



Official Newsletter of the Senate of the Philippines

e-MONITOR

“

If there is one mission that should animate the Senate of the 19th Congress, an overriding theme, then we must be a Senate for National Reconstruction.

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HON. JUAN MIGUEL “MIGZ” F. ZUBIRI
Senate President, 19th Congress

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This has not been the easiest year. As the country continued to weather the pandemic, and disaster after disaster, the Senate has had to stand firm as a source of hope and a beacon of action.

If the Senate has succeeded, it is thanks entirely to the efforts of our employees. This institution may be composed of 24 senators, but truly, it runs on the tireless service of our employees. Election after election, it is our employees who ensure that the Senate is able to fulfill its mandate.

This Christmas, I thank and celebrate our employees for your invaluable service, not just to the Senate, but to the country. Your efforts have led us here—a season of renewed hope for our people.

May your holidays be filled with warmth, love, and happiness, shared with your families and loved ones.

Maligayang Pasko po at Mapagpalang Bagong Taon!

A stylized signature in black ink, likely belonging to Hon. Juan Miguel 'Migz' F. Zubiri.

HON. JUAN MIGUEL "MIGZ" F. ZUBIRI
Senate President



A merry and blissful Christmas to all our reliable and hardworking Senate employees and staff! As the Senate

President Pro Tempore, I thank you for carrying out your legislative and administrative duties to the best of your ability. Know that your continued dedication and compassionate service are most appreciated as more voices are heard and lives improved by this institution because of you.

This yuletide season affords us quiet interludes to reflect and introspect on this year's successes and opportunities, as well as failures and challenges.

Together, let us embrace all these lessons with spiritual greatness and humility to better serve the people and this country. May the circle of good continue to clothe us and our families with love, hope, and peace in our hearts, as we celebrate this season and welcome the new year with zeal and positivity.

A stylized signature in blue ink, likely belonging to Hon. Loren Legarda.

HON. LOREN LEGARDA
Senate President Pro Tempore



"When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy." (Matthew 2:10)

The Star of Bethlehem led the magi from the East to the Baby Jesus in the manger, where they worshipped Him and gave Him gifts.

As the lawmaking branch of government, I dare say that the Senate serves as the North Star that leads our people along the path of recovery and progress.

But as Christmas draws near, many of our kababayans remain in the dark. The pandemic is still too recent a phenomenon that it continues to instill fear and cause sorrow to many. We have the highest unemployment spike, and the prices of prime commodities such as rice and meat continue to rise at an 8% inflation rate, especially during this holiday season.

It is truly an honor and privilege to be part of this august chamber because it allows each one of us to help transform the lives of every Filipino. For instance, it is the

responsibility of the Senate to strengthen and continue modernizing our agricultural sector, creating agricultural jobs while ensuring food security and sustainability. Not every day is Christmas, and we need to put food on the table of every Filipino family the whole year round.

The scene of the first Christmas in Bethlehem, when Jesus Christ was born in a manger, resonates with the poverty our people experiences today.

Christ is the reason for the season.

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake, he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Our work in the Senate is demanding, but let us not forget that this season is also about family. As Peg Bracken once said, “Gifts of time and love are surely the basic ingredients of a truly merry Christmas.”

Let Jesus be our star as we do our job so our people will have a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

May this august chamber be a blessing from God to our people this Christmas and through the years.

May God bless us all.



HON. JOLL VILLANUEVA
Senate Majority Leader



Maligayang Pasko po sa Pamilyang Senado! Sa ating pagdiriwang, alalahanin po natin ang tunay na diwa ng Kapaskuhan — ang pagmamahalan at pagbibigayan, pagpapatawad, at higit sa lahat, pagkakaisa lalo na sa panahon ng matinding pagsubok.

Mag-enjoy po tayo ngayong Christmas kasama ang ating mga pamilya!

Mula po sa Pamilya Pimentel, dalangin po naming para sa lahat ang masagana at makabuluhang Pasko at Manigong Bagong Taon!


HON. AQUILINO “KOKO” PIMENTEL III
Senate Minority Leader



The year-that-was witnessed the best of our unity and resilience as a people.

We welcomed the year 2022 with a deep sense of optimism despite having been crippled by the COVID-19 pandemic for two years. A few months later, our unity prevailed over one of the most heated and most divisive elections in our country's history.

As we dealt with destructive storms and the impacts of our ongoing economic woes, our ability to set aside our differences and work together for the benefit of our respective communities would prove to be our best quality as a nation. Without a doubt, our bayanihan can endure any challenge and any crisis.

Behind this unconquerable spirit is our faith in God, the reason for this joyous season. May we take this opportunity to express our eternal praise and gratitude for His grace and love. At the same time, let us thank those who stayed with us during the many moments of trial that we had to confront in the past twelve months. I would like to personally thank my family, my friends, and my staff, and most of all, the Filipino people, for believing in me and giving me another chance to be an instrument of God's great work through public service. By serving our country to the best of my ability, by being a faithful friend and ally of our people here in the Senate, I hope to make the most out of the mandate that you have given me and my colleagues in the Upper Chamber. We will not let you down.

With that said, I would like to wish everyone a merry, merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous new year. May we find strength and inspiration in God's compassion and be the good ones of our communities.



HON. JOSEPH VICTOR "JV" EJERCITO
Deputy Senate Majority Leader



I convey my warmest Christmas greetings to everyone!

I join you all in celebrating the joyous occasion of Christmas. This occasion reminds us of the birth of our Savior, who exemplifies the true meaning of compassion, grace, and selflessness to the world.

Even if the times are fraught with different challenges, the significance of Christmas cannot be reduced, as nothing can stop the Light of the World from shining and spreading love and hope.

In this time of giving, I call on every Filipino to be a light to others. Let us open our hearts to those in need so that through the light of hope and faith that we carry, may they find the clarity, peace, hope, and resolve they seek.

Together, let us rejoice in Christ's compassion for our nation, as we move forward along the straight and righteous path toward a brighter and more equitably progressive future.

I wish everyone a blessed Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year! *Mula sa akin at sa aking pamilya, binabati ko po kayong lahat ng isang Maligayang Pasko!*



HON. MARK A. VILLAR
Deputy Senate Majority Leader



Ngayong Pasko ay ginugunita natin ang pagsilang ni Hesukristo, ang ating tagapagligtas. Sumisimbulo ito ng pag-asa, ng pagmamalasakit at pagtulong sa kapwa. Ito rin ang pinakamasayang panahon para sa mga Pilipino dahil muling nagsasama-sama ang buong pamilya. Pero dahil sa pandemya, marami sa ating kababayan ang may lungkot na nararamdaman dahil sa bigat na kanilang pinapasan.

Bilang mga katuwang ng inyong mga Senador sa paglilingkod sa bayan, hayaan ninyong gamitin ko ang pagkakataong ito na magpasalamat sa inyong walang-sawang pagtatrabaho para maging katuwang namin na mapagaan at mabigyan ng magandang buhay ang bawat Pilipino. Kayo ang pinakamagandang regalong aming natanggap ngayong Pasko. Nawa ay patuloy na maging ang inyong tala at magsilbing pag-asa ng isa't isa.

Mula sa akin at sa aking pamilya at staff, isang maligayang Pasko at mapuno nawa ng biyaya ang darating na bagong taon.

HON. RISA HONTIVEROS
Deputy Senate Minority Leader

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Senate to work hard under SP Zubiri

By Jardine Dave Chua

The Senate of the 19th Congress will work even harder to “harness the best and brightest ideas” for national reconstruction and improvement of people’s lives amid times of crisis.

This is according to Senate President Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri as he shared his vision for the Upper Chamber in his acceptance speech at the opening rites of the 19th Congress on July 25, 2022.

“If there is one mission that should animate the Senate of the 19th Congress, an overriding theme, then we must be a Senate for National Reconstruction,” Zubiri said.

Zubiri, a seasoned lawmaker-known as the “Trabahador ng Senado,” was elected as Senate President with no objections among his fellow senators. Other Senate officials elected to leadership posts were Loren Legarda as Senate President Pro Tempore, Joel Villanueva as Senate Majority Leader and Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel Jr.

Improved lives for Filipinos

Zubiri said the “Senate for National Reconstruction will



Senate President Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri presides over a plenary session.



(From left) Majority Leader Joel Villanueva, Sen. Joseph Victor “JV” Ejercito, Sen. Juan Edgardo “Sonny” Angara, Senate President Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri and Sen. Win Gatchalian share a light moment during a break at a plenary session.

focus on pushing laws and policies that will help Filipinos not just to cope but also to overcome and prosper amid the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and the global economic crisis.

“The recovery that we should work for together is not merely returning to where we were once before. It is catapulting ourselves to a better place than the past,” Zubiri said.

He said the Senate acknowledges the “multiple crises” being faced by Filipinos at present: “Food, fuel, fiscal,

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Upper House celebrates first General Assembly post-pandemic

Employees bring Coachella to World Trade Center

By Vanne Elaine P. Terrazola

Senate employees gathered to celebrate Christmas in the first in-person party since the COVID-19 outbreak.

Employees flocked to the World Trade Center in Pasay City Wednesday, December 14, for a get together after two years of lockdowns, self-quarantine and physical distancing. Prior to the assembly, all attendees were required to undergo antigen testing.

Patterns, florals, and feathers flooded the venue, as employees donned their best bohemian and festival outfits in the Coachella-themed event. They posed for photos and walked the red carpet leading to the massive tent along Gil Puyat Avenue.



Employees in Coachella outfit attend the General Assembly held at the World Trade Center last December 14, 2022.

Senators, led by Senate President Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri, also graced the assembly. Opening the holiday party, Zubiri thanked the employees for their service.

“In my first few months as Senate President, I have developed a deeper respect and appreciation for your hard work and commitment. If we stay late for sessions, many of you stay later than the senators, and come back to the Senate early the next day,” Zubiri said.

“Wala po tayong batas na ma-

gagawa kung wala po kayong lahat (We cannot craft laws without you)... *Kayo ang tunay na puso ng Senado* (You truly are the heart of the Senate),” he told the Senate employees.



Senate President Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri, along with other senators, grace the Christmas party held at the World Trade Center.



Senate Secretary Renato Bantug (left) and Senate President Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri (right) announce the raffle prizes.



Senate Secretary Renato Bantug (right) hands the symbolic key to grand prize winner Maximo Ciasico of RMMS

The highlight of the party, however, was the raffle event. Employees waited and listened attentively for their

names to be called – or not – in hopes of bringing home the grand and other exciting prizes.

Another highlight was the announcement of victors in the Christmas competitions that employees and offices have worked for days before the event.



Officers of the Public Relations and Information Bureau accept the prize for the Best Door Décor contest.

The Public Relations and Information Bureau’s (PRIB) distinctive door design emerged as the winner of the Door Decor contest. A mixed media of handwoven mat, used boxes, paper scraps, paint, and meticulously glued indigenous textiles, twines, and strings that featured the nativity of Christ and employees’ loved ones, showcased the ingenuity of the decorators.



Finalists in the TikTok contest dance to the cheering crowd.

The Office of Sen. Raffy Tulfo dominated the Senate Tiktok Dance

claiming the top prize. During the party, members of the “Team Tulfo in Action” wowed the crowd as they grooved to a remix of Ariana Grande’s Last Christmas and other Tiktok beats.



EDP staff bags Senate Tiktok Comedy Challenge

Meanwhile, the retakes in the entry of the Electronic Data Processing and Management Information System Bureau (EDP-MIS), entitled

“O.T.L.U.M.”, gave off a natural and unscripted humor enjoyable enough to clinch the 1st Prize in the TikTok Comedy Challenge.



Javee Algenio of the Office of Sen. Win Gatchalian was crowned Star of the Night.

The night did not end without recognizing the “Stars of the Night”. Pulling off a chic, fringe white dress,

knee-high boots and an embroidered kimono, Javee Algenio of the Office of Sen. Win Gatchalian was crowned the “best dressed” in the Individual Category.

Staff members of the Senate Public Assistance Office (SPA), on the other hand, came out as the best dressed in the Group Category with their kaftan dresses and boho shirts.

Even as the program ended, attendees who can’t get enough of the holiday cheer danced the night away to nostalgic 60s hits.

No employee went home defeated, as they certainly brought home happy memories from the Senate’s first Christmas party in two years.

Frontliner bags most outstanding employee award

By Jet Bellen

A healthcare frontliner was awarded the much-coveted ‘Most Outstanding Employee Award’ of the 2020 Senate Secretariat Exemplary Employee Awards (SSEEA) during the General Assembly on Wednesday, December 14, 2022.

Dr. Virgilio Del Rosario, fondly known as Doc Del, was awarded the Senate employees’ highest honor for his exemplary performance of duties and public service. He was selected from a pool of 33 nominees who were all exemplary employees in their own right.

Del Rosario, a dentist, said that he was “overwhelmed” with the recognition and did not expect to be given such honor. He was unable to personally receive the reward as he was on medical leave.

“I want to thank and share this award with my colleagues in the Medical and Dental Bureau (MDB) for the nonstop service they provide to Senate employees,” Del Rosario said.

Dr. Cristeta DR Cocjin, MDB bureau director, received the plaque



Dr. Virgilio Del Rosario

of recognition signed by Senate President Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri and Senate Secretary Renato N. Bantug Jr., in Del Rosario’s behalf.

Apart from the plaque of recognition, Del Rosario will also receive a solid gold Senate pin and P40,000 in cash.

The SSEEA is a yearly project of

the Human Resources and Management Service in recognition of outstanding work ethics and commendable behavior in the performance of an employee’s and duties functions. The awarding of the SSEEA was delayed due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Department heads nominate qualified staff who attained successive ‘Outstanding’ grades on their Performance Appraisal Ratings for the SSEEA award. Their accomplishments and mental achievements are also noted and given a score. The nominees are ranked based on

their scores until only one nominee per department is left. Departmental awardees are also given a plaque of recognition and a P5,000 cash award.

The SSEEA Committee conducts a panel interview with the departmental Awardees where the Most Outstanding Employee is selected.

Trainings in a click:

Senate HRMS launches virtual channel

By Vanne Elaine P. Terrazola

Seminars and trainings in the Senate are made more accessible to employees after the Human Resources Management Service (HRMS) launched a virtual channel allowing them to view and review video contents at their convenience.

Staff members of the HRMS' Manpower Development and Employee's Welfare Section (MDEWS) introduced the "HR Trainings on Demand," which aims to provide a more accessible and readily available mode of training amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Launched on video hosting and sharing platform Vimeo last March 9, the Senate HRMS channel contains webinars, professional development trainings and other videos, ranging from administrative matters to lifestyle contents such as cooking and baking recipes, fitness, and several hobbies that employees may relate to.

New videos are uploaded weekly, the MDEWS team said.

"The tool produced may be of use not only to the HRMS but to anyone who wants to share and who aims for continuous learning. Thus, we encourage everyone to share and showcase your talents," said Director Christian Borja (officer-in-charge) of the HRMS during the launch of the HR Training on Demand.

Once created, they must register their name, email address and their Vimeo username and user number on the Senate HRMS Channel.

To access videos in the HRMS channel, employees would need to create their own accounts on Vimeo.

"This tool is not only for us to do trainings but we invite everyone...to volunteer and showcase what your office or your talent could offer. We will

gladly include you in our portfolio," he added.

The MDEWS would then confirm the registration and send back to the employee the link to the said channel, finally allowing them to view the webinars, trainings and other contents from the channel.

Meanwhile, Senate officials lauded the initiative of the HRMS and the MDEWS team, led by Ms. Sarah Marie Jalandoni, for coming up with the initiative.

"Who would've thought that Senate employees can access information, webinars, and discussions from anywhere at anytime using mobile phones or computers? Now, we have our version of on-demand channel, thanks to our HRMS," said Deputy Secretary for Administrative and Financial

Services Arnel Jose S. Bañas.

"This program will open more possibilities and opportunities for everyone as it offers a vast selection of trainings and modules which are readily available," Executive Director for Administrative and Financial Services Renato B. Chua also said.

The HRMS, Borja said, would continue to work to "improve the quality of our seminars and trainings despite the challenges."

"This pandemic was really a tough examination which tested us in every aspect of our lives, but if we continue to keep our doors open to new things, new learnings and shift our perspective into a more constructive and productive side, we will pass this exam with overwhelming victory," he added.



19TH CONGRESS BRASS MARKER: Senators led by Senate President Juan Miguel "Migz" F. Zubiri (5th from left) unveil the brass marker of the 19th Congress last November. The unveiling of the marker coincided with the resumption of the plenary session after a short break. The marker contains the officers and members of the 19th Congress. Also in photo are (from left) Senators Raffy Tulfo, Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito, Senate Majority Leader Joel Villanueva, Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda, Cynthia Villar, Nancy Binay and Robinhood Padilla. (PRIB photo)

Senate 106th Anniversary reunion: A toast to the glorious past

By Leonard Postrado



Past and current senators pose at the gallery of the National Museum in Ermita, Manila.

As the past and present senators started arriving inside the historic National Museum, a strong sense of nostalgia swept those who were present during the Senate 106th Anniversary Dinner Reunion last November 8, 2022.

Gone were the old wooden desks lawmakers used during plenary debates. The hall, which was once a training ground for neophyte politicians to become distinguished statesmen, was now adorned by precious murals by notable Filipino art prodigies.

Still, tales as old as time reverberated through the whole room as past senators, and senior Senate personnel,

recalled what was like stepping back in their former home after so many years.

Senate President Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri aptly pointed out during his opening speech how the past memories tugged each and everyone’s heartstrings: “If these walls could speak, it would regale us with tales of how batches of 24 men and women shaped the course of our nation for the better when they held office here.”

Truly, there’s no better place to remember Senate’s glorious past than in the National Museum in Manila, which was its home for almost half a century.

Lawmakers, past and present,

attended the intimate reunion dinner held annually as part of the founding anniversary celebration of the Senate of the Philippines. Among those who attended the traditional reunion dinner were former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and former Senate Presidents Vicente Sotto III, Franklin M. Drilon, and Manny Villar.

Also in attendance were former Senators Ralph Recto, Richard Gordon, Nikki Coseteng, Rodolfo Biazon, Sr., and Ramon “Jun” Magsaysay, Jr. Most of the members of the 19th Congress, including their spouses, attended the dinner.



Senate President Juan Miguel "Migz" F. Zubiri delivers a welcome address during the reunion.

present Senate," Zubiri said.

"What we current senators are trying to do, the mission we have committed all our energies, the ideal we have consecrated ourselves, is for the whole country, to turn a new leaf, to a new chapter that will bring hope and happiness to our people," he added.



Senate President Juan Miguel "Migz" F. Zubiri poses for a souvenir photo with his wife, Audrey, and former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

dinner.

As he welcomed the past and present senators, Zubiri gushed at the beauty of the ornate balustrade and clean classical lines of National Museum's architecture as he remembered that the whole structure was in ruins 75 years ago.

"We are standing on what was once the bombed out remains of a proud edifice of a fledgling nation. As this building rose from the ashes with the rest of the country, so too our people and country today," Zubiri said.

Like the National Museum, the Senate President said the lawmakers during the first Congress confronted difficult challenges which were as hard as the ones being faced by the present members of the Senate.

Zubiri expressed hope that despite



Past and current senators during the 106th anniversary reunion held at the National Museum in Ermita, Manila.

the debacles and hardships every Filipino faces, their indomitable spirit would help surmount the odds.

He also reminded his former and present colleagues of their duty to bring hope and help uplift the lives of households and called on to them to recommit themselves to this goal.

"It has been said that out of the life stories of senators, one can weave our country's history... But I know, with certainty, that this is farthest from the minds of every member of the



(From left) Congresswoman Lani Mercado, a singer, Sen. Loren Legarda and Audrey Zubiri, wife of Senate President Juan Miguel "Migz" F. Zubiri, entertain their peers.

Senate to work hard... from page 4

and the fading faith of our people in our institutions, just to name a few.”

Zubiri said that under his leadership, the entire Senate would urgently address the daily concerns of Filipinos by working quietly and effectively to pass laws “that would bring social good and not just social media hits.”

“Jobs created, hunger reduced, inflation-GNP growth, houses built, higher school test scores, and middle class expanded are the metrics that should gauge our performance, instead of likes, shares, and views,” he said.

“Let us do these through the time-honored fashion by which the Senate had acted upon during times of crisis, by harnessing the best ideas that our brightest can offer, so the cures would not just bring temporary relief, but also permanently release our people from what ails them,” Zubiri stressed.

Cooperative but proudly independent

Zubiri said the Senate is working closely with President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. and the entire executive branch, and will fully support government initiatives that “will address the people’s clamor for jobs, bring down prices of basic goods, affordable food, humane transport, among other relief measures.”

“This Senate under my leadership, will be one to solve problems more than it would find faults. But for us to do our role, we must uphold the Senate’s proud tradition of being independent. And that is important because the Senate’s independence is a lynchpin of its two other hallmarks: Industry and innovation,” Zubiri said.

“The Senate is not an office of 24 receiving clerks for executive proposals. We will improve what has been proposed to us as we initiate our own. We do so not because we are rivals for power with the other branch but because we are partners for progress,” he added.

Zubiri pointed out that the Senate



Senate President Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri bows his head in prayer before the start of the plenary session.

will actively exercise its oversight functions over government activities and use of public funds “not to encroach on the executive branch but to help government remedy deficiencies in the delivery of public services and recalibrate ineffective policies.”

All ideas welcome

As head of the country’s highest lawmaking body, Zubiri said his leadership style will be defined by consultation, and that the institution’s output will be made through extensive consensus-building.

“This Senate will meet the big problems of the nation with bold thinking and brave legislation but most especially, and I am looking forward to this, bipartisanship,” Zubiri said.

As the “workshop of great ideas,” Zubiri said the Senate will also be a “crowd-sourcing” institution which eagerly accepts ideas and proposals not only from both the Senate Majority and Minority blocs, but also from the whole public.

“We value your ideas because this Upper Chamber will never be an echo chamber. Let us debate and embrace ideas without regard from where they came from,” he added.

Wealth of experience

Zubiri, the 24th Senate President since 1916, is no stranger to a leadership position in the legislative branch, having served in various senior posts in both the Senate and the House of Representatives across two decades.

Before becoming Senate President, Zubiri worked as Senate Majority Leader across three Congresses (14th, 17th and 18th Congresses), where his perfect attendance and tireless

work ethic in shepherding legislation led to the moniker “*Ang Trabahador ng Senado*.”

As a lawmaker, Zubiri is the principal author and sponsor of over a hundred laws of national application, including the landmark Bangsamoro Organic Law, the Renewable Energy Act of 2008, the Biofuels Act of 2006, and is considered the father of the Philippine Cooperative Code of 2008.

Outside of his work in the Senate, Zubiri is actively involved in environmental protection and conservation programs, and is a certified rescue diver. He is also a former arnis world champion and is the chairman and president of the Philippine Eskrima Kali Arnis Federation.

Senators’ Profile

Aside from Zubiri, 11 more senatorial candidates won seats in the 19th Congress. The senators elected in May 2022, together with those elected in 2019, complete the Senate’s 24 seats.

Four incumbent senators, five former senators and three new ones were elected with a deep sense of hope and optimism for the country's better future.

SENATE PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE LOREN LEGARDA



Senate President Pro Tempore Legarda has authored many laws to improve Filipinos' lives and promote inclusive, sustainable, and resilient development. Legarda is the most senior in terms of tenure among the senators serving in the 19th Congress.

She served as a member of the House of Representatives, representing the Lone District of the Province of Antique, the only Antiqueña who has served the House as Deputy Speaker.

Prior to being elected as the youngest senator in 1998, she was a respected and multi-award-winning broadcast journalist with over 30 awards. These included the Ten Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) Award in 1992, The Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service (TOWNS) in 1995 and the Benigno Aquino Award for Journalism in 1995, among others.

A public servant of more than two decades, Legarda is also notable for being the only female to top two senatorial elections, in 1998 and in 2007. She is also the only female majority leader who served in the Philippine Senate.

A renowned champion for the environment, Legarda authored numerous landmark laws for the conservation and protection of the country's natural

resources: the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, the Clean Air Act, the Climate Change Act, the People's Survival Fund Act, the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, Green Jobs Act, the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act, among many others.

Her inspiring advocacy on environmental protection has earned her global recognition. She has been recognized as a Global Leader for Tomorrow by the World Economic Forum and a UNEP Laureate. She is also currently the UNDRR Global Champion for Resilience, the UNFCCC National Adaptation Plan Champion, a Commissioner of the Global Commission on Adaptation, the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) Ambassador for Parliaments, and the Women Political Leaders Global Ambassador for Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change and Environment.

In appreciation for her lifelong advocacy to protect and preserve our culture, heritage, and the arts, Legarda was conferred the *Dangal ng Haraya* by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts. Many indigenous people's groups likewise bestowed titles upon her for championing the rights and welfare of the IPs: *Bai a Labi* by the Marawi Sultanate League, *Tukwif* by the Cordillera Indigenous Elected Women Leaders' League which means "bright star"; *Cuyong Adlaw Dulpa-an Labaw sa Kadunggan* by the Panay Bukidnon from Visayas, which literally translates to "shining sun rising in power" and *Bae Matumpis* by the cultural communities of Mindanao, which means "the one who takes care."

Through her efforts to strengthen bilateral relations with other countries, Legarda was bestowed with the title of Knight in the French National Order of the Legion of Honor, Knight in the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, and the Award of Distinction by the European Union.

A cum laude graduate of the University of the Philippines, the National

Defense College of the Philippines top-notcher, and graduate of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Command and General Staff College, Legarda is a reserve officer of the Philippine Air Force with the rank of full colonel. She was also conferred the degree Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, by the University of the Philippines.

SEN. ALAN PETER CAYETANO



"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." -- Jeremiah 29:11

In his three decades of public service, Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano has made it his mission to honor GOD, build communities and transform the nation. He served as city councilor and vice mayor of Taguig before becoming representative of the then-lone district of Taguig-Pateros for three terms. He was senator from 2007 to 2017 and was appointed secretary of foreign affairs in 2017. He became house speaker in 2019 and in the same year chaired the Philippine Southeast Asian Organizing Committee (PHISGOC) which led the country's successful hosting of the Southeast Asian Games. His current stint as senator is his third term in the chamber.

As foreign affairs secretary, Cayetano introduced reforms in the passport system, enabling the department to increase its capacity from 9,500 to 300,000 passports daily. He also led the country's campaign against the Kafala

system in the Middle East that eventually led to its historic reform.

For these and other achievements, he received the Order of Sikatuna with the rank of *Datu* (Gold Distinction) in December 2018 from then President Rodrigo Duterte.

As House Speaker, Cayetano transformed the institution into the “House of the People” and steered it through one of its most productive periods.

He responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by leading the swift passage of the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act and the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act that put necessary measures in place to protect the lives and livelihood of Filipinos.

Cayetano continues to champion the 10K Ayuda Bill as a pandemic response, which he has refiled in the Senate as the Sampung Libong Pag-asa Bill. Refusing to simply wait for its approval, he launched the privately funded “*Sampung Libong Pag-asa*” and “*Sari-saring Pag-asa*” programs which have helped thousands of families and sari-sari store owners.

Aside from the *Sampung Libong Pag-asa* bill, Cayetano’s other priority bills include the National Values, Etiquette, and Moral Uprightness Act, Anti-Online Gambling Act, MERCHANT Loan Program Act, *Puhunan Tungo sa Kaunlaran* Act, Emergency Response Department Act, Mobile A.P.P. Act, Mahal Ko, Barangay Health Worker Ko Law, Center for the Elderly in All Cities and Municipalities Act and Health Passport System Act.

As of August 21, 2022, Cayetano chairs the Senate Committee on Government Corporations and Public Enterprises as well as the Committee on Science and Technology.

With his long experience as a public servant, he is ready to serve with integrity to provide only what is the best for the Filipino people.

SEN. JOSEPH VICTOR “JV” G. EJERCITO



Sen. Joseph Victor G. Ejercito was born on December 26, 1969 in Manila. He is the son of former San Juan City Mayor Guia Gomez and former President Joseph Ejercito Estrada.

Under Ejercito’s leadership, San Juan was distinguished for its dynamic local government reforms and economic boom, which resulted in an annual revenue increase of P100 million. From P300 million in 2001, San Juan’s revenue reached P1.2 billion pesos in 2010. Because of this significant growth, San Juan was converted into a highly urbanized city in June 2007.

Ejercito’s accomplishments as mayor garnered him several prestigious awards such as the Ten Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) Award for Public Service and Governance in 2007. In 2010, Ejercito ran unopposed as representative for the Lone District of San Juan.

In the 15th Congress, Ejercito was recognized among the Fifteen Most Outstanding Congressmen. Ejercito was also distinguished as the 9th most prolific lawmaker in the 15th Congress, having authored a total of 149 House bills, one of which was the Kasambahay Bill, and 18 House resolutions. He also fought to increase state subsidies for state universities and colleges (SUCs) and for the reformation of the Sangguniang Kabataan system.

Ejercito was elected senator during the May 2013 national elections.

During the 16th Congress, Ejercito

sought to legislate landmark reforms on local housing, economic affairs, education, job generation and the welfare of the youth. At the time, he was chairman of the Senate Committee on Economic Affairs and Committee on Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement. He was able to file a total of 117 Senate bills and 18 Senate resolutions.

In the 17th Congress, Ejercito advocated for significant measures on public health and housing. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Health and Demography and Committee on Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement, he principally sponsored two landmark laws, namely the Universal Healthcare Law and the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development Law. He also ensured the approval of at least 40 laws that sought to establish, upgrade, and convert public hospitals across the country. A total of 55 bills authored and co-authored by Ejercito during the 17th Congress were enacted into law.

As a motorcycle enthusiast, Ejercito is a proponent of the Philippine Motorcycle Tourism (PMT) program. He is a Commissioned Reserve Officer of the Philippine Marine Corps with the rank of major and an adopted member of the Philippine Military Academy Class ‘88 of Maringal.

SEN. FRANCIS JOSEPH “CHIZ” G. ESCUDERO



Francis Joseph Guevara Escudero or Chiz as most Filipinos know him, is one of the youngest lawmakers to serve in Congress and among its most popular,

having consistently won elections in the House of Representatives and later on in the Senate, topping the senatorial elections.

A lawyer and a professor of law, Chiz is a product of the University of the Philippines, from primary all the way to law school. He passed the Philippine Bar in 1994 and went on to obtain a Masters degree in International and Comparative Law at Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C. in 1996.

He entered politics in 1998 when he was elected representative of the First District of Sorsogon. He served three terms during which he served as Assistant Majority Floor Leader and House Minority Floor Leader.

In 2007 and 2013, Chiz ran and was among the top senators that the voters preferred. He was one of the Senate's most productive members. He passed a total of 273 laws and was among the legislators who made sure that there were no pending bills in his committees.

Chiz was named one of the country's Ten Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) for youth leadership, the only Filipino to be named Asia News Network's Asia's Idols, honored as one of the world's Young Global Leaders by the World Economic Forum, and received the Rotary Golden Wheel Award in recognition of his contributions in political governance and the legislative field.

In 2019, Chiz went back to his hometown in Sorsogon and became the governor of the province. As governor, he pushed for the speedy implementation of numerous projects on health, infrastructure, agriculture, social services, tourism and disaster risk management that immensely improved the lives of his fellow Sorsoganons.

With the fresh mandate given to him in the 19th Congress, Chiz continues to push for extensive legislation on good governance, education, agriculture, electoral reforms and justice and human rights.

SEN. JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA



Sen. Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada returns to the Senate with a mandate vested upon him by over 15 million or 27.20 percent of the 55.5 million Filipinos who cast their votes during the May 9, 2022 national elections.

In 2004, when he first won as senator, he got more than 11 million votes, or 33.11 percent of the total ballots cast, to snatch the 10th place.

In the 2010 senatorial elections, he won his reelection bid and finished 2nd in rank. Three years into his second term, or during the opening of the 14th Congress, he was elected by his colleagues as Senate President Pro Tempore, the youngest senator to hold the position at the age of 44.

During his 12 years in the Senate from 2004 to 2016, Estrada authored at least nine landmark labor legislations that were signed into law. Among these laws is Republic Act No. 10361, or the Batas Kasambahay Act which languished in Congress for 16 years before it was finally enacted into law on January 18, 2013.

Estrada, who was then the chairperson of the Senate Committee on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development, pursued the enactment of the Batas Kasambahay Act as he sought justice for the cruelty that kasambahay Bonita Baran suffered under the hands of her employers for three years. He led the Senate investigation into her case and

incorporated his committee's findings to the final version of the measure which institutionalized the rights and liabilities of kasambahays and their employers.

Estrada is also the principal author of RA 10151 which lifted the ban on night work for women and expanded the rights of night workers. Signed on June 21, 2011, the passage of the law substantially increased employment opportunities in the thriving business process outsourcing (BPO) sector.

Estrada's pro-labor advocacy is also behind his pursuit of the enactment of the following measures: RA 10917 which strengthened and expanded the coverage of the special program for the employment of students (SPES); RA 10691 or the enhanced Public Employment Service Office (PESO) Act which institutionalized PESOs in all provinces, municipalities, cities and other strategic areas throughout the country to help more Filipinos seeking local and overseas employment;

RA 10801 which declared the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) as a national government agency and provided for an OWWA Fund for the exclusive financing of core programs and services for OFWs and their families; RA 10771 or the Philippine Green Jobs Act of 2016 which grants special tax deductions and duty-free importation of capital equipment for companies that create a "green economy" for the country;

RA 10165 or the Foster Care Act of 2012 that institutionalized foster care as a primary child care program for abused, abandoned and neglected children in the country and established a system that will promote foster care for homeless children by giving foster parents and donor agencies tax incentives; and RA 9858 or the Legitimation of Children Born to Parents Below Marrying Age which recognizes the legitimacy of children born out of wedlock to parents who were not allowed by law to marry.

SEN. WIN GATCHALIAN



“Education is the foundation of our national development.” This has been the standpoint of Sen. Win Gatchalian since he entered public service. He is a steadfast advocate of educational programs and a champion of quality, affordable, and accessible education for Filipino learners.

He earned his degree in Finance and Operations Management from the prestigious Boston University in Massachusetts, USA.

He first entered public service as representative of the first district of Valenzuela City in 2001 and later served in 2004 as mayor of the city for nine years. Upon his return to the House of Representatives in 2013, he pioneered the Free Higher Education measure which sought to make the state and local universities and colleges tuition-free.

In 2016, Gatchalian landed a seat in the Senate. A year after, the Free Higher Education Act that he authored has turned into a reality when Republic Act No. 10931 -- the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act -- was signed into law.

As chairman of the Senate Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture during the 18th Congress, Gatchalian pushed for various education reforms. Among the landmark laws he fought for are the Alternative Learning System Act, Inclusive Education for Learners with Disabilities Act, National Academy of Sports Act, Good Manners and Right Conduct and Values Education Act, Excellence in Teacher

Education Act and the creation of a Second Congressional Commission on Education or EDCOM II to review, assess, and evaluate the state of the Philippine education system and recommend innovative and targeted policy reforms relevant to the needs of the people and society.

Now, on his second term in the Upper Chamber, he continues to chair the Committee on Basic Education.

As the chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy during the 17th and 18th Congresses, Gatchalian also become one of the leading voices in the Philippine energy sector. He successfully steered the passage of several key measures aimed at fostering a competitive, investor-friendly, and red tape-free environment—the Murang Kuryente Act, Electric Cooperatives Emergency and Resiliency Fund Act, Energy Virtual One Stop Shop Act, Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act, among others.

He also strove towards the successful passage of several pro-consumer laws such as the Mobile Number Portability Act, allowing consumers to have the freedom to shift to other mobile service providers or subscriptions without changing their mobile numbers; and the Financial Products and Services Consumer Protection Act which will safeguard and promote the rights of consumers on financial products and services.

Recognizing his extensive track record as a public servant and for his notable contributions to the development of the country, he was chosen as the 69th Lee Kuan Yew Exchange Fellow in 2019. He was one of the four Filipinos to receive the prestigious fellowship from Singapore.

His commitment to provide genuine public service continues to drive him in pursuing his promising vision of a better Philippines as he now serves his second term in the Senate. He chairs the Committee on Ways and Means.

Gatchalian's impeccable work ethic and tireless dedication to serve the country for over 20 years has made him one of the most distinguished law-makers today.

SEN. RISA HONTIVEROS



Sen. Risa Hontiveros is widely known for her tireless work in promoting public health, the rights of women and other marginalized groups and the welfare of the Filipino family.

A multi-awarded public servant, community organizer and broadcast journalist, Hontiveros served as the representative of Akbayan Partylist from 2004 to 2010. She was first elected to the Senate in 2016, and was later re-elected by voters for a new Senate term in 2022.

Hontiveros has championed 25 new landmark laws, including the historic Expanded Maternity Leave Law (RA 11210) which gives working moms 105 days of paid maternity leave, and the Mental Health Law (RA 11036) which provides the first legal framework over mental health care in the country.

As chairperson of the Senate Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality, Hontiveros has successfully pushed the passage into law the Expanded Solo Parents Welfare Act (RA 11861) which provides wider social benefits to solo parents, the Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313) which protects Filipinos -- especially women -- from gender-based harassment in public spaces, and the Anti-

Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children Law (RA 11930) which boosts government efforts to end online abuse and exploitation of Filipino children.

She is currently working on the passage of reforms such as the proposed *Lingap Para Kay Lolo at Lola Act* which will establish a system of universal social pension for Pinoy senior citizens, and the Free Dialysis Act which will mandate PhilHealth to provide free dialysis sessions to all senior citizens.

In addition to her legislative achievements, Hontiveros is known as a fiscalizer due to her leading role in Senate investigations exposing corruption and abuses in government. She led the Senate probe on the “pastillas” scam involving personnel of the Bureau of Immigration which led to the filing of criminal and administrative charges against dozens of erring BI officers.

She is also recognized for her work as a peace advocate. In 2005, she earned a nomination to the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize for her contributions in the peace movement in the Philippines.

Alongside her work in and outside of the Senate, Sen. Hontiveros is a loving and hands-on solo mother to her four children: Kiko, Ianna, Issa and Sinta.

SEN. ROBINHOOD "ROBIN" C. PADILLA



“Kailangan hindi ka lang action hero sa pelikula. Pag sinabi na action hero ka, kahit sa totoong buhay (Being

an action hero should not just be for the movies - it should be for real life).”

This is what motivates Sen. Robinhood "Robin" C. Padilla - Robinhood Ferdinand Cariño Padilla in real life -- to promote the welfare of ordinary Filipinos.

It is Senator Robin's dream to achieve peace and unity among all Filipinos, not just Muslims like him but for every Juan.

An actor, "Binoe" has experienced firsthand the daily problems that hound Juan dela Cruz, including poverty and discrimination. As the number one elected senator, he is determined to help the ordinary Filipino through legislation.

Among his first bills are the proposed amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law for our farmers; civil service eligibility for casual and contractual employees in the government; and the use of Filipino as an official language for government issuances and documents.

Padilla is also pushing for the teaching of Philippine History in the curriculum, the rights of same-sex couples, and the protection of couples with irreconcilable differences through a divorce bill.

His other advocacies include giving Filipinos a comfortable life through a shift to federalism; fighting crime and corruption; and caring for the environment.

SEN. RAFFY T. TULFO



Sen. Raffy T. Tulfo is a known

defender of the poor and the aggrieved, with a career in public service as a broadcaster spanning over 20 years.

Popular for his brand of public service where he acts swiftly on the problems of ordinary citizens, Tulfo is bringing his experience and expertise in the area of crafting meaningful laws in his first term as senator in the 19th Congress.

Called by many as “Idol,” he is also the man behind the multi-awarded and widely popular programs, “Raffy Tulfo in Action” and “Wanted sa Radyo.”

As a mediaperson, Tulfo started his broadcasting career as a disc jockey in a local radio station in Puerto Princessa City, Palawan and later clinched his first big break on broadcast when he became a newscaster/reporter of PTV 4.

Tulfo then hosted several public service programs on ABC 5 providing immediate resolutions to disputes.

He also became the anchor of primetime TV newscast “Frontline Pilipinas.”

His advocacy includes promoting and protecting the rights of families, OFWs and ordinary workers.

Using the power of the pen to inform the public and express his opinions on burning issues, Tulfo became a columnist for several tabloids, such as Abante and Bulgar.

Prior to being a media practitioner and a senator, Idol Raffy wore different hats and took on different jobs both in the Philippines and the US to survive – from working as a vegetable vendor to working as dishwasher, waiter, nursing aid, account receivable clerk, shoe salesman, and sales and insurance representative.

Born on March 12, 1960 in Quezon City, NCR, Tulfo is the 8th of 10 children of Ramon Tulfo Sr. and Caridad Teshiba-Tulfo. He was educated in Holy Trinity College of Puerto Princessa City, Trinity College of Quezon City and Ateneo De Davao University.

SEN. JOEL “TESDAMAN” VILLANUEVA



Sen. Joel Villanueva's career in public service started in 2002 when he became a member of the House of Representatives as Citizens' Battle Against Corruption (CIBAC) Party List representative at the age of 27.

He championed the passage of the Anti-Red Tape Act, became the youngest member of the Lower Chamber also known as the "Benjamin of the House," elected as Assistant Majority Leader, and became the first ever Minority Leader of the Commission on Appointments from a partylist group.

After his term in Congress in 2010, he was appointed Director General of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) by former President Benigno Aquino III. Villanueva was able to earn for the agency its ISO Certification, allowing TESDA to provide world class tech-voc training for 10 million Filipinos during his term, and 10 million more in 2016. Villanueva aimed to remove the stigma attached to tech-voc education by walking his talk, training and becoming a Certified Barista under the TESDA program. This was how he earned the nickname "TesdaMan".

TesdaMan then ran and won as senator in 2016, advocating the promotion of jobs and their inextricable connection to tech-voc education and skills training. As a senator, he served as chairman of the Committees on Youth, on Labor and Employment, and on Higher, Technical and Vocational

Education. He holds to this day a perfect attendance record in the Senate, which led to the passing of more than 300 of his Senate bills into law.

Some of these "Villanueva Laws" include the Department of Migrant Workers Law, *Doktor para sa Bayan* Law, *Tulong-Trabaho* Law, Telecommuting Law, Philippine Qualifications Framework Law, Occupational Safety and Health Standards Law, First-Time Jobseekers Assistance Law, Increasing the Social Pension of Senior Citizens Law, and many more.

Reelected in the May 2022 national elections with 18,486,034 votes, Villanueva's second term began when his colleagues elected him to become Senate Majority Leader.

He received various awards and recognition as a public servant. He was

named among the 40 Under 40 International Development Leaders in 2013 by the US-based Development Executive Group (DevEx) for distinguished development impact and his role in shaping the development agenda. Former President Benigno Aquino III conferred him the Order of Lakandula in 2016 for his distinguished contributions to the nation. The UST College of Commerce Alumni Foundation, Inc. (COCAFI) awarded him as Outstanding Alumnus in the Field of Government Service in 2007.

Villanueva graduated with a degree in Commerce, major in economics, at the University of Santo Tomas. He also took special studies in Business Administration at Harvard University. In addition, the Polytechnic University of the Philippines conferred on him the Doctor of Humanities, *honoris causa*.



19th CONGRESS LEGACY WALL UNVEILED: Senate President Juan Miguel "Migz" F. Zubiri leads senators in unveiling the legacy wall last October. The 19.97 x 3.13-meter mural installed at the second floor of the Senate building in Pasay City features the 24 senators of the 19th Congress. "This wall celebrates the power of the people, people who chose us to work for them and to advocate for them in these halls. Remember, ladies and gentlemen, this is not our Senate, this is your Senate. It is the people's Senate. When we look at this wall, may we be constantly reminded of our duty to our people," Zubiri said during the unveiling ceremony. The activity was part of the month-long celebration of the 106th anniversary of the Senate. Also present during the ceremony were Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda, Majority Leader Joel Villanueva and Senators Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go, Win Gatchalian, Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito, Ramon Bong Revilla Jr., Francis "Tol" Tolentino, Robinhood Padilla and Raffy Tulfo. Former Senate President Franklin Drilon and former Sen. Francisco "Kit" Tatad also graced the occasion. (Senate PRIB photo)

SEN. MARK A. VILLAR



Sen. Mark A. Villar served as the Secretary of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) for five years under the Duterte Administration. As the head of DPWH, Sen. Mark was able to institute numerous changes which led to the timely completion, rehabilitation and improvement of quality infrastructure all over the Philippines.

He played a prominent role in realizing the “Golden Age of Infrastructure” through the “Build, Build, Build” Program, which generated over six million jobs from 2016 to 2021. He helped institutionalized reforms in policies and strategies in the DPWH.

He also helped address the road right of way issue, which is one of the main reasons for project delays. He issued numerous important Department Orders, which include: the blacklisting of contractors, the strict application of the Procurement Law (R.A. No. 9184) in the Conduct of Post Qualification of Bidders with Delayed Ongoing Contracts, the Electronic Submission and Receipt of Bids for the Procurement of Civil Works Contracts, and the Geo-tagging of DPWH Civil Works Projects, among other issuances.

He relentlessly pursued the completion of projects under the Luzon Spine Expressway Network Program, the Mindanao Logistics Network, the “Tatag ng Imprastaktura para sa Kapayapaan at Seguridad” (TIKAS) Program, the Tourism Road Infrastructure Program (TRIP), the Roads Leveraging

Linkages for Industry and Trade (ROLL-IT) Program, the “Kalsada Tungo sa Paliparan, Riles, at Daungan” (KATUPARAN) Program, the Agri-Infrastructure Support Program, and many other priority projects.

At the onset of the pandemic, Villar was instrumental in the building of 730 operational facilities with 27,302-bed capacities. Back in 2010, he was elected representative for the Lone District of Las Piñas and served as congressman until 2016 until he was appointed by President Duterte as DPWH Secretary.

Prior to being a public servant, Villar served for eight years as the

General Manager of Crown Asia Corporation. He finished his Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science, Philosophy, and Economics at the University of Pennsylvania and his Master's Degree in Business Administration at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

Asked to name his greatest achievement in life, Sen. Mark without blinking an eye, admitted that it is marrying the strong, bright, beautiful, and passionate former Undersecretary of the Department of Justice Atty. Emmeline Aglipay Villar, and his beautiful, smart, and energetic daughter, Emma Therese A. Villar.



LAUNCHING OF LANTERNS: Senators watch with delight the bright giant Christmas lanterns during its launch at the Philippine Senate last November. A project of the Senate Spouses Foundation, Inc. (SSFI), the event was graced by the father of Philippine Christmas Music Jose Mari Chan and Congresswoman Lani Mercado who crooned “Christmas in our Hearts” to Senate officials and employees. “This is our first Christmas Senate after a long time. This is the light at the end of the two-year in the very long and dark COVID tunnel. This Christmas, just as the first Star of Bethlehem served as a guide for the wise men to the manger of Jesus, I hope that as you see this Star, let it guide your hearts back home to Jesus as well. Merry Christmas to all,” SSFI president Audrey Zubiri said. (PRIB Photos)

Eugenio keeps SENADO post

By JP Lopez



Rosella Eugenio has been given a fresh mandate as president of the Senate Union Sandigan ng mga Empleyadong Nagkakaisa sa Adhika-in ng Demokratikong Organisasyon (SENADO).

The November 10, 2022 elections was also a record considering that 87.5 percent or 700 of around 800 union members participated in the elections.

During the officers' oath-taking ceremonies held last November 22, Eugenio vowed to pursue a progressive and nationalistic orientation of unionism.

"We will continue to pursue the union's major campaigns: enhancement of collective negotiation agreement, regularization of casual and contractual employees, and assert liviang wages, humane working condition, and employees' rights and welfare," Eugenio said during the oath-taking ceremonies.

Also elected were Sarah Marie Jalandoni, vice-president; Maricel Jovellano, secretary; Jocelyn Tomarong-Celda, treasurer; Divina Alano, Auditor; Bienvenido Dimen, P.R.O.; and Ronel Manalo, Sgt-at-Arms.

The elected members of the board were: Rogelio Pacete, Kara Hernandez, Alan Tablizo, Pedro Samaniego, Leonora Salonga, Elena Valeantus, Ma. Cristina Elialde-Poblete and Nueva Viola Gacutan.

Union holds general assembly



During the September 24, 2022 assembly, more than 500 members attended the event, 171 of them via online.

Aside from Zubiri, Sen. Win Gatchalian, who attended physically and Senators Francis "Chiz" Escudero, Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada and Ramon Bong Revilla Jr. extended their support for the union. Revilla sent their video messages to the union.

The assembly highlighted its accomplishments for the past three years such as the reactivation of Union Representatives Committee, re-establishments of other standing committees like education, membership, propaganda/publications, and

campaigns, among others.

Under the leadership of Rosella, several monetary benefits were increased such as the educational allowance, the limit of the health care services, the transition allowance, milestone award, and burial assistance.

For the regularization of casual and contractual employees, Senate Secretary Renato Bantug Jr., in a meeting with union officers, agreed to study the "co-terminus with the incumbent (CTI) status of the employees. But initially, Zubiri agreed with the proposed annual renewal of casual and contractual employees from the old practice of six-month renewal.

Sotto leads symbolic lowering of time capsule

By Leonard Postrado



Former Senate President Vicente C. Sotto III felt a brief wave of nostalgia the moment he stepped foot in the basement of the unfinished new Senate building at the Naval Village in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City last June 2, 2022.

The wave of nostalgia was strong that it quickly transports Sotto from what would be the future parking lot of the new Senate to the old Congress building in Manila, now the National Museum, in 1992.

“That’s where (old Congress) I delivered my maiden privilege speech about illegal drugs,” Sotto told guests who took part and witnessed the dedication ceremony.

Sotto walked further down memory lane as he recalled his colorful journey as a senator for more than two decades: How he spent long hours with his colleagues from different congresses, how he participated and engaged in debates during plenary sessions and most importantly, passing significant laws.

“Since 1992, when I started as a legislator, I’ve been in different Senate buildings. It served as an extension of my home... In light manner, I cherish these memories,” Sotto said.

“Both buildings that I have been

in have witnessed so much of our history that if only the walls could speak, the stories of the past would be endless and it would be bittersweet moment to leave behind the Senate’s residence for over two decades,” he added.

Sotto, together with former Sen. Panfilo M. Lacson and Sen. Nancy Binay, were in the new Senate building (construction ongoing) to participate in the symbolic lowering of the time capsule during a simple dedication ceremony.

Also present during the ceremony were former Senate Secretary Myra Marie D. Villarica, Deputy Secretary for Legislation Edwin Bellen, Deputy Secretary for Administrative and Financial Services Jose S. Bañas, and Senate Legal Counsel Maria Valentina S. Santana-Cruz.

Though the construction of the new Senate building took a step back due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sotto pointed out that “the timetable for the completion of the construction is getting back on track.”

“At this point, allow me to express how incredibly grateful and humbled I am to grace this occasion. It feels like only yesterday when we broke ground on this site, of course before the pandemic,” Sotto said.

He said he believes the new Senate building would provide a fresh chapter for the Senate of the Philippines now that it has a new and permanent home.

He said he believes the new Senate building “Bagong Senado represents the honor, dignity, and integrity of the Philippine Senate. It undoubtedly captures the essence of the institution. My hope is that we will all be blessed to witness the day that this iconic structure will become a home for the Filipino people we represent and serve. A citadel of democracy and symbol of the Senate’s independence,” he said, would provide a fresh chapter for the Senate of the Philippines now that it has a new and permanent home.

For Lacson, the symbolic lowering of the time capsule tells the story of how the Senate threaded its way despite the setbacks brought about by the pandemic.

He said the Senate’s transition to the next Congress should bear the same thrust following the inevitable demands of the new normal: to build the facility within a reasonable time and budget while keeping safety, efficiency and economy as their priority.

“‘Bagong Senado sa Ikalawang Siglo’ is everything imagined by its visionaries: a landmark that will serve as the permanent home of the Senate,” Lacson said.

“As we lower the time capsule today, may we bear in mind that we are creating a legacy—a New Senate Building with the end goal of giving the institution the dignity it deserves; a legacy that will outlive us and hopefully, represent the Senate -- a truly dignified and independent public institution for the interest of the Filipino People,” Lacson, who oversaw the construction of the new Senate building, said.

External Affairs conducts fellowship games

By Jeff Antiporda

Sports are beneficial for the mental and physical well-being of an individual. Not only can it help strengthen bones and tone muscles but it can also improve one's focus, productivity and health.

These were among the reasons why the Senate External Affairs and Relations headed by Deputy Secretary Enrique Luis D. Papa had been keen on reintroducing sports to the Senate employees as the country slowly transitions to a "new normal" amid the slow-down of Covid-19 spread.

For starters, the External Affairs Office during the first quarter of the year launched its fellowship games -- the Golf fellowship and Bowling and Billiards fellowship which were participated by a number of employees.

The Golf fellowship games were successfully held in April at the Splendido Taal Golf Club in Laurel, Batangas with 25 staff joining the whole day activity.

Legislative-Executive Liaison Service head Dir. Rommel Escudero said that since golf tournament was not yet allowed during that time, organizers allowed players to play by flight, and have them record their scores by themselves. Each flight is composed of four players.

Escudero added that unlike the usual golf tournament, there was no big celebration at the end of the golf fellowship.

"There was no big celebration. It was a quiet game because tournaments were not allowed at that time," Escudero explained.

Similar procedures were observed during the billiard and bowling fellowship games which were held on April 26 and 27, respectively at the Superbowl Bowling and Billiard Center (Makati Cinema Square) in Makati City.



"We have encountered some difficulties in all the sports events. We have to implement certain rules and we have to limit the players. We had to arrange the events in such a way that we would comply with physical distancing and medical protocols. It was challenging, but if there is a will, there is always a way," Papa said.

According to Papa, the purpose of the sports events is to promote wellness, camaraderie and competitiveness which are very important to all Senate employees.



"So, you have to have the tenacity to achieve your goal otherwise, you will fail more often than you expect," he added.

Although they encountered some difficulties in conducting the fellowship games, Papa said the events were successfully held because of the support they got from the employees.

A public servant and a family man

By Michael D. Caber



Former Senate President Vicente Sotto III and his family

Senator Vicente C. Sotto III, the 23rd senate president, was described by his colleagues as a consensus builder, a leader by example, and a master of parliamentary procedures and Rules of the Senate. His experience in legislation—being a former Quezon City vice mayor who presided the City Council, minority leader, and majority leader—helped him to smoothly lead and navigate the Senate as a legislative body.

As an expression of his staunchness and commitment to his duties, Sotto has always been physically present even in time of a pandemic, never late and recorded no absences. Perhaps he is the only senator who can seamlessly switch from one career to another, being an accomplished public servant, lawmaker, sportsman and musician.

Sotto wants to be remembered as musician by profession, sportsman by affiliation, drug buster by vocation, and a public servant by conviction. He approaches legislation and public service with utmost dedication to ensure the welfare of the Filipino

people.

Sotto's legacy as senate president embraces the timely passing of several measures to make sure that our government is well-equipped to respond against the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the laws he worked for were: Bayanihan 1 and 2, National Vaccination Program, An Act Amending School Calendar, An Act Authorizing the President to Expedite the Processing of Permits, Licenses and Certifications, COVID-19 Benefits and Allowances for Health Workers Act and the Financial Institutions Strategic Transfer (FIST) Act.

Furthermore, some landmark laws during his time include: the Universal Health Care Law, Medical Scholarship Act (Doktor Para sa Bayan Act), creation of new departments such as the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development, Department of Migrant Workers, and the amended 85-year old Public Service Act (which became a law in 1936 and has never been amended).

Sotto's senate presidency started on May 22, 2018 during the 17th

Congress and continued up to the 18th Congress. In these two Congresses, the Senate managed to pass a total of 669 bills into laws (472 during the 17th Congress and 197 in 18th Congress), without mentioning the resolutions adopted and treaties ratified.

Aside from being the vice mayor of Quezon City (1988-1992) and Dangerous Drugs Board chairman (2008-2009), Sotto had been a senator from 1992 to 2004 and was reelected in 2010 up to 2022. With three decades of public service, Sotto had authored and sponsored 247 laws, making him one of the

most prolific senators in the history of the Senate.

Some of the laws that he principally authored were: the Family Courts Act, Philippine Fisheries Code, Electronic Commerce Act, Anti-Drunk and Drugged Driving Act, Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, Children's Safety on Motorcycles Act, Mental Health Law, Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act, Expanded Sotto Law, Doktor Para sa Bayan Act, the Anti-Terrorism Act, and An Act Increasing the Penalty for Perjury.

Also part of Sen. Sotto's bequest was the construction of the new Senate building dubbed as "Bagong Senado," a new and permanent home for the Senate family.

For Senate President Sotto, his family is his best treasures, and an untarnished record as a public servant is his lasting legacy.