

FIFTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)



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SENATE
P. S. R. No. 557

BY: 

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE, TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON ALLEGATIONS THAT TOURISM SECRETARY ALBERTO LIM HAS FAILED TO EXERCISE THE FUNCTIONS OF HIS OFFICE WITH UTMOST RESPONSIBILITY AND EFFICIENCY AS MANDATED BY THE CONSTITUTION, THUS RESULTING IN THE LOSS OF MILLIONS OF PESOS FROM THE GOVERNMENT

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article 11, Section 1 provides: "Public office is a public trust. Public officers and employees must, at all times, be accountable to the people, serve them with utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty, and efficiency; act with patriotism and justice, and lead modest lives";

WHEREAS, various media have alleged that many people in the tourism sector are unhappy with Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Alberto Lim because of his alleged mismanagement of public funds and tourism projects; various media have also cited Lim's inefficiency, aloofness, and incompetence as contributing to the disunity in the tourism industry;

WHEREAS, Section 45 of Republic Act No. 9593 or the Tourism Act of 2009 mandates the creation of a Tourism Promotions Board: "Tourism Promotions Board. - Under the supervision of the Secretary and attached to the Department for purposes of program and policy coordination shall be a body corporate known as the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB). The TPB shall formulate and implement an integrated domestic and international promotions and marketing program for the Department";

WHEREAS, the law also provides that at least 25 percent of the 50 percent of the national government's share remitted by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (Pagcor) to the national treasury shall be used as funds by the Tourism Promotions Board;

WHEREAS, it was reported that according to Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Florencio Abad, since the abovementioned provision was not brought up during budget deliberations, the DBM allocated P476 million to the DOT for tourism promotions;

WHEREAS, reports however claimed that apart from the P476 million, the DOT can still claim its 25 percent of the government's 50 percent share in Pagcor's remittances to the national government;

WHEREAS, despite the enactment of the law in 2009, Lim has failed to convene the Tourism Promotions Board, which should have been the body in charge of tourism promotions;

WHEREAS, since the TPB has not yet been convened, the disbursement of public funds relating to tourism promotions, which includes not just the P476 million but also funds from Pagcor's remittances to the national government, now depends solely on the discretion of the DOT;

WHEREAS, it was reported that of this P476 million, Lim spent P4.7 million to pay for food during the launching of the "Pilipinas Kay Ganda" slogan, that failed to impress the tourism

industry because it was a mere imitation of Poland's logo, and was in Filipino, a language foreigners do not understand;

WHEREAS, it was further reported that due to this, Lim is now allegedly facing a graft case in the Office of the Ombudsman for dishonesty, abuse of authority and incompetence and wasting public funds, which was filed last 9 December 2010;

WHEREAS, despite this blunder, Bobit Avila in his column, "Shooting Straight", dated 22 July 2011, claimed that the "DOT [under Lim] is wasting again taxpayer's money... to get a company to redo the Tourism Development Master Plan, when what he [Lim] could have done was merely implement this master plan";

WHEREAS, Lim's alleged rehashing of old plans will lead to unnecessary expenditure on the part of the government; the P476 million for tourism promotions should be put into better use by implementing current tourism programs that have proved to bolster the tourism industry in the past;

WHEREAS, it should also be stressed that Lim has also violated the law by supposedly failing to convene the Tourism Congress, which according to Section 104 of the Tourism Act of 2009, should have been convened by the DOT secretary within 30 days from the publication of the implementing rules and regulations of the law;

WHEREAS, the Tourism Congress shall be composed of representatives of all accredited tourism enterprises and former government officials involved in the tourism industry to serve as the private sector consultative body to assist the government in the development, implementation and coordination of Philippine tourism policy;

WHEREAS, Avila's article also stated that although Lim "has finally convinced the President to sign that Open Skies Policy...there are no new carriers flying foreign tourists here. In fact the foreign carriers flying in and out of the Philippines are profiting from Filipino Overseas Foreign Workers (OFWs) who fly all over the world";

WHEREAS, the article therefore questioned the necessity of an Open Skies Policy, stating that "[although] there are some 70 foreign airlines given entitlements to fly to Cebu...only Silk Air, Korean Air, Asiana Airlines, Jeju Air, Qatar Airways and Cathay Pacific are flying in and out of Cebu";

WHEREAS, the Filipino people deserve competent officials; when it comes to the disbursement of public funds, each official must exercise a higher degree of prudence in executing projects on behalf of the government; Lim's alleged incompetence may lead to the wastage of the P1.65 billion budget for the DOT proposed in the 2012 budget;

WHEREAS, given that tourism is an indispensable element of the national economy, it is necessary to look into reports that Lim has failed to exercise the functions of his office with utmost responsibility and efficiency, thus resulting in the loss of millions of pesos from the government and causing detrimental damage and disunity in the local tourism industry;

WHEREAS, be it hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate, to direct the proper Senate committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on allegations that Tourism Secretary Alberto Lim has failed to exercise the functions of his office with utmost responsibility and efficiency as mandated by the Constitution, thus resulting in the loss of millions of pesos from the government.

Adopted,


MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO