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SENATE  
P. S. R. No. 1437

REC-1111-2009  


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Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

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RESOLUTION  
DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY  
IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES COMMITTED  
BY THE PHILIPPINE LABOR ATTACHE IN AUSTRALIA

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, a news article by ABS-CBN Australia News Bureau dated 23 October 2009, it was reported that the Philippine Embassy in Australia has recommended the immediate removal of Labor Attaché Victor Julio Ablan from office;

WHEREAS, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Franklin Ebdalin reportedly said that the recommendation was made in early October due to Ablan's alleged "unpaid obligations" and "deceit" and that the matter has been conveyed to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the government agency which deployed Ablan to Australia in the first place;

WHEREAS, it was learned that details of the Embassy's basis for suggesting Ablan's recall remain sketchy, but Ebdalin confirms the Head Office in Manila has received reports Ablan has been borrowing money from the Filipino-Australian community;

WHEREAS, the report claimed that in Sydney, Ablan's alleged borrowing activities have long been discussed by Filipino-Australians in hushed tones ;

WHEREAS, it was claimed that the story narrated by community leaders to ABS-CBN is the same: Ablan would ask to borrow \$700 and he would offer to pick up the cash at their homes or at work, refusing a check or electronic bank transfer;

WHEREAS, although the stories are the same, the reasons vary slightly: sometimes, Ablan would allegedly borrow money because his "living allowance" from the DOLE was late, or other times, Ablan allegedly explained that he needed the money to form part of the "Mobilization Funds", or funds that would enable him to help overseas Filipino workers who live and work in isolated areas and saying that the Philippine government's funds were insufficient;

WHEREAS, many initially believed the story about government sending late or insufficient funds, so they sympathized with Ablan and thought of other ways to help him, but people started talking when he allegedly failed to settle the loans as promised;

WHEREAS, it was reported that Ablan, who maintains an apartment in Curtin, a suburb of the Australian capital Canberra, allegedly owes his landlord thousands of dollars in unpaid rent;

WHEREAS, real estate agent Lita McKell allegedly told ABS-CBN that Ablan issued two checks totaling \$4,400, but since both checks bounced, McKell is considering filing a case in court;

WHEREAS, Ebdalin reportedly said that the Labor Department has been advised to make a decision on Ablan's case "quickly, as the matter is quite urgent," and that while the final decision rests with the DOLE, Ebdalin claimed that the recommendation of the Philippine Embassy in Australia "carries a lot of weight";

WHEREAS, there is an urgent need to investigate these allegations so as to ensure accountability and uprightness in the diplomatic and labor organizations, as well as to come up with legislation that would uphold the efficiency and effectiveness of its members and officers in the performance of their duties;

WHEREFORE, be it hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate, to direct the proper Senate committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the alleged irregularities committed by the Philippine labor attaché in Australia.

Adopted,

  
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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