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SESSION NO. 64
Tuesday, March 21, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

At 3:30 p.m., the Senate President, Hon. Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri, called the session to order.

PRAYER

Sen. Joel Villanueva led the prayer, to wit:

Heavenly Father, we thank and praise You for this wonderful time and opportunity You have given to all of us to be a channel of Your blessing to millions of our people from Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao, and all over the world.

We pray that as we start our session today, we ask for Your blessing from heaven. Let Your wisdom from heaven be upon all of us, that Your treasury of wisdom guide us in deliberating important measures for our people and our nation.

We pray that You bless every member of the Senate, every family represented here in the Senate, all our employees, our *kababayan* from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Encapsulate them with Your glory and embrace them with Your love and gladness, and unspeakable joy that You can only give them, O Lord.

We pray that today would be a memorable day, a fruitful day, so that we will be able to lift up the lives of our beloved people from Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao, and even our OFWs.

We love You and praise You as we carefully give back to You all the glory, all the honor, and all the praise. In Jesus’ Mighty Name, we pray.

Amen.

ROLL CALL

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

Angara, S.	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. E.	Tolentino, F. T. N.
Gatchalian, W.	Tulfo, R. T.
Go, C. L. T.	Villanueva, J.
Hontiveros, R.	Villar, C. A.
Lapid, M. L. M.	Zubiri, J. M. F.

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

Senator Cayetano (A) was on official business to attend engagements with policy experts and scholars at the National University of Singapore from March 20 to 23, as indicated in the March 20, 2023 letter of his chief of staff.

Senator Villar (M) was also on official business as part of the Philippine delegation to the Sixth United Nations Special Thematic Session on Water and Disasters which would be held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on March 20 to 28, as indicated in the March 21, 2023 letter of his acting chief of staff.

CONFEREES

Upon nomination by Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the following were designated to constitute the Senate panel in the Bicameral Conference Committee on the disagreeing provisions of Senate Bill No. 1849 and House Bill No. 6517 (*Strengthening Professionalism in the Armed Forces of the Philippines*): Senator Estrada as chairperson, and Senators Angara, Dela Rosa, Go, Marcos, and Tolentino as members for the Majority; and Senator Pimentel III for the Minority.

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. 63 (March 20, 2023) and considered it approved.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

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

- Secretary Rex Gatchalian of the DSWD with Asec. Elaine Folarcona;
- Governor Jose Enriquez “Joel” Miraflores of Aklan and Mayor Miguel Miraflores of Ibahay, Aklan;
- Congresswoman Maria Vanessa Aumentado of the Second District of Bohol;
- Mayor Ronald Cosico of Paete, Laguna and Carlos Miguel Cosico;
- Mayor Patrick Go of Siniloan, Laguna;
- Mayor Cyrus Kalibo of Larena, Siquijor;

- Mr. Larry Apolinario, the champion of the First Philippine Trail Running Association;
- the Ten Accomplished Youth Organizations (TAYO) accompanied by Rein Esolana, the Executive Director of TAYO Awards Foundation;
- Gian Pineda, the program officer of Coca-Cola Foundation Philippines; and
- Participants to the Foreign Scholarship Training Program on Cyber Security at the University of Cincinnati lead by Major Romero from US Air Force.

Senate President Zubiri welcomed the guests to the Senate.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

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

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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

House Bill No. 7397, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING IN THE CITY OF LIGAO, PROVINCE OF ALBAY, A COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE OF THE BICOL UNIVERSITY, TO BE KNOWN AS THE BICOL UNIVERSITY-COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

House Bill No. 7398, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE SOUTHERN LUZON STATE UNIVERSITY-CATANAUAN CAMPUS-COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

and House Bill No. 7412, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COLLEGE OF MEDICINE IN THE VISAYAS STATE UNIVERSITY LOCATED IN THE CITY OF BAYBAY, PROVINCE OF LEYTE, TO BE KNOWN AS THE VISAYAS STATE UNIVERSITY-COLLEGE OF MEDICINE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

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

House Bill No. 7322, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING A PARCEL OF LAND LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF NUEVA VALENCIA IN THE PROVINCE OF GUIMARAS, A PROTECTED AREA, WITH THE CATEGORY OF NATURAL PARK UNDER THE NATIONAL INTEGRATED PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM, TO BE REFERRED TO AS THE TAKLONG AND TANDONG GROUP OF ISLANDS NATURAL PARK, PROVIDING FOR ITS MANAGEMENT, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

House Bill No. 7358, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY FORESTS IN BARANGAYS BALUBAL, CUGMAN, F.S. CATANICO, INDAHAG, TABLON, AND AGUSAN, IN THE SECOND DISTRICT OF CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY, PROVINCE OF MISAMIS ORIENTAL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”;

House Bill No. 7359, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN ARBORETUM IN THE PREMISES OF THE COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES OFFICE (CENRO) IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KOLAMBUGAN, LANA DEL NORTE, TO BE KNOWN AS THE KOLAMBUGAN ARBORETUM, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

and House Bill No. 7360, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN ARBORETUM IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TAGOLOAN, LANA DEL NORTE, TO BE KNOWN AS THE MIGHTY CAVE PARK ARBORETUM, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

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

House Bill No. 7377, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING PINSAL FALLS, LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN NICOLAS, PROVINCE OF PANGASINAN, A TOURISM DESTINATION

To the Committees on Tourism; Public Works; and Finance

House Bill No. 7380, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING DIKET FALLS, LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF UMINGAN, PROVINCE OF PANGASINAN, A TOURISM DESTINATION;

House Bill No. 7388, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING HULUGA CAVES 1 & 2, LOCATED IN BARANGAY INDAHAG, CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY, PROVINCE OF MISAMIS ORIENTAL, AS ECOTOURISM SITES;

House Bill No. 7389, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING KALAPAT CAVE, LOCATED IN BARANGAY DANSOLIHON, CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY, PROVINCE OF MISAMIS ORIENTAL, AN ECOTOURISM SITE;

House Bill No. 7390, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING KWEBA DE ORO, LOCATED IN BARANGAY BAYANGA, CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY, PROVINCE OF MISAMIS ORIENTAL, AN ECOTOURISM SITE;

House Bill No. 7391, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING LANGAG CAVE, LOCATED IN BARANGAY DANSOLIHON, CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY, PROVINCE OF MISAMIS ORIENTAL, AN ECOTOURISM SITE;

House Bill No. 7392, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING MACAHAMBUS CAVE, LOCATED IN BARANGAY BAYANGA, CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY, PROVINCE OF MISAMIS ORIENTAL, AN ECOTOURISM SITE;

House Bill No. 7394, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING BOLUTOHAN CAVE, LOCATED IN BARANGAY INDAHAG, CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY, PROVINCE OF MISAMIS ORIENTAL, AN ECOTOURISM SITE;

House Bill No. 7395, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING CALABERA CAVE, LOCATED IN BARANGAY INDAHAG, CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY, PROVINCE OF MISAMIS ORIENTAL, AN ECOTOURISM SITE;

and House Bill No. 7399, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING MAMBUAYA CAVE, LOCATED IN BARANGAY MAMBUAYA, CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY, PROVINCE OF MISAMIS ORIENTAL, AN ECOTOURISM SITE.

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

House Bill No. 7316, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE BAGUIO CITY HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

To the Committees on Basic Education; Culture and the Arts; and Finance

House Bill No. 7406, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING SECTIONS 23, 50, 52 AND 50 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11689 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "REVISED CHARTER OF THE CITY OF BAGUIO."

To the Committee on Local Government

BILL ON FIRST READING

Senate Bill No. 2022, entitled

AN ACT ENSURING THAT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES UNDER THE K TO 12 PROGRAM ARE EQUIPPED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE, TRAINING

AND SKILLS DEMANDED IN THE LABOR MARKET, ENHANCING THEIR EMPLOYABILITY AND COMPETITIVENESS, CREATING THE BATANG MAGALING COUNCILS TO STRENGTHEN MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT FOR THEIR EMPLOYMENT, ALLOWING FULL DEDUCTION OF TRAINING EXPENSES INCURRED FOR THEIR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Gatchalian

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

RESOLUTION

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 553, entitled

A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY IN AID OF LEGISLATION ON THE ALLEGED ANOMALIES, MISMANAGEMENT, AND CORRUPT PRACTICES PREVALENT IN THE STATE-RUN PHILIPPINE TELEVISION NETWORK, INC. (PTV4) INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO NON-INCREASE OF EMPLOYEE SALARIES FOR THE PAST 15 YEARS, IRREGULAR COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MISUSE OF FUNDS

Introduced by Senator Tulfo

To the Committees on Accountability of Public Officers and Investigations; and Public Information and Mass Media

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee Report No. 59, prepared and submitted jointly by the Committees on Trade, Commerce and Entrepreneurship; Economic Affairs; and Finance, on Senate Bill No. 2021 with Senators Angara, Revilla Jr., and Villar (M) as authors thereof, entitled

AN ACT TO INSTITUTIONALIZE THE SHARED SERVICE FACILITIES (SSF) PROJECT FOR MICRO, SMALL, AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (MSMES) BY AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6977 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE MAGNA CARTA FOR SMALL ENTERPRISES AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9501 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE MAGNA CARTA FOR MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES,

recommending its approval in substitution of Senate Bill Nos. 761 and 1897.

Sponsor: Senator Angara

To the Calendar for Ordinary Business

Committee Report No. 60, submitted jointly by the Committees on Tourism; Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change; and Finance, on Senate Bill No. 1615, introduced by Senator Angara, entitled

AN ACT RECOGNIZING THE MUNICIPALITY OF BALER IN THE PROVINCE
OF AURORA AS THE "BIRTHPLACE OF PHILIPPINE SURFING,"

recommending its approval with amendments, taking into consideration House Bill No. 5961

Sponsor: Senator Angara

To the Calendar for Ordinary Business

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

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 6

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, with the consent of the Body, the Body considered Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 6, entitled

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION GRANTING CONSENT TO SENATE PRESIDENT
PRO TEMPORE LOREN LEGARDA TO ACCEPT THE "COMMENDATORE"
TO THE ORDER OF MERIT OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC CONFERRED
UPON HER BY THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC.

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

The Chair recognized Senate President Zubiri for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

In sponsoring Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 6, Senate President Zubiri delivered the following speech:

I am proud to sponsor Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 6, granting our consent to our Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda to accept a very well-deserved "Commendatore" to the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

Sen. Loren Legarda has long been one of our best ambassadors constant in her efforts to put a spotlight on the wonders of our country and the excellence of our people. She has that program "Dayaw," which I watch every midnight.

Having an opportunity to meet foreign dignitaries with her, I can attest to her matchless ability to forge meaningful ties with our foreign counterparts. She is so adept at disabusing them of any belief that we are fledging country with little to offer. Instead, leaving them excited about the opportunities for cultural and economic exchange with our country.

The Italian Republic's conferment of the Commendatore is a much deserved award recognizing our vital role in strengthening Philippine-Italian relations particularly through our successful campaign to make the way for Philippine artists in Venice Biennale. She also spearheads the people to people interaction between our two countries.

More than just a recognition of Sen. Loren Legarda's excellence, this award is also a testament to the Italian Republic's deep respect for our country and the importance with which we regard our diplomatic relations.

And so, we are proud to grant our consent to Sen. Loren Legarda's Commendatore Award and we congratulate her for this honor.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO (P)

Senator Cayetano (P) stated that Senator Legarda has always set a gold standard and had represented the Senate not just in the country but across the world. She said that Senator Legarda became a household name among the climate change advocates because she has been very active in promoting it. She added that Senator Legarda is a politician who genuinely walks the talk, especially on concerns about climate change because she was well-versed about it.

Senator Cayetano (P) stated that she wanted to work with Senator Legarda who does not pretend to be an expert on everything because she knew whom to call to ask for inputs and to clear issues not just on climate change but the environment as a whole, as well as on foreign relations. She expressed hope that Senator Legarda, who holds a master's degree in national security, would continue to be an example to the other members as she was to her, and that the senators would continue to learn from Senator Legarda's experience and expertise.

Finally, Senator Cayetano (P) stated that it was a great opportunity for the Senate to recognize a female stateswoman among its members, as she thanked Senator Legarda for being an inspiration to her fellow senators, and for all the work she did for the country.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECHES

At the instance of Senators Go and Dela Rosa, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following cosponsorship speeches on Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 6 into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

By Senator Go

I rise today to manifest my support to grant consent to our esteemed colleague, Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda, to accept prestigious award conferred upon her by the Italian Republic.

The "Commendatore" or Commander rank of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic is one of Italy's highest honors given to individuals who have distinguished themselves in various fields of endeavor.

Senator Legarda has been a tireless champion of environmental protection, climate action, cultural preservation, and parliamentary diplomacy throughout her illustrious career in public service.

She has been instrumental in promoting cooperation on arts, culture, trade, economy, education, health, security, and other areas of mutual benefit.

This award is not only a testament to Senator Legarda's achievements but also an affirmation of our country's commitment to uphold our values and principles as a nation.

Therefore, I urge this august chamber to grant consent to our dear colleague, Senator Loren Legarda, to accept the recognition, and commend her for bringing honor and pride to our country and our Senate.

By Senator Dela Rosa

It is my honor to cosponsor Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 6, granting consent to Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda to accept the *commendatore* to the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic conferred upon her by the Italian Republic.

Writer Suzy Kassem states: "Choose a leader who will build bridges, not walls." All too often, the picture of leadership we inherit is the protective kind. *Hinahanap natin ang lider na matibay ang loob at ang paninindigan na kaya tayong ipagtanggol laban sa lahat ng uri ng banta at pananakot*, leaders who shield their members from those who threaten the stability of the group. And yes, this is good for us. However, while it is good to be protected, I think it is far better to know when to tear down walls in the name of genuine unity.

Thank God that in our day and age, we have been introduced to the brand of leadership of our Senate President Pro Tempore, Senator Loren Legarda. By her unwavering example of diplomacy, participation, and commitment, she is now being given the award of "Commendatore" to the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

Indeed, Senator Legarda continues to show us that there is so much that individuals and entire nations can gain from building, not burning bridges.

ADOPTION OF SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 6

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 6, was adopted by the Body, subject to style.

COAUTHORS

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, all the senators were made coauthors of Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 6.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 9

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 9, entitled

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION GRANTING CONSENT TO SENATE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE LOREN LEGARDA TO ACCEPT THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN) BIODIVERSITY HEROES AWARD CONFERRED UPON HER BY THE ASEAN,

taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution No. 442.

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

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Villanueva, sponsor of the resolution.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

In sponsoring Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 9, Senator Villanueva delivered the following speech:

It is my honor to sponsor Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 9, granting consent to Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda to accept the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Biodiversity Heroes Award conferred upon her.



Ako po ay isang buhay na patotoo kung paanong iginagalang, tinitingala, at minamahal ang ating kasamahan dito sa Senado, Sen. Loren Legarda. Whenever we go abroad, IPU man ito o anumang usapin tungkol sa anumang bagay na pinahahalagahan ng bawat asosasyon, sa Asya man o sa buong mundo, ang sabi nga nila ay "legend" na si Sen. Loren Legarda. And we are just so very proud of her because she never gets tired mentoring her colleagues, especially this Representation.

Another award is here, and this award is designed to recognize individuals from ASEAN member-states, who significantly contribute to biodiversity conservation in their countries and the region. Sen. Loren Legarda was conferred with the ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes for the Philippines for her significant contributions to biodiversity efforts in the country.

We recognize and commend her for her continuous and consistent efforts in championing landmark environmental laws including the "Ecological Solid Waste Management Act," "Philippine Clean Air Act," "Clean Water Act," "Renewable Energy Act," "Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act," and the "Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act," among other measures.

Maubos ang oras natin dito sa Senado kung iisa-isahin natin ang kontribusyon ni Sen. Loren Legarda. But for me, as a colleague, as a friend, and as a mentor, ang masasabi ko, ang pinakamagandang legasiya na iiwan niya sa atin ay iyong pagiging Ate Loren, Tita Loren natin dito sa Senado. Hindi nagbabago ang kaniyang pananaw, ang kaniyang mga paninindigan, at kaniyang pagnanasang masiguro na ang bawat isa na nakapaligid sa kaniya ay natututo at napahahalagahan ang kaniyang trabaho dito sa bulwagang ito.

Thus, we urge our dear colleagues to adopt this concurrent resolution granting consent to Sen. Loren Legarda to receive the award to be conferred upon her by the ASEAN, pursuant to Article IX, Section 8 of the 1987 Constitution.

REMARKS OF THE CHAIR

In agreeing that Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda is the Philippines' best ambassador to every part of the world, Senator Ejercito said that he witnessed how the European Parliament members admired the rare combination of beauty and brains found in Sen. Legarda, besides being a staunch environmental advocate.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECHES

At the instance of Senators Go and Dela Rosa, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following cosponsorship speeches on Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 9 into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

By Senator Go

I rise today to manifest my support to grant consent to Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda to accept recognition and award from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes Award is a recognition given by ASEAN to individuals who have made significant contributions to biodiversity conservation and advocacy in their respective countries and in the region.

Senator Legarda has authored numerous landmark laws that have advanced our national interests and welfare on various fronts, such as ecological solid waste management, clean air and water, renewable energy, disaster risk reduction and management, wildlife conservation and protection, among others.

She has been a role model for many Filipinos who aspire to make a positive difference in our society and in our world.

This shall serve as an inspiration for us all to continue working together for the common good of our people and our planet.

I urge this august chamber to grant consent to our dear colleague, Senator Loren Legarda, to accept the award and commend her for bringing honor and pride to our country and our Senate.

By Senator Dela Rosa

I rise once again, this time to cosponsor Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 9, granting consent to Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda to accept the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Biodiversity Heroes Award conferred upon her by the ASEAN.

May isang awitin po ang bandang Asin na ang pamagat ay Masdan Mo Ang Kapaligiran— “Lahat ng bagay na narito sa lupa, Biyayang galing sa Diyos kahit no’ng ika’y wala pa. Ingatan natin at ‘wag nang sirain pa, ‘Pagkat pag Kanyang binawi, tayo’y mawawala na.” This song was written and performed many years ago, way back when I was around 16 years old and yet, its message still rings true.

Environmentally, we stand at a very precarious position. On one hand, the Philippines can still boast of being a biological storehouse, being home to what may be considered the greatest concentration of unique species per unit area in the whole world. On the other hand, we are also quick to threaten this biodiversity, with our pollution, trafficking, and unsustainable practices.

I said it in the previous speech, and allow me to repeat: Thank God for the leadership of Sen. Loren Legarda. Today what we truly need is a leader who will fight for the preservation, conservation, and enrichment of our natural resources. *Tunay na naisapuso ni Sen. Loren na ang lahat ng mayroon tayo ay biyaya ng Diyos sa atin kaya nararapat lamang na ating pangalagaan.*

With that, I humbly congratulate Sen. Loren on this well-deserved Biodiversity Hero Award, and I wish that more leaders will follow her lead.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

In expressing support to Senate Concurrent Resolution Nos. 6 and 9, Senator Hontiveros stated that the word “commendatore” (commander) refers to a member of an Italian honorary order of chivalry who ranks next above an officer and next below a grand officer, and “chivalry” refers to the medieval knightly system with its religious, moral, and social code, or combination of qualities expected of an ideal knight, especially courage, honor, courtesy, justice, and readiness to help the weak. She said that as a fellow woman-leader, Senator Legarda truly lived in accordance to the greatness given to her by the Italian Republic.

ADOPTION OF SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 9

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 9, taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution No. 442, was adopted by the Body, subject to style.

COAUTHORS

Senator Villanueva manifested that all senators were coauthors of Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 9.

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

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR LEGARDA

Senator Legarda expressed gratitude to the Members of the Chamber, especially Senate President Zubiri for sponsoring the resolution; Senators Villanueva, Go and Dela Rosa for their cosponsorship speeches; and Senators Cayetano (P) and Hontiveros for their manifestations, saying that the latter were women exemplars not only in the Philippines but worldwide. Even being the

most senior senator, she admitted that as a lifelong learner, she still learned from each and every Member who inspired her to work harder.

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 547

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 547, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING LARRY APOLINARIO FOR HIS EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE AND BECOMING THE CHAMPION OF THE FIRST PHILIPPINE TRAIL RUNNING ASSOCIATION (PHILTRA) NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS.

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

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Legarda for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR LEGARDA

In sponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 547, Senator Legarda delivered the following speech accompanied by a slide show presentation:

It is with deep sense of pride and honor to sponsor the resolution congratulating and commending Larry Apolinario for his exceptional performance and for becoming the champion of the First Philippine Trail Running Association (PHILTRA) National Championships.

I would like to congratulate Larry Apolinario, a proud fellow Antiqueño, and the 2023 champion of the first-ever Philippine Trail Running Association National Championships. The Philippine Trail Running Association National Championships was held on February 26, 2023 at Bontoc, Mountain Province.

At the age of 26 years old, Larry prevailed over the country's elite trail runners and made history as the inaugural champion of the 42-kilometer mountain marathon that featured a trail course of more than 3,000 meters of elevation gain. Larry finished the grueling marathon in only five hours, forty-seven minutes, and nine seconds.

Finishing a 3,000-meter mountain marathon in such an amount of time is not an endeavor of the lighthearted. Today, I commend Larry's strength, determination, grit, and perseverance for remaining steadfast in his pursuit of a professional trail running career despite several of life's challenges.

Proudly hailing from the Iraynon-Bukidnon community in Barangay Capnayan, Municipality of Laua-an in Antique, Larry started from humble beginnings and has relentlessly persisted to reach his trail running dreams.

Larry is the seventh child among eleven children of a modest family. He is currently the first *kagawad* of his barangay, a farmer, a part-time motorcycle driver or a "*habal-habal*" driver, and is a local guide for mountaineers and tourists going to the Mt. Igmotong, which is a beautiful hiking destination located in Brgy. Capnayan, Laua-an. This is perhaps a trek that Sen. Pia Cayetano might want to try in the coming weeks.

His first race was the inaugural Tracing Iraynon-Bukidnon Trail (TIBT) in 2017 where he finished only minutes before the champion. After the 2017 TIBT, Larry gradually dominated the local and international trail running scene by winning several championships, garnering multiple awards, and breaking course records. Just last year, Larry was able to compete in his first international trail running competition that was conducted in Hanoi, Vietnam.

In his interviews, Larry would express his sincere desire to bring pride to the Philippines, but especially to his home province of Antique and his Iraynon-Bukidnon community. The Iraynon-Bukidnon community is one of the local indigenous communities in the province of Antique.

I am truly delighted by Larry's success and his sense of origin. I have also supported and long advocated for the welfare and continual support of my fellow Antiqueños and its IP communities.

Having sponsored Republic Act No. 10689 which declared August 9 as National Indigenous People's Day, I believe that the recognition and protection of the rights and causes of our IPs are crucial in achieving inclusive growth and genuine nation-building. Our IPs play a vital role in national development, and we must always push for the provision of adequate support to programs that support their growth.

As exhibited by Larry, Filipinos have a huge potential in dominating the international trail running scene. I believe in our athletes' excellence and that is why I did not think twice about helping Larry with his provisions, but we need more government programs that support the development and training of Filipino athletes and IPs who are active in sports.

Despite Larry's exceptional success, there is still much to be done in order to ensure that more indigenous persons would have access to programs and initiatives to build their strength and develop their potential. In this way, we would be encouraging and stimulating the careers of the future Larry Apolinarios.

By successfully besting elite trail runners and by entering multiple elite competitions, Larry Apolinario has brought pride and honor to the Philippines, and the Iraynon-Bukidnon community.

Larry not only serves as an inspiration to his community but also all Filipinos, especially the Indigenous Peoples community, to continuously aim for their dreams and to believe in their full potential.

This afternoon, we celebrate and congratulate the 2023 PHILTRA champion, Larry Apolinario.

Mabuhay si Larry at maraming salamat!

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GO

In cosponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 547, Senator Go delivered the following speech:

As chairperson of the Committee on Sports, it is my distinct honor that I rise today to cosponsor Proposed Senate Resolution No. 547, entitled "Resolution Congratulating and Commending Larry Apolinario for his Exceptional Performance and Becoming the Champion of the First Philippine Trail Running Association (PHILTRA) National Championships."

Larry Apolinario exhibited a remarkable performance in that 42-kilometer mountain marathon competition, which had a trail course and ascent of more than 3,000 meters. This astonishing feat truly demonstrates the rising talent and excellence of Filipino athletes in various disciplines in sports. His admirable achievement is proof of what can be achieved with perseverance, hard work, and dedication.

It is crucial that we continue initiatives which will consistently provide support and assistance to our Filipino athletes, especially in ensuring that they have access to the resources and opportunities they need to excel in their chosen sport.

I would like to reaffirm that all of us in the government will continue our ongoing efforts to restore the Philippines' glory in sports and cement our status as a sports powerhouse in Asia.

Once again, I would like to extend my sincerest congratulations to Larry Apolinario. *Patuloy kong ipaglalaman ang inyong karapatan at kapakanan dito sa Senado upang patuloy ding umangat ang antas at kalidad ng sports sa ating bansa.*

Ang panalo mo ay panalo ng sambayanang Pilipino. Proud na proud po kami sa iyo. Mabuhay ka, Larry.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR REVILLA

At the instance of Senator Revilla, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following cosponsorship speech on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 547 into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

I rise today to cosponsor Proposed Senate Resolution No. 547.

Isang pagkilala at parangal sa husay at gilas ni Larry Apolinario na ipinamalas niya sa kauna-unahang Philippine Trail Running Association (Philtr) National Championships.

As champion, Larry dashed through the 42-kilometer mountain marathon. *Alam natin na hindi lamang bilis at tibay ang hinihingi mula sa mga marathoners.* Marathons demand discipline, and Larry exemplified that.

Ang kwento ni Larry ay sumasalamin na ang mga Pilipino ay tunay na matatag, tunay na maliksi, tunay na matulin.

Larry, as a member of the Iraynon Bukidnon IP community, has worked tirelessly as a “*habal-habal driver*” and local guide for mountaineers and tourists on the side.

Larry, ipinakita mo na mas mabilis ka pa sa “habal-habal.” Dinaig pa nga ito ng iyong mga paa na sinubok at pinatibay na ng mga bulubundukin ng Antique. Saludo kami sa iyo!

With the permission of the good sponsor, I would like to also manifest my intent to be a coauthor of this resolution.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 547

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 547 was adopted by the Body.

COAUTHORS

Senator Villanueva manifested that all senators were coauthors of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 547.

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 548

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 548, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING THE AWARDEES OF THE 20TH TEN ACCOMPLISHED YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS (TAYO) AWARDS FOR THEIR INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATION-BUILDING.

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 ANGARA

In sponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 548, Senator Angara delivered the following speech:

Kami po ay tumatayo ngayon para i-sponsor ang Proposed Senate Resolution No. 548, para ihayag ang ating pagbati at paghanga sa mga nanalo ng The 20th Ten Accomplished Youth Organizations (TAYO) Awards.

Ang TAYO Awards ay sinimulan noong 2002 ni dating Sen. Francis Pangilinan noong nabatid niyang walang malawakang programa para kilalanin at bigyan ng parangal ang mga youth organizations na may natatanging kontribusyon sa lipunan. Nahanap at nabigyan ng parangal ang mga unang awardees sa tulong nina former NYC chairperson Mabel Villarica Mamba and former NYC Commissioner at ng dating kasamahan natin, Sen. Bam Aquino.

Pang-dalawampung batch ng TAYO awardees ang pinaparangalan natin ngayon. Ibig sabihin, higit sa dalawang dekada nang tumatakbo ang TAYO Foundation. Ibig sabihin, hindi siya ganoon kabata, hindi rin siya ganoon katanda.

Kahanga-hanga na sa loob ng panahong ito, aabot sa 380 youth organizations ang nabigyan ng parangal at higit sa limang libong grupo ang napapabilang sa nationwide network nito. Kasama rito ang mga tanyag na grupo tulad ng Street to Schools, Mga Tala at Tula, GoodGov PH, the Association of Young Environmental Journalists, Center for Sustainability PH Inc., One Million Lights Philippines, A-HA Learning Center, at marami pang iba.

Sa ibat-ibang larangan ang naging kontribusyon ng mga grupong ito, tulad sa 1) Culture, Arts, and Heritage; 2) Education and Technology; 3) Environment, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation; 4) Health, Well-being and Human Development; and 5) Livelihood and Entrepreneurship.

Pormal na nagbukas ang pang-dalawampung batch ng TAYO Awards noong nakaraang Oktubre 2022. Sinuportahan ito ng Coca-Cola Foundation Philippines at ng San Miguel Corporation. Ang mga nagwagi ay ang sumusunod:

Albay Young Farmers Organization, na pinangangatawan ni Joshua Carl Barcelon. Sa pamamagitan ng program nila, pakay nilang mahikayat ang kanilang komunidad—partikular ang mga kabataan—na gumamit ng mga organic farming technologies.

Pangalawa, ang The BAKA sa Misamis Oriental na inirepresenta ni Ezel R. Lambatan. Labinglima ang miyembro na nagmula sa ORO Youth City Agriculture at mga pribadong indibidwal sa Cagayan De Oro. Naglunsad sila ng Agricultural Leadership Incubation Program para turuan ang mga Kagay-anon Youth—where the Senate President and the Minority Leader hailed—tungkol sa tinatawag na Whole Value Chain Approach sa agrikultura. Sa pamamagitan ng mga workshops at ibang aktibidades, nagkaroon ng kaalaman at karanasan ang mga kabataan tungkol sa servant leadership, agro-fishery inputs, business planning, marketing, communications, at pag-showcase ng kanilang mga produkto.

Pangatlo, ang Iligan Safe Space sa Lanao del Norte na pinapangatawan ni Ian Embradura. Diversity ang prinsipyo na nais itaguyod ng grupong ito. At sa kanilang Safe Space Session Project, pakay nilang bigyan ng mapang-arugang espasyo o lugar para sa mga LGBTQIA+ youth mula sa iba't-ibang kultura at kinagisnan. Naglulunsad sila ng mga empathic listening sessions, mga group dialogues, at tinatawag na Facilitated Empowerment Validations.

Pang-apat po, ang Leader's Council ng Scouting Officers organization ng Sacred Heart School ng Ateneo de Cebu University sa pangangasiwa ni Therese Ertlyn Napuli. Nagwagi ang organisasyon na ito dahil sa kanilang Love to Learn: Learn to Earn community program na tumutulong sa mga tinatawag na Children in conflict with the law (CICL) para hindi na sila mapasabak sa krimen muli.

Pang-lima po, ang Open Arms Organization na pinapangatawan ni Rod Charlie Delos Reyes. Ang Open Arms Organization ay isang non-profit na registrado sa SEC na sinimulan ng isang barkada na taga-Batangas City para tumulong sa mga sector na nahihirapan. Sa pamamagitan ng kanilang flagship project, ang Embrace a Child program, nais nilang bigyan ang mga mahihirap na pamilya ng access sa mga rehabilitation services at social programs.

Pang-anim po, ang PINTAKASI na pinapangatawan ni Gabriel Villaruel. Ito ay non-profit multi-arts organization na nakabase sa Alabat Island, Quezon Province. Nagsisilbing tagpuan ang organization ng mga artists at malikhaing indibidwal ng Alabat Island. Siya rin ang nangunguna sa pag organisar sa Buwan ng Sining or Arts Month kung saan puwedeng itanghal ng mga artist ang kanilang mga obra.

Pang-pito po, ang Project TALA organization na pinapangatawan ni Mark Matta Sotto. Ang Project TALA ay isang grupo ng mga volunteer sa Isabela Province na nagsagawa ng mga

awareness at advocacy campaigns *hinggil sa HIV-AIDS sa pamamagitan ng mga dula at pang-teatrong palabas.*

Pang-walo ay ang SK ng Barangay Talomo River sa Davao del Sur sa pangangasiwa ni SK Chairperson Leonieljun Aresco. Ang SK ay isa sa 182 na SK ng Davao City. Nagwagi sila dahil sa Project Descartes nila na isang libre na online enrichment at tutorial program sa limang pre-Calculus subject para sa mga interesadong senior high school at freshman college students.

Pang-siyam po, ang Shafaat Agriculture Cooperative na pinangungunahan ni Sittie Asia Mai. Umusbong ang kooperatiba mula sa Mushroom for Change Social Enterprise na nagbibigay ng dagdag na pagkakakitaan ang mga low-income farmers sa bayan ng Ditsaan Ramain, Lanao del Sur. Sa pamamagitan ng kooperatiba na nagtatanim ng mushroom, nagkakaroon ng additional income ang mga magsasaka pati ang mga internally displaced people (IDP) mula sa Marawi at ang mga out-of-school youth (OSY).

Pang-sampung po, ang Youth Empowering Youth Initiative, Inc. (YEY) na pinapangatawan ni Coleen Awit. Ang YEY initiative ay isang Bacolod-based youth-led organization na nangangasiwa sa social enterprise na Sasup Negros na nagtatrabaho para maibsan ang food waste. Pakay ng Sagup Negros ang maturuan ang mga karinderya, market vendors, at naglalako para bawasan ang pag-aksaya ng pagkain habang pinapalaki ang kanilang average monthly income.

Ang lahat ng mga nanalo ay makakatanggap ng P50,000 na premyo bilang seed grant para sa kani-kanilang mga proyekto at isang tropeyo na gawa ng kilalang sculptor na si Abdumari "Toym" de Leon Imao.

Bukod sa sampung nanalo, nais din nating i-recognize ang sampung finalist na nakapasok sa semifinals. Sila po ay ang:

- Act Now for Ranow Movement ng Camarines Sur, represented by James Nathaniel Refugio;
- Break the Fake Movement, represented by Paolo Miguel Ordonio; EdukSine Production Corporation, represented by Kendrick Clement Reyes;
- Ibayaw Youth Collective, represented by Renko Feliz Gaudiel of Negros Oriental;
- NSP-Kamara PH, represented by Davijay Engay of Quezon City;
- Order of Asclepius, represented by Brian Christian Atencion of Iloilo City;
- Set Forth Philippines, represented by Renoa Richelle Evangelista King of Cebu;
- SK Barangay Commonwealth, represented by Raymart Garcia of Quezon City;
- SK, Calumpang, represented by John Salvador Demdam of General Santos City; and
- Youth Uprising Philippines, represented by Robyn Camille Mijares of Las Piñas City.

One thing has become clear to me from the hearings and consultations we have conducted with the youth organizations: that even at their young age, our youth can make an outside contribution to the nation. There is no minimum age requirement to being a good citizen.

In 1984, Former Senator Jose "Pepe" W. Diokno delivered a speech, entitled "A Nation for Our Children." Allow me to quote from the beginning and the end:

"There is one dream that all Filipinos share: that our children may have a better life than we have had. So, there is one vision that is distinctly Filipino: the vision to make this country, our country, a nation for our children... Yet, reality is often much more beautiful than anything we can conceive of. If we can but release the creative energy of our people, then we will have a nation full of full and full of joy, full of life and full of love—a nation that may not be nation for our children but will be a nation of our children."

The groups that we pay tribute today demonstrate that if the youth are provided the opportunity, they can make huge contributions towards the betterment of their respective communities and shape Philippine society according to their values and aspirations. Indeed, not just a nation for our children but of our children.

Muli, congratulations sa mga nanalo at sa mga finalists ng 20th TAYO Awards.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

In cosponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 548, Senator Villanueva delivered the following speech:

It is my honor and privilege to cosponsor Proposed Senate Resolution No. 548 congratulating and commending the awardees of the 20th Ten Accomplished Youth Organizations (TAYO) Awards.

I was just talking a while ago with Gov. Jose Enrique “Joen” Miraflores and Mayor Miraflores about the importance of making sure that we hone the skills and talents of our young people. And we indeed need a lot of organizations like this *na ating paparangalan ngayong hapon na ito*.

Ayon po kay Gat Jose Rizal: “Ang kabataan ang pag-asa ng bayan.” On many occasions, the youth sector has demonstrated their love for our country and has strived to contribute to their communities and find innovative solutions to the many challenges facing our society. This is especially manifested in the 380 youth organizations that have been recognized by the TAYO Awards since its inception 20 years ago.

Today, the TAYO Awards is considered the country’s leading award-giving body that celebrates the excellent contributions of youth organizations in the country.

This year, the TAYO Awards recognized trailblazing youth organizations from a pool of almost 500 entries from NCR, Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. They were selected based on project impact, volunteerism and citizenship, creativity and innovation, and sustainability. And today, we are delighted to have the ten awardees with us. They are:

1. Albay Young Farmers Organization
2. Leaders’ Council
3. The Baka
4. Project TALA
5. PINTAKASI
6. Open Arms Organization
7. Iligan Safe Space
8. Sangguniang Kabataan ng Barangay Talomo River
9. Youth Empowering Youth Initiative, Inc.; and
10. Shafaat Agriculture Cooperative—Mushroom for Change

These ten youth organizations demonstrated their drive to make a difference and inspire change as they champion projects and use their talents to promote food security, poverty alleviation, education, diversity, empowerment of the marginalized, and awareness to various causes.

Muli po, binabati natin ang bawat isa at mabuhay ang mga kabataang Pilipino.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECHES

At the instance of Senators Revilla and Estrada, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following cosponsorship speeches on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 548 into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

By Senator Revilla

I join our colleagues in honoring our 20th Ten Accomplished Youth Organizations (TAYO) Awardees for their creative and sustainable ways of promoting food security, health and education, addressing poverty alleviation and raising consciousness for arts, culture and inclusivity at the grassroots level.

Kinikilala ng ating Saligang Batas ang sagradong papel ng ating mga kabataan sa pagpapaunlad ng ating bayan. At ngayong araw nga ay ating itinatangi ang kanilang mga

ngoing kontribusyon sa pagtugon sa pangangailangan ng kanilang komunidad. Mga simpleng proyekto na buong puso nila isinagawa para sa ikakabuti ng higit na nakakarami.

Sa bawat kabataang Pinoy na kinikilala ng parangal na ito, ang aking taas-noong pagsaludo. Ipagpatuloy ninyo nang buong puso at sigasig ang pagsusulong ng pagbabago para sa ating bayan. And as you do, remember that you are shining a light for others to follow in your footsteps. Masarap ngang isipin na as you do good for your community, you likewise inspire others.

Again, congratulations!

And with the permission of the sponsor, I would like to manifest my intent to co-author the measure.

By Senator Estrada

I would like to ask to be made coauthor and cosponsor of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 548, entitled "Resolution Congratulating and Commending the Awardees of the 20th Ten Accomplished Youth Organizations (TAYO) Awards for their Invaluable Contributions to Nation-Building."

Oftentimes, behind a dynamic and productive youth contributing for the betterment of the society is a supportive organization to which that youth belongs to.

In my 25 years of leadership experience, I have always given recognition to the meaningful contribution of our active and commendable youth leaders and youth organizations in positive and progressive nation-building.

And I am glad that we are now honoring our ten outstanding youth organizations all throughout the nation for their beneficial contribution to agriculture, social equality, children's rights and welfare development, arts and culture, HIV and aids awareness, sustainable development, social recovery and youth empowerment, leadership and participation in Philippine social and moral rejuvenation.

Congratulations to the Albay Young Farmers organization, the Baka, the Iligan Safe Space, the Leaders' Council, the Open Arms organization, the PINTAKASI, the Project Tala organization, the Sangguniang Kabataan of Barangay Talomo River, the Shafaat Agriculture cooperative–Mushroom for Change, the Youth Empowering Youth initiative, incorporated for dedicating your energy and time in pursuing your respective advocacies in the service of the Filipino people.

Also, my felicitations to the TAYO Awards on the 20th year of existence. Thank you for your commitment in engaging our youth organizations in participative, inclusive, sustainable and progressive nation-building by giving due recognition and a forum for celebration of their accomplishments and achievements.

Mabuhay ang kabataang Pinoy!

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 548

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 548 was adopted by the Body.

COAUTHORS

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, all the Members of the Senate were made coauthors of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 548.

At this point, Senate President Zubiri invited Larry Apolinario, winner of the 2023 PHILTRA National Championships, and the Ten Accomplished Youth Organizations to the podium for a photo opportunity.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 4:24 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:05 p.m., the session was resumed with Sen. Ejercito presiding.

COAUTHORS

Senator Villanueva manifested that Senators Tolentino and Go were coauthors of Senate Bill No. 1480.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 11 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1480

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of Senate Bill No. 1480 (Committee Report No. 11), entitled

AN ACT RATIONALIZING THE DISABILITY PENSION OF VETERANS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6948, ENTITLED, AN ACT STANDARDIZING AND UPGRADING THE BENEFITS FOR MILITARY VETERANS AND THEIR BENEFICIARIES, AS AMENDED.

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

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

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR PIMENTEL

Preliminarily, Senator Pimentel noted that the measure would amend an existing law, Republic Act No. 6948, which was amended by Republic Act No. 7696. Moreover, he noted that under the proposed measure, veterans with disability ratings between 10% to 30%, who were initially receiving a monthly pension of P1,000, would receive P4,500; and those with a disability rating of 100% would receive P10,000, an increase from their current monthly pension of P1,700.

Asked by Senator Pimentel as to when the last adjustment to the disability pension was made, Senator Estrada stated that the benefit was last amended in 1994 with Republic Act No. 7696. On that note, Senator Pimentel believed that it was high time an update on the law was made.

Asked if the proposed increase in monthly disability pension had taken into account the inflation rates since 1994, Senator Estrada stated that the current value of P1,000, which was the minimum amount of the benefit, would be around P287, a significant decrease in their purchasing power. Senator Pimentel opined that the amounts stipulated in the bill could be advantageous to disabled veterans, if inflation rates were factored into the adjustment. Senator Estrada concurred.

Senator Pimentel then inquired as to the rationale for the deletion of the phrase "unless he is actually receiving a similar pension for the same disability from other government funds or from the United States Government" from lines 6 to 9 which on page 1 of the proposed bill. He noted that the phrase was not deleted at the time Republic Act 7696 amended the original law.



In response, Senator Estrada clarified that while Congress, with the passage of Republic Act No. 9499 in 2008, had already allowed Filipino World War II veterans to continue receiving pensions and benefits from the Philippine government regardless of similar pensions provided by the United States government, Filipino veterans were not receiving a similar pension for their disability from other government funds other than what they receive from the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO). In this regard, Senator Pimentel opined that if the intended consequence was the explanation provided by Senator Estrada, then he would agree to delete the phrase on page 1, lines 6 to 9 of the bill.

Senator Pimentel underlined additional provisions of the mother law, Republic Act No. 6948, that also mention "the United States Government," particularly Sections 10, 11, and 20. He proposed, in the interest of consistency, that the phrases in the aforementioned provisions be deleted as well, believing that the provisions could limit the right or opportunity of Filipino veterans to obtain compensation from the U.S. government. Senator Estrada replied that he was open to the proposal of reviewing the entire mother law in order to maximize the benefits provided to Filipino veterans. Senator Pimentel also reminded Senator Estrada of the Constitution's "one subject, one title rule." He thanked Senator Estrada for being receptive to his proposal.

At this point, Senator Pimentel queried if there had been disputes arising from the disability rating system being used by the Philippine government. Senator Estrada replied in the negative. Asked further if the government had not bothered to devise its own rating system because it was already satisfied with the existing U.S. system, Senator Estrada replied in the affirmative. He then said that all applications for disability pension would be referred to the PVAO Disability Rating Board, which would determine the extent of the veteran's disability based on the findings of the Disability Discharge Board and the individual's clinical records. In addition, he stated that the decision would be consistent with the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Schedule for Rating Disabilities.

As to the proposed measure's projected budgetary impact, Senator Estrada noted that from April to December 2023, P327.14 million would be required to execute the proposed adjustments to the disability pension of Filipino veterans. He said that the amount could be covered by the appropriations in the Pension and Gratuity Fund administered by the PVAO and, thus, no appropriation would be required for that fiscal year.

Asked if the enactment of the measure would necessitate an additional amount of P400 million per year, Senator Estrada replied that the increase in disability pension could be absorbed by the Pension and Gratuity Fund administered by the PVAO, on account of its yearly infusion by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) amounting to P10 billion, which was rarely being used.

Senator Pimentel then sought clarification on whether the same transfer of P10 billion to the PVAO in the following year would be sufficient to cover the new disability pension rates proposed in the bill. Senator Estrada responded affirmatively. Inquired as to length of time that the PVAO has received surplus funds, Senator Estrada responded that the fund was also utilized for the veterans' hospitalization. Senator Pimentel believed that it would be problematic if the P400 million budgeted for disability benefits had a substantial impact on the amounts allocated for hospitalization expenses.

Senator Estrada informed the Body that the DBM had only allocated P100 million for the hospitalization benefits of veterans, despite the fact that hospitalization costs were estimated to exceed P300 million. In light of this, he asked the Body to consult with the DBM over the prospect of appropriating additional funds for the purpose. Senator Pimentel thanked Atty. Rolando Villaflor, Chief of the Legal Affairs Division of the PVAO, for providing information on the matter. Subsequently, he emphasized that while it may be essential to expand government's support for

veterans' disability benefits, it would be ideal if the Pension and Gratuity Fund could absorb the additional equivalent expense. He then expressed his support for Senator Estrada's request for an increase to the existing P10.858 billion fund. He reiterated his earlier opinion on the potential impact of the allocation of disability benefits on the hospitalization funds intended for veterans.

After conferring with PVAO, Senator Estrada stated that the funds allocated for hospitalization expenses will come from the Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) and not from the Pension and Gratuity Fund. In that regard, he stated that said fund had remained intact throughout the years. Giving a brief overview of its funding allocation, he informed the Body that in 2018, the DBM allocated P10.1 billion to the fund; in 2019, P10.18 billion; in 2020, P10.858 billion, or a difference of P609 million; in 2021, P9.6 billion; in 2022, P10.8 billion; and finally, in 2023, P10.8 billion. In addition, he stated that although the DBM gave the PVAO P10.8 billion in 2022, the actual expenses or obligations were only P9.8 billion, resulting in a surplus of P1.028 billion, which he believed might be used to fund the disability pension increase for Filipino veterans.

Regarding the last paragraph on Pension Rates in the mother law, which is Section 5, paragraph (h) of Republic Act No. 6948; and which appeared from page 2, line 30 to page 3, line 14 of the measure, Senator Pimentel noted that there were proposed deletions on page 3, lines 4 to 5 regarding the phrases "with or" and "or non-service connected." He expressed concern that deleting the words "with or" and the phrase "or non-service connected" might result in a more restrictive provision compared to the original version which covers all veterans who have reached the age of 70. Senator Estrada explained that under the bill, veterans with 100% service-connected disability would receive the adjusted disability pension of P10,000, whereas those without a service-connected disability would still be entitled to a monthly pension of P1,700. He further clarified that it is only the P500 benefit for the veteran's spouse and for each of his unmarried minor children that was being proposed to be rationalized.

On whether 70-year old veterans would still be entitled to the maximum disability pension regardless of whether or not they have an actual disability, Senator Estrada replied in the affirmative.

Asked if a 70-year old veteran is considered to be totally disabled and would be entitled to the 100% monthly pension equivalent to P10,000 a month, he clarified that the 100% disability rate or P10,000 monthly pension would only be for veterans with actual disabilities, such as those who lost their hands and limbs, or those with amputated extremities.

Responding to further queries, he stated that he had been informed by the resource person that the deletion of the words "with or" would not cause any problems. Senator Estrada reiterated that under the measure, veterans with 100% service-connected disability would receive the adjusted disability pension of P10,000 while those aged 70 years old without service-connected disability would be entitled to a monthly pension of P1,700. He affirmed that the phrase "non-service connected" had been deleted because a veteran who reaches the age of 70 is deemed to be totally disabled and shall be entitled to receive P1,700 per month.

Senator Pimentel reiterated that he would further study the bill, as he believed that increasing the veterans' disability pension was long overdue. He then lauded Senator Estrada for sponsoring the measure and expressed his full support for it.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

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

It was 5:35 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:37 p.m., the session was resumed.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

There being no other interpellation, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1480

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

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 5:38 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 6:33 p.m., the session was resumed with Senate President Zubiri presiding.

COAUTHOR

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Senator Go was made coauthor of Senate Bill No. 21.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR CAYETANO

Availing herself of the privilege hour, Senator Cayetano (P) delivered the following speech urging Congress to review several discriminatory laws against women:

It is Women's Month and we celebrate as often, anywhere and everywhere, as we can.

I take this opportunity to discuss a concern that I have raised in the previous congresses, and these is the need to review discriminatory laws against women.

I chaired the Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality for six years, and during this period, I had the opportunity to review these laws.

The Constitution is very clear that the State recognizes the role of women in nation building and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men. We also have our Magna Carta of Women and the Philippines also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. These are the reasons why the Philippines often ranks as one of the most gender-equal countries globally based on the Annual Gender Gap Report published by the World Economic Forum. So, we do what we can but there is still room for improvement. We have been regressing in gender parity in the last few years.

As legislators, our primary job is to ensure that we pass laws that advance the status and protect the rights of women. However, while we do this, we must also acknowledge that the laws with provisions that are discriminatory against women are relics from the past and must be amended or repealed.

At the beginning of the Nineteenth Congress, I filed Proposed Senate Resolution No. 25, which directed the Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality and



other appropriate committees to conduct a review, in aid of legislation, on these precise laws with such provisions that are discriminatory.

The outcome from previous Congresses is as follows: In the Fourteenth Congress (2007 to 2010) and the Fifteenth Congress (2010 to 2013), we did have these committee hearings that I mentioned, and, again, in the Sixteenth Congress (2013 to 2016).

The review of the previous Congresses resulted in the repeal of Article 351 of the Revised Penal Code, which used to penalize premature marriages, and amendment of the Anti-Mail Order Bride Act.

We still have existing laws which are discriminatory or contain distinctions, exclusions, or restrictions against women. This is Article 14 on parental consent of the Family Code – this is all on the Family Code – Article 96 on Joint Administration of Community Property; Article 124 on Joint Administration of Conjugal Property; Article 211 on Joint Parental Authority; and Article 225 on Joint Legal Guardianship Over the Property of the Unemancipated Common Child.

In these provisions, it is the man, it is the husband, who is given these responsibilities. Why? No other reason than he is the husband and he is the man. In many cases, and in many families, the woman is actually more involved in these matters and it is the man who is given this decision-making role. So, these are things that we really need to review.

In the Revised Penal Code, there is Article 333 on adultery, Article 334 for concubinage, and Article 247 on death or physical injuries under exceptional circumstances.

I understand that no less than our Majority Leader filed a bill in his first term as Member of the House of Representatives wherein the law seeks to equalize the penalty for marital infidelity.

There are also provisions on the Code of Muslim Personal laws.

So, to conclude, as chairperson of the Committee on Sustainable Development Goals, Innovation and Futures Thinking, this representation is committed to building a more sustainable future for women and their children and, as I always say, the goal is not to give preference to women; the goal is to create gender partnership. We give preference to women because, like other sectors that have been traditionally given less opportunities, that is the reason why we create opportunities for them to rise above the discriminatory practices that they have experienced in life. But the ultimate goal is gender equality among all.

So, with that, I end my speech knowing that I am in good company. Our male colleagues here have always shown support and, at the proper time, I believe the chairperson of our Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality will be able to hear this, we have had discussions in the past, and I think we will have the support of our colleagues on this.

Thank you, and Happy Women's Month to all of us.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva expressed his support for the measure and confirmed that he had filed the Anti-Marital Infidelity Bill when he was a Member of Congress in 2002. He recalled that the measure had been passed on Third Reading by the House of Representatives, but was not passed by the Senate. He stated that he has filed Senate Bill No. 1140, which seeks to remove the unequal treatment between the crimes of adultery and concubinage, in the Nineteenth Congress.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Senator Hontiveros stated that as chairperson of the Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality, she valued the advocacy put forth by Senator Cayetano (P) in her privilege speech, and expressed her appreciation for the support of both women and men Members of the Senate.

Senate President Zubiri conveyed his support for gender parity in the law as well.

REFERRAL OF SPEECH TO COMMITTEE

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair referred the privilege speech of Senator Cayetano (P) to the Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality.

SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 60 on Senate Bill No. 1615 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 60 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1615

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 1615 (Committee Report No. 60), entitled

AN ACT RECOGNIZING THE MUNICIPALITY OF BALER IN THE PROVINCE OF AURORA AS THE "BIRTHPLACE OF PHILIPPINE SURFING."

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 Angara for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR ANGARA

In sponsoring Senate Bill No. 1615, Senator Angara delivered the following speech:

Kami po ay tumatayo ngayon para i-sponsor ang Committee Report No. 60 para ideklara ang aming bayan ng Baler sa probinsiya ng Aurora bilang "birth place of Philippine surfing." Ito ay counterpart ng House Bill No. 5961 ni Aurora Representative Rommel Angara sa Kamara de Representante along with 60 other coauthors, at itong panukala ay pumasa sa Third Reading noong nakaraang November 21, 2022.

Kilala ang bayan ng Baler bilang isa sa mga tanyag na tourist destinations ng bansa na umusbong sa nakaraang dekada. Isa sa mga pangunahing dahilan kung bakit bumibisita ang mga turista ay para mag-surfing sa mga matataas na alon ng Sabang Beach, Cemento Beach, Charlie's Point at iba pang mga surfing spots sa probinsiya ng Aurora.

Sa katunayan, punong-puno ng mga kilalang surfing spots ang bansa natin bukod sa Baler, tulad ng Pagudpud sa Ilocos Norte, San Juan sa La Union, Daet sa Camarines Norte, Calicoan sa Eastern Samar, at General Luna sa Siargao. May kanya-kanyang pananaw o opinyon kung alin dito ang pinakamaganda. Pero namumukod-tangi ang Baler dahil kinikilala ito bilang pinaka-unang lugar kung saan may nag-surfing sa mga alon ng Pilipinas at nag-organisa para dito.

Amerikano Missionaries

Ayon sa pahayag ng ating mga resource persons, simula 1969 pa, pinupuntahan na ng mga misyonaryong dayuhan ang Baler para mag-surfing. Binansagan bilang mga "Amerikano," kahit na iba-iba ang kanilang nasyonalidad, ang mga misyonaryong ito ay ang mga unang tumulong at nag-udyok sa mga taga-Baler na sakyan ang mga alon sa Sabang Beach.

The Travels of Steve Scott

Unti-unti itong nagbago sa paglipas ng panahon. Ayon sa paglalahad ni Steve Scott, isang Amerikanong surfer na nakatira sa Subic Naval Base, binisita raw niya at ng kanyang mga

kaibigan ang Baler noong taong 1972, dala-dala ang unang modernong surfboard. Iniwan ni G. Scott ang surfboard niya sa Baler at napunta raw ito sa mga bata ng Baler.

Apocalypse Now

After Mr. Scott's visits, there are other accounts of foreigners visiting Sabang Beach in 1975 ostensibly to scope out the area and surf. But the story between Baler and surfing took a deeper turn in the year 1976, when world-renowned director Francis Ford Coppola chose the remote beach town as the main filming location for his multi-awarded Vietnam War epic "Apocalypse Now."

For the film, Baler was dressed up to be a seaside Vietnamese village. Some shooting days even included helicopters, jet planes, and explosions to simulate the ravages wrought by the Vietnam War. Film buffs might remember the memorable character, Colonel Kilgore, played by the great Robert Duvall, who notoriously said: "I love the smell of napalm in the morning."

In the same scene where he said the famous line, Colonel Kilgore ordered some of his men to surf the waves even while they were being shot at by their enemies, off-camera. Cut scenes of the men surfing amid the gunshots and explosions were of the waves that many Baler surfers enjoy today in a location called "Charlie's Point." This is the same area where the famous "Ride of the Valkyries" scene was shot. Here is a short clip.

(At this juncture, a video clip from the movie was shown onscreen)

Iniwan ng mga crew member ng Apocalypse Now ang kanilang mga surfboards para magamit ng mga batang Baler. Sa puntong ito talagang nagkaugat ang pagmamahal ng mga taga-Baler sa surfing. Sa paglipas ng mga taon, lalong umusbong at lumago ang mga surfing activities nila.

Nagsimulang burnuo ng mga local surfing groups ang mga taga-Baler hanggang sa napansin ito ng mga international surfing organizations. In August 1983, opisyal na itinatang ang Philippine-USA Surfing Cultural Exchange sa Baler ang NSSA-Philippine and Interscholastic Surfing Competition, at iilang mga "Baler Boys" ang hinikayat na sumali, kasama si Lysander Quertijero, at Edmund "Django" Mendoza, a local surfing legend.

Mahalagang sabihin ang punto na ang pinakaunang Philippine surfing team na pinili ng Department of Tourism noong 1986 ay binuo ng tatlong taga-Baler. Naulit ito noong 1987, kung saan pitong taga-Baler ang pinili para sa Philippine Surfing Team. Nangyari uli ito noong sumunod na mga taon, at hanggang ngayon po madalas may mga taga-Baler na sumasali sa mga international surfing competition.

Sa madaling salita, sa pamamagitan ng panukalang batas, nais nating kilalanin ang Baler bilang pinakaunang lugar sa Pilipinas kung saan umusbong at naging organisado ang surfing bilang isang pormal na sport.

Ultimately, in pushing for this declaration, we seek to provide our hometown Baler with a policy tool from which they can entice more visitors and boost its tourism, which is one of the municipality's major industries. And by recognizing Baler as the birthplace of Philippine surfing, in no way do we seek to diminish or disregard the vital role which other surfing destinations continue to play in deepening Filipinos' love for the sport and in raising the country's international profile in it. We merely seek to leverage the characteristics that are specific and unique to our town, and to use them as a platform for boosting our tourism.

Simple lamang po ang pakay: Una, kilalanin ang mahalagang papel na ginampanan ng Bayan ng Baler sa simula at paglago ng surfing sa Pilipinas; at pangalawa, bigyan ng mas malawak na pagkakataon ang Bayan ng Baler para itulak pa lalo ang turismo nito upang mabigyan ng mas maraming trabaho at kita ang mga kababayan namin doon.

INQUIRY OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

At this juncture, Senate President Zubiri asked Senator Angara if he knew how to surf. The latter answered in the affirmative.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva expressed his support for the measure, stating that he learned to surf in Baler, Aurora and confirmed that it was the best place for the sport.

COAUTHORS

Upon their request, Senate President Zubiri and Senator Villanueva were made coauthors of Senate Bill No. 1615.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

In expressing her support for Senate Bill No. 1615, Senator Hontiveros narrated that when her late husband, Frank Baraquel, was a teenager, he accompanied his uncle who was then the cook for the biggest movie production shot in Baler, Aurora – *The Apocalypse Now*. She added that Frank was like the big brother to the younger Charlie Sheen who was brought along by his father, Martin Sheen, who had a prominent role in the movie. She stated that up until that moment, Frank's family stayed in Aurora. She added that the story was told to her by Frank when they were still dating, and had been retold when they were still starting as a family. She believed that Frank would have been happy to hear her expression of support for the measure, because it was in Baler, Aurora where surfing was born in the Philippines and where her late husband's fondest memories lived.

In response, Senator Angara thanked Senator Hontiveros, adding that he had hoped for a more romantic story to flash on the screen. He nevertheless expressed appreciation for the support and fond memories of her late husband. He also thanked Senator Villanueva, who he believed was not able to go surfing as his father, then Senator Angara had him on a tight schedule.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

For his part, Senate President Zubiri informed the Body that Baler is known for its waves and surfing. He averred that at one point in history, the town was hit by a tsunami and the Angaras were one of those who survived it.

On another note, he stated that the Siege of Baler will be celebrated on June 30. He relayed to the Body that, earlier, he was with the Spanish Ambassadors who wanted to make sure that he would meet Senator Angara, and the rest of the Members.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva stated that he considers himself to be one of the Baler guys, and admitted that his chief-of-staff, Albert Basa, was also from Baler, Aurora. He then expressed his support for the measure.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1615

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

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

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

It was 7:00 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 7:23 p.m., the session was resumed.

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

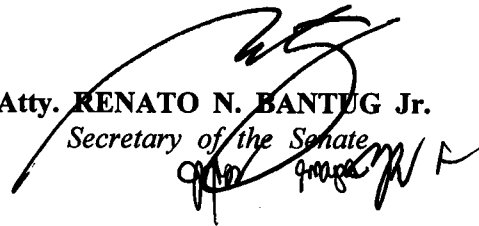
Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair declared the session adjourned until three o'clock in the afternoon of the following day.

It was 7:23 p.m.

I hereby certify to the correctness of the foregoing.

Approved on March 22, 2023

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

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Renato N. Bantug Jr.', is written over the typed name and title. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.