

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



Senate
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SENATE
P. S. R. No. 436

RECEIVED BY: *ji*

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, TO STRENGTHEN LAWS TO ENSURE THE EFFICIENCY, TRANSPARENCY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF GOVERNMENT DISASTER RELIEF PROJECTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE INVOLVING INTERNATIONAL AID, FOLLOWING REPORTS THAT BUNKHOUSES BEING DEVELOPED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS IN LEYTE AND EASTERN SAMAR THAT ARE MEANT FOR THE VICTIMS OF SUPERTYPHOON YOLANDA ARE OVERPRICED AND DO NOT COMPLY WITH INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article II, Section 27 states: "The State shall maintain honesty and integrity in the public service and take positive and effective measures against graft and corruption";

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article II, Section 28 states: "Subject to reasonable conditions prescribed by law, the State adopts and implements a policy of full public disclosure of all its transactions involving public interest;"

WHEREAS, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* reported last 6 January 2014 that, according to international shelter group Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM), some 203 bunkhouses being developed by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) in Leyte and Eastern Samar do not comply with internationally recognized standards and best practices;

WHEREAS, the construction of bunkhouses are meant for families of homeless victims of Supertyphoon "Yolanda" (international name: Haiyan) as temporary shelters;

WHEREAS, the CCCM said in a report that a number of contractors appears to be working at different sites; and that standards and facilities appear to be somewhat different between different locations;

WHEREAS, the same CCCM report raised the question of whether contractors have different specifications for different sites; and if they are using the same specifications, whether these are fully complied with in every location;

WHEREAS, it was also reported that government officials in Leyte and Samar are worried about reports that each bunkhouse is being constructed at a cost roughly below P200,000 and not P959,360 as priced in the DPWH plan;

WHEREAS, the news report said that although the DPWH planned for each of the bunkhouses to have amenities such as four toilets, two bathrooms, and a common kitchen, some bunkhouses in at least one municipality in Eastern Samar allegedly do not have those amenities;

WHEREAS, the CCCM report also raised concerns ranging from cramped spaces to lack of ventilation, risk of fires, and safety and security of occupants;

WHEREAS, it was reported that the bunkhouse unit is divided into 24 rooms, each room measuring 8.64 square meters meant to house one family; it should be considered that the reported average size of a Filipino family is five, but can be as large as 10 in some cases;

WHEREAS, a report by the municipal engineer in an Eastern Samar town was said to detail failures of private contractors of the DPWH to comply with specifications of the department; as an example, the municipal engineer's report said that while the DPWH specification on roofing was 0.50 millimeter, a 0.30 mm or 0.40 mm sheet was used in some of the bunkhouses; a 6 mm thick plywood wall specified was replaced with a thinner 3/16; instead of a 3/4 plywood for flooring, a 1/2 plyboard was employed;

WHEREAS, based on an *Inquirer* interview, a government engineer in Manila estimated the cost of the structures to be priced at P170,075 accounting only for the dwelling, direct cost using coco lumber, ordinary plywood and GI sheets, and doing away with the toilets, baths and kitchen.

WHEREAS, the *Inquirer* news article computed that when a calculated 10-percent profit margin and a 12-percent overhead cost contingency and miscellaneous expenses are factored in, the total cost of the bunkhouses amount to P232,391; this amount would mean each room costs an estimated P19,365, said to be roughly the same cost as a thatched hut;

WHEREAS, in an interview with the *Inquirer*, DPWH director for Eastern Visayas Rolando Asis, said that the department's specifications were being complied with faithfully and that mayors had agreed to the project; he also reportedly said that the bunkhouses were being built by private contractors outside the affected region and that the costs were in fact lower compared to the similar shelter for victims of Tropical Storm "Sendong" (international name: Washi) in Mindanao in 2012 years ago which cost P1.2 million;

WHEREAS, the *Inquirer* article reported that in one Eastern Samar town at least six private contractors for the project were local residents who are neither engineers nor building contractors, and that one of them is a Commission on Elections officer who did not have the capacity to provide for the P1-million investment needed for a single bunkhouse project;

WHEREAS, it was reported that the contractors were recommended by an administration politician and that their selection was based from the traditional practice in the Priority Development Assistance Fund pork barrel system;

WHEREAS, the news report said that some local officials in the typhoon-affected areas have yet to be told how long the temporary structures would remain and when permanent shelters would be built;

WHEREAS, this controversy multiplies the suffering of our countrymen in the typhoon-affected areas, as they have faced both devastation from a natural disaster and the evils of corruption from what is supposed to bring them relief;


WHEREAS, it is unscrupulous for entities, from government or otherwise, to take advantage of national tragedy and international charity for their personal gain;

WHEREAS, the national government owes local and international typhoon relief donors transparency and accountability, and therefore must ensure that the typhoon victims should receive relief by observing internationally recognized standards and best practices;

WHEREAS, the national government should also look into other potential overpricing and unscrupulous acts concerning typhoon relief operations;

WHEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PHILIPPINE SENATE to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, to strengthen laws to ensure the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of government disaster relief projects, especially those involving international aid, following reports that bunkhouses being developed by the Department of Public Works and Highways in Leyte and Eastern Samar that are meant for the victims of Supertyphoon Yolanda are overpriced and do not comply with internationally recognized standards and best practices.

Adopted,

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MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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