



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Senate
Pasay City

Journal

SESSION NO. 73
Monday, March 13, 2017

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

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CALL TO ORDER

At 3:13 p.m., the Senate President Pro Tempore, Hon. Ralph G. Recto, called the session to order.

PRAYER

Sen. Maria Lourdes Nancy S. Binay led the prayer, to wit:

Panginoon,

Ngayong malapit na ang panahon ng Kwaresma, buksan Mo po ang aming mga puso at isipan upang maiwaksi ang galit at poot laban sa aming mga kapwa.

We know that temptations abound us, and with Your help and guidance, love and righteousness will prevail. Guide us back to Your loving arms, our God of love.

Ituro Mo po sa amin ang Inyong banal na karunungan upang maging gabay namin sa isang marangal at kapita-pitagang buhay.

Fill our hearts with peace and justice instead, so we can share it with our fellow men and women.

Give our minds clarity so we can serve our countrymen faithfully as leaders of the land, and formulate programs, policies and service that would uplift their lives from the poverty and prejudice that surround us.

Bigyan Mo kami ng tapang at tibay ng loob upang mapagtagumpayan ang mga hamon at unos ng buhay.

Guide our hands and feet so that we can be Your tools in spreading Your goodness and generosity to all of Your creation.

Pagkalooban po Ninyo kami ng sapat na kakayahan upang patuloy naming mapagsilbihan ang bawat Pilipinong umaasa sa amin.

Patnubayan Mo po kami, Panginoon, at dalangin namin sa Inyo ang kabutihan ng aming kapwa at bayan.

Siya Nawa.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

The Senate Choir led the singing of the national anthem



ROLL CALL

Upon direction of the Senate President Pro Tempore, the Secretary of the Senate, Lutgardo B. Barbo, called the roll, to which the following senators responded:

Aquino, P. B. IV B.	Lacson, P. M.
Binay, M. L. N. S.	Pacquiao, E. M. D.
Drilon, F. M.	Pangilinan, F. N.
Ejercito, J. V. G.	Recto, R. G.
Escudero, F. J. G.	Sotto III, V. C.
Gatchalian, W.	Trillanes IV, A. F.
Gordon, R. J.	Villar, C. A.
Honasan, G. B.	Zubiri, J. M. F.
Hontiveros, R.	

With 17 senators present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum.

Senators Angara, Legarda and Poe arrived after the roll call.

Senators Cayetano and Villanueva were on official business as indicated in the March 13, 2017 letters of their respective chiefs of staff.

Senate President Pimentel was likewise on official business.

Senator De Lima was unable to attend the session as she was under detention.

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body dispensed with the reading of the Journal of Session No. 72 (March 8, 2017) and considered it approved.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

At this juncture, Senator Sotto acknowledged the presence in the gallery of the following guests:

- Atty. Coy Casado, board member of Benguet;
- Emy Mebomia, board member of Ifugao;
- Randolph Awisan, board member of Mountain Province;
- Jona Perio of Kalinga;
- Student representatives from the University of

the Philippines, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Eulogio Amang Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology, Technological Institute of the Philippines, Rizal Technological University, the Philippine State College of Aeronautics, Marikina Polytechnic College, UP System Bukluran, the Student Council Alliance of the Philippines, Akbayan Youth;

- Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) representatives;
- Mayor Hermogenes Cordova of Zamboanga del Norte;
- Councilors of Leon Postigo, Zamboanga del Norte, led by Vice Mayor Aidaroz Hambali;
- Students and faculty members of Don Carlo Cavina School, Las Piñas City; and
- Solicitor General Jesusa Magbanua.

Senate President Pro Tempore Recto welcomed the guests to the Senate.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 4631 ON THIRD READING

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, House Bill No. 4631, printed copies of which were distributed to the senators on March 7, 2017.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, Secretary Barbo read only the title of the bill, to wit:

AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO REPUBLIC BROADCASTING SYSTEM, INC., PRESENTLY KNOWN AS GMA NETWORK, INC., AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7252, ENTITLED AN ACT GRANTING THE REPUBLIC BROADCASTING SYSTEM, INC. A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES.

Secretary Barbo called the roll for nominal voting.



RESULT OF THE VOTING

The result of the voting was as follows:

In favor

Aquino	Lacson
Binay	Pacquiao
Drilon	Pangilinan
Ejercito	Recto
Escudero	Sotto
Gatchalian	Trillanes
Gordon	Villar
Honasan	Zubiri
Hontiveros	

Against

None

Abstention

None

With 17 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared House Bill No. 4631 approved on Third Reading.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

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

It was 3:21 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:22 p.m., the session was resumed with Senator Honasan presiding.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 4637 ON THIRD READING

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, House Bill No. 4637, printed copies of which were distributed to the senators on March 9, 2017.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, Secretary Barbo read only the title of the bill, to wit:

AN ACT EXTENDING FOR TWENTY-

FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO SMART COMMUNICATIONS, INC. (FORMERLY SMART INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.) AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7294, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING SMART INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC. (SMART) A FRANCHISE TO ESTABLISH, MAINTAIN, LEASE AND OPERATE INTEGRATED TELECOMMUNICATIONS/COMPUTER/ELECTRONIC SERVICES, AND STATIONS THROUGHOUT THE PHILIPPINES, FOR PUBLIC, DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Secretary Barbo called the roll for nominal voting.

RESULT OF THE VOTING

The result of the voting was as follows:

In favor

Aquino	Pacquiao
Binay	Pangilinan
Drilon	Recto
Ejercito	Sotto
Escudero	Trillanes
Gatchalian	Villar
Gordon	Zubiri
Honasan	

Against

Hontiveros	Lacson
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Abstention

None

With 15 senators voting in favor, two against, and no abstention, the Chair declared House Bill No. 4637 approved on Third Reading.

EXPLANATION OF VOTE OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Senator Hontiveros explained her negative vote, as follows:

Last Tuesday, during the period of amendments for the renewal of franchise of Smart telecoms, I proposed amendments which I thought were necessary to ensure that Smart complies with its obligations to its subscribers and prevent the perpetuation of a duopoly that compromises the quality of telecommunications service in the country.

In a sense, this sends a clear signal that the grant of a franchise is indeed a privilege that carries not only rights but also obligations. These amendments were unfortunately not accepted by the good Sponsor.

But we should stand on the side of the people who have so long suffered from poor telecom service but have no choice but to stick with their current service providers simply because there is no alternative. I am therefore registering my NO vote to the grant of franchise extension to Smart. And if I may be further allowed to explain my vote, please let me state the following issues which I thought were and still are crucial:

1. *The 30% public listing requirement*

Considering that Smart has continuously failed to comply with this requirement, we need a mechanism to guarantee compliance. In this case, what we proposed is that the franchise be *ipso facto* revoked should Smart fail to list within two years.

Why provide this penalty for a violation of the transfer limitation provision but fail to do so for this one?

2. *Equality Clause*

As admitted by the Sponsor during the interpellation, this clause is redundant as it is already contained in Republic Act No. 7925, the Telecommunications Act.

3. *Tax Exemptions*

Does an entrenched member of the duopoly need these privileges? It does not. Of particular concern is the substitution of the value-added tax for the 3% franchise tax. Given the nature of the VAT, this is a tax that can, and will, be passed on directly to consumers, possibly making service that is already among the slowest and most expensive in the region, even more expensive.

Congress should also consider any additional exceptions and privileges very carefully. The equality clause in Republic Act No. 7925 will, in conjunction with the equality clause, make these exceptions and privileges applicable to all other

telecom franchise holders, including those already owned by Smart and Globe.

This might lead to unintended consequences, particularly when the scope for the equality clause is ambiguous. As we all learned last week, there is a possibility that provisions in the franchise of the National Grid Corporation may be made applicable to entities in the telecommunications industry.

These unintended consequences may end up further solidifying the market position of the duopolists.

4. *Reallocation of the Radio Spectrum*

Moreover, it should be noted that both Smart and Globe have previously moved in tandem to oppose the entry of a third player in the industry. Between them, they have now been assigned all of the relevant portions of the radio spectrum.

Does Smart need Sun's frequencies? Maybe not. Right now, these frequencies might be redundant. It might be beneficial for the government to rebid and reallocate.

5. *Ownership*

Compared to Globe's corporate structure, PLDT's is very convoluted.

Smart is being less open and transparent. As an entity operating a public utility, it should disclose the beneficial ownership of the foreign companies that form part of its corporate layering.

Having said the foregoing, let me just remind Smart and all those who will be applying for franchise that it will no longer be business as usual. We shall be closely scrutinizing each and every application, including that of Innove Communications, Inc., to ensure that consumers are protected and that a level playing field is maintained. We shall be exercising our oversight powers over government regulators to ensure that they do their jobs.

Lastly, a lot has changed in the industry since the Public Telecommunications Policy Act was passed in 1995. Perhaps, it is time for Congress to re-examine the way in which the telecommunications sector is being regulated.

EXPLANATION OF VOTE OF SENATOR LACSON

Senator Lacson said that he cast a negative vote because even though his proposed amendment lost



when it was submitted to a vote, he still maintains that PLDT is different from Smart and, therefore, the requirement for PLDT to list publicly within two years, should also be required of Smart when the latter's franchise is renewed.

APPROVAL OF SENATE BILL NO. 209 ON THIRD READING

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, Senate Bill No. 209, printed copies of which were distributed to the senators on March 9, 2017.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, Secretary Barbo read only the title of the bill, to wit:

AN ACT DECLARING THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF AUGUST OF EVERY YEAR AS THE NATIONAL TECHNOLOGY DAY.

Secretary Barbo called the roll for nominal voting.

RESULT OF THE VOTING

The result of the voting was as follows:

In favor

Aquino	Lacson
Binay	Pacquiao
Drilon	Pangilinan
Ejercito	Poe
Escudero	Recto
Gatchalian	Sotto
Gordon	Trillanes
Honasan	Villar
Hontiveros	Zubiri

Against

None

Abstention

None

With 18 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared Senate Bill No. 209 approved on Third Reading.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri informed the Body that Senators Cayetano and Villanueva, who were both on official mission, had expressed their intention to submit their respective explanations of their vote the following day.

APPROVAL OF SENATE BILL NO. 1277 ON THIRD READING

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, Senate Bill No. 1277, printed copies of which were distributed to the senators on March 9, 2017.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, Secretary Barbo read only the title of the bill, to wit:

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE FREE INTERNET ACCESS PROGRAM IN PUBLIC SPACES IN THE COUNTRY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Secretary Barbo called the roll for nominal voting.

RESULT OF THE VOTING

The result of the voting was as follows:

In favor

Aquino	Lacson
Binay	Pacquiao
Drilon	Pangilinan
Ejercito	Poe
Escudero	Recto
Gatchalian	Sotto
Gordon	Trillanes
Honasan	Villar
Hontiveros	Zubiri

Against

None

Abstention

None

With 18 senators voting in favor, none against,

and no abstention, the Chair declared Senate Bill No. 1277 approved on Third Reading.

EXPLANATION OF VOTE OF SENATOR RECTO

Senator Recto explained his affirmative vote, to wit:

It is my pleasure to finally vote on a bill which I first filed in May 2014.

Although the Free National Wi-Fi Project is now in full swing by virtue of another legislative route — through three General Appropriations Acts, including this year's—still the best way to guarantee its continuation is through a charter.

As we speak, DICT-maintained Wi-Fi spots are mushrooming all over the country.

By end of the year, it is projected that 13,024 sites covered by 18 Points of Presence in 1,489 towns and 145 cities are up and running.

The funding came from the P4.8 billion appropriated since 2015.

To firewall this public service from being knocked down by changing political winds—to prevent the plug from being pulled—the passage of this bill is required.

More so that much remains to be done. For this year and next, 1,880 public elementary schools, 2,688 public high schools, and 682 state colleges are targeted for connection.

Overall, the aim is to roll out 23,631 sites by 2018, expanding it four-fold to 100,349 by 2026.

When it was conceived, government-run free Wi-Fi hotspots were meant for social good, and not for the sole purpose of allowing anyone to post unli-Instagram photos or selfies on Facebook.

That they will be set up in public hospitals so that if you are the son of an OFW in Italy, you can update your mom, via Viber, on the recovery of a loved one who has been stricken ill. Or if the hospital staff would like to transmit a patient's data, then there is a facility for that as well.

That they will be set up in schools to enrich learning so that both teachers and students could tap into the infinite sources of knowledge available online.

That they will be set up in MRT stations so you can message your hot date with sad emoticons that you will be late because one of

the last straggling coaches of MRT has broken down again.

That they will be set up in municipal halls so that if you are applying for a license or permit in one of the offices, and you forgot to bring one requirement, a photocopy can be immediately emailed to you.

Others may deride free public Wi-Fi hotspots as populist-driven conveniences. Sadly, those who embrace this falsehood have not been able to fully grasp the empowering potential of ICT.

Because the only way to view free Wi-Fi hotspots, my friends, is to treat them for what they are: as a form of "liberation technology."

Yes, trolls, fake news purveyors, and manufacturers of weapons of mass distractions ride on the same technology platform, but the damage to individual brains or collective consciousness they inflict is far smaller than the greater good that ICT brings.

For every troll farm, there are millions of farmers whose lives have been made better by ICT.

The truth is, mass Wi-Fi services form part of the ICT solutions which can ease the pain caused by the many problems we confront today, if not make them totally go away.

In the same way that need is the mother of invention, or demand ushers in efficiency, or mass use triggers innovation, it is hoped that big government investments in free Wi-Fi spots would nudge forward the upstream reforms in the telecoms sector we all would like to see.

And in this bill are provisions that will improve Internet speed, better broadband services, slash the red tape that retards ICT growth.

If we want a thousand Wi-Fi spots to bloom, we must cut the thicket of regulations choking its growth.

Permitting problems encountered by DICT contractors and telcos in putting up facilities must be ended in one declogging sweep of administrative bottlenecks.

Permit me to cite a few which this bill prescribes:

- The DICT shall streamline the process for the application, renewal and release of permits, licenses and clearances needed for the construction of infrastructure or installation of equipment.



- Licenses and permits must be approved and released within seven days after submission of complete requirements and payment of the corresponding fees.
- The DICT shall prohibit any unfair methods of competition and exclusivity arrangements in favor of a single telecommunications entity.
- The DICT, in coordination with the National Telecommunications Commission, shall be allowed the use of available and unassigned spectrum for the Free Public Internet Access Program.
- The excess capacity of private sector partners may be offered to deliver supplemental internet access service for a reasonable fee.
- To lower costs, increase and improve the free internet access for public spaces, private service providers are encouraged to exchange data traffic at domestic internet protocol (IP) exchanges, which may be designated by the DICT.
- The NTC shall provide minimum standards for quality of service, including but not limited to download speed, latency, packet loss, and jitter for public free internet service.
- The minimum quality of service standards for free public internet access services shall not be lower than minimum quality of service standards provided for retail basic internet connectivity services offered to the public.

All of this must be done because the benchmark in gauging effectivity is not just the number of Wi-Fi spots, but also Internet speed.

If Internet access is a human right, then Wi-Fi is a basic public service. But for it to become one, the hindrances which bar its full enjoyment by the people must first be removed.

Paano ang bawat Juan magiging konektado, kung ang mga regulasyon ay magulo?

In closing, I would like to thank Senator Bam, the better Aquino, for his expert shepherding of this bill.

I vote yes to this measure.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PANGILINAN

Being the principal author of the measure in the Senate, Senator Pangilinan stated that he would submit a written explanation of his vote to be spread into the record.

APPROVAL OF SENATE BILL NO. 1304 ON THIRD READING

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, Senate Bill No. 1304, printed copies of which were distributed to the senators on March 9, 2017.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, Secretary Barbo read only the title of the bill, to wit:

AN ACT ACCELERATING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO TERTIARY EDUCATION BY PROVIDING FOR A TUITION SUBSIDY AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS ENROLLED IN STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES, PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Secretary Barbo called the roll for nominal voting.

RESULT OF THE VOTING

The result of the voting was as follows:

In favor

Aquino	Lacson
Binay	Pacquiao
Drilon	Pangilinan
Ejercito	Poe
Escudero	Recto
Gatchalian	Sotto
Gordon	Trillanes
Honasan	Villar
Hontiveros	Zubiri

Against

None

Abstention

None

With 18 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared Senate Bill No. 1304 approved on Third Reading.

EXPLANATIONS OF VOTE

By Senator Aquino

Senator Aquino thanked the individuals and groups that, he said, came together to support the measure providing free tuition fee for the SUCs and scholarships for the private sector higher education institutions.

Senator Aquino stated that the passage of the Affordable Higher Education for All Act is an important day in the Seventeenth Congress. Saying that its passage cannot be attributed to one person or office alone, he then recognized some of his colleagues:

- Senator Recto who has been working at the advocacy for more than a decade already;
- Senators Gordon, Lacson and Hontiveros who provided very good amendments that improved the bill;
- The coauthors—Senators Villanueva, Ejercito and Gatchalian — who have also been working at the advocacy for many years;
- Senators Pangilinan, Angara, Legarda, De Lima, Villar and Zubiri;
- Senator Sotto, the Majority Leader, and Senator Escudero, the new chairman of the Committee on Education, Arts and Culture for allowing him to finish the important measure and take it to the finish line; and
- Senate President Pimentel who made the bill a priority.

Senator Aquino also thanked Chairperson Licuanan, Commissioners Alarcon, Brillantes, De Vera and Adamat of CHED who extended their help despite their share of disagreements. He also thanked Nikki Tinasas of CHED and friends from UniFAST for their guide in the different provisions that were tackled during the interpellations.

Senator Aquino also expressed his gratitude to PIDS, CEAP, COCOPEA, PAPCO, PACO and PBED for their critical inputs for the measure, as well as Dr. Rotoras of PASUC for providing the committee with insights from the SUC's perspective.

Lastly, Senator Aquino thanked the students and youth who continue to be the inspiration in passing the measure. He empathized with what the students

are going through, their hardships and how much they need the law. He then acknowledged the presence in the gallery of the Student Council Alliance of the Philippines, AKBAYAN Youth, UP Bukluran; as well as students from UP, Rizal Technological University, the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Philippine State College of Aeronautics, the Technological University of the Philippines, and Marikina Polytechnic College. He stated that their presence was to show support for the measure and for the senators who have passed the bill in record time.

Senator Aquino stated that the passage of the Affordable Higher Education for All Act was a clear message from the Senate to every Filipino that the their Senators prioritize education; and that they choose to invest, first and foremost, in the students and children in the next generation, the best next investment the Senate could undertake.

By Senator Gatchalian

At the outset, Senator Gatchalian thanked the Senate for approving the very important reform in tertiary education. With the passage of the bill, he said that both rich and poor could be recipients of a college diploma, and that everyone would be given the opportunity to finish college and find a good job. He stated that he would submit a more comprehensive explanation of his vote to be spread into the record.

By Senator Recto

Senator Recto explained his affirmative vote, to wit:

As I have always said as the principal author of the bill, the costs this bill would entail are not unrecoverable expenses.

They are investments with high returns.

Some will only see the billions in this measure and warn of the deficit they might incur. But let us see them for what they really are – as means to realize dreams.

A nation's progress depends on the quality of its human capital.

Education dictates whether it prospers or it remains poor.

But building the country's talent pool is not the responsibility of families alone. Government has to do and give its share.



As I have said, college education has a good rate of return, better than what banks can offer. In fact, the best form of investment is to educate oneself.

In one study, college education posts a 15% return, which shows that the best investment certificate is a college diploma.

A college graduate earns 140% more than that of a high school graduate—except notable outliers like Steve Jobs, Richard Branson, John Gokongwei and Ricky Razon.

In the local ICT sector, the wage ratio between a skilled college graduate and an unskilled personnel is as high as six. The rates of return to high school and college graduates are rising, accompanied by a widening of the gap between them.

A college diploma is a ticket out of poverty. But sadly, there are many students who cannot make this trip on their own. Many poor and middle class youth do not have the financial self-propulsion.

Overall, 40% of high school graduates do not proceed to college. And for those who managed to enter college campus as freshmen, only six out of 10 will march up the stage to claim their diplomas.

It is a marathon with a high mortality rate, and oftentimes not because a student does not have the head for it – he even has the heart – but because he does not have the money.

This is the truth: More are waylaid by financial exhaustion than by intellectual burnout.

Madalas kong sabihin na ang diploma ay hindi lang katibayan ng pagtatapos, ito rin ay resibo ng gastos.

Kaya ang panukalang ito ay naglalayong obligahin ang pamahalaan na tumulong sa gastos.

This bill will benefit poor, near-poor, the middle class. But if a rising tide raises all ships, including the rich, then it should not be used as an argument against this measure.

There are, however, guidelines that will bar the affluent from getting a free lunch.

While government will contribute in his education, the biggest equity will be borne by the student himself. Free tuition, and other aids, are not an entitlement without condition.

First, a student must qualify for college admission. That is the starting hurdle he must pass. Of course, he must pass the tests.

This bill does not override admission protocols. Thus, it is a merit-based aid. And one that can be maintained by merit alone.

Because they go against convention, brave social legislations are birthed under hard circumstances. Thirty years ago, there was no universal high school education. The law making it free and mandatory only came in 1988. The free public high school was first implemented during the 1988-1989 school year. So, this bill is but a natural progression on how our education system matures and develops.

At this point, allow me to point out some of the amendments – but I call them improvements – that were included on the bill that was presented to the floor.

The question on the role of private higher education institutions cropped up. In many areas, the only college is privately-owned.

The fear is that if we offer free public college tuition, students in private would flock to SUCs. It is a mass migration that will weaken the tertiary education system, or worse, lead to their mass extinction. The solution seen was to expand and strengthen the programs authorized in the UniFAST Law, and make them available to HEIs.

It is GASTPE for college, a public-private partnership, in which the contribution of private colleges will be even bigger than of the government's.

Private colleges can accommodate more students, and if the quality of instruction they offer is superior at fraction of the cost in an SUC – everybody wins – them, the government, and above all, the student who is the center of this legislation.

We should always remember that private colleges and SUCs are not competitors, but are partners, in the important work of educating our young.

So this bill goes beyond tuition waivers and tuition aid. There is a section here which lays out the many types of educational assistance to be given or received.

Taking into account the complex structure of our HEI system, and accepting the fact that our students are not homogenous, we have broadened the options, and widened the modalities.

This is not a straitjacketed one-type of assistance only.

I vote yes to this very important landmark bill.



By Senator Hontiveros

Senator Hontiveros manifested her support to the bill and applauded the inclusion of her amendment making qualifying examination free of charge for the students. She said that the amendment articulates the sentiment of the students from various youth networks, including the Akbayan Youth and the Student Council Alliance of the Philippines, as it frees the Filipino youth and their families, majority of whom live on less than P80,000 annually, from the additional burden of entrance fees, which could instead be redirected to be used for other school-related expenses.

She hoped that the affirmative action mechanism brings the dream of college education a step closer to reality for the future *Iskolar ng Bayan*.

By Senator Zubiri

Senator Zubiri said that the measure has been a dream for many students, not only in Metro Manila but also in the countryside. He recalled that when he was a congressman, whenever scholarships were needed for the students, there was always a *palakasan* system; those who were close to the CHED and the administration would get a bigger share of the scholarships given out by CHED. Since then, he said, he started thinking of how to come up with a mechanism to give students — students who do not come from well-to-do families — in the SUCs free education so that they could have a fighting chance in life.

Senator Zubiri recalled that when he visited the city of Pune, India, he learned that the city gives high value to education, producing 40,000 engineers and professionals every year. He said that Pune has become the fastest growing city in India because of the high value of education that it gives to its people.

He also recalled that during the budget hearings, every time he looked at the PSA surveys on poverty incidences in the Philippines, he noticed that areas with a high priority on education have lower poverty rates such as Zamboanga del Sur which dropped out of the top 20 poorest provinces in terms of poverty incidence, registering a decline in poverty incidence, from 30% poverty incidence rate in 2012 to 22% in 2015. He said that when he asked the LGU officials what their secret was to the drop in the PSA poverty index, he was told that it was because of their high thrust in educating their constituents. He explained

how the provincial government of Zamboanga del Sur was able to do it by putting up extension campuses of the J.H. Cerilles State University in all the municipalities of the province, making it easy for the students to afford transportation or board and lodging, and allowing them to proceed to college immediately after graduating from high school. He said that this strategy made the province rank No. 49 in the PSA poverty index.

Senator Zubiri said that another province which puts a high priority on quality education is the province of Benguet which only has 6.4% poverty incidence and ranked No. 79 in the 2015 PSA poverty survey. He believed that this was the key to unlocking the problem of poverty in the country.

By Senator Gordon

At the outset, Senator Gordon congratulated the Senate for having the vision of supporting the bill of Senator Aquino. He described the bill as a game changer of sorts because it would serve as a beacon of hope that would allow the less privileged the opportunity to get a college degree and help their families out of poverty.

He congratulated Senator Aquino for steering the bill and Senators Recto and Gatchalian and the other senators for their support. However, he cautioned that they should tarry a little because while education may be the key out of poverty, access to education is simply not enough; there should also be quality education. He acknowledged that there are those who were not fortunate to be given access or opportunity to go to school but by their industry and patience were able to succeed in life.

He said that the measure should be supported with mechanisms to provide additional benefits to teachers to enable them to live a good quality of life.

Senator Gordon cautioned that there are about 5.6 million children a year, between the ages of 7 to 16, who would never see education and that according to UNESCO statistics, there are 1.6 million out-of-school youth.

He reiterated his call that the Body should focus next on the teachers, the out-of-school youth and the poor and underprivileged children of the country. He joined Senator Recto in emphasizing out the need for good and quality education.



In closing, he saluted the Senate for passing the important piece of legislation that would lead towards development and progress.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF SENATOR SOTTO

At this juncture, Senator Sotto informed the members of the Committee on Ethics and Privilege of their meeting at one o'clock in the afternoon of Wednesday, March 15, 2017.

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 7 March 2017, the House of Representatives passed House Bill No. 4727, entitled

AN ACT IMPOSING THE DEATH PENALTY ON CERTAIN HEINOUS CRIMES, REPEALING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9346, ENTITLED "AN ACT PROHIBITING THE IMPOSITION OF DEATH PENALTY IN THE PHILIPPINES," AND FURTHER AMENDING ACT NO. 3815, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "THE REVISED PENAL CODE," AND REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9165, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE COMPREHENSIVE DANGEROUS DRUGS ACT OF 2002,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committees on Justice and Human Rights; and Constitutional Amendments and Revisions of Codes

BILLS ON FIRST READING

Senate Bill No. 1373, entitled

AN ACT TO STRENGTHEN THE HUMAN RIGHTS AFFAIRS OFFICE

OF THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE AND TO FURTHER AMEND REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6975, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE UNDER A REORGANIZED DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES," AS AMENDED, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Introduced by Senator Leila M. de Lima

To the Committees on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs; Justice and Human Rights; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1374, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8551, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE REFORM AND REORGANIZATION ACT OF 1998" AND REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6975, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT OF 1990," AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Introduced by Senator Richard J. Gordon

At this juncture, Senator Drilon noted that in the Order of Business, Senate Bill No. 1373 was referred to the Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs, while Senate Bill No. 1374, which also pertains to the PNP, was being referred to the Committee on Justice on Human Rights as the primary committee. He inquired whether it was typographical error.

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, the session was suspended and was resumed shortly thereafter.

Acknowledging Senator Drilon's observation, upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, Senate Bill No. 1374 was referred primarily to the Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs and secondarily to the Committees on Justice and Human Rights; and Finance.

Senate Bill No. 1375, entitled

AN ACT CREATING A NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD



APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Joseph Victor Ejercito

**To the Committees on Civil Service, Govern-
ment Reorganization and Professional Regulation;
Public Services; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1376, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A MAGNA
CARTA OF WORKERS IN INFORMAL
ECONOMY, INSTITUTIONALIZING
MECHANISM FOR IMPLEMENTA-
TION THEREOF AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Joseph Victor Ejercito

**To the Committees on Labor, Employment
and Human Resources Development; Social
Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; Ways
and Means; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1377, entitled

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A JOB TRAIN-
ING PROGRAM FOR MATURE OR
OLDER WORKERS

Introduced by Senator Joseph Victor Ejercito

**To the Committees on Labor, Employment
and Human Resources Development; and
Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development**

Senate Bill No. 1378, entitled

AN ACT REGULATING THE USE OF
GOVERNMENT AMBULANCES,
PROVIDING PENALTIES THEREFOR
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Joseph Victor Ejercito

**To the Committees on Health and Demo-
graphy; and Civil Service, Government Reorganiza-
tion and Professional Regulation**

Senate Bill No. 1379, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE PUBLIC
HEALTH EMERGENCY COUNCIL,

PROVIDING POWERS THEREFOR,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Joseph Victor Ejercito

**To the Committees on Health and Demo-
graphy; and Local Government**

Senate Bill No. 1380, entitled

AN ACT MANDATING THE APPOINT-
MENT OF BARANGAY HEALTH
WORKERS IN EVERY BARANGAY,
AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE
REPUBLIC ACT 7160 OTHERWISE
KNOWN AS THE LOCAL GOVERN-
MENT CODE, FURTHER EXPAND-
ING THE BENEFITS OF BARANGAY
OFFICIALS AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Joseph Victor Ejercito

**To the Committees on Local Government;
and Health and Demography**

Senate Bill No. 1381, entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE PENALTIES
FOR NON-COMPLIANCE OF THE
PRESCRIBED INCREASES AND
ADJUSTMENTS IN THE WAGE
RATES OF WORKERS, AMENDING
FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT
NO. 6727, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS
THE "WAGE RATIONALIZATION
ACT," AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Joseph Victor Ejercito

**To the Committee on Labor, Employment
and Human Resources Development**

Senate Bill No. 1382, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING SECTIONS 5
AND 8 OF REPUBLIC ACT (RA)
NO. 9505, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS
THE PERSONAL EQUITY AND
RETIREMENT ACCOUNT (PERA)
LAW AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Sonny Angara



To the Committees on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies; and Ways and Means

Senate Bill No. 1383, entitled

AN ACT EXEMPTING THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS FROM THE COVERAGE OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6758, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE SALARY STANDARDIZATION LAW, AS AMENDED, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Sonny Angara

To the Committees on Ways and Means; Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation; and Finance

SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 37 on Senate Bill No. 286 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

**COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 37
ON SENATE BILL NO. 286**

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 286 (Committee Report No. 37), entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE (COLA) FOR ALL OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES IN THE GOVERNMENT SECTOR AND FOR OTHER RELATED PURPOSES.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, with the permission of the Body, 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 Trillanes for the sponsorship.

**SPONSORSHIP SPEECH
OF SENATOR TRILLANES**

On behalf of the Committee on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional

Regulation, Senator Trillanes presented to the Body for plenary consideration Senate Bill No. 286 under Committee Report No. 37, entitled "An Act Providing for a Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) for All Officials and Employees in the Government Sector and For Other Related Purposes."

Following is the full text of Senator Trillanes' sponsorship speech:

It is the policy of the State to promote, nurture and protect the interest of the workers in the public sector. The basic requirement is to adjust the salaries of government officials and employees over the years to help them endure the economic challenges brought about by the undeniable upsurge in the cost of living. This challenge, especially with the recent upsurge in the inflation rate and spiralling prices of gasoline and basic commodities, has rendered the previous adjustments in the salaries, through recent Executive Order No. 201, insufficient and inadequate.

To help alleviate the adverse effects of the increase in the prices of basic necessities, Senate Bill No. 286 seeks to provide additional financial assistance, to be known as the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA), to all civilian government employees and the members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine National Police (PNP) and other uniformed personnel, whether employed by national or local government agencies and/or instrumentalities, appointive or elective, and whether occupying regular, contractual or casual positions. All of the aforementioned government employees shall uniformly receive P5,000 as COLA, to be implemented across-the-board, on top of the other existing mandatory allowances they are currently receiving.

Funding of the said measure shall be sourced from the General Appropriations Act (GAA), particularly from the Miscellaneous Personnel Benefits Fund (MPBF) or any savings realized by the government from the current GAA and shall thereafter be included in the annual General Appropriations Act. In the case of government-owned and -controlled corporations and financial institutions, the source of funds shall be from their respective corporate funds; and in the case of LGUs, from their respective local funds or the LGU's share in their Internal Revenue Allotments (IRA).

This measure seeks to address the said contingencies and to recognize our government employees' contributions to public service by



providing every government worker just and reasonable compensation, to allow them to have decent living conditions and to be able to meet the basic needs of their families for shelter, daily sustenance, education and medical attendance.

It is in this light that our committee is pushing for the expeditious passage of this humble measure. It is high time that government employees be granted additional allowance to shield them from erratic economic conditions brought about by market forces.

In view of the foregoing, I hope that our colleagues will support the immediate passage of this measure.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 286

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

MEMBERSHIP IN THE COMMISSION ON APPOINTMENTS

Senator Drilon manifested that in view of the reorganization of the Senate on February 27, 2017, the Senate Minority contingent in the Commission on Appointments (CA) would already be composed of himself, Senator Pangilinan and Senator Aquino who were members of the CA representing the Majority before the reorganization. He further placed on record that Senator Pangilinan was the designated Minority Leader in the CA. Given the change in the composition, he requested the Secretary of the Senate to make the appropriate communication to the CA.

SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 38 on Senate Bill No. 453 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 38 ON SENATE BILL NO. 453

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 453 (Committee Report No. 38), entitled

AN ACT GRANTING SURVIVORSHIP BENEFITS TO THE SURVIVING LEGITIMATE SPOUSE OF A DECEASED RETIRED MEMBER OF THE OFFICE OF SOLICITOR GENERAL.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, with the permission of the Body, 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 Trillanes for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR TRILLANES

On behalf of the Committee on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation, Senator Trillanes presented to the Body for plenary consideration Senate Bill No. 453 under Committee Report No. 38.

Following is the full text of Senator Trillanes' sponsorship speech:

The Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) is the government's representative in "any litigation, proceeding, investigation or matter requiring the services of lawyers." It is considered the government law firm and the Tribune of the People, handling cases of national and public interest.

Under Republic Act No. 9417, the Solicitor General shall have cabinet rank and the same qualifications for appointment, rank, prerogatives, salaries, allowances, benefits and privileges as the Presiding Justice of the Court of Appeals; an Assistant Solicitor General, those of an Associate Justice of the Court of Appeals; and Senior State Solicitor, State Solicitor II and State Solicitor I, those of a Regional Trial Court Judge, Metropolitan Trial Court Judge, and Municipal Trial Court in Cities Judge, respectively. These OSG officials are exposed to the same occupational risks, including health and security risks, as these judiciary officials are facing, considering the nature and number of cases they handle.

It is just right that these OSG officials must be afforded the same benefits being received by the members of the judiciary, as a way of recognizing the efforts and sacrifices they have rendered to the government and to our people.



In 2010, Republic Act No. 9946 was enacted to provide additional retirement benefits, survivorship and other benefits to members of the judiciary. Though OSG and judiciary members should have the same allowances and benefits as stated under Republic Act No. 9417, there is still no law that would provide the same adjustment in the benefits of the members of the OSG.

In order to address the gap, Senate Bill No. 453 seeks to upgrade the retirement benefits of a Solicitor General, Assistant Solicitor General, Senior State Solicitor, or State Solicitor of the Office of the Solicitor General by granting survivorship benefits to the surviving legitimate spouse or dependent child of a deceased retired member. The above-mentioned immediate family members shall be entitled to receive, on a monthly basis, all the retirement benefits due to the OSG official at the time of death under the provisions of the applicable retirement laws then in force. They shall continue to receive such retirement benefits until said surviving legitimate spouse remarries or when the dependent child marries or comes of age.

These benefits are intended to recognize and honor members of the Office of the Solicitor General, many of whom have rendered decades, if not a lifetime, of service to our people, and, hopefully, assist their family members who will be left behind in their passing.

In view of the foregoing, I urge our colleagues to support the immediate passage of the measure.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 453

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

SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 39 on Senate Bill No. 807 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 39 ON SENATE BILL NO. 807

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading,

Senate Bill No. 807 (Committee Report No. 39), entitled

AN ACT INCREASING TO THREE THOUSAND PESOS (P3,000) THE MONTHLY PERSONNEL ECONOMIC RELIEF ALLOWANCE (PERA) GRANTED TO GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, with the permission of the Body, 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 Trillanes for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR TRILLANES

On behalf of the Committee on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation, Senator Trillanes presented to the Body for plenary consideration Senate Bill No. 807 under Committee Report No. 39, entitled "An Act Increasing to Three Thousand Pesos (P3,000) the Monthly Personnel Economic Relief Allowance (PERA) Granted to Government Employees, Appropriating Funds Therefor and For Other Purposes."

Following is the full text of Senator Trillanes' sponsorship speech:

In 1993, Pres. Fidel Ramos signed Administrative Order No. 53, which granted P500 additional compensation to all government employees in order to cushion the impact of the increasing prices of commodities brought about by the Gulf crisis. However, the financial crisis persisted and this additional compensation became more than just an emergency fund, but an economic relief fund.

In 2009, this Personnel Economic Relief Allowance or PERA was increased to P2,000 through Joint Resolution No. 4. However, with the continued increase in the prices of basic commodities and the recent upsurge in inflation, your Committee believes that it is high time that we augmented the PERA to help our government workers cope with the economic difficulties.

On top of the proposal to institute Cost of Living Allowance, Senate Bill No. 807 seeks to



increase the current PERA of all government employees from P2,000 to P3,000. This Act shall cover all civilian government employees and members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine National Police (PNP) and other uniformed personnel of the government, whether employed by national or local government agencies and/or instrumentalities, appointive or elective, and whether occupying regular, contractual or casual positions.

The funding of the said increase shall be included in the General Appropriations Act (GAA). For local government units (LGUs), the same shall be charged against respective local funds, and for government-owned and/or -controlled corporations, the same shall be charged against their respective corporate funds.

Similar to our other measures which aim to provide additional or improved benefits to our government workers, passing this measure is the least we can do to shield the salaries of our government employees from the negative impact of inflation. Although the proposed amount may not be enough to defray all the living costs of our beloved government workers, the increase is significant and will definitely go a long way in helping them with their daily needs.

In view of the foregoing, I hope that our colleagues will support the immediate passage of this measure.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR RECTO

As cosponsor of Senate Bill No. 807, Senator Recto pointed out the need to increase the Personal Economic Relief Allowance (PERA) of government employees as it has been 26 years since government workers first received the benefit, noting also the many urgent needs of government workers especially in their daily subsistence.

Following is the full text of Senator Recto's cosponsorship speech:

'Why It Is Hard and Heartless to Veto a P3,000 PERA for Public Workers?'

One item in the government employee payslip turns 26 this year.

In June 1991, pursuant to that year's General Appropriations Act, a Personnel Economic Relief Allowance in the amount of P500 a month was granted to all government employees.

Two years later, an "Additional Compensation" or "AdCom" of P500 per month was added when President Ramos issued Administrative Order No. 53 in 1993.

In 2006, President Arroyo raised the AdCom to P1,500 a month.

Three years later, under Joint Resolution No. 4 of Congress, the P1,500-AdCom was merged with the P500-PERA, with the latter as the surviving nomenclature.

In the eight years that PERA has been nailed at P2,000, rice prices have soared by 21.8 percent, and the peso had lost 26.7 percent of its value to inflation.

Thus, this bill seeks to recover the erosion in PERA's worth, by increasing it to P3,000.

Admittedly, the P1,000 increase will not allow government workers to get rich, not even to fully get by.

But if reckoned annually, the P12,000 increase will help pay certain bills, like a semester's tuition in an SUC, or six sacks of rice, or for a small family, probably a year's water bills plus cable TV subscription.

Although a P1,000 increase may not be enough, the financing it requires is enormous.

The present P2,000 PERA costs taxpayers P33 billion a year. Raising it to P3,000 would require P16.5 billion more.

Taken against the big Personal Services or PS picture of the government, the P33 billion is three percent of the almost P1 trillion PS outlay this year.

It would have been scandalous if the proposed PERA increase is the sole pay amelioration initiative in the public sector since 2006.

But in the 12 years since, there have been pay or across-the-board allowance increases in eight of those years.

In 2006, the P1,000 AdCom was granted.

In 2007, a 10-percent increase in the basic monthly salaries of civilian government personnel. Also that year, the subsistence allowance of uniformed personnel was increased by P30 a day. Their hazard pay was also increased.

In 2008 came the 10-percent across-the-board increase in basic monthly salaries of government personnel. This was followed by four annual installments of the SSL 3 from 2009 to 2012.



The SSL 4, to be given in "four gives," commenced last year. By 2019, there would have been 10 annual government pay increases in the past 14 years.

Not only that, there were also upward adjustments in the special allowances of certain government employees in some of those years.

To cite an example, the P60 increase in the daily subsistence allowance of uniformed personnel authorized by Joint Resolution No. 2 in 2015, which was authored by Sen. Sonny Trillanes.

Another is the increase, through an executive fiat, in the "actual combat pay" of soldiers and policemen last year. This is EO 3 issued by President Duterte on September 1, 2016.

There are reports that some qualified personnel have yet to get theirs. If true, it is hoped that these outstanding payables will be settled soon, especially if owed to brave men who are in the line of fire.

In the light of these increases, this bill seeks to lift the embargo on PERA adjustment, but at a level government finances can afford.

It is borne out of the stark realization that many urgent needs of our people compete for scarce resources, like health and education and irrigation and roads, all of which require amelioration as well.

Pegging an increase that is not too big to fund effectively denies the executive branch of any excuse to veto a very reasonable measure.

While it will add a little amount in the employee's pocket, it will not burn a hole in the government's. Thus, it will be hard, if not heartless, to reject a bill such as this.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 807

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

SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 46 on the killing of Albuera Mayor Rolando Espinosa Sr. from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 46

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body considered Committee Report No. 46, Re: Manifestation and Motion made by Majority Leader Vicente Sotto III on 07 November 2016, tasking the Committees on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs and Justice and Human Rights to investigate and inquire, in aid of legislation, into the killing of Mayor Rolando Espinosa Sr. of Albuera, Leyte.

The Chair recognized Senator Lacson for the sponsorship.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, the session was suspended.

It was 4:40 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:40 p.m., the session was resumed.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR LACSON

As sponsor of Committee Report No. 46, Senator Lacson described the incident surrounding the killing of Albuera Mayor Rolando Espinosa, Sr. while in detention, after which he presented the findings of the Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs and its corresponding recommendations.

Following is the full text of Senator Lacson's sponsorship speech:

This Representation has the honor to report on the Senate floor the result of the inquiry, in aid of legislation, conducted jointly by the Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs and the Committee on Justice and Human Rights, into the killing of Mayor Rolando Espinosa Sr. of Albuera, Leyte, as embodied in Committee Report No. 46.

Running on a platform of eradicating illegal drugs and capturing big-time drug dealers and protectors, then candidate Rodrigo Roa Duterte had won the May 2016 presidential elections.

Upon his assumption of office, he launched a relentless war against drugs. A few months after, this war has become a hotbed of controversy. The absolute discretion granted to the



Philippine National Police (PNP) in delivering the President's campaign promise was exploited, even abused by some police scalawags.

Allow me to commence this report by quoting President Duterte himself: "Abuse your authority and there will be hell to pay. For you will have become worse than criminality itself."

The integrity and conviction of his words will be put to test when what is at stake is not only the career but also the liberty of a certain Supt. Marvin Wynn Marcos and other members of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) Region VIII whom we have all seen during our public hearings.

On November 5, 2016, while alone inside his prison cell in Baybay Sub-Provincial Jail, Albueria Mayor Rolando Espinosa Sr. was killed in an alleged shootout with the operatives of the CIDG Region VIII in the course of implementing a search warrant. "*Nanlaban at napatay.*" Default justification *na ho ata yan sa lahat ng drug-related killings na laman ng ating mga balita.*

The fact that an incumbent mayor had fallen in this war against drugs is controversial enough, as we went through the facts and considered other reports, we discovered that what was shown before us is more intricate and complex than what was then presented.

Although this Joint Committee recognizes and gives due respect to the authority of the courts to determine whether the death of Mayor Espinosa was a result of a legitimate police operation or a case of premeditated murder, we are convinced that the circumstances of this case clearly present a systematic "cleanup" made on any living trace that may reveal the involvement of several CIDG operatives in Kerwin Espinosa's drug trade. After all, in the words of Benjamin Franklin, "Three can keep a secret if two of them are dead."

Apart from Mayor Espinosa, other persons connected with the drug trade of Kerwin Espinosa in Region VIII, namely, Edgar Allan Alvarez and Fernando Balagbis, suffered the same fate while incarcerated. The odds of being killed by the PNP while detained inside a government detention facility seemed to be very unlikely, until now. Further, it is unbelievable that such similar fate would befall on personalities involved in Kerwin Espinosa's drug trade.

This Joint Committee has found compelling reasons, based on evidence, to overturn the presumption of regularity accorded to the implementation of the search warrants conducted

by the team of PSUPT Marvin Marcos, PCI Laraga, and other CIDG personnel together with members of the Regional Maritime Unit.

This Joint Committee has conducted three public hearings and one executive session regarding this inquiry. I beg your indulgence as I discuss briefly the basis of our conclusion that the killing of Mayor Espinosa was not a result of a legitimate police operation but, rather, a case of premeditated murder.

1. Notwithstanding the guidance of no less than the Supreme Court when it said that "a citizen's privacy right is a guarantee that is available only to the public at large but not to persons who are detained or imprisoned," the CIDG personnel maliciously obtained a search warrant in a court outside Baybay City to clothe the operation with an appearance of legitimacy.
2. The search warrant was issued by the judge after relying on a deposition of a certain Paul Olendan whose allegations were proven to be false. Said deponent was around 100 kilometers away at the time he claimed he was inside the cell of the victims to see their firearms.
3. None of the statements contained in the affidavits executed by the jail guards and the inmates could corroborate the allegation of facts and the details presented by PSUPT Marcos and PCI Laraga on how they implemented the search warrants.
4. Instead of seeking assistance during the implementation of the warrant, the CIDG personnel made the jail guards and PNP personnel in the jail facility kneel down, face the wall and surrender their firearms.
5. The CIDG's blatant violation of the rule that law enforcement officers cannot go beyond the area specified in the search warrant in terms of the area to be searched. The search warrant could not be more clear, the area to be searched were Cell Nos. 1 and 2. However, the operatives proceeded to and searched Cell No. 7 just because Raul Yap was actually detained there.
6. The intentional and deliberate disregard for the chain of command in the PNP-CIDG when PSUPT Marcos did not notify his immediate superiors, PCSUPT Elmer Beltejar, PRO-8 Regional Director and CIDG Director Roel Obusan of the operation against a high-profile detainee in the person of Mayor Espinosa.

7. The illegal items reported in the inventory after the search were merely planted by the CIDG team in order to justify their operation. This Joint Committee has accorded value to the affidavits submitted by the jail guards and inmates stating that the previous conduct of *Oplan Galugad* by the jail guards a few days before the CIDG operation yielded no illegal firearms and drugs. In addition, we considered the testimony of two inmates stating that they heard Mayor Espinosa telling the CIDG operatives that he did not have any firearm in his possession and pleaded them not to plant the same inside his cell.
8. The incredible narration of PCI Laraga on how he was able to fire at Mayor Espinosa notwithstanding the alleged total darkness in his cell. To be more detailed, according to him, he was able to aim his gun properly after taking advantage of the spark coming from Mayor Espinosa's gun when he initially fired at his team.
9. The erroneous timeline of events presented by PSUPT Marcos in his accomplishment report and his testimony during the public hearings. According to PSUPT Marcos, the operation began at 4:10 a.m. However, we have on record the affidavit of PO2 Jennifer Monge stating that at 3:49 a.m., SUPT Matira called the PNP RTOC Regional Office 8 requesting for the assistance of SOCO.
10. The hard drive containing the recordings of the CCTV cameras inside Baybay Sub-Provincial Jail which went missing immediately after the CIDG team had full control over the penal facility.
11. The testimony of Kerwin Espinosa in one of our public hearings confirming that he gave considerable amounts of money to the leaders of the CIDG operation subject of this inquiry. In fact, PSUPT Marcos had received a sum of P3 million just last May 2016.

Allow me to go back to a few of my questions on my opening statement when this inquiry was commenced:

"Why would Mayor Espinosa even attempt to put up a fight while he was trapped inside a prison cell with nowhere to go? Not to mention that he had surrendered and was fully cooperating, hoping to become a state witness? Nothing makes sense."

Truly, up to now, there is no sense to it.

After a thorough consideration of all the testimonies and documents submitted, let me tell you and everyone closely following this case, *hindi po nanlaban si Mayor Espinosa*.

Mayor Espinosa, in his possible willingness to cooperate and provide information on the personalities involved in his son's drug trade, was silenced by individuals who wanted their participation concealed. It just so happened that these individuals had access and means to do so through abuse of their authority. Moreover, his death posed a clear threat to his son, Kerwin Espinosa, who was already captured and was on his way back to the Philippines at that time. The death of Alvarez, Balagbis and even his father while inside their respective penal institutions is a statement that Kerwin is not safe anywhere and that the same fate awaits him should he decide to speak up and provide the information that will aid the PNP in its war against illegal drugs.

At this point, allow me to present the recommendations of the Committee on Public order and Dangerous Drugs and the Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

First of all, let us be reminded that the public hearings conducted do not in any way intend to overstep the authority and jurisdiction of our courts in the determination of the Espinosa and Yap case. However, as a coequal branch, we will request the Judiciary to expedite its determination as to the propriety and liabilities or sanctions, if any, of the following:

1. JUDGE CARLOS ARGULLES, for his failure to act upon the motion of Mayor Espinosa to be transferred to a safer prison facility, notwithstanding the fact that the deceased has expressed his intention to fully cooperate with the government and provide vital information relevant and of value to the administration's war against illegal drugs;
2. JUDGE TARCELO SABARRE, JR. of RTC Branch 30 Basey, Samar for issuing search warrants upon persons detained in a government detention facility located outside his court's jurisdiction; and
3. JUDGE JANET CABALONA of RTC Branch 33, Calbiga, Samar, also for issuing search warrants upon persons detained in a government detention facility located outside her court's jurisdiction.

Moreover, the Supreme Court should remind lower courts to exercise caution in issuing search warrants. Strict adherence to the policy that

“judges should personally examine the applicant and the witnesses he may produce,” with underlying emphasis on the words “personally examine” should be observed.

Next point, we understand that the Espinosa case was filed before the Department of Justice (DOJ) as early as December 7, 2016. Three months had passed and no resolution yet is forthcoming on the preliminary investigation being conducted. Considering the time, not to mention the overwhelming testimonial and documentary evidence presented before the five-man panel conducting the preliminary investigation, they should have already resolved this matter with urgency. As such, we respectfully request the DOJ to expedite its proceedings given that this case is impressed with public interest.

In addition, among the intricacies that arose out of this case was the recall of PNP Chief Dela Rosa’s order relieving PSupt. Marcos and his men from CIDG-8 by no less than the President himself. This Joint Committee is of the opinion that the President should not be micro-managing the affairs of the government and should place his trust in the sound discretion of his appointees, including PNP Chief Dela Rosa. As far as the organizational and operational aspect of the PNP is concerned, the Chief should be given full authority and control on how he will manage the day-to-day affairs of the organization subject to limitations set by law.

The following are the proposed legislative measures that are responsive to the issue at hand:

1. The amendment of Article 183 of the Revised Penal Code to increase the penalty for false testimony or perjury. It is our view that the damage or injury caused by perjury upon an innocent person is no less similar to that of planting of evidence. Apart from the possibility of being charged and erroneously convicted, we also have to consider its effect on the reputation of the victim and his or her family.
2. The enactment of an “Anti-Contraband in Prison Act” penalizing those who would provide, assist, aid or abet in the introduction of any prohibited object or contraband inside a prison facility, along with the inmate who makes, possesses or obtains or attempts to make or obtain the same inside the prison facility; and imposing a stiff penalty for its commission.
3. The strengthening of the functions and mandate of the Internal Affairs Service (IAS)

of the PNP so as to make the disciplinary system more timely, transparent and efficient. To be more specific, we seek to expand the *motu proprio* investigation powers of the IAS to cover all acts and omissions, which tend to discredit or subvert the achievements of the institution. Moreover, for purposes of expediency, investigations should be conducted within a mandatory period not exceeding 30 days after the case has commenced, and immediately thereafter, appropriate case/s shall be filed. Accordingly, the IAS should reach the resolution of the case within 30 days at most after the same has been filed.

4. And finally, we should look into and assess the foundation of police training in our country. So as not to waste the resources of the government in re-training and re-orienting erring police officers and to instill the right culture, values and discipline expected from our uniformed personnel, it is incumbent for us to review and amend the law creating the Philippine Public Safety College (PPSC) either by strengthening it or by transferring control over training from the PPSC to the PNP.

Before I end this report, allow me to express my strong condemnation on the killing of Mayor Rolando Espinosa Sr. and Raul Yap. Though they may have committed violations of our existing laws, the same is to be determined by our courts. Granting that certain freedoms are denied to detainees, including the right to privacy, they are still entitled to the fundamental right to life as guaranteed by the Constitution.

This war against drugs has reached unparalleled heights that will be remembered as part of our nation’s history. What we have at the moment is a race against time, where we either succeed or fail in exposing the truth. Though it seems that the end is nowhere in sight, today we emerge victorious for exposing these rogue uniformed personnel. We may have won the battle today, yet we still have a war to emerge triumphant. Let today be a testament that “No man in this country is so high that he is above the law. No officer of the law may set that law at defiance with impunity.”

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR DRILON

At the outset, Senator Drilon expressed support for and congratulated Senator Lacson for delivering a comprehensive report, saying that he actually signed the report without any reservation. Senator Lacson thanked Senator Drilon for his kind words.



Senator Drilon recalled that in the course of the investigation, there were certain commitments made by the IAS officials on specific timelines within which the investigation would be finished and the appropriate penalties would be imposed. Concurring with Senator Lacson's statement regarding the DOJ's preliminary investigation that time is of the essence and deterrence exists whenever the public sees that justice and punishment are swiftly done, Senator Drilon asked what happened to the commitments and timelines made by the IAS particularly on Superintendent Marcos.

Senator Lacson stated that the IAS committed to resolve the administrative case by March 17, 2017, but since the timeline kept on moving, the last deadline would be on March 31, 2017. Per the committee report, he stated that it is a foregone conclusion that the resolution would be such that the concerned PNP personnel should be guilty of grave misconduct and be dismissed from the service. Still, he suggested waiting for the final resolution of the case.

As regards other commitments and/or timelines made by the DOJ in the course of the hearing, Senator Lacson said that the DOJ also committed to obtain the information after completing the resolution of the criminal case so as to resolve the case and file the necessary information in court in two weeks' time.

To Senator Drilon's observation that the report highlighted, with reason, that the DOJ resolution was already delayed because it has been more than three months since the case was filed on December 7, 2016, Senator Lacson admitted that the DOJ, particularly its panel of prosecutors, is facing public scrutiny and suspicion because no less than the President himself has publicly expressed that he would defend the action taken by the concerned CIDG personnel.

Explaining the "suspicion" that he has in mind, Senator Lacson said that the DOJ prosecutors were under tremendous pressure to come up with an objective resolution of the case considering President Duterte's public expression that he would go by the action of the police personnel concerned in the killing of Mayor Espinosa and Raul Yap.

Senator Drilon admitted that it saddened him to hear that public expression of support from the President because during his time as DOJ Secretary,

the rule was that a finding of probable cause in serious offenses can be appealed to the Office of the President, and if said rule is still observed, and given the suspicious delay of the resolution, the suspicion that there is pressure brought upon the prosecutors by their appointing authority cannot be avoided. He hoped that such suspicion would not happen as he emphasized that the interest of justice should transcend beyond such expression of determination on the part of Senator Lacson so that justice can be done and the rule of law is carried out. Still, he noted DOJ's undue delay on resolution of the case, and the PNP-IAS' undue delay in the resolution of its administrative aspect.

Senator Lacson assured that he would, in his official and personal capacity, follow up with the DOJ and the PNP to expedite the resolution of both administrative and criminal cases.

Asked by Senator Drilon if he would agree to an amendment which would condemn the undue delay on the part of the DOJ and the PNP-IAS in the resolution of the criminal and administrative aspects of the case, Senator Lacson said that it would be prudent to wait for another week before accepting the proposed amendment. Senator Drilon remarked that if they would wait for one more week, Congress would already be in recess at that time.

At this juncture, Senator Sotto intervened, asking on the possibility of using the phrase "call the attention" of the DOJ and PNP-IAS instead of "condemning" them. Senator Lacson disclosed that they have already called the attention of the DOJ and PNP through the committee report, but that Senator Drilon wanted a stronger language. Senator Drilon affirmed Senator Lacson's statement as he believed that it is necessary to put the Executive branch, particularly the DOJ and the PNP-IAS, to task because the incident has all the indications of a premeditated murder yet the case has been pending for more than three months. He said that if they would keep on delaying the resolution of the case, it would lose its efficacy considering that inordinate delay would not augur well for the trust of the people in the country's justice system.

Senator Drilon pointed out that the Executive department is a separate branch of government and Senator Lacson was very careful in putting on record that the Senate would not want to interfere with what is otherwise a judicial process, but he asked if there is anything else that the Senate can do to

prompt Judiciary to act more quickly. He asked if there were administrative cases filed against the judges concerned. Senator Lacson stated that the Supreme Court is conducting its own investigation to hold liable the judges involved in the issuance of search warrants inside a penal institution. He said it is only a matter of time before the Supreme Court would come up with its own resolution in meting out appropriate penalties on the judges concerned.

Senator Drilon said that before the approval of the committee report, they may consider some proposed amendments to the Rules of Court so that clear malpractice in issuing a search warrant for those under detention and where jurisdiction is way out of the jurisdiction of the Regional Trial Court could be corrected and prevented from happening again.

In closing, Senator Drilon said that he was awaiting the proposed amendment of Senator Lacson on the inordinate delay in the resolution of the administrative and criminal cases that have been pending for the last several months.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Like the Minority Leader, Senator Hontiveros said that she was also supporting the whole report, specifically that portion in page 7 of the report, which states that "This Joint Committee is of the opinion that the President should not be micro-managing the affairs of the government and should place his trust in the sound discretion of his appointees, including PNP Chief Dela Rosa. In so far as the organizational and operational aspect of the PNP is concerned, the Chief should be given full authority and control on how he will manage the day-to-day affairs of the organization subject to limitations set by law."

She commended Senator Lacson for including such a wise opinion expressed to the President in view of the fact that the Chief Executive not only reinstated Superintendent Marcos but even said that the police officers involved in the killing should not go to jail.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR SOTTO

Senator Sotto said that Committee Report No. 46 would be scheduled for plenary deliberation the following day while the committee report on extrajudicial killings would be available for interpellations as well.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 46

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the committee report.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, the session was suspended.

It was 5:17 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:39 p.m., the session was resumed.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 48 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 4682 (Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 4682 (Committee Report No. 48), entitled

AN ACT CREATING A BARANGAY TO
BE KNOWN AS BARANGAY
CUMAWAS IN THE CITY OF
BISLIG, PROVINCE OF SURIGAO
DEL SUR.

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

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Angara, sponsor of the measure, and Senator Sotto for his interpellation.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR SOTTO

Senator Sotto stated that he was the chairperson of the Committee on Local Government from 1992 to 1998, and he could not recall a time during his term that the Senate ever passed a bill creating a barangay. He asked whether such a process had ever taken place since he might not have been in the Senate when such barangays were created. Senator Angara replied that 143 barangays have been created by law since 1992.

Considering that some bills which emanate from the House of Representatives are for purposes of



the local government, Senator Sotto sought clarification on whether it was necessary for such bills seeking the creation of barangays to be passed in the Senate.

Senator Angara said that under the Local Government Code, a barangay could be created either by law or by an ordinance of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan, to which Senator Sotto remarked that the latter mode was what he meant instead of resorting to a law.

Stating that he was not against the measure, Senator Sotto recalled that when he was Quezon City vice mayor, there was a plan to create more barangays because some barangays in the city have huge voting population. However, he said that the plan never materialized.

Senator Angara remarked that the City of Manila is the opposite of Quezon city where every street constitutes a barangay. Senator Sotto agreed, as he noted that some barangays are even bigger than sub-cities. He suggested that an alternative action be taken so that the number of bills being transmitted to the Senate from the House of Representatives would be minimized as this fills up the agenda.

At this juncture, Senator Gordon proposed that Congress start rationalizing the criteria for the creation of barangays, municipalities and cities since there are some barangays that are even bigger than municipalities and cities, while other municipalities which have small population are made into cities. He believed that it would be a good time to reassess the standard upon which a barangay, municipality or city can be reclassified.

For his part, Senator Angara remarked that one barangay in General Santos has 200,000 people, while another one in Caloocan City has a population of 180,000 which is bigger than all the towns in Aurora province. He said that his committee, upon the prodding of Senator Hontiveros, had begun a long overdue review of the Local Government Code which has not been undertaken in the 26 years since its passage even though the law provides for mandatory review every five years. He said that his committee welcomed the proposals of Senators Gordon, Sotto and Drilon.

Senator Gordon pointed out that even Barangays Holy Spirit, Payatas and Commonwealth in Quezon City as well as the other half of Caloocan City comprise some of the biggest barangays in the

country. He said that the creation of large barangays has led to other ridiculous consequences such as in the creation of various cities which has become a problem for the Department of Finance in terms of allocating the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA). He commended Senator Angara for undertaking the review as he believed it was time for the Senate to study all the laws that require an oversight every five years. This, he said, would prevent a situation that would result in a lot of unjust apportionments in terms of resources and redistricting.

Asked for the rationale behind the creation of the barangay, Senator Angara explained that Barangay Cumawas is an existing barangay created through Provincial Ordinance No. 1030-94 of the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan* of the province of Surigao del Sur and was approved by a majority of votes cast in a plebiscite in 1996. He said that the bill would simply formalize its creation through legislation to allow for its receipt of the IRA since having been created by a provincial ordinance, the supporting funding for Barangay Cumawas was sourced from appropriations of the provincial government. He surmised that the barangay might be feeling the financial burden and, as such, would like to get funding from the national government so that it could get its share of the IRA.

In closing, Senator Sotto said that he welcomed the review being undertaken by the Committee on Local Government on the Local Government Code.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

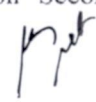
There being no further interpellation, upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of committee amendments.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

There being no committee or individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of amendments.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 4682 ON SECOND READING

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 4682 was approved on Second Reading.



SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 4682

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

ARCHIVING OF SPEECHES

On behalf of the Committee on Rules and upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the speeches delivered by Senators Trillanes and Pacquiao on March 8, 2017 were transmitted to the Archives.

MOTION OF SENATOR SOTTO

Senator Sotto moved that the primary referral of Senate Bill No. 1375 be transferred from the Committee on Civil Service, Government reorganization and Professional Regulation, to the Committee on Public Services with the Committee on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation as the secondary committee.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON

Senator Drilon requested that the title of the measure and not merely its number be read while the proposal is being made so that the Body could determine whether the referral is within the jurisdiction of the committees to which these are being transferred. He pointed out that the referral should be based on the jurisdiction defined in the Rules of the Senate rather the consent of the members, author and the chair of the committee where it is being transferred.

Senator Sotto took note of the manifestation, stating that Senate Bill No. 1375 is An Act Creating A National Transportation Safety Board, Appropriating Funds Therefor and for Other Purposes.

CHANGE OF COMMITTEE REFERRAL

Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of the primary referral of Senate Bill No. 1375 from the Committee on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation to the Committee on Public Services, with the Committee on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation as the secondary committee.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR SOTTO

Senator Sotto manifested that Senator Pangilinan had been designated by the chairperson of the Committee on Electoral Reforms and People's Participation and the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on the Automated Election System as vice chairperson of the two committees.

As principal author of the automated election law, Senator Gordon informed the Body that he had been designated as vice chairperson of the Committee on Electoral Reforms and People's Participation which is chaired by Senator de Lima. In view of the manifestation of Senator Sotto, he sought clarification on whether a new vice chairperson was being nominated for the committee. In fact, he said that he was talking with his staff on scheduling the hearing on urgent matters as campaign finance reforms and political party switching.

Senator Sotto clarified that he was simply making the manifestation in response to the letter from the chief of staff of Senator de Lima.


Upon motion of Senator Sotto, there being no objection, his manifestation regarding the vice chairmanship of Committee on Electoral Reforms and People's Participation and the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on the Automated Election System was referred to the Committee on Rules.

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

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

It was 5:56 p.m.

I hereby certify to the correctness of the foregoing.


ATTY. LUTGARDO B. BARBO
Secretary of the Senate

Approved on March 14, 2017