourists expect to travel in the summer season.

Para mas lalong makilala ang mga produkto, the DTI conducts monthly trade fairs to showcase products in every region. Layunin din nito na umasenso ang mga MSME. Last year alone, there were 540 trade fairs conducted.

Moreover, there were 19,123 MSMEs assisted from 2022 up to January of 2023 through skills training and seminars, and managerial training on how to be entrepreneurs.

To appreciate OTOP even more, my office, in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry led by Sec. Alfredo Pascual, brought the OTOP exhibit here in the Senate to showcase the craftsmanship and creativity of our people, as they produce exquisite pieces of handicrafts, textiles, furniture, and other artisanal products.

I also encourage my dear colleagues, Senate employees, and staff to also visit the exhibit outside the Session Hall. I urge you all to explore the products on display and discover the incredible talent of our local entrepreneurs and the potential of their amazing products.

You can reserve or order products directly from our OTOPpreneurs. By doing so, we can help our OTOPpreneurs grow their businesses and create more job opportunities for our fellow Filipinos.

In sponsoring this bill, the DTI wants to showcase the OTOP products by providing complements to the honorable Members of this august Chamber.

To strengthen MSMEs and to support homegrown talents, artisans, and craftsmen, the Senate Committee on Trade, Commerce, and Entrepreneurship filed Senate Bill No. 1594 under Committee Report No. 14. This bill seeks to institutionalize the OTOP Program to promote inclusive growth within communities, and stimulate local employment.

The reason behind the OTOP Program is to support and empower local industries, particularly in rural areas, and create jobs and income opportunities for the people. By developing and promoting local products, the OTOP Program encourages entrepreneurship and helps boost economic growth in the country.

Section 6 of this proposed bill is the OTOP Philippines Trustmark, which shall signify that the business and products have been marked as excellent in terms of quality, design, value, and marketability, as well as serves as a guarantee of excellence in OTOP Philippines' products and service.

To attain the objective of this trustmark, Section 10 of the bill provides a package of assistance for MSMEs with viable products in order to develop new, innovative, and more complex products, with significant improvement in the areas of quality, product development, design, packaging, standards, regulatory compliance, marketability, production capability, and brand development, among others.

Also, a notable feature of this bill is the creation of an OTOP Program Office in each LGU, which shall direct, supervise, and implement the OTOP Program on the local level, in accordance with the national One Town One Product Strategic Development Plan.

The establishment of OTOP Hubs under the program provides an incubation venue for MSMEs' respective products to promote market access to tourist destinations and other consumer-frequented locations.

And, most importantly, there will be appropriate funding for the implementation of this act.

Once enacted into law, more intensive product development sessions that will lead to the improvement of existing products per LGU will be implemented, which has cultural value and promotes "pride of place." Our trade fairs and market-watching activities will provide market exposure to products as well as the MSMEs. This will also increase sales and expand businesses. Further, the MSMEs' development through capacity-building will empower and capacitate LGUs in the OTOP Program's implementation.

Each LGU can focus on developing its own products, and each LGU can build its own unique brands or standards. LGUs are now being engaged and involved with OTOP. They are really part of identifying and pushing for these products.

As I end this sponsorship speech, may we continue to patronize and support locally-made products. This serves as a reminder that we have come so far in realizing this program, and we still have more to do in order to showcase it into international level, which is, of course, through necessary support by the government to communities in identifying, developing, and promoting products and services. We can achieve this goal by making our Filipino-made products competitive on the world stage.

And with that, I would like to solicit your full support for the passage of this bill.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUEST

At this juncture, Senator Villar acknowledged the presence in the gallery of Mayor Cesar V. Areza of Pagsanjan, Laguna.

Senate President Zubiri welcomed Mayor Areza to the Senate.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR LEGARDA

Senator Legarda thanked Senator Villar (M) for expeditiously hearing the OTOP bill and reporting the same on the floor that day. She stated that she has been supporting the measure for 20 years, ever since she first filed the OTOP Bill, and recalled that during her her first term, it was a Department of Trade and Industry program. She also disclosed that she had filed a bill at the time to institutionalize the program.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR LEGARDA

In cosponsoring Senate Bill No. 1594, Senator Legarda delivered the following speech:

It is my honor to cosponsor and principally author the bill creating the One Town One Product (OTOP) Philippines Act of 2022. It has been 20 years.



In 2021, the Philippines Statistics Authority recorded a total of 1,080,810 business enterprises operating in the country. Of these, 99.58%, or 1,076,279 businesses, are MSMEs. These MSMEs generated a total of 5,461,731 jobs, or 64.67% of the country's total employment in 2021, an increase from the 5,380,815 jobs, or 62.66%, of the country's total employment in year 2020 when the pandemic caused a devastating sharp contraction of economic activity and huge job losses.

Based on the report of the Philippine Statistics Authority in 2020, MSMEs contributed 60% of all exports, representing 25% of total export revenues. In addition, it generated P2.09 billion worth of sales in 2021—an increase from P1.41 billion in 2019. As the lifeblood of the economy, MSMEs, now more than ever, should be supported financially and in terms of capacity building.

The OTOP Program is a government intervention that provides priority for MSMEs. First introduced in 2002—21 years ago—subsequently promulgated through Executive Order No. 176 by then Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in 2003, the bill seeks to institutionalize the OTOP Program to promote local products from a sector and a locality as their own pride of place. These goods symbolize the unique characteristics and talent of their respective localities, showcasing where they are best at, or in areas where they may hold recognition. This leads to the growth of MSMEs in the countryside through the development of indigenous raw materials utilizing local skills and talents and featuring local traditions and cultures across the country. It remains to be a strategic tool for inclusive local economic growth, with assistance coming from local government units, national government agencies, and the private sector.

The bill proposes that OTOP products must meet a set of criteria to be established by the DTI. The product should be consistent with the cultural values rooted in a locality, derive its resources from the community, evoke a sense of connection among the locals, exemplify the Filipino people's creativity and innovation, and draw from a localities' innate or endemic strength.

The components of the OTOP Program include product development as a primary instrument of assistance for the OTOP Program, capacity building to address the gaps in entrepreneurial skills, standards, and market compliance to preserve the OTOP brand as a mark of excellence, and access to both local and foreign markets as well as product promotion across different platforms. The OTOP Program provides an avenue to support my advocacies in culture and the arts in such a manner that it has encouraged local patronage and gained international recognition. An example is the assistance extended to our local textile industry.

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

Weaving is a traditional industry in various parts of the country, with different provinces known for their respective tropical fabrics such as the Ikat, T'nalak, and Inaul of Mindanao; the Patadyong of Antique and of Iloilo; the Abel of Ilocos and the whole region in the north; the weaves of the different tribes from the Cordilleras; Hablon of the Ilonggos; and the Piña of Aklan and Antique, among many others.

These fabrics are worn by dignitaries and well-known personalities, and are even seen on the runways sometimes. I wear them with pride in the Senate and on important occasions, even for simple occasions, to show my passion and appreciation for the weavers and artists.

De-kalidad din ang kape ng Kalinga; bangus ng Pangasinan; parol ng Pampanga; marble novelties ng Romblon; sapatos ng Marikina; saging ng North Cotabato; mangga mula sa Guimaras, Cebu, Antique, at Zambales, at marami pang iba. Mga likas na yaman; mga likhang sariling atin na maipagmamalaki natin saan man sa mundo.

It is imperative that we encourage and support the establishment of trade and industry conducive to greater productivity and higher incomes through cooperative systems of production, processing, marketing, distribution, and credit services, where applicable, especially among MSMEs.

The promotion of every product in every town is a movement to make the local economy work, thus promoting sustainable development, growth, and competitiveness of small units of society in the regions, the well-being of the residents, and the quality of living environment.

These, and many others, are the reasons why I wish to associate myself with the proposed measure. And I hope in this Congress we will be able to pass the more than two decades pending measure that will provide a sustainable pandemic recovery.



COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GATCHALIAN

In cosponsoring Senate Bill No. 1594, Senator Gatchalian delivered the following speech:

It is my privilege and honor to cosponsor Senate Bill No. 1594 under Committee Report No. 14, otherwise known as the OTOP Philippines Act of 2022.

It is my intent as one of the authors of this measure, having filed Senate Bill No. 946, to institutionalize the OTOP Program to promote inclusive and sustainable economic development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and develop local products and services rooted in the culture and competitive advantage of each town in the country.

Our MSMEs, as the backbone of our economy, play a crucial role in generating revenues and creating jobs. Based on our estimation using the available PSA data in 2006, gross value-added for the MSME sector as baseline, the contribution of MSMEs in terms of value-added in year 2021 was around P2.3 trillion. In the same year, the sector also provided 5.5 million jobs in our country, or roughly two-thirds of the total workforce of the country.

Recognizing the vital role of the MSME sector, this measure will further enable the coordination of our local government units, national government agencies, and private sector to improve the quality and competitiveness of our exports and domestic products.

The impact of the OTOP Philippines Act extends far beyond the promotion of cultural products and indigenous materials. After all, it also seeks to draw attention to the untapped local potential that needs to be discovered and supported.

Halimbawa na lang dito ang mga produkto ng Valenzuela City. Nakilala man ang aming lungsod bilang "Industrial City," ipinagmamalaki rin ng mga Valenzuelano ang mga produktong katulad ng "Oh So Healthy" fruit crisps, at maging ang handicraft products katulad ng eco-bayong.

Tiyak na mas lalo ring maipagmamalaki nina Senator Dela Rosa at Senator Go ang mga lokal na produkto nila sa Davao tulad ng tablea, cacao, at handcrafted handbag. Asahan din natin na mas mapapadalas ang pagpapadala sa atin ng "pili nut" nina Senator Escudero at Sen. Robinhood C. Padilla na galing pang Bicol. Mas marami ring mahihikayat pang bumili ng shellcraft na itinatampok sa probinsya ni Sen. Imee R. Marcos, ang Ilocos Norte. At higit sa lahat, mas magiging mabenta pa ang mga produkto nina Senate President Zubiri mula sa Bukidnon tulad ng coffee beans, bayong bag, at picnic mat. Tama ho ba, Senate President? Alam ko marami ho kayong produkto sa Bukidnon.

As policymakers, part of our duty is to provide our local entrepreneurs with a comprehensive range of support services, particularly in the areas of product development, capacity building, standard compliance, market access, and product promotion—all of which are mandated by this bill.

The bill likewise seeks to establish the OTOP Philippines Trustmark as a guarantee of excellence in OTOP Philippines products and services. It will also direct certain agencies to construct and allocate spaces for the establishment of OTOP Philippines Hubs, as well as create an OTOP Program Office in every LGU.

As such, enacting the OTOP Philippines Act will be a game-changer in opening up abundant opportunities for our MSME sector.

Habang itinataguyod natin ang mga ipinagmamalaking sariling produkto ng bawat bayan, siyudad, at rehiyon sa buong bansa, mabibigyan din natin ng pagkakataon ang bawat lokalidad na makabuo ng iba't ibang inobasyon sa kanilang mga produkto at serbisyo.

Ang pagsasabatas ng panukalang ito ay magsisilbing susi upang mapalago ang ating ekonomiya at makapagbigay ng mas maraming trabaho para sa ating mga kababayan.

At this point, I would like to thank the sponsor of this legislation, Sen. Mark A. Villar, as well as the coauthors, Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda, Senator Revilla, Senator Estrada, and Senator Go, for their keen insights in drafting this significant measure.

In light of this endeavor, I respectfully seek the approval of this important legislation by this august Chamber.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECHES

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following cosponsorship speeches of Senators Estrada and Revilla on Senate Bill No. 1594 which were deemed read and inserted into the *Record of the Senate*:

By Senator Estrada

It is an honor to be a cosponsor of Senate Bill No. 1594 under Committee Report No. 14 submitted by the Committees on Trade, Commerce and Entrepreneurship; Local Government; and Finance, which provides for the "OTOP Philippines Act of 2022."

This Representation filed Senate Bill No. 286 with a vision to promote the products and services of the different localities of our country, which will not only result to progress in our economy but, more importantly, to strengthen the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that comprise 99.58% of all the businesses in the country.

One Town One Product (OTOP) is an adaptation of Japan's "One Village, One Product," But through the years since its implementation in the Philippines in 2002, it was molded into an indigenized program that serves as an important vehicle to bring the native products and services to a wider reach of consumers. As it is now being implemented by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), OTOP provides a holistic support to the MSMEs by attending to both the supply and demand sides of the business. On one hand, they cultivate the mindset change and mastery of entrepreneurship, while on the other hand, they assist the product development and marketing through physical and online channels.

In their effort to continually improve the program, the DTI relaunched the program in 2017 to "allow more communities to have more than one OTOP offering" and to "transition to being more market-oriented and innovation-driven." During this occasion, the department was able to assist 6,519 MSMEs and developed or improved a total of 4,960 products.

These initiatives will certainly be sustained if a legislation that institutionalizes the program will be enacted. The proposed law will not only provide the appropriate structure and institutionalized roadmap for the program, but will also ensure sufficient funding for the implementation of the same.

Ang pagpapalawig ng "One Town One Product" ay tiyak na makapaglilikha ng mga trabaho para sa ating mga mamamayan, lalo na sa kanayunan. Sa pamamagitan nito, magiging mahalagang instrumento ito upang maiangat ang antas ng kabuhayan ng ating mga kababayan at magiging kaagapay ng pamahalaan sa pagsupil ng kahirapan sa ating bansa. Sa kabuuan, ito ay magiging daan upang makamit natin ang pag-unlad para sa lahat, o ang tinatawag nating "genuine inclusive development."

Bukod pa rito, ang ating masiglang paglahok sa pandaigdigang kalakalan ay maipagpapatuloy sa pamamagitan ng panukalang "OTOP Act." Dahil sa mas malawak na merkado, ang mga oportunidad at benepisyo nito ay pakikinabangan ng mas maraming Pilipino at mag-uudyok sa kanila na lalo pang paghusayin ang kanilang mga produkto.

The Philippines boasts of its vast natural and human resources. The proposed OTOP Act will celebrate the unique character of the diverse products of our local communities and the rich heritage of their people.

Let us embrace and support home grown talents, artisans and craftsmen, as well as our indigenous resources and local traditions. Let us harness them as our competitive advantage and unique identity as we venture in the world market. I am giving my full support for the passage of the OTOP Philippines Act of 2022.

By Senator Revilla

I would like to congratulate our colleague Sen. Mark Villar for sponsoring the One Town One Product or OTOP Philippines Program. *Alam natin ang kahalagahan ng panukalang ito lalo na sa mga bayang naglalayong mas maipakita at maipakilala sa buong bansa, at buong mundo na rin, ang kanilang mga natatanging haing produkto.* In fact, this Representation filed a similar

version of the OTOP bill, Senate Bill No. 260, which also seeks to institutionalize and strengthen the OTOP Program.

The One Town One Product Philippines Program is a key stimulus program for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) designed by the government to foster inclusive local economic growth. *Pagyayabungin at palalaguin nito ang ating mga kababayan lalo na yung mga nasa probinsya at mga kanayunan.* If we give spotlight to the unique products that they offer, we empower them to create and produce more, thereby helping them grow economically.

More than that, this program also aims to highlight and give importance to the uniqueness and richness of our culture. The Philippine archipelago is blessed with a multitude of natural resources and indigenous skill sets. Each municipality has its own unique character and cultural mark shaped by its geography, history, and traditions that can distinguish it from any other locality. Such unique and authentic identity can very well be reflected in its product and service offerings – one of a kind.

Kung anong singdami ng isla sa Pilipinas ay ganun din kahitik ang ating mga natatanging produkto. Kaya naman nararapat lamang na pahalagahan, linangin at suportahan natin ito!

Hence, I fully support the passage of this bill.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GO

In cosponsoring Senate Bill No. 1594, Senator Go delivered the following speech:

I stand here to cosponsor Senate Bill No. 1594, which seeks to institutionalize the One Town, One Product (OTOP) Philippines Program in the country.

As one of the authors of this measure, it is my belief that we should always provide protection and recognize the profound and undeniable contributions of micro, small and medium-scale enterprises (MSMEs) in nation-building, continuing national economic growth, and the realization of our economic objectives.

Isa po sa backbone ng ating ekonomiya ay ang MSMEs. Hindi naman po natin maikakaila ang kasipagan at diskarte sa buhay ng Pilipino. Kung mabibigyan lamang sila ng tamang suporta, hindi malayo na mas lalago pa ang mga negosyo nila.

While we are recovering from the pandemic, *naniniwala po ako na sa pamamagitan ng panukalang ito ay matutulungan natin ang mga MSMEs na buhayin at muling pagyabungin ang kanilang mga negosyo.* Let us assist them to fully recover. *Bigyan natin ng bagong pag-asa ang mga nasa probinsiya at palakasin ang kanilang kabuhayan para makaahon sa krisis.*

To emphasize, according to a report from the Department of Trade and Industry, as of 2020, 99.5% of the total business enterprises operating in our country are MSMEs. Moreover, the sector is also a major employer, counting for 62.66% of the country's total employment.

Under the bill, the One Town One Product (OTOP) Philippines Program will be institutionalized and shall be one of the government's stimulus programs that will encourage the growth of MSMEs in the countryside through the development of indigenous raw materials, utilizing local skills and talents, and featuring local traditions and cultures across the country.

The DTI and LGUs shall make available a comprehensive package of assistance to OTOP Program beneficiaries, such as product development, assistance in the designing of new products, packaging and labelling, business skills training, market access, and product promotion.

With this bill, we continue to strive for a better and resilient economy. It is for this reason that I am reiterating my full support for the passage of this important measure. And I congratulate the sponsor, Sen. Mark A. Villar, for prioritizing this piece of legislation.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva likewise delivered the following speech on Senate Bill No. 1594:

It is an honor for me and a privilege to coauthor and cosponsor Senate Bill No. 1594 under Committee Report No. 14, or the One Town One Product (OTOP) Philippines Act.



We would like to thank and commend our distinguished colleague, Sen. Mark A. Villar, for his hard work on this particular measure.

This Representation is a proud product of the Province of Bulacan, known as the “Northern Gateway from Manila.” Among the industries famous in our province are marble and marbled limestone, pyrotechnics—*paputok po*—leather, aquaculture, garments, furniture, high-value crops, sweets, and native delicacies, and a wide variety of high-quality native products.

This very important measure will help these industries as it seeks to institutionalize the OTOP Program of the Department of Trade and Industry and encourage the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises through the utilization of indigenous raw materials, local traditions, and cultures across the country.

In a statistics given to us by the Philippine Statistics Authority, they reported in 2021 that 99.58% of all business enterprises in the country are MSMEs, accounting to about 5.46 million jobs, or 64.67% of total employment.

According to the DTI, in 2022, the OTOP program was able to assist 15,777 MSMEs, develop 5,150 products and prototypes and generate more than P2.5 billion in sales. That is why I am glad that this measure aims to offer assistance packages to MSMEs, help rural communities develop their local economies and become more innovative and market oriented, and encourage the coordination of efforts among government agencies, local government units, and the private sector to develop and market Philippine export and domestic products.

I remember when we had that parliamentary exchange in France headed by our Senate President “Migz” Zubiri last October 2022. I was personally amazed by how certain products being exported to other countries can easily be attributable to a certain region or province in France. These include Bordeaux wine, Roquefort cheese, and Corsican olive oil, among others. It is our hope that this measure will help our domestic producers to be more competitive in the international market and have our local products like Guimaras mangoes and Davao chocolate be linked to or known by their originating provinces and cities. This will not only promote trade but also *iyong support po* for our MSMEs. It will create more jobs and even boost our tourism sector.

Maraming salamat sa ating sponsor, kay Sen. Mark Villar. Makakaasa po kayo sa ating buong puso na suporta sa pagsasabatas ng panukalang batas na ito.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

As a former chairperson of the Committee on Cooperatives and a supporter of the One Town, One Product Bill, Senate President Zubiri informed the Body that he and his former vice chairperson, Senator Hontiveros, actually worked to come up with the highly successful cooperatives program. He disclosed that they have even expanded into other products that are currently exported or sold within the region.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

At this juncture, Senate President Zubiri acknowledged the presence in the gallery of Mayor Javi Benitez of Victorias City, Negros Occidental, and Mayor Albee Benitez and the vice mayor and councilors of Bacolod City, Negros Occidental.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1594

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. 41 on Senate Bill No. 1979 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 41 ON SENATE NO. 1979

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 1979 (Committee Report No. 1979, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A NATIONAL POLICY IN PREVENTING ADOLESCENT PREGNANCIES, INSTITUTIONALIZING SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR ADOLESCENT PARENTS, AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR.

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*.

The Chair recognized Senator Hontiveros for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

In sponsoring Senate Bill No. 1979 for plenary consideration of the Body, Senator Hontiveros delivered the following speech:

Happy International Women's Day to my female colleagues and to all Filipino women and allies of women.

Today, I rise to sponsor Senate Bill No. 1979 under Committee Report No. 41, or the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancies Bill. I thank my coauthors, Senators Imee R. Marcos and "Bong" Revilla Jr., who filed similar bills, and Senators Sonny Angara and Sherwin Gatchalian, who filed resolutions that the Committee considered in the deliberations for this committee report.

There are thousands of adolescent Filipinos who have already begun child bearing and who are about to face the hard realities that come with the entry to parenthood. Among these pregnant girls and young fathers, many of them will have come from rural areas, will not have finished their education, or will have come from families who live in the lower wealth quintile.

While teen pregnancy in the country has been declining, data that some experts still question since we were in lockdowns for more than a year, a worrying trend among very young girls has emerged. There was a recorded increase in cases of pregnancies in the 10 to 14 year-old age group. Some of them are elementary school children—elementary school children!—who will now be carrying a child while still just on the cusp of their own adolescence. These are thousands of students whose education will be disrupted, at the very least, and ended, at the worst.

Teachers, like Neme Guanco of Aklan, have seen these stories firsthand. He had to babysit the child of his Grade IX student who had to be brought to school every day. *Salamat at may ganitong kababait na mga guro, pero hindi maramihan ito, at hindi dapat pasanin ito ng mga guro sa dami ng mga pasan na nila.*

For some students, however, pregnancies spell the abrupt end of their education, such as the case of 16-year old Kristine and her 19-year old husband who had to drop out of school due to adolescent pregnancy.

Teen pregnancy costs a young mother as high as P83,000 a year, with NEDA estimating that the Philippine economy loses as much as P42 billion in lifetime income. These macro level numbers are easy to quantify, but for our young parents, their losses maybe incalculable in terms of lost opportunities or missed chances.

Ito po ang dahilan kung bakit isinusulong ko ngayon ang panukalang batas na ito. Senate Bill No. 1979 seeks to address the issue of adolescent pregnancy through various methods, such as the faithful implementation of comprehensive sexuality education and the delivery of necessary sexual and reproductive information and services to young Filipinos when they need it, when they ask for it, and when they seek it.

Para rin po sa kaalaman ng lahat, ang SRH services po ay para sa mga teens lagpas sa edad na 15 years old, the recommended age by the UN, DOH, and non-government organizations based on the evolving capacities of adolescence. Kapag mas bata sa 15, kailangan pa din ang pahintulot ng magulang or responsible adults designated by the state. In all cases, may mandatory counselling po by accredited social workers.

The bill also seeks to provide social protection to our young parents, such as maternal healthcare services, post-natal family planning, parenting workshops, and psycho-social support for the young parents, among others.

In addition, the bill also seeks to strengthen the referral pathways in cases of sexual violence against adolescents by instituting mandated reportorial requirements when there are observed and identified signs of abuse. *Ito ay alinsunod sa mga batas natin, gaya ng Raising the Age of Sexual Consent na ipinasa natin at ng ating mga kampiyon—ang ating Senate President at ating Majority Leader.*

Nais ko din ibahagi na tiniyak ng panukalang batas na ito na maging culturally-sensitive. Kasama sa TWG ang National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) at ang National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF).

Gusto ko pong ibahagi sa inyo, lalo na po sa ating colleague na si Sen. Robinhood Padilla, na tinanggap po namin ang lahat na mga proposed amendments ng NCIP and NCMF.

We cannot afford to have children having children. It is our duty as legislators and as parents to provide the next generation of Filipinos the knowledge they need to empower themselves, to make informed decisions as they grow into adulthood. By doing so, we will be allowing more young Filipinos to choose the timing and the manner of how they enter parenthood if or when they choose to do so.

Maraming salamat po, at muli po Happy International Women's Day.

INQUIRY OF THE CHAIR

Referring to Republic Act No. 11648 which raised the age for the commission of statutory rape from 12 years old to 16 years old, Senate President Zubiri questioned whether the situation described by Senator Hontiveros in her speech would constitute statutory rape. Senator Hontiveros explained that, regardless of the circumstances of the suspect or offender, the law considers carnal knowledge with children below 12 years old to be statutory rape because it violates the age of sexual consent. She further clarified that if the child involved is older than 12 but still a minor, and the perpetrator is no more than three years older than the child, then the act would fall within the exclusion for close-in-age consensual relationships, assuming it is proven to be non-coercive and non-abusive.

Senate President Zubiri thanked Senator Hontiveros for her response and stated that he would study the matter further.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1979

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. 42 on Senate Bill No. 1980 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 42 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1980

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 1980 (Committee Report No. 42), entitled

AN ACT TO ENSURE GENDER-RESPONSIVE AND INCLUSIVE PROTOCOLS AND PROGRAMMING TO ADDRESS THE GENDER-DIFFERENTIATED NEEDS OF WOMEN DURING EMERGENCIES INCLUDING PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS, PANDEMICS, AND NATURAL AND MAN-MADE DISASTERS.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the *Rules of the Senate*, with 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*.

The Chair recognized Senator Hontiveros for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

In sponsoring Senate Bill No. 1980, Senator Hontiveros delivered the following speech:

I rise today to sponsor Senate Bill No. 1980 under Committee Report No. 42, or the Gender Responsive and Inclusive Emergency Management Act of 2023.

I thank my colleagues and coauthors, Sen. Loren Legarda and Sen. Bong Revilla.

This bill arises at a critical time as we begin to see the end of COVID-19 policies in our country. It is an opportune time to revisit our country's emergency management system to determine whether or not the more vulnerable among us fall through the cracks.

Despite our country's significant strides in closing the gender equality gap, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to harsh light the gendered and intersectional issues that women and girls continue to face. This makes us disproportionately affected in times of emergencies. *Dahil higit na mas maraming kababaihan ang kabilang sa informal economy, mas malala ang hagupit ng pandemya sa kanilang kabuhayan.* Further, gendered expectations at home have overburdened women and girls with increased unpaid care work. *Malimit, ang babae ang pumapasan ng mga tungkulin na pangalagaan ang mga maysakit, gumabay sa online class ng anak, habang ginagawa ang iba pang mga gawaing bahay at pagkasyahin ang budget ng pamilya.*

With women and girls confined to their homes and shelters, they often become targets of violence. Plan International Philippines also found that 17% of women and girls have witnessed gender-based violence outside their homes, while 56% of them saw online violence against women.

Women suffered from inaccessible reporting mechanisms due to the harsh COVID-19 restrictions that hampered both mobility and access to information. This issue is a global phenomenon, as Filipino migrant women have also suffered from increased labor exploitation and abuse by their employers.

Impediments to sexual, reproductive, and mental health services for women also prevail during emergency situations. Major disruptions occurred in sexual and reproductive health services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the numerous pressures and burdens that women face during emergencies highlight the need to ensure the consistent availability of mental health services.

These multifaceted issues that women face during emergencies necessitate a comprehensive and multisectoral bill that will guarantee the protection and empowerment of women even during emergencies. It further fulfills our legislative duties outlined in our Constitution and the Magna Carta of Women to commit to protecting the women and girls in our lives and ensuring gender equality. This bill aims to effectively prevent and respond to the gendered issues that women and girls face through the following:

- Devising a national preparedness and response plan that addresses the differentiated issues and needs of women;
- Prioritizing women and girls in emergency response, especially those who are at the most risk;
- Strengthening gender-based violence preparedness and response systems by ensuring that GBV services remain accessible and unimpeded;

- Guaranteeing the availability of sexual and reproductive health goods and services;
- Ensuring the continuity and availability of mental health services;
- Improving education systems' responsiveness to emergencies that consider the obstacles in education; and
- Institutionalizing protections for women migrant workers and their children, rural and indigenous women, and locally stranded women.

On this very day, International Women's Day, I am honored to sponsor this bill to protect and empower women in emergency situations. May we leave no woman or girl behind, especially when they are most vulnerable.

Let us build back better, let us build back better together, with women and girls at the heart and center.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR LEGARDA

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following cosponsorship speech of Senator Legarda into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

It is with great pleasure that I register my full and unequivocal support for the passage of Senate Bill Nos. 375, 1339, and 1838 or the Gender Responsive and Inclusive Pandemic Management Act.

COVID-19 has exposed the gaps in existing government policies and mechanisms in terms of protecting women against the adverse effects of a global health crisis. The pandemic was not just a public health crisis, but also an economic crisis.

We were unprepared in addressing the unavailability of economic opportunities for women and in acting upon unpaid care work and other labor-related issues during the pandemic. In the Philippines, nearly 6.6 million women are engaged in the unpaid work sector, an entirely unregulated informal economy. They often suffer from a low earning capacity, little to no labor protections, and a lack of paid sick leaves. The prolonged financial slowdowns at the height of the pandemic have further increased their vulnerability to economic shocks. In fact, according to a survey conducted by UN Women, nearly 33 percent of Filipino women had lost their informal employment by April 2020.

Another immediate consequence of COVID-19 was the significant global increase in sexual violence against women. In the Philippines, one in every four women has experienced domestic violence. The PNP Women and Children Protection Center reported on January 2021 a total of 11,184 cases of violation of RA 9262 or AntiViolence against Women and their Children Act, followed by 2,117 cases of rape and 1,550 cases of Acts of Lasciviousness. PNP-WCPC also reported that Region VII has the highest number of VAW cases with 3,159, followed by the NCR with 1,726 cases.

While these figures reflect fewer cases of violence against women (VAWC) logged during the pandemic, the lockdown restrictions have resulted in underreporting of cases of gender-based violence.

Women victims were unable to report their cases as reflected by a 27.2% drop in reported cases to the Philippine National Police. Further, they could not seek protection in domestic shelters because of their lack of accessibility.

Once more, we have witnessed the government's insufficient protection of and slow response to the victims of gender-based violence and other abuses against women.

During the peak of the pandemic, we were also not equipped in delivering social services that advance women's welfare and in providing health care or sexual and reproductive health services, among others.

There is a need to address these gaps.

This proposed measure, thus, seeks to ensure gender-responsive and inclusive protocols and programs to address the gender-differentiated needs of women not just during the COVID-19 pandemic but during other public health concerns, emergencies, and disasters.

As such, under the bill, women shall be empowered to be included in the government response systems during a public health emergency. The response and recovery systems must ensure that women are placed strategically in participating meaningfully in leadership, decision-making, and policy-making at all levels.

The bill also requires the government authorities to guarantee the availability and accessibility of social protection and safety nets, especially for the victims of genderbased violence.

Moreover, in recognition of the need to further protect our rural and indigenous women, local government units shall be required to provide them with sufficient and unimpeded access to health, legal, and socio-economic services.

For these reasons, the passage of this measure is earnestly requested.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1980

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

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR LEGARDA

Availing herself of the privilege hour, Senator Legarda delivered the following speech:

I rise on a matter of personal and collective privilege.

Mga kaibigan at kabaro, ilang taon ba natin uulit-ulitin ang mga panawagan natin tungkol sa pagiging patas sa pag-aalis ng diskriminasyon at sa pagpapantay ng mga pagkakataon?

How many ways can you say these buzz words and remain relevant? In communications, there is such a thing as desensitization. Eventually, individuals, and maybe even societies, zone out on the same things repeated year after year.

Thankfully, this year, the United Nations decided that the theme will be something rather fresh: "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality" was chosen for 2023.

Stephanie Sy, founder and CEO of Thinking Machines Data Science, Inc., and a 2019 TOWNS awardee when she was just 30 years old, marveled at how the world has transformed in just 10 years since she was 20 years old.

In her interview with *Tattler*, she says, "Tech is a huge disruptor. Most of the societal changes of the last 10 years have been because of tech. If I had to guess, I would say the next 10 will be about climate change."

I believe it will be women whose shackles have been cut that will innovate to carry us through the climate crisis. They will be the ones inventing the mechanisms and the means to keep the homes humming in the midst of calamities and challenges.

And yes, they, we, will find a way.

The intersection of these two disruptors cannot be overemphasized. Technology has increased connectivity among people in ways we could not have imagined. A solution can catch like wildfire, being adopted by millions of people once it spreads. But like any tool, it can be misused or blunted. What we may need to do is use technology for better policy-making – inform ourselves of conclusions to be derived from big data in order to surgically address the issues that beset us.

The world has changed so much that solutions that worked just a few years ago might no longer be on point. There are, of course, some prescriptions that remain the same:

- Reducing tobacco prevalence, which we have been able to do by a few percentage points over the last eight years or so;

- Increasing exclusive breastfeeding rates, which, while far from the 50% target of the World Health Organization (WHO), is already higher than previous rates; and
- Keeping girls in school is problematic due to the pandemic. But prior to it, it was mostly due to teenage pregnancy just discussed by our Deputy Minority Leader, averaging 200,000 per year.

Some issues might surprise us. When I first heard about unpaid or underpaid work from the UN Women, I realized that it was an issue that was invisible to us, to me.

It is difficult to imagine the true monetary value of the hands that patted your bottom as a child to put you to sleep; the ones that scoured gardens and markets for what to put on the table to eat; the feet that trudged kilometers to fetch water to cook or to drink; the grandmother that raised her grandkids; or the solo mother that raised her children singlehandedly.

I suppose monetizing this has not been foremost on the agenda partly because it is priceless. But that recognition of its pricelessness has prevented our society from addressing this gap with policy. The advocates for valuing unpaid work have come up with five "Rs" as our to-do list. We must:

- Recognize it;
- Reduce such labor by helping make such work easier and more efficient;
- Redistribute the burden by having others help;
- Reward such work; and, finally,
- Represent the sector and give them a voice.

The lesson to be learned here is from Albert Einstein, and I quote, "We cannot solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." Climate change and the pandemic have afforded us the opportunity to look for new solutions, to innovate, to frame our issues differently, and perhaps find the tipping point where we have not been looking before. Until we are able to think of our situation in an integrated manner, with feedback loops for every drawn scenario and using the digital tools available to us, we will be left with solutions that are tried and tested but too slow to actually matter.

Simple lamang po ang ibig sabihin niyan. Ang mga hamon ng ating panahon ay magkadudugtong at ang paglampas natin dito ay nangangailangan ng lakas ng lahat ng bisig at ng kolektibong kaisipan.

Kapag naiwan ang kababaihan sa tahaking ito ay hindi tayo makakarating sa kabila.

Happy International Women's Day.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva thanked and commended Senator Legarda for the advocacy embodied in her speech.

He noted that Republic Act 6949 designates every March 8 as National Women's Day, which is an opportune time to recognize the contributions of women to nation-building and to the country's social, cultural, economic, and political developments.

He further noted that according to the UN Women, the Philippines had access to only 48.3% of the indicators needed to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals from a gender perspective. Specifically, he cited gaps in key areas such as unpaid care and domestic work, as well as key labor market indicators such as the gender pay gap.

He added that the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 aims for a deep economic and social transformation to reinvigorate job creation and accelerate poverty reduction. He emphasized that the plan must be inclusive and must foster an environment that offers equal opportunities to everyone.

REMARKS OF THE CHAIR

Senate President Zubiri agreed with the observations of Senator Villanueva and expressed his appreciation for women who serve as beacons for society.

Senator Legarda thanked Senate President Zubiri and Senator Villanueva for acknowledging the unpaid and invaluable care and work that women give to their husbands, their children, the family, and the management of the household. She noted that female solo parents, in their case, singlehandedly bear the duties in raising her child or children.

She also expressed her appreciation to the women employees of the Secretariat who work until evening and go home after to take care of their families, saying that she could relate to their situation. Recalling her long years of being a legislator since 1998 when her two children were still at the age of eight and five, she admitted to have wept and felt the pain and regretted not being able to personally attend to her children in their younger years. She then advised the men to appreciate their wives and all the women employees of the Senate for working until late hours and still managing to take care of their families at home. Senate President Zubiri agreed, recognizing the importance and capabilities of women in society as he expressed his appreciation for his mother and his wife.

Senator Legarda also expressed her appreciation of Senator Hontiveros, given that the latter has been a solo parent since the death of her husband and had to raise her children alone into good adults, for her sacrifices, unpaid care, and undervalued work as a mother, which no amount of money could replace. Senate President Zubiri noted that the Senate in the 19th Congress has seven female Members, the most number of capable, strong, and competent women senators.

Senator Villanueva joined Senator Legarda in recognizing the immeasurable sacrifices that parents and mothers do for their children and for the nation. He also paid homage to his late mother who died almost three years ago.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 21 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1841

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of Senate Bill No. 1841 (Committee Report No. 21), entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION OF
PHILIPPINE CULTURAL HERITAGE THROUGH CULTURAL MAPPING,
AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10066, OTHERWISE
KNOWN AS THE NATIONAL CULTURAL HERITAGE ACT OF 2009.

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

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Legarda, sponsor of the measure, and Senator Pimentel for the continuation of his interpellation.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR PIMENTEL

(Continuation)

Senator Pimentel stated that apparently, Senate Bill No. 1841 intended to amend RA 10066 more comprehensively than the initial intention of simply introducing the cultural mapping concept.

Upon his examination of the bill, he noted that it actually included four subjects that were already beyond cultural mapping. However, he opined that it would be possible to accommodate

all four subjects if the Body would change the focus of the measure, which would require the scrutiny of the substance of each new concept. He then enumerated the following:

1. From the six categories of cultural property as stated in RA 10066, the bill adopted the grade level style—Grade I, II and III.
2. There is an additional power given to the appropriate cultural agency to *motu proprio* declare a cultural property as belonging under the Grade I or Grade II level.
3. The Grade I or Grade II level property shall still be entitled to the same privileges stated in Section 7 of RA 10066 (Section 3 of Senate Bill No. 1841) paragraphs (a) to (c). In addition, the bill proposed to amend paragraph (d) and insert the new paragraph (E) which stated that:
 - “(d) PRIORITY GOVERNMENT PROTECTION FOR ALL NATIONAL CULTURAL TREASURES OR NATIONAL HISTORICAL LANDMARK SITES OR MONUMENTS IN times of armed conflict, natural disasters, and other exceptional events that endanger the cultural heritage of the country.”
 - “(E) PRIORITY PROTECTION FROM MODIFICATION OR DEMOLITION RESULTING FROM GOVERNMENT PROJECTS. GOVERNMENT PROJECTS THAT MAY POTENTIALLY AFFECT THE INTEGRITY OF ANY GRADE I OR GRADE II LEVEL PROPERTY MUST HAVE THE COMMISSION’S APPROVAL AT THEIR PLANNING STAGES PRIOR TO THEIR IMPLEMENTATION.
4. The bill introduced the following new terms: visual impact, visual sightline, visual corridor, and line of sight.

In reply, Senator Legarda stated that the protection from modification or demolition was already stipulated in RA 10066 and that Senate Bill No. 1841 simply changed the nomenclature. She also pointed out that the implementing rules and regulations of the 2009 National Heritage Act already included the two proposed additional privileges for a cultural property; hence, both were already being implemented. She said that Senate Bill No. 1841 would only strengthen the proposed provisions, which were already being implemented, by amending the law.

Senator Legarda reasoned that the purpose of including the protection of visual sightlines, core, and buffer zones in the amending bill was to prevent the Torre De Manila issue from recurring because of the lack of an enabling legislation that would protect the sightlines of selected monuments.

Senator Pimentel stated that he would later be interpellating sequentially on each of the four subjects and would later ask for the number of selected monuments whose visual sightlines should be covered.

Adverting to Senator Legarda’s statement that the proposed provisions in the bill were already being implemented, Senator Pimentel asked for the cultural agencies’ legal basis for the said implementation. Senator Legarda replied that the bill was merely specifying and clarifying what has already been included in the IRR of RA 10066, such as the visual sightlines and the cultural property grade levels. She added that Presidential Decree No. 260 also included the *motu proprio* declaration and some of the other proposed provisions in the bill.

Senator Legarda further stated that existing laws, RA 4846 and PD 260, in particular, already grant the NCCA and the NHCP the power to declare national cultural treasures, important cultural properties, national historical landmarks, national historical sites, and national historical monuments without a request from the property owner. She pointed out that the proposed provision will also grant the other cultural agencies to declare important properties even without the consent of the owner in order to achieve the spirit of the law, which was to protect the nation’s heritage from diminishment.

She continued that according to the NHCP, it only recently used the power to *motu proprio* declare a cultural property as Grade I or II level during instances that such properties were in danger or threat, such as in the following cases: the Rizal Memorial Stadium declared as the national historical landmark in 2017 amidst new possible sale and subsequent demolition, and the Burnham Park declared as a historic site. She pointed out that the two instances were some of the examples wherein RA 10066 and PD 260 already granted NCCA and the NHCP the power to declare the levels of importance of a cultural property. She added that Senate Bill No. 1841 would be amending the existing laws in order to provide more clarity.

Stressing that a threat to a cultural property is a threat to the culture that would be mapped, Senator Legarda said, for instance, that the demolition of a stadium where a mall would be constructed and the conversion of the Burnham Park into a parking lot would affect cultural mapping because sightlines and buffer zones of cultural properties are part of the culture of the place or LGU, and the history of the place and its people.

Senator Pimentel said that it would not be advisable to simply restate something that was already provided under the existing laws. He inferred from Senator Legarda's answer that the provision on the *motu proprio* declaration was not a mere restatement of the PD 260 provisions, which covers shrines, monuments, and landmarks but was actually an amendment to it and an expansion of the power of the cultural agencies.

As to the rationale for the expansion of powers of cultural agencies, Senator Legarda replied that there has been a gap in RA 4846 (The Cultural Properties Preservation and Protection Act) and PD 260 when it granted the NCCA and the NHCP the *motu proprio* declaration. She said that there was a need to expand the NCCA's powers in order to allow all cultural agencies concerned to protect properties under their respective jurisdictions. For instance, she said that the National Archives reported that many archival materials were under threat and that it would be necessary to grant them the power to declare archival materials as national treasures or important cultural properties so these would be protected. She explained that without such power, the National Archives would have to ask protection from the NHCP, which would reply that the matter was archival and not under the NHCP jurisdiction. She said that the expansion of power would clarify that cultural agencies under the NCCA would empower them to declare a cultural property under their jurisdiction as an important cultural treasure.

Thereupon, Senator Pimentel read the amendment, to wit:

F. THE APPROPRIATE CULTURAL AGENCY MAY *MOTU PROPRIO* DECLARE A CULTURAL PROPERTY AS FALLING UNDER GRADE I OR GRADE II LEVEL.

Senator Legarda stated that the NCCA merely wanted more precise language to avoid confusion. She stated that if the proviso would be a contentious issue, the committee would opt to maintain the status quo, with agencies declaring as stipulated in the PD. She explained that the NCCA added the provision for more clarity. She opined, however, that even without the amendment, the NCCA would still be able to fulfill the current law's mandate. She added that the bill could stand without the new provision.

Senator Pimentel surmised that if the proviso was not pursued, the NCAA would follow the current procedure of notifying the affected property owner through a petition. Senator Legarda confirmed that the NCCA's current procedure would be to notify the property owner.

Senator Pimentel believed that any shortcuts provided by the PDs were deemed null and void if not explicitly or implicitly repealed by subsequent legislation, particularly RA 10066. Senator Legarda stated that if a historical structure exists, the NCCA will declare it as such, and the property owner will be notified after the declaration as required by the current law.

Senator Pimentel stated that the current law provided a procedure whereby affected parties could be better assured that notice requirements were met; otherwise, affected parties would be unaware that their properties were already covered. Senator Legarda conceded that the current procedure would be adhered to and the amendment would be stricken out because she would want the measure to be enacted into law.

Asked on the rationale for the amendment, Senator Legarda stated that the NCCA requested such power. She reiterated that the committee merely wanted to provide clarity because currently, only the NCCA has the authority to inform property owners following a declaration; consequently, they wished to empower other agencies within the NCCA. She added that the NCAA wanted to be stringent due to rampant demolition and circumvention of laws. In addition, she stated that the committee believed the law to be insufficient or ambiguous, which is why, since the law was enacted in 2012, much of the heritage sites have deteriorated. She admitted that she would pursue the amendment and that would have to be strict, citing the government's strict procedures. She cited that fact that the Rizal Memorial Stadium was declared *motu proprio* for their actions under PD 260. She said that the exercise of *motu proprio* was used sparingly, and only when there was already a commotion or an outrage in the Board, which has so many members, including senators and representatives from Congress. In addition, she stated that out of courtesy, if the owner was private, they were typically notified. She admitted that she would rather err on the side of being strict because she has witnessed in recent years how much cultural heritage has been destroyed by those who do not care about their preservation. She assumed that the *motu proprio* provision would be utilized for public structures and not for private old homes or houses.

Senator Pimentel remarked that the measure was unclear on the subject. Senator Legarda stated that she would welcome an amendment from Senator Pimentel to assist the NCAA in dealing with public structures. She stated, however, that she would yield if it was deemed unsettling and would abide by the existing law.

Senator Pimentel noted that the existing law specifies a number of days for the process to move forward. He proposed being strict with the number of days if the motions for extension are denied. He stated that the essence of following the procedural due process would be the notice and hearing.

Asked about the origin of Grades I, II, and III, Senator Legarda responded that the grading was contained in the old law's implementing rules and regulations (IRR). She stated that it was an original concept in the Philippines done in the 2009 IRR to grade properties based on their highest significance and to include other DepEd properties inscribed by UNESCO. She explained that grades were important for determining which issues were significant to local governments and which were significant at the national level.

Senator Pimentel noted that the number of categories decreased from six to three grade levels, and that some categories were listed per grade level. He then inquired whether the grade levels were adjusted to align with the IRR or whether the law was amended to reflect the IRR. Replying in the affirmative, Senator Legarda stated that the 2009 law was good but broad in scope, and that the IRR provided more details, including the grading from 10 years ago.

Asked if the IRR had ever been challenged before a court, Senator Legarda replied in the negative. She acknowledged that the committee missed some categories when the law was enacted in 2009, which was why the amendment was being proposed to complete the grading.

Senator Pimentel noted that the enumeration of cultural properties in the three grade levels exceeded the six original categories, thereby necessitating a definition of some of the new phrases, names, or entries that were introduced in the grade levels. He also asked about the use of the phrase "presumed to be important cultural properties."

Senator Legarda stated that all of the terms mentioned were not part of the current law. She stated that she has a whole list of definition of terms which she would propose during the period of committee amendments.

Senator Pimentel stated that all the terms needing clarification or definition should be defined in order for the law to be understandable; otherwise, it would be deemed unconstitutional for vagueness. He stated that he does not want the Nineteenth Congress to pass a law assuming that the terms have been understood. Senator Legarda assured that the committee would introduce clear definitions of terms.

Senator Pimentel cited the definition of cultural mapping in the measure as difficult to comprehend. He then read the definition on page 4, line 17, to wit:

“CULTURAL MAPPING” SHALL REFER TO THE APPROACHES EMPLOYED TO IDENTIFY, DETERMINE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF, RECORD, AND USE CULTURAL MAPPING RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE PURPOSE OF BUILDING AND EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES. IT IS A SYSTEMATIC SET OF ACTIVITIES AND METHODOLOGICAL PROCESSES FOR EXPLORING, DISCOVERING, DOCUMENTING, EXAMINING, ANALYZING, INTERPRETING, PRESENTING, AND SHARING INFORMATION RELATED TO PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES, SOCIETIES, PLACES, AND THEIR MATERIAL PRODUCTS, PRACTICES, AND NARRATIVES.

Senator Pimentel opined that including the term in the definition of terms would result in a looping definition. Senator Legarda stated that it merely mandates the need for inventory, do a database, study, research or documentation of audio, visuals, written, tangible, intangible, movable or immovable heritage in order to empower communities.

To address the issue of redundancy, Senator Legarda stated that she was open to substituting “cultural mapping resources” with “local resources” in defining cultural mapping. She stated that the new term would capture the essence of the item described in the definition, which, in its simplest form, are culture mapping resources. In response, Senator Pimentel acknowledged that it is a complex subject matter, advising the Body not to assume that those who are expected to comply with the law will understand it at first glance. In this regard, he emphasized the need for further refinement of the measure.

Senator Legarda stated that she would be pleased to receive the individual amendment proposed by Senator Pimentel to simplify the definition. Senator Pimentel stated that he would review the transcript of stenographic notes, examining each word used to describe culture mapping, in order to avoid using the same term in reference to what was being defined. He then proposed that the Body make it a rule when defining terms in proposed measures.

On his third point regarding cultural property privileges, Senator Pimentel inquired whether the section of the bill concerning priority protection from modification or demolition resulting from government projects merely restated an existing law. He then cited the aforementioned portion of the bill, to wit: “Government projects that may potentially affect the integrity of any grade one or grade two level property must have the commission’s approval at their planning stages prior to their implementation.”

Senator Legarda stated that the item in question could already be found in the existing law, Republic Act No.10066, Section 32(e):

“The Department of Public Works and Highways which shall be responsible in undertaking major infrastructure projects specifically in the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of national roads and bridges as they impact on heritage structures or aspects of heritage conservation.”

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Pimentel, the session was suspended.

It was 7:10 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 7:41 p.m., the session was resumed with Senate President Zubiri presiding.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR PIMENTEL

(Continuation)

Senator Pimentel sought clarification on the proposed provision which he believed did not apply to the situation. Senator Legarda replied that the NCCA would need to be consulted because it is involved in the initial stages of the project, just as the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report guides Department of Public Works and Highways projects.

Relative thereto, Senator Pimentel suggested that they revisit Section 7(e), which reads as follows:

“Priority Protection from Modification or Demolition Resulting from Government Projects. – Government projects that may potentially affect the integrity of any Grade I or Grade II level property must have the commission’s approval at their planning stages prior to their implementation.”

He expressed concern that the wording suggests that the action goes beyond consultation or coordination and could be a new power granted to the commission, especially since the word “must” implies a sense of obligation. In response, Senator Legarda proposed rephrasing the provision to convey the idea that the commission should be consulted during the planning stage.

Senator Pimentel advised against restating the existing law, as doing so could alter its meaning or intent. He added that they should not grant the commission new power which is tantamount to a veto power over government projects. He pointed out that the existing law already provides a procedure for the commission to issue a cease and desist order to stop or to slow down a wayward project.

Senator Legarda stated that the provision is not found in RA 10066. She recalled that when she was chairperson of the Committee on Finance, a special provision was placed in the General Appropriations Act. She said that the provision has been in place since 2015 – for GAA 2023, Section 39, states that:

“Protection of Built Heritage, Cultural Properties and Cultural Landscapes. Alteration, renovation or demolition of government buildings and open spaces declared or presumed to be important cultural properties by government cultural agencies concerned shall be undertaken only upon prior approval of the said government cultural agencies and proper consultation with stakeholders and cultural groups to be administered by the NCCA. This includes the protection of the sight line with regard to built heritage, cultural properties, and cultural landscapes.

“In addition, the DPWH shall be responsible in the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of national roads and bridges as they impact on heritage structures or aspects of heritage conservation pursuant to RA 10066.”

Senator Pimentel remarked that the special provision included in the GAA is effective for every calendar year. Senator Legarda believed that the committee does not have to introduce the amendment because it has been included in the annual GAA for the past eight years.

Asked if it has not been challenged in the court, Senator Legarda replied in the negative.

Senator Pimentel thanked Senator Legarda for raising the matter. He stated that he will revisit the special provision during budget deliberations.

On whether he would support incorporating the special provision placed into the proposed measure so that it would be more effective than merely including it annually in the GAA, Senator Pimentel replied in the affirmative, but that the language would have to be revised.

Senator Legarda stated that an amendment to the provision would be welcome at the proper time.

Senator Pimentel stated that he would suspend his interpellation so that the Body could study the terms “visual sight line,” “visual corridor” and/or “line of sight,” and “visual impact.” He said that the terms have distinct meanings, so the Body will have to discuss and distinguish between them.

Senator Legarda thanked Senator Pimentel for his intervention, adding that she looked forward to discussing the language in question in the next session.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

Senate President Zubiri thanked Senator Pimentel for highlighting the issues and for making the Members aware of the potential constitutional and legal concerns regarding the proposed measure’s ambiguous language and assignment of obligation to another entity.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva stated that the Body has learned a great deal from the discussions as issues were hammered out, and that there was a consensus in principle and in spirit.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1841

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

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

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

RESOLUTIONS

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 536, entitled

RESOLUTION URGING THE COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, INNOVATION, AND FUTURES THINKING TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE STATUS OF HUMAN RESOURCES FOR HEALTH (HRH) IN THE PHILIPPINES

Introduced by Senators Cayetano (P) and Villanueva

To the Committee on Committee on Sustainable Development Goals, Innovation and Futures Thinking

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 537, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND CLIMATE CHANGE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ESCALATING OIL SPILL FROM THE SUNKEN TANKER MT PRINCESS EMPRESS THAT IS CAUSING SURMOUNTING DAMAGES TO THE MARINE ECOSYSTEM AND BIODIVERSITY, AMONG ITS OTHER ADVERSE EFFECTS

Introduced by Senator Villar (C)

To the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change

CREATION OF SUBCOMMITTEE

Pursuant to Section 18 of the *Rules of the Senate*, and on behalf of Senator Poe, chairperson of the Committee on Economic Affairs, Senator Villanueva manifested that the Committee had created a subcommittee to hear Senate Bill No. 158, or the Comprehensive Infrastructure Development Masterplan, with Senator Ejercito as the designated chairperson.

CHANGE OF REFERRAL

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body changed the referral of the following measures:

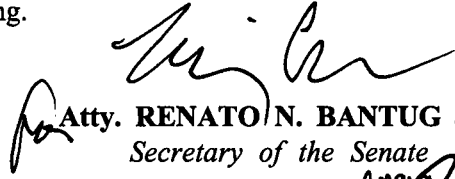
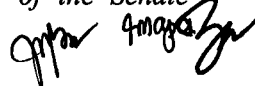
1. Senate Bill No. 122 (*Multi-Species Marine Hatchery in the Municipality of Agusan del Sur*) from the Committee on Rules to the Committees on Agriculture, Food, and Agrarian Reform; and Finance; and
2. Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 488 and 492 (*Defense of Former President Rodrigo Roa Duterte in Investigation on Prosecution by ICC*) from the Committee on Rules to the Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

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, March 13, 2023.

It was 7:54 p.m.

I hereby certify to the correctness of the foregoing.


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


Approved on March 13, 2023