



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Senate
Pasay City

Journal

SESSION NO. 63

Monday to Wednesday, May 4 to 6, 2020

**EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION**

Prepared by the
LEGISLATIVE JOURNAL SERVICE
Senate of the Philippines

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CALL TO ORDER

At 3:00 p.m., Monday, May 4, 2020, the Senate President, Hon. Vicente C. Sotto III, called the session to order.

PRAYER

Sen. Francis "Tol" N. Tolentino led the prayer, to wit:

The highest glory and honor we offer to You today, Almighty Father, are Your gifts of life, love, and hope. We thank You for Your goodness, Your compassion, Your unfailing love for humanity. We acknowledge in all humility our human frailties, and implore Your forgiveness and mercy.

Almighty Father, we come to You in this time of greatest need as the novel coronavirus continues to stalk across the land, spreading fear and confusion, bringing our lives to a standstill, and ultimately claiming countless lives. We fly to Your refuge, Lord God, and we seek Your protection from this malady.

Stretch forth Your healing hands, O Lord. Lay upon them our sick and ailing countrymen, including Sen. Sonny Angara. Be with the thousands who are struggling with this dreaded disease, uplift their spirits, renew their strength, and restore them to good health. For in Jeremiah Chapter 30, verse 17, You have promised, "For I will restore health to you and heal You of Your wounds." In a special way, we thank You for healing our colleagues here in the Senate, Senators Miguel Zubiri and Koko Pimentel.

We humbly ask You to comfort the families and loved ones of those whose lives have been claimed by this disease, in particular our esteemed statesman former Sen. Heherson Alvarez. In Your loving arms welcome them, and grant Your everlasting peace.

Lord, we lift up to You our brave and tireless frontliners and those who risk their lives to give hope and deliverance to those afflicted by this crippling pandemic. Fortify their spirits, renew their strength, and shield

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them from all harm as they selflessly offer themselves as instruments of Your divine healing. We implore Your wisdom to come upon those tasked to seek the cure for this disease. Direct their minds, O Lord, so that they may offer relief to the infirmed, physically and spiritually, by this contagion.

We humbly ask You to bless the leaders of this country, and to help the members of this Chamber today in passing measures for the relief and recovery of our countrymen.

Bless us with Your wisdom, fill us with Your strength, engulf us in Your grace, Lord God, so that we may be united in heart and in spirit, as we heal as one.

Our hopes we rest upon You, Lord, and all these we ask in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, forever and ever.

Amen.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Everyone remained standing for the singing of the national anthem.

ROLL CALL

Upon direction of the Senate President, the Secretary of the Senate, Atty. Myra Marie D. Villarica, called the roll, to which the following senators responded:

Binay, M. L. N. S.	Poe, G.
Dela Rosa, R. B. M.	Recto, R. G.
Gatchalian, W.	Revilla III, R. B.
Go, C. L. T.	Sotto III, V. C.
Gordon, R. J.	Tolentino, F. T. N.
Lacson, P. M.	Villanueva, J.
Lapid, M. L. M.	Zubiri, J. M. F.
Pacquiao, E. M. D.	

With 15 senators present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum.

Senators Angara, Cayetano, Drilon, Hontiveros, Marcos, Pangilinan, Pimentel and Villar arrived after the roll call.*

* Senators Angara, Cayetano, Drilon, Hontiveros, Marcos, Pangilinan, Pimentel and Villar were marked "arrived after the roll call" following the adoption of Senate Resolution No. 43.

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

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body dispensed with the reading of the Journal of Session No. 62 (March 9, 2020) and considered it approved.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary of the Senate read the following matters and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

MESSAGE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 9, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives on even date passed House Bill No. 6489, entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING AND EXPANDING THE LEYTE DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRIAL ESTATE INTO THE LEYTE ECOLOGICAL INDUSTRIAL ZONE, CREATING FOR THIS PURPOSE THE LEYTE ECOLOGICAL INDUSTRIAL ZONE AUTHORITY, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committees on Economic Affairs; Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change; Ways and Means; and Finance

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 9, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 6365, entitled

AN ACT UPGRADING THE SIARGAO DISTRICT HOSPITAL, IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF DAPA, PROVINCE OF SURIGAO DEL NORTE INTO A LEVEL II GENERAL HOSPITAL TO BE KNOWN AS THE SIARGAO MEDICAL CENTER,

INCREASING ITS BED CAPACITY, UPGRADING ITS PROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND FACILITIES, AUTHORIZING THE INCREASE OF ITS MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committee on Health and Demography

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 9, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 6404, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (TESDA) TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT CENTER IN QUEZON CITY, TO BE KNOWN AS THE QUEZON CITY TESDA TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT CENTER, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committees on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; and Finance

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 9, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 6333, entitled

AN ACT COMMEMORATING THE CITYHOOD OF SAN JOSE DEL MONTE, PROVINCE OF BULACAN, THROUGH THE ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF THE TANGLAWAN FESTIVAL ON THE OCCASION OF ITS FOUNDATION DAY ON SEPTEMBER 30, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9750,

and House Bill No. 6363, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JULY 2 OF EVERY

YEAR A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN PASIG CITY TO BE KNOWN AS THE "ANNIVERSARY DAY OF PASIG CITY,"

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committee on Local Government

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 9, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 5887, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN UNDERSEA OR BRIDGE FROM CEBU CITY TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF CORDOVA AND A COASTAL ROAD-EXPRESSWAY TO THE MACTAN-CEBU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committees on Public Works; and Finance

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 9, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 6373, entitled

AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO TANDAG ELECTRIC AND TELEPHONE COMPANY, INC. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT 8715, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING THE TANDAG ELECTRIC AND TELEPHONE COMPANY, INC., A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, ESTABLISH, INSTALL, MAINTAIN AND OPERATE LOCAL EXCHANGE NETWORK IN THE PROVINCE OF SURIGAO DEL SUR,"

and House Bill No. 6474, entitled

AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS (25) THE

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FRANCHISE GRANTED TO CACERES BROADCASTING CORPORATION UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8106, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING CACERES BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE ISLAND OF LUZON AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,"

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committee on Public Services

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 9, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 875, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE IMPROVEMENT, REHABILITATION, AND MODERNIZATION OF THE NAVOTAS FISH PORT COMPLEX,

and House Bill No. 4443, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FISH PORT OF BARANGAY MACARASCAS IN THE CITY OF PUERTO PRINCESA AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committees on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform; Public Works; and Finance

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 10, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 78, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE DEFINITION OF PUBLIC UTILITY, FURTHER AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE COMMONWEALTH ACT NO. 146, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "PUBLIC SERVICE ACT," AS AMENDED,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committees on Public Services; and Economic Affairs

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 10, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 6134, entitled

AN ACT MANDATING BANKING INSTITUTIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM FOR AGRICULTURAL, FISHERIES AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform; and Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 10, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 5912, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JULY 27 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NATIONAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9645, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "COMMEMORATION OF THE FOUNDING ANNIVERSARY OF IGLESIA NI CRISTO ACT,"

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committee on Constitutional Amendments and Revision of Codes

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 10, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 6136, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8794, ENTITLED "AN ACT IMPOSING A MOTOR VEHICLES USER'S CHARGE ON OWNERS OF ALL TYPES OF MOTOR VEHICLES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES," AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11239,"

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

**To the Committees on Public Services;
Ways and Means; and Finance**

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 10, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 6123, entitled,

AN ACT DEFINING THE OFFENSES OF DISCHARGE OF FIREARMS AND INDISCRIMINATE FIRING OF FIREARMS AND PROVIDING STIFFER PENALTIES THEREFOR, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE ARTICLE 254 OF ACT NUMBER 3815, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "REVISED PENAL CODE," AND REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10591, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "COMPREHENSIVE FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION REGULATION ACT,"

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

**To the Committee on Public Order and
Dangerous Drugs**

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 10, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 5975, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE FOURTH THURSDAY OF NOVEMBER OF EVERY YEAR AS NATIONAL THANKSGIVING DAY,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

**To the Committees on Civil Service,
Government Reorganization and Professional
Regulation; and Labor, Employment and
Human Resources Development**

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 10, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 6192, entitled

AN ACT PRESERVING THE INDIGENOUS GAMES OF THE PHILIPPINES,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

**To the Committee on Sports; and Cultural
Communities**

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 10, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 6254, entitled

AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO FBS RADIO NETWORK, INC. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8114, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING FBS RADIO NETWORK, INC. A FRANCHISE TO ESTABLISH, CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, MAINTAIN AND OPERATE COMMERCIAL RADIO AND TELEVISION STATION IN THE PHILIPPINES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committee on Public Services

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 10, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 6256, entitled

AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO CENTURY COMMUNICATIONS MARKETING CENTER, INC. DOING BUSINESS UNDER THE NAME AND STYLE OF CENTURY BROADCASTING NETWORK. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8133, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING CENTURY COMMUNICATIONS MARKETING CENTER, INC. A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSE

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**RADIO AND BROADCASTING
TELEVISION STATIONS IN THE
PHILIPPINES, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES,**

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committee on Public Services

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 10, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 6371, entitled

AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION, PRESENTLY KNOWN AS BAYAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS, INC. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 3259, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO ESTABLISH RADIO STATIONS FOR DOMESTIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS, RADIOPHONE AND TELECASTING" AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NOS. 4905 AND 7633,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committee on Public Services

Letter from the House of Representatives, dated March 10, 2020, informing the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on even date House Bill No. 6091, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING PROTECTION FROM LIABILITY TO VOLUNTEERS FOR ACTS OR OMISSIONS COMMITTED IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES DURING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committees on Social Justice,

**Welfare and Rural Development; and Justice
and Human Rights**

BILLS ON FIRST READING

Senate Bill No. 1412, entitled

AN ACT TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN THE ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING LAW, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTIONS 2, 3, 7, 10, 12, AND 20 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9160, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING ACT OF 2001, AS AMENDED, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

**To the Committees on Banks, Financial
Institutions and Currencies; and Justice and
Human Rights**

Senate Bill No. 1414, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND RECOVERY PACKAGE TO COUNTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ALSO, ENTITLED "PAG-ASA: ALAGA, SUSTENTO, AT ANGAT SA PANAHONG COVID-19 CRISIS" PACKAGE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Marcos

To the Committee on Finance

Senate Bill No. 1415, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 288 OF THE NATIONAL INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1997, AS AMENDED, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committees on Ways and Means;
and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1416, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11332, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS

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THE "MANDATORY REPORTING OF NOTIFIABLE DISEASES AND HEALTH EVENTS OF PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN ACT," AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Marcos

To the Committee on Health and Demography

Senate Bill No. 1417, entitled

AN ACT APPROPRIATING THE SUM OF ONE HUNDRED EIGHT BILLION PESOS (P108,000,000,000) FOR THE 2020 FISCAL STIMULUS PACKAGE TO ADDRESS THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19

Introduced by Senator Angara

To the Committee on Finance

Senate Bill No. 1419, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A UNIFIED SYSTEM FOR SEPARATION, RETIREMENT, AND PENSION OF THE MILITARY AND UNIFORMED PERSONNEL (MUP) SERVICES OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES, CREATING THE MILITARY AND UNIFORMED PERSONNEL RETIREMENT FUND AUTHORITY, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Go

To the Committees on National Defense and Security; Peace, Unification and Reconciliation; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1420, entitled

AN ACT MANDATING THE APPOINTMENT OF BARANGAY HEALTH WORKERS IN BARANGAYS, AND PROVIDING FOR THEIR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Revilla

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

Senate Bill No. 1421, entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING MICRO-FINANCE PROGRAMS AND ACCESS TO CAPITAL TO SUPPORT THE GROW MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (MSMEs), ALLOCATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Revilla

To the Committees on Trade, Commerce and Entrepreneurship; Economic Affairs; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1422, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE MAGNA CARTA OF YOUNG FARMERS

Introduced by Senator Revilla

To the Committees on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform; Youth; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1423, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL HEALTH PASSPORT SYSTEM THEREBY STRENGTHENING THE PRIMARY HEALTHCARE SYSTEM, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Revilla

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1424, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL ECONOMIC DECENTRALIZATION PLAN TO FACILITATE FURTHER GROWTH IN ALL REGIONS OF THE PHILIPPINES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Revilla

**To the Committees on Economic Affairs;
and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1425, entitled

AN ACT TO INSTITUTIONALIZE A
STANDARD UPGRADE AND
MODERNIZATION OF REGIONAL
HOSPITALS TO CREATE AND
ESTABLISH REGIONAL CENTER OF
EXCELLENCE FOR HEALTH CARE

Introduced by Senator Revilla

**To the Committees on Health and Demo-
graphy; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1426, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT
NO. 7610, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS
THE "SPECIAL PROTECTION OF
CHILDREN AGAINST ABUSE,
EXPLOITATION AND DISCRIMINA-
TION ACT", AS AMENDED, AND
FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committee on Women, Children,
Family Relations and Gender Equality**

Senate Bill No. 1427, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT
NO. 11469 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS
THE "BAYANIHAN TO HEAL AS
ONE ACT"

Introduced by Senator Marcos

To the Committee on Finance

Senate Bill No. 1428, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT
NO. 7924, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS
"AN ACT CREATING THE METRO-
POLITAN MANILA DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY, DEFINING ITS POWERS
AND FUNCTIONS, PROVIDING

**FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES**

Introduced by Senator Marcos

To the Committee on Local Government

Senate Bill No. 1429, entitled

AN ACT GRANTING FULL TAX BENE-
FITS TO DONATIONS PROVIDED
DURING A STATE OF CALAMITY
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Marcos

To the Committee on Ways and Means

Senate Bill No. 1430, entitled

AN ACT PROHIBITING DISCRIMINA-
TION AGAINST HEALTHCARE
WORKERS, FRONTLINERS, AND
PERSONS SUSPECTED OF COVID-19
INFECTION, PROVIDING PENALTIES
THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committee on Justice and Human
Rights**

Senate Bill No. 1431, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN ECONOMIC
RECOVERY PACKAGE TO BUSI-
NESSES IN THE HARDEST HIT
SECTORS BY THE CORONAVIRUS
DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19), APPRO-
PRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND
FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committees on Economic Affairs;
and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1432, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING SECTIONS 28, 38
AND 39 OF REPUBLIC ACT
NO. 7305, OTHERWISE KNOWN

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**AS THE "MAGNA CARTA OF
PUBLIC HEALTH WORKERS"**

Introduced by Senator De Lima

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1433, entitled

AN ACT REQUIRING ALL TELECOMMUNICATIONS ENTITIES GRANTED WITH CONGRESSIONAL FRANCHISES TO PROVIDE THEIR SUBSCRIBERS WITH FREE ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

Introduced by Senator De Lima

To the Committees on Public Services

Senate Bill No. 1434, entitled

AN ACT PROMOTING THE WELFARE AND PROTECTION OF THE ELDERLY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator De Lima

To the Committees on Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1435, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING DISCOUNT FOR INDIGENT JOB APPLICANTS IN THE PAYMENT OF FEES AND CHARGES FOR CERTAIN CERTIFICATES AND CLEARANCES ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES FOR EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

Introduced by Senator Poe

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

Senate Bill No. 1436, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11332 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS

**THE MANDATORY REPORTING OF
NOTIFIABLE DISEASE AND
HEALTH EVENTS OF PUBLIC
HEALTH CONCERN ACT**

Introduced by Senator Hontiveros

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Justice and Human Rights

Senate Bill No. 1437, entitled

AN ACT MODERNIZING THE REGULATION OF HEALTH FACILITIES AND SERVICES, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, REPEALING FOR PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 4226, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "HOSPITAL LICENSURE ACT"

Introduced by Senator Revilla

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1438, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 3 OF REPUBLIC ACT NUMBER 7977, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS AN ACT TO LENGTHEN THE SCHOOL CALENDAR FROM TWO HUNDRED (200) DAYS TO NOT MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED TWENTY (220) CLASS DAYS

Introduced by Senator Sotto

To the Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture

Senate Bill No. 1439, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING SECTIONS 13 OF REPUBLIC ACT 10121, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "PHILIPPINE RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2010"

Introduced by Senator De Lima

To the Committees on National Defense

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and Security, Peace, Unification and Reconciliation; Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1440, entitled

AN ACT CREATING THE PHILIPPINE CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Gordon

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1441, entitled

AN ACT MANDATING LIFE INSURANCE AND ADDITIONAL HEALTH COVERAGE FOR ALL WORKERS IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR COMPELLED TO RENDER SERVICE OUTSIDE THE HOME DURING A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

Introduced by Senator Hontiveros

To the Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development; Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1442, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF ADDITIONAL QUARANTINE STATIONS, GROUNDS AND ANCHORAGES IN ALL STRATEGIC AREAS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Cayetano

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1443, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A NATIONAL HEALTH SECURITY

AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Cayetano

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1444, entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND BIORISK REDUCTION IN RESPONSE TO PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES

Introduced by Senator Pacquiao

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1445, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL COVID-19 CENTER, TO BE KNOWN AS THE COVID-19 DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL CENTER

Introduced by Senator Pacquiao

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1446, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10173, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "DATA PRIVACY ACT OF 2012", AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Marcos

To the Committee on Science and Technology

Senate Bill No. 1447, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING THE PRESCRIPTIVE PERIOD OF OFFENSES UNDER THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN ACT, THE CRIME OF RAPE AND THE CRIMES CHARACTERIZED AS CRIMES AGAINST CHASTITY

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UNDER TITLE ELEVEN OF THE REVISED PENAL CODE, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION TWENTY-FOUR OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9262, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "ANTI-VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN ACT OF 2004," AND ARTICLE 90 OF THE REVISED PENAL CODE, AS AMENDED

Introduced by Senator Marcos

To the Committees on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality; and Justice and Human Rights

COAUTHOR

Senate President Sotto, the principal author of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 351, manifested the inclusion of Senator Lacson as coauthor of the resolution.

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 372

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 372, entitled

RESOLUTION AMENDING RULE XI, SECTION 22, AND RULE XIV, SECTION 41 OF THE RULES OF THE SENATE TO ALLOW THE CONDUCT OF PLENARY SESSIONS AND COMMITTEE HEARINGS THROUGH TELECONFERENCE, VIDEO CONFERENCE, AND OTHER RELIABLE FORMS OF REMOTE OR ELECTRONIC MEANS.

With the permission of the Body, only the title of the resolution was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the Record of the Senate.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Zubiri for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri explained that the proposed amendments to Rule XI, Section 22, and Rule XIV,

Section 41 of the Rules of the Senate to allow the conduct of plenary sessions and committee hearings through teleconferencing, video conference, and other reliable forms of remote or electronic means, became necessary in light of the COVID-19 pandemic which prompted the President to issue Proclamation No. 922 declaring a state of public health emergency and Proclamation No. 929 declaring a state of calamity throughout the Philippines for a period of six months, and to place the National Capital Region and most areas in Luzon under the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) while other areas were placed under General Community Quarantine (GCQ). He said that he did not have to remind everyone of the danger of COVID-19, citing himself, as well as Senators Angara and Pimentel, as victims of the disease. He also mentioned the staff of Senators Cayetano and Revilla who also contracted the disease, latter's staff succumbing to it, as well as over a dozen of Senate staff who tested positive that day in the rapid test kits provided by Senator Lacson and Senate President Sotto. Thus, he advised his colleagues who have preexisting health conditions and are already elderly, to remain at home in accordance with the protocols set forth by the government and by the World Health Organization as they are the most vulnerable sector.

He feared that the number of cases would continue to increase and given the current rate of contamination, the country might reach the 10,000 mark by Tuesday or Wednesday with the virus still lurking in Metro Manila. Thus, he underscored the need to protect not only the Members of the Senate but also the 3,000 staff from both the Secretariat and the Office of the Senators. He pointed out that 80% of them take public transport, thus allowing them to work from home would decongest the Senate from any possible contamination and spread of the virus, thereby lessening the problem of the country's national health service system.

He explained that Rule XI, Section 22 of the Rules of the Senate would be amended to allow the committees to conduct meetings or hearings through teleconference, videoconference, and other reliable forms of remote electronic means in cases where there would be *force majeure* or occurrence of an emergency that would prevent the senators from physically attending committee meetings or hearings, while Rule XIV, Section 41 would be amended to allow the Senate to postpone the holding of the session on a day to day adjournment or, with the

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consent of the House of Representatives, convene and hold session through teleconference, videoconference, or other reliable forms of remote or electronic means. He also indicated that Senate President Sotto and Senator Lacson would be introducing amendments to come up with a hybrid system that would provide the Members the choice to be physically present in the Senate or to participate from home.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR LACSON

At the outset, Senator Lacson requested that he be made coauthor of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 372. He then asked if the proposed resolution lays down the exception rather than the rule on how the Senate should conduct meetings, hearings, and plenary sessions through teleconferencing. Senator Zubiri replied in the affirmative, clarifying that teleconferencing or videoconferencing would only be utilized during times of national health emergencies and *force majeure*, whether natural or manmade calamities, that would prevent the Members from physically attending the sessions of the Senate.

As to what constitutes an emergency to justify a Member to be unable to physically attend a Senate meeting or plenary session and to use teleconferencing or videoconferencing, Senator Zubiri replied that there should be an occurrence of a national emergency like the national health emergency currently in place, natural or manmade calamities, or state of lawlessness that would prevent the Members from coming to the Senate. He agreed to consider amendments that would specifically reflect the intent as he described earlier.

Senator Lacson stated that since it is a crisis of worldwide implications, at the proper time during the period of amendments, he would propose to only limit the exception to the rule to the COVID-19 issue, because anyway, the Senate could always adopt another resolution if the situation demands, such as in the event of war or an occurring emergency or *force majeure*.

But Senator Zubiri cited the difficulty of amending the Rules from time to time because of the publication requirement. He believed that the word “force majeure” would suffice to cover natural and manmade calamities, and he also suggested the deletion of the word “emergency” to prevent the invocation of this word by a Member simply because he/she would not

want to physically attend the session, more so when the emergency being invoked is not considered an emergency by the other Members.

Asked who would determine that there is an emergency that would necessitate or compel the Senate to resort to teleconferencing, Senator Zubiri stated that if the Body so agrees, the determination could be left to the discretion of Senate President Sotto. But Senator Lacson believed that being a deliberative and collegial body, the matter of determining if there is an emergency to compel them to resort to teleconferencing must be decided by the whole body.

Asked by Senate President Sotto of the phrase “The Senate President, in consultation with the Majority Leader and the Minority Leader,” which phrase is already contained in the Rules, would suffice, Senator Lacson maintained that leaving the determination to the discretion of three persons does not make it any different from leaving it to the Senate President alone, and he pointed out that because once the amendment as presently worded is adopted, it would encompass future occurrences of emergency; hence, his proposal is to just limit the application of the resolution to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis as it is not every day or every year that a crisis of such magnitude will occur.

Senator Poe agreed with Senator Lacson that the determination of the occurrence of an emergency must have the concurrence of the majority of the senators, but she asked if they have to physically show up first to concur or not to concur or a preliminary teleconference could be held to get the sentiment of the Members so that if majority of the Members agree that there is an emergency, then teleconferencing is allowed.

Senator Lacson said that the proposal of Senator Poe would be a welcome amendment to his amendment.

Senate President Sotto suggested the phrase “a manifestation of the majority of the members of the Senate,” saying that the word “manifestation” would provide enough elbow room which would be translated into a resolution signed by all Members.

Senator Zubiri proposed the phrase “majority of the Senators,” so as not to limit the determination to the Minority Leader, the Majority Leader and the Senate President.

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Senator Lacson noted that the point raised by Senator Poe was that the determination of an emergency that would necessitate teleconferencing should be decided by the whole body even through teleconferencing.

Senator Zubiri agreed, but he appealed to Senator Lacson not to limit the application of the rule on teleconferencing to the COVID-19 pandemic because even if a vaccine would be discovered and made available by October, for instance, and the teleconferencing rule would no longer be valid, the future Senate must have this rule available in the event of another emergency or a calamity that would make it impossible for the Members to physically attend the sessions of the Senate. He explained that the teleconferencing rule is not a special rule but an amendment to the general rule which would be published and become part of the Rules of the Senate. He reiterated his earlier proposal that the presence of a emergency must be determined by a vote of the majority of the Members.

Senate President Sotto proposed to add a new subparagraph (c) to address the concern of Senator Lacson that the occurrence of a national emergency should be determined by the majority of the Members of the Senate.

On Rule XI, Section 22 which governs the holding of meetings and/or hearings through teleconference, Senator Lacson inquired if the rule would also be applicable to inquiries in aid of legislation, particularly when during the course of an investigation, one of the witnesses or resource persons lied under oath and there was a need to cite him/her for contempt. Asked how the members of the committee would vote or cite a person in contempt and order his/her detention, Senator Zubiri stated that the resource persons would have to take their oath while being witnessed by all the members of the Senate via video conference or teleconference.

But Senator Lacson pointed out that administering an oath necessitates physical presence before an administering officer. Senator Zubiri stated that certain limitations would be observed in the conduct of committee hearings through teleconferencing, and that the amendment would not prevent a chairperson to conduct committee meetings face to face.

Senate President Sotto stated that teleconferencing should only be confined to simple committee

meetings and/or hearings but not to inquiries in aid of legislation which is governed by a separate set of rules, *The Rules of Procedure Governing Inquiries in Aid of Legislation* which the Senate adopted through Senate Resolution No. 5.

Adverting to Rule XIV, Section 41, Senator Lacson questioned the need for the consent of the House of Representatives when both Houses of Congress could adopt their own rules of proceedings.

Senate President Sotto manifested that he would, in fact, proposed the deletion of that requirement as he agreed with Senator Lacson that the Senate does not need the consent of the House of Representatives.

Asked how the senators' vote would be taken in case one or some of them are not physically present in the session hall considering that under Rule XIV, Section 117, "the vote of a Senate absent from the session at the moment he is called to vote shall not be counted," Senate President Sotto explained that once Proposed Senate Resolution No. 372 is adopted, the senators in the teleconference would be deemed present and therefore they can participate in the voting.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR TOLENTINO

Prefatorily, Senator Tolentino congratulated Senator Zubiri for opening a hybrid window that would settle the constitutional ambiguities which the Senate was experiencing at that moment.

Adverting to Section 16(5), Article VI of the 1987 Constitution, Senator Tolentino believed that to sit in one House refers to the venue where the Senate chamber is, and that moving elsewhere means transferring collectively, just like when the House of Representatives sought the consent of the Senate before convening in Batangas City after the Taal Volcano eruption. Senate President Sotto clarified that the House of Representatives simply informed the Senate of their plan to convene in Batangas City.

Casting his support for the shift to teleconferencing, Senator Tolentino likewise expressed concern on the constitutionality of moving out of the session hall because it will be tantamount to having session in 23 different venues, contrary to the Constitution. As he acknowledged that the hybrid session would create a good fusion in the Senate proceedings so that the health and safety of the senators and their

staff would be protected, he hoped that the Senate could likewise comply with the constitutional requirement of not leaving the session hall. He stated that as provided for in Rule L, Section 135, absent a rule applicable to the specific case, precedents of the Legislative Department of the Philippines shall be resorted to, but he noted that there was no precedent yet to resort to although before World War II, Senate sessions were conducted at the Manila City Hall, Aduana in Intramuros, and Sampaloc, Manila. Accordingly, he believed that amending the Senate Rules to allow teleconferencing was imperative, noting that the House of Representatives already was practicing its own hybrid session. He said that the presence of the majority of the senators in the Session Hall already complies with the requirements of the Constitution.

Senate President Sotto emphasized the need to retain the physical presence of some Members in the session while the others would participate via teleconference.

Senator Tolentino also assumed that the plenary hall would serve as the nerve center of any electronic platform that the Senate would have.

Also, Senate President Sotto stated that Article VI, Section 16(3) of the Constitution provides that "Each House may determine the rules of its proceedings xxx."

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

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

At this juncture, Senate President Sotto relinquished the Chair to Senate President Pro Tempore Recto.

SOTTO AMENDMENT

On page 2, line 32, as proposed by Senate President Sotto and accepted by the Sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved to delete the phrase "WITH THE CONSENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES."

VILLANUEVA AMENDMENT

On page 2, lines 19 and 20, as proposed by

Senator Villanueva and accepted by the Sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved to replace the phrase "in case when there is" with DUE TO, consistent to the rationale found in Section 41 of the Rules.

LACSON AMENDMENTS

As proposed by Senator Lacson and accepted by the Sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved the amendments on page 2, line 20, as follows:

1. Insert the word NATIONAL before the word "emergency"; and
2. Insert the phrase AS DETERMINED BY A MAJORITY OF ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE after the word "emergency."

SOTTO AMENDMENT

On page 3, line 3, as proposed by Senate President Sotto and accepted by the Sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved to insert a new paragraph, to read as follows:

NOTWITHSTANDING THE FOREGOING, SENATORS WHO ELECT TO BE PHYSICALLY PRESENT DURING THE HOLDING OF TELECONFERENCE SESSION MAY PERSONALLY ATTEND AND PARTICIPATE IN THE SAID SESSION INSIDE THE PLENARY HALL.

LACSON AMENDMENTS

As proposed by Senator Lacson and accepted by the Sponsor, there being no objection, the Body approved the following amendments on page 3:

1. On line 1, insert the word NATIONAL before the word "emergency;"
2. On the same line, after the word "emergency," insert the phrase AS DETERMINED BY A MAJORITY OF ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

There being no other individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of amendments.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 372

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection. Proposed Senate Resolution No. 372 was adopted by the Body, subject to style.

INQUIRY OF SENATOR DRILON

Preliminarily, Senator Drilon thanked Senate President Sotto and Senate Majority Leader Zubiri for coming up with Proposed Senate Resolution No. 372 as a remedy to the procedure in the Senate plenary session, amid the current COVID-19 pandemic. He said that it was, in fact, a departure from the *Rules of the Senate* and the tradition of the Senate, particularly on attendance or presence of a quorum and voting.

With the adoption of the said resolution embodying the amendments to the Rules, Senator Drilon asked when the Body should avail of teleconferencing; whether this new rule could be used in a daily basis or only in an emergency, and assuming it is only in an emergency, how long the privilege of participating via teleconferencing would last.

In reply, Senator Zubiri explained that with the adoption of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 372, the Senate could already conduct sessions with some Members physically present in the Senate Hall, while the others participating via teleconference.

Supposing these would no longer be an emergency in July or August, Senator Drilon asked whether the Body could still conduct sessions and transact business through teleconference, or if the Members would be required to be physically present. Senator Zubiri explained that based on the amended rule, it is the majority of the Members of the Senate that would determine the occurrence of a national emergency. He said that the Body would be continuing with the setup until the majority of the Members deem that teleconferencing would no longer be necessary.

Asked if the exercise of the said prerogative of going through teleconferencing can be availed of only in case there is an emergency or whether the majority can vote that the Body can conduct sessions through teleconferencing even in normal times Senator Zubiri replied that there has to be a national emergency or *force majeure* as determined by the

majority of the members of the Senate, to justify the holding of sessions through teleconference.

Senator Drilon pointed out that teleconferencing is not the new normal, it is only an exception that, he noted, would have a lot of implications, most importantly on voting. He said that by tradition and pursuant to the Rules, before it was amended, a senator cannot vote, interpellate, nor do anything unless physically present in the Session Hall, but the Body would depart from all those traditions and rules in case the majority determine the occurrence of a national emergency or *force majeure* and allow teleconferencing. He then placed on record, for purposes of clarification, that if there is no national emergency, the rule that a Member of the Body must be physically present in the plenary cannot be overturned by an opinion of the majority or a motion of the majority to allow teleconferencing.

Senator Zubiri agreed that the rule on teleconferencing is an exemption rather than a rule, meaning, the use of teleconferencing is allowed only in case of a national emergency or a *force majeure* as determined by the majority of the senators.

Senate President Sotto pointed out that the operative phrase must always be "in a national emergency." Senator Drilon agreed that absent the circumstance of a national emergency or *force majeure*, the Body cannot have a session through teleconferencing.

At this juncture, Senator Zubiri placed on record the Members who were online: Senators Drilon, Hontiveros, Villa, Angara, Marcos, Pangilinan and Pimentel.

Senate President Sotto stated that the senators who were online would be marked "arrived after the roll call."

Senate President Sotto explained that he was asking for a suspension of the session earlier in order to incorporate all the other gadgets the other senators would want to use in the teleconference for familiarization. He said that among the agreements reached during the caucus earlier, starting next week, as their names are called during the roll call, the senators would verbally state that he or she is present in the teleconferencing, and that sessions would be suspended on a daily basis except on Wednesday when the session would be adjourned so

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that Monday the following week, a roll call would be conducted.

Asked by Senator Drilon how long the privilege of being able to participate through teleconferencing would last, Senator Zubiri replied that until there are still cases of COVID-19 contamination as determined by the Members of the Senate, teleconferencing would be allowed.

Asked if the Body can still conduct sessions through teleconferencing supposing the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) is lifted in the National Capital Region where the Senate is located, Senator Zubiri replied that once there is no more General Community Quarantine (GCQ), the Body can discuss to decide if they would still continue videoconferencing. However, he believed that the COVID-19 pandemic would not be gone anytime soon as the number of people infected by the virus keeps growing, citing that 14 members of the Senate staff, both from the Secretariat and staff of senators, have just tested positive. He added that the Body cannot just put a time limit on the use of teleconferencing at the moment and that they would have to decide depending on the situation and with the approval of the majority of the members of the Senate.

Senator Lacson believed that the limit to the use of teleconferencing by the Body should not depend on whether a GCQ or ECQ was still in place, underscoring that the requirement must be the occurrence of a national emergency as clearly defined in the 1987 Constitution.

To Senator Zubiri's statement that the President has declared a six-month national emergency, Senator Drilon stated that the powers granted to the President under the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, which was actually on emergency act, would expire on June 30 of this year because under the Constitution, a declaration of emergency by Congress should terminate upon the expiration or adjournment of the session. He clarified that he simply raised the issue of having definite rules because he would want the Body to avoid debating on this rule when the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act would expire upon the adjournment of the session because the Body failed to set standards.

Senator Zubiri stated that the President issued on March 16, 2020, Proclamation No. 929 declaring a state of calamity throughout the Philippines for the period of six months, aside from the Proclamation

No. 922 which declared a state of public health emergency, and pursuant to Proposed Senate Resolution No. 372, with the approval of the majority of the Members of the Senate, the Body can continue with the teleconferencing. Senate President Sotto stated that based on the amendment of Senator Lacson, there must be a national emergency as determined by majority of the Members to justify the use of teleconferencing.

Asked if the Body can allow teleconferencing and voting *in absentia* for one year if the state of public health emergency extends for the next one year, Senate President Sotto said that based on Proclamation No. 922, the state of public health emergency may last for six months, at which time, the Body could determine whether or not to continue the use of teleconferencing.

Senator Drilon stated that he would not want the action of the Senate or the *Rules* of the Senate to be governed by an extraneous action on the part of the Executive branch. He stressed that it should be the prerogative of the Senate to determine its own set of procedures if it decides to allow the teleconferencing method until the end of the session or if it decides to end it in December. He suggested that the Body allow teleconferencing until June 30, the expiration of the present Congress, and when session resumes in July and if the situation still calls for it, they can readopt the same resolution allowing teleconferencing.

Senator Zubiri agreed, but he opined that the Senate need not adopt a new resolution because they have already adopted the resolution which amended the general rule of the Senate. He pointed out that pursuant to the adopted resolution, it is the majority of the Members of the Senate that would determine the occurrence or absence of national emergency, and they could either extend or cut short the teleconferencing rule, as the case may be.

Asked if the resolution allowing teleconferencing will expire, in effect, on June 30, 2020, and subject again to a debate when the next Congress convenes on the fourth Monday of July, Senator Zubiri replied in the negative. He explained that the Senate as a body was not adopting a special rule but amending a general rule, the *Rules of the Senate*, which is the mother rule that must be published. He believed that the provision on teleconferencing should not apply to one specific condition or limit it to a specific timeline.

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COAUTHORS

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, all the Members present were made coauthors of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 372.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO

Senator Cayetano proposed to place a “raised hand” function in the application of teleconferencing for an orderly conduct of business. She asked the Secretariat to assist the Senate President and the Majority Leader on how to use the said function. In reply, Senate President Sotto said that precisely he asked for a suspension of session to get accustomed to the functions being used in the teleconferencing. He said that the Presiding Officer would be given a main monitor by the service provider where all the Members are there, including those physically present in the plenary session, and the hand raising function would be incorporated there. He said that the Senate President and the Majority Leader would have the same monitor to see those who are asking for recognition for proper acknowledgement.

Senator Cayetano agreed with the position taken by the Majority Leader on the conditions that are attached to the conduct of online hearings and session. She stated that there would be less to debate about in the future, when they would amend the Rules if they would be guided by the pronouncements of scientists and experts, for instance, whether serious form of social distancing needs to be observed. She noted that a lot of guidelines have to be put in place, and when the ECQ is lifted, she cautioned against congregating as if there was never any quarantine, as what happened in other parts of the country.

Senator Cayetano pointed out that they risk their lives every time they step out of their homes and that inasmuch as there are legislative priority bills that the Executive wants them to look into, she said that she would be physically present when necessary. She reiterated that the Chamber has to be guided by and be conscious of the discussions and pronouncements of the scientists.

On a related matter, she questioned the protocol for e-signatures, noting that apart from the senator’s signature, a confirmation from their chief-of-staff is

being required. She then appealed that the e-signature as well as a direct message from the senator should suffice to be able to adapt to the new normal.

Regarding the exclusion of resolutions in aid of legislation for online hearings, Senator Cayetano pointed out that a lot of resolutions were, in fact, worded that way, and that they should also be allowed to be heard. For instance, she said that she has a resolution that would take a look at the health equipment inventory which is in aid of legislation because they might need to come up with some bills on the matter.

Lastly, Senator Cayetano stated that the Chamber has to be fluid because the system is new to all of them, and it would be hard to put everything in the Rules.

As they have discussed during their online caucus, Senator Zubiri confirmed that they have already allowed e-signatures as long as it is countersigned by the chief-of-staff. Senator Cayetano asked how it would be confirmed because sending documents would also be difficult. She suggested that a confirmation via text message should suffice.

Senator Zubiri said that they would discuss the teleconferencing protocols during the suspension and would come up with internal rules including the raising of hands, mute button and dress code.

APPROVAL OF SENATE BILL NO. 1365 ON THIRD READING

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, Senate Bill No. 1365, printed copies of which were distributed to the senators on March 11, 2020.

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

AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE
ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM
IN BASIC EDUCATION FOR OUT-OF-
SCHOOL YOUTH, ADULTS, AND
CHILDREN IN SPECIAL EXTREME
CASES AND APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFOR.

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Secretary Villarica called the roll for nominal voting.

RESULT OF THE VOTING

The result of the voting was as follows:

In Favor

Angara	Marcos
Binay	Pacquiao
Cayetano	Pangilinan
Dela Rosa	Pimentel
Drilon	Poe
Gatchalian	Recto
Go	Revilla
Gordon	Sotto
Hontiveros	Tolentino
Lacson	Villanueva
Lapid	Zubiri

Against

None

Abstention

None

With 22 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared Senate Bill No. 1365 approved on Third Reading.

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 363

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 363, entitled

RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE PROFOUND SYMPATHY AND SINCERE CONDOLENCES OF THE SENATE ON THE DEATH OF HONORABLE HEHERSON T. ALVAREZ, FORMER SENATOR (1987-1988), FORMER MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES (1998-2001), AND FORMER MEMBER OF THE CABINET,

taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution No. 366, 371 and 382.

With the permission of the Body, only the title of the resolution was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the Record of the Senate.

The Chair recognized Senate President Sotto to sponsor the resolution.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATE PRESIDENT SOTTO

Senate President Sotto presented to the Body the Resolution expressing the profound sympathy and sincere condolences to the bereaved family of the late Senator Alvarez.

The following is the full text of Senate President Sotto's speech:

I join the rest of the nation in mourning the passing of a respectable leader and a good friend, former Senator Heherson "Sonny" Alvarez, last April 20, 2020. I had the great opportunity to learn from this reasonable and hard-working lawmaker as a neophyte senator in 1992 when I first joined this august Body. We were even together during the campaign of 1992.

Senator Sonny Alvarez will always be remembered as a freedom fighter, a land reform champion, a debater par excellence, an environmental warrior, a human rights advocate, an exemplary lawmaker, an exceptional statesman, a fearless leader, a dedicated public servant, a patriot, and a respectable Filipino.

Even after his stint as a lawmaker, his burning passion for public service continued. His giving of advice on legislative matters and current issues did not cease. As a matter of fact, he last visited my office in November last year with his wife to seek support for the National Commission for Culture and the Arts. He truly was a dedicated public servant.

I feel more pain with his loss as we, the Members of the Senate, and our counterparts in the House of Representatives cannot give him the proper recognition and reverence due to a former member of the Congress, given that his passing comes during this time when the country is gripped by this infectious, fatal virus, and a necrological ceremony cannot possibly be held.

To his family, especially to his wife Cecile and his children, may you find solace in the thought that he is now free of any suffering, and is now peacefully watching over you as you continue your life's journey. His legacy will live on in the hearts and minds of the people, and his name will forever be etched in our country's rich history.

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COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GORDON

Senator Gordon recalled working with the late Senator Alvarez when they were young delegates in the Constitutional Convention. He said that they were also colleagues in the student movement in the 1970s, particularly in the National Union of Student Movement where they supported the candidacy of Arturo Macapagal in the NUS, and many other opportunities.

Senator Gordon stated that former Senator Alvarez was a distinguished man who had no mean bone in his body, and made sure that he took a stance on important issues, and an environmental warrior and a person who spoke on principle. He also shared that when they joined the Constitutional Convention, they were seen walking out during the speech of the former President Marcos, but they just coincidentally went to the restroom at the same time.

Senator Gordon stated that former Senator Alvarez worked hard for the environment and had terrific positions on the matter; he was a congressman from the Fourth District of Isabela, as well as an adviser on overseas Filipino community for a long time. Also, he pointed out that the former senator was a staunch human rights activist who made known his position to certain administrations in the past, and that he was also forced to go into exile in the United States, together with Raul Manglapus, after the declaration of Martial Law, where he founded the Ninoy Aquino Movement.

Senator Gordon recalled the many environmental laws that Senator Alvarez principally authored, as well as the Healthy Air Pact of 1993 that he initiated—an agreement among the three major oil companies of the country to reduce the lead content in gasoline from 0.6 gram per liter to 0.15 gram per liter—which eventually resulted in the introduction of unleaded gasoline to the market in February of 1994. He also cited Senator Alvarez's involvement in international advocacies on the environment with the United Nations Environmental Program, as well as his active participation in the holding of the First Asia Pacific Leaders Conference on Climate Change in Manila on 21 February 1995, which resulted in the Manila Declaration that recognized the risks posed by climate change to small island states, coastal areas and other nations of the Asia Pacific region.

Senator Gordon said that former Senator Alvarez was also a recipient of many awards and recognitions which are already part of the record of his life.

Senator Gordon said that as the Chamber mourns the loss of an exceptional leader and visionary who dedicated his life for the good of the country and the Filipino people fighting for what is right and just and championing issues for the benefit of our future generations, they should recognized that he really fought the good fight. He expressed his sympathy to his family, particularly to his wife, Cecile Alvarez, who worked for various advocacies for children, the indigenous communities and the environment.

Senator Gordon mentioned that he spoke with Senator Alvarez's daughter Xilca who requested that the Senate remember her father by having a blood day on the occasion of his birthday and death anniversary. He said that during his fight with the virus, he received blood from the Red Cross.

Senator Gordon urged the Members to adopt a resolution not only to honor Senator Alvarez but also to respect the wishes of his daughter by holding a blood donation in commemoration of the senator's birth anniversary as well as on the anniversary of his passing.

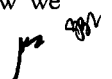
COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva submitted his cosponsorship speech for Proposed Senate Resolution No. 363 for insertion into the Record.

The full text of Senator Villanueva's speech follows:

When I heard about the death of former Senator Heherson "Sonny" Alvarez on April 20 due to coronavirus, I felt how deeply the disease changed our way of life. It altered the ways we process loss by disrupting our sacred rituals around death and hindering even our time-honored tradition of holding necrological services in honor of a former Senator of the Republic.

But as the death of a loved one or family member, a friend, colleague, a frontliner, and even some stranger leaves us with irreconciled emotions, it also gives us a new perspective about the value of our existence and how we make of our lives.



To my mind, they are all heroes not because they fought with illness and death in a solitary battle, but because they fought in a way that gave the Filipino pride, honor, and dignity.

Former Senator Heherson "Sonny" Alvarez is definitely a "hero" in the fight against COVID-19. There is no doubt that he, together with all the others, gave our medical practitioners and scientists significant learning and approaches on how to fight this deadly virus like the use of convalescent plasma therapy, which former Senator Alvarez underwent on "experimental" basis.

But this is not the only heroism I know about Senator Alvarez. Even though I was just a fresh college graduate when Senator Alvarez began his last term as Senator in 1996, I know that he was our hero at the nation's frontline in the unrelenting battlefields of climate change and human rights.

He gave us the cure for our environmental woes through landmark legislations. The Clean Air Act of 1999, the National Integrated Protected Area System or NIPAS Act, the Solid Waste Management Act, the Northern Sierra Madre Protected Area Act, the Strategic Environmental Plan for Palawan, and the declaration of April 22 of every year as Earth Day in the Philippines are but few examples.

He did not only craft environmental laws. He truly unleashed the "green warrior" in him, shielding us against air and water pollution, when he put up the Earth Savers Movement. In 1993, he initiated the Healthy Air Pact, an agreement among the Big 3 Oil companies in the Philippines to reduce lead content in gasoline. He also paved the way for the "Manila Declaration" that recognized the risks posed by climate change to small island states and other coastal nations of the Asia Pacific Region.

Senator Alvarez was also at the nation's frontline in the battle for human rights. In my history classes, I learned how he opposed Martial Law and refused to sign the Constitution that would legitimize it. He even went into exile, founded the Ninoy Aquino Movement and called for the US government to cut military aid and economic grants that became instrument for human rights violation at that time.

My first encounter with Senator Alvarez happened by chance during a mass gathering in EDSA in 2001. He was then a leading member of the opposition and the minority block and principal initiator of the impeachment complaint filed against then President Estrada.

His words left an indelible ink in my mind as the leader of the *Kristiyanong Kabataan Para sa Bayan* Movement. Eventually, his thoughts influenced the cause of the Citizens Battle Against Corruption or CIBAC Party List which I represented for three terms in the House of Representatives. Time and again, on several occasions and functions, I told myself that Senator Alvarez was the kind of leader whom I will march behind.

Senator Heherson Alvarez ran headfirst into unknown territory when he advocated for the environment at a time when "climate change" was not yet spoken of by many. He pushed himself towards danger when he opposed Martial Law. He preserved democracy and protected civil liberties that has now become his legacy.

Throughout his life, he was in the frontline of the many battles we faced as a nation including COVID-19. Losing a great statesperson amid a pandemic is a scorching agony. But we are still here to put the pieces back together, to heal and win together, and to relive the memories of our heroes. They gave us a sense of pride, dignity and honor as a people— foremost among them is Senator Heherson "Sonny" Alvarez.

Thus, I join this august Chamber in officially expressing its profound sympathy and condolences on the death of Honorable "Sonny" Alvarez — former senator, great statesperson, freedom fighter, human rights advocate, and a staunch environmentalist who brought the Filipino nation much honor, dignity, and pride.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri extended his sympathies to the family of the late Senator Alvarez as he recalled having served with the former senator when he was a member of the House of Representatives in the 11th Congress.

He reminisced how Senator Alvarez, who was among the 29 members of the brave minority that signed the impeachment complaint against the former President Joseph Estrada, served as one of the legal luminaries who helped defend the position of the minority at that time.

Senator Zubiri said that he mourned the passing of Senator Alvarez because they shared the same advocacy against bullying and hazing. In fact, he recalled having been with former Senators Alvarez and Lina during a recent forum condemning the death of a PMAer through hazing. He commended

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Senator Alvarez for having been very active on issues on human rights and issues that tackle environment and climate change even after his term had ended. He also lauded the departed legislator who, like Senator Legarda, had been the Senate's resident climate change expert. He believed that Senator Alvarez could have still made even greater contribution to their legislative advocacies.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR BINAY

Senator Zubiri manifested Senator Binay's request for her speech to be inserted into the record.

The full text of Senator Binay's speech follows:

I here stand to give honor to a fellow Isabeliño — a champion for the environment. Human rights crusader. Defender of the oppressed. Tireless member of the legislature and the parliament of the streets.

These epithets are indeed all appropriate for the gentleman from Isabela. But all these would still not be able to capture the greatness of one of the finest to have graced these august halls.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid low not only our nation, but the whole world. It has cratered the economies of even the mightiest countries and left them reeling, and has led to the loss of livelihood of millions of people.

The pandemic continues, and even as we speak it leaves in its wake families who mourn the loss of their beloved members.

For many of us, it will be the cruelest disease we will have seen in our lifetime. We have been separated from one another of necessity, and we are prevented from bidding a proper farewell to those who have left us.

Not a final embrace, nor a clasped hand. Mourning families are left to deal with their grief within the confines of their households.

I can only imagine the pain and loss that Mrs. Cecile Guidote-Alvarez and the rest of their family feel at this moment.

With Senator Sonny Alvarez' passing, our country is left further impoverished.

In great crises as the one we are facing now, we need all the wisdom and leadership we can get.

Senator Alvarez, who has throughout his lifetime never backed down from sharing his

enlightened insights, and never shirked from his duty to our nation and people, would have been invaluable in our attempts to pick up the pieces and carve a new path under the new normal.

We are resuming our session under extraordinary circumstances. But I believe it is only apt that we take a moment to honor a great man, a great leader.

But allow me to also take this opportunity to present a challenge to all of us. The death of Senator Sonny Alvarez has left a massive void in public service that we must fill. Just as he has on many occasions bested the challenges hurled his way in his desire to truly serve the Filipino people, so must we pick up where he has left off.

Our people need genuine leaders, and they should not have to look far to find them. Especially under these trying times, the Senate must be a source of light and warmth that inspires and reassures the Filipino nation.

That is the only fitting way to pay tribute to a man who has dedicated his whole life to public service.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 363

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Body adopted Proposed Senate Resolution No. 363, taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 366, 371 and 382, subject to style.

COAUTHORS

Senator Zubiri manifested that all members are coauthors of the resolution.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, the session was suspended.

It was 5:04 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:58 p.m., the session was resumed with Senate President presiding.

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Senate President Sotto designated the

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following senators to constitute the Senate panel in the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on Universal Health Care:

Chairperson: Go

Members :

Dela Rosa	Gordon
Tolentino	Hontiveros

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary of the Senate read the following matters and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Letter from the House of Representatives informing the Senate that on 23 March 2020, the House of Representatives passed House Bill No. 6616, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE EXISTENCE OF A NATIONAL EMERGENCY ARISING FROM THE CORONA-VIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19) SITUATION AND A NATIONAL POLICY IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, AND AUTHORIZING THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES FOR A LIMITED PERIOD AND SUBJECT TO RESTRICTIONS, TO EXERCISE POWERS NECESSARY AND PROPER TO CARRY OUT THE DECLARED NATIONAL POLICY AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Archives

Letter from the House of Representatives, informing the Senate that on 23 March 2020, the House of Representatives adopted Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 9, entitled

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION CREATING A JOINT COMMITTEE OF BOTH HOUSES TO NOTIFY THE PRES-

IDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES THAT CONGRESS HAS CONVENED ITS FIRST SPECIAL SESSION AND THERE BEING A QUORUM, SAID CONGRESS HAS ALREADY ENTERED UPON THE EXERCISE OF ITS FUNCTIONS

To the Archives

Letter from the House of Representatives informing the Senate that on 23 March 2020, the House of Representatives adopted House Concurrent Resolution No. 7, entitled

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE FIRST SPECIAL SESSION OF THE EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE PHILIPPINES NOT LATER THAN TWELVE O'CLOCK, MIDNIGHT TODAY, MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2020,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Archives

BILLS ON FIRST READING

Senate Bill No. 1457, entitled

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE DEFERMENT OF THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR IN TIMES OF EMERGENCIES AND CALAMITIES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7977 AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Tolentino

**To the Committee on Basic Education,
Arts and Culture**

Senate Bill No. 1458, entitled

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE SHORTENING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR AND THE MASS PROMOTION OF STUDENTS IN TIMES OF EMERGENCIES AND CALAMITIES,

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AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE
REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7977 AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Tolentino

**To the Committee on Basic Education,
Arts and Culture**

Senate Bill No. 1459, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE TER-
TIARY ONLINE LEARNING AND
DISTANCE EDUCATION OFFICE
UNDER THE COMMISSION ON
HIGHER EDUCATION, AMENDING
REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10650 OTHER-
WISE KNOWN AS "OPEN
DISTANCE LEARNING ACT" AND
FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Tolentino

**To the Committees on Higher, Technical
and Vocational Education; and Science and
Technology**

Senate Bill No. No. 1460, entitled

AN ACT EXPANDING THE BASIC
EDUCATION CURRICULUM,
INCREASING THE FUNCTIONS OF
THE BUREAU OF LEARNING
DELIVERY UNDER THE DEPART-
MENT OF EDUCATION TO
INCLUDE DISTANCE EDUCATION
AND ONLINE LEARNING, THEREBY
AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10533
OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE
"ENHANCED BASIC EDUCATION
ACT OF 2013," AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Tolentino

**To the Committees on Basic Education,
Arts and Culture; and Higher, Technical and
Vocational Education**

Senate Bill No. 1461, entitled

AN ACT ENFORCING MEASURES TO
MITIGATE THE SPREAD OF CON-

TAGIOUS DISEASES IN THE COM-
MUNITY AND SELECT PUBLIC
ESTABLISHMENTS AND EVENTS
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Pacquiao

**To the Committee on Health and Demo-
graphy**

Senate Bill No. 1462, entitled

AN ACT RENEWING THE FRANCHISE
GRANTED TO THE UNIVERSITY
OF THE PHILIPPINES SYSTEM TO
CONSTRUCT, ESTABLISH, MAIN-
TAIN AND OPERATE FOR EDUCA-
TIONAL AND OTHER RELATED
PURPOSES RADIO AND TELE-
VISION BROADCASTING STATIONS
WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY OF THE
PHILIPPINES AND SUCH OTHER
AREAS WITHIN THE SCOPE OF ITS
OPERATION UNDER REPUBLIC
ACT NO. 8160 TO ANOTHER
TWENTY FIVE (25) YEARS

Introduced by Senator Villanueva

To the Committee on Rules

Senate Bill No. 1463, entitled

AN ACT PROHIBITING THE ACTIVE
USE AND DISPLAY OF COMMER-
CIAL BILLBOARDS DURING
TYPHOONS

Introduced by Senator Villanueva

To the Committee on Public Works

Senate Bill No. 1464, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT
NO. 7743, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS
"AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF CONGRES-
SIONAL, CITY, AND MUNICIPAL
LIBRARIES AND BARANGAY
READING CENTERS THROUGH-
OUT THE PHILIPPINES," AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES

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Introduced by Senator Villanueva

To the Committees on Basic Education, Arts and Culture; Local Government; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1465, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A MAGNA CARTA OF COMMUTERS

Introduced by Senator Villanueva

To the Committee on Public Services

Senate Bill No. 1466, entitled

AN ACT REDEFINING THE CRIME OF ILLEGAL RECRUITMENT COMMITTED BY A SYNDICATE, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE ARTICLE 38 OF PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 442, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "LABOR CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES," AS AMENDED AND SECTION 6 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8042, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "MIGRANT WORKERS AND OVERSEAS FILIPINOS ACT OF 1995," AS AMENDED

Introduced by Senator De Lima

To the Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development; and Foreign Relations

Senate Bill No. 1467, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING MEASURES TO ENSURE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND CONVENIENCE AND PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS THEREOF

Introduced by Senator De Lima

To the Committees on Public Services; and Public Works

Senate Bill No. 1468, entitled

AN ACT ENHANCING THE SOCIAL PROTECTION RESPONSES OF THE

GOVERNMENT TO THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Introduced by Senator De Lima

To the Committee on Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1469, entitled

AN ACT SUPPORTING THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL CAREERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Introduced by Senator Angara

To the Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development; Science and Technology; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1470, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A NATIONAL DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION POLICY AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Angara

To the Committees on Science and Technology; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1471, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11036, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT

Introduced by Senator Angara

To the Committee on Health and Demography

Senate Bill No. 1472, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE PHILIPPINE eHEALTH SYSTEM AND SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE USING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY IN THE PHILIPPINES, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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Introduced by Senator Angara

To the Committees on Health and Demography; Science and Technology; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1473, entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING AN INSTALLMENT PAYMENT SCHEME ON BASIC UTILITY BILLS DURING CALAMITIES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES, TO BE KNOWN AS THE "THREE-GIVES LAW"

Introduced by Senator Tolentino

To the Committee on Public Services

Senate Bill No. 1474, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING AN ECONOMIC STIMULUS STRATEGY FOR THE EFFECTS OF THE CORONA VIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Recto

To the Committees on Economic Affairs; Ways and Means; and Finance

RESOLUTIONS

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 378, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE/S TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REVITALIZATION OF THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRY IN THE NEW NORMAL

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Basic Education, Arts and Culture; and Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 379, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SERVICES

TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE RESUMPTION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN ORDER TO IMMEDIATELY RESTORE MOBILITY AND LIVELIHOOD WHILE STILL OBSERVING SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES AND OTHER HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committee on Public Services

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 380, entitled

RESOLUTION URGING THE EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT TO FORMULATE AND IMPLEMENT A BALIK PROBINSYA PROGRAM

Introduced by Senator Go

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 381, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND DEMOGRAPHY TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED REFUSAL OF SOME HOSPITALS TO ADMIT AND PROVIDE NECESSARY EMERGENCY TREATMENT TO PERSONS IN NEED OF IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION

Introduced by Senator Go

To the Committee on Health and Demography

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 382, entitled

RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE PROFOUND SYMPATHY AND SINCERE CONDOLENCE OF THE SENATE OF THE PHILIPPINES ON THE DEATH OF FORMER SENATOR HEHERSON T. ALVAREZ

Introduced by Senator

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 383, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER AND TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE STATUS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION AND THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING ACT

Introduced by Senator Villanueva

To the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 384, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, EMPLOYMENT, AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEES, TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ADEQUACY OF ON-SITE ASSISTANCE AND PROGRAMS FOR OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS IN LIGHT OF THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) PANDEMIC AND THE CONSEQUENT OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT DISPLACEMENTS WORLDWIDE

Introduced by Senator Villanueva

To the Committee on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 385, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN, CHILDREN, FAMILY RELATIONS AND GENDER EQUALITY TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE RAMPANT PROLIFERATION AND RISING INCIDENCE OF CHILD CYBERSEX ABUSE IN THE PHILIPPINES ESPECIALLY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC,

WITH THE END IN VIEW OF PROPOSING LEGISLATIVE MEASURES AND ENSURING THAT THE WELFARE OF THE FILIPINO YOUTH AND CHILDREN ARE NOT NEGLECTED DURING A GLOBAL HEALTH CRISIS

Introduced by Senator De Lima

To the Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 386, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10533, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "ENHANCED BASIC EDUCATION ACT OF 2013," IN RELATION TO REPORTS ON THE APPARENT DIFFICULTY IN WRITING IN ENGLISH OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF IDENTIFYING THE GAPS OF THE CURRENT CURRICULUM AND PROPOSING LEGISLATIONS THAT WOULD ENSURE THAT THE FILIPINO YOUTH ARE INDEED RECEIVING THE QUALITY EDUCATION THEY DESERVE

Introduced by Senator De Lima

To the Committees on Basic Education, Arts and Culture; and Youth

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 387, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE STATUS AND PROGRESS OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY TO ADDRESS THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) PANDEMIC, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF ADDRESSING ISSUES THAT MAY IMPEDE ITS PROGRESS, ENSURING THE REALIZATION OF

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ITS OBJECTIVES, RESTORING PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS, AND SUSTAINING GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TOWARDS RECOVERY AND NORMALCY

Introduced by Senator Recto

To the Committees on Economic Affairs; and Health and Demography

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 380

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 380, entitled

RESOLUTION URGING THE EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT TO FORMULATE AND IMPLEMENT A BALIK PROBINSYA PROGRAM.

With the permission of the Body, only the title of the resolution was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the Record of the Senate.

Thereafter, the Chair recognized Senator Go for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GO

Senator Go delivered his sponsorship speech, as follows:

Over the past few months, we have witnessed how the COVID-19 global pandemic put to test almost all nations in the world, causing unprecedented stress on health facilities and pressure on governments worldwide, including those of many developed countries.

In the Philippines, while our situation remains better off due to our quick response to the public health emergency, the pandemic has exposed and brought to the surface many of our country's perennial problems, including congestion in our urban centers, particularly in Metro Manila. Such problem results in a whole lot of other issues, including poverty, economic inequality, traffic jams, environmental issues, among others.

More importantly, overcrowding in Metro Manila makes it more difficult to contain disease here, putting us all at risk for future pandemics.

The current COVID-19 outbreak is a testament to this vulnerability. According to the Department of Health, as of May 1, 2020, of the total 8,772 COVID-19 infection cases, NCR registered a total of 5,968 cases, representing 68% of the country's total.

Given the nature of the virus and the manner by which it is spread between individuals, highly dense communities in Metro Manila explain why nearly seven out of ten infected Filipinos are found in the nation's capital.

This highlights our need to improve the quality of life in all regions of the country, improve access to social services, especially in rural areas, and decongest Metro Manila.

It is for this reason that I am sponsoring today a resolution urging the Executive department to formulate and implement a "*Balik Probinsya*" Program. The proposed program is envisioned as a multi-sectoral comprehensive program to decongest Metro Manila by helping stranded workers and OFWs, assisting people who want to relocate to the provinces, and encouraging people to settle down in the provinces for good.

Under this program, people, particularly informal settlers and those living in danger areas, will also be encouraged to move out of Metro Manila and go back to their home provinces.

As we continue to fight the war against COVID-19, we also have to simultaneously craft plans and strategies to ensure that we are better prepared for pandemics that can occur in the future. The "*Balik Probinsya*" Program is one of these measures that will allow us to respond more efficiently and effectively to these contagious diseases.

While the entire country currently addresses the COVID-19 crisis, it is important to give Filipinos "hope for a better future" and motivate all sectors to work together to learn from this experience, address perennial problems in the Metro and bring more opportunities to the countryside.

Alam ninyo, isa rin sa maraming dahilan kaya maraming hindi nakatatanggap ng social amelioration dahil iyong iba ay nasa probinsiya ang kanilang pamilya at nagtatrabaho sila dito. Ang daming mga stranded na workers na napapabayaang lamang diyan sa construction site nila na gusto na ring umuwi. Kaming mga probinsiyano, we are always fascinated dito sa Maynila. Maganda at kumpleto dito. Nandidito po ang lahat. So, panahon na

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po siguro. I am urging the Executive department *na planuhin* iyong immediate medium-term, *at tsaka* iyong long-term plan *para rito sa* Balik Probinsya Program.

It is in this spirit that I ask this Chamber to adopt this resolution.

COSPONSOR

Upon his request, Senator Gordon was made cosponsor of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 380.

COSPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF SENATOR GORDON

Senator Gordon recalled that the Regional Investment and Infrastructure Coordinating Hub (RICH) bill that was passed on Third Reading by both Houses of Congress was precisely intended to bring business and opportunities to the regions.

Senator Gordon stated that had it been signed into law, it would have decongested Metro Manila, dispersed industries and brought new investments into different regions like Central Luzon. He said that the supposed RICH measure was to be the progenitor in other areas like Mindanao inasmuch as the administration has promised to enhance the infrastructure across the country. He said that areas like Western Visayas, Central Visayas, Easter Visayas, especially in Samar and Tacloban could have benefitted from the RICH bill, Zamboanga, Cagayan de Oro in Northern Mindanao and Butuan City or General Santos City in Eastern Mindanao could have become the hub of dispersed industries to Mindanao.

He opined that Panay Island which is complete with airports and seaports is filled with agricultural activity and has enough power source, while Central Luzon would have been enhanced by areas like Aurora Province. He said that during the time of the late Senator Edgardo Angara, he pushed for Aurora's development not because of its size but because of its strategic location in the Pacific. He said that a port could have been put up there or even a canal that would stretch to the Pacific Ocean to the China Sea, or even a highway from there so that development could reach out not only in Central Luzon but all the way down to the Pacific side of Isabela, Cagayan, Quirino, and all the other areas there.

Senator Gordon lamented that the efforts of the mayors and congressmen in Central Luzon after

holding many hearings outside of Metro Manila were put to naught when the President vetoed the bill.

Senator Gordon expressed support for Senator Go's *Balik Probinsiya* effort as he had always advocated that Metro Manila should not be regarded as Imperial Manila. He questioned the purpose of building infrastructure like schools, universities and colleges, airports and seaports if it is not accompanied with business. He said that there is no reason why the islands of Negros and Panay, which are bigger than Singapore or Hong Kong, could not have been developed with so many educational institutions there.

Senator Gordon stated that most of the time, the government would only look at its own navel and not at the opportunities as what other countries have been doing. He recalled that before President Marcos went to China and opened diplomatic relations, China was a weak economy until Deng Xiaoping decided to have more than one system, several systems that developed not just Shanghai and Hong Kong but the other provinces, like Changsha in Hunan which developed the PCR that is being used by the Red Cross to test for COVID-19. He said that the Philippines has been left behind because people just look up to Imperial Manila.

Senator Gordon wondered why government keeps building infrastructure like schools putting so much money in developing Metro Manila while nearby provinces are being neglected.

He stressed the need to start doing the 11-point program that President Marcos and Roberto Ongpin wanted to implement in order to decongest Metro Manila. He recalled that part of the program was to disperse industries towards different areas, the reason a steel mill was built in Iligan City, a fertilizer plant in Samar, and a nuclear power plant in Bataan.

He said that when the results of bar exams came out and the topnotcher was not from UP and Ateneo, a lot of people flexed their muscles, proudly announcing that the number one came from Legazpi City, Albay, and that the bar exams was no longer dominated by the favored schools.

Senator Gordon stated that the internet has brought about a lot of reawakening in the countryside; there is development rising in Cagayan de Oro, Negros and Iloilo City; and that all it needs is to give it more push so that people do not have to leave their

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homes to become a stranger in another city in his/her own country compete with real estate in areas that are really overcrowded and prone to creating disease all over the place.

Senator Gordon stated that he was tarrying with the CITIRA because it would take away a lot of incentives from the BPO sector as well as other economic zones. He said that instead of bringing such industries to the countryside, the BPOs would rather close with the proposed measure. He said that Proposed Senate Resolution No. 380 is an opportunity to start bringing the people to the countryside. He added that there is also a threat of people leaving the metropolis not only due to COVID-19 but because of certain initiatives that might, instead of encouraging, discouraging business to flourish in the country.

Thereafter, Senator Gordon commended Senator Go for recognizing the opportunity in the current situation. He said that while there are people before Senator Go who have thought of such ideas – Presidents Marcos, Garcia, Macapagal, Magsaysay and Quirino — their ideas would be remembered as those who came from one region who would try to put up all the infrastructure toward that region to make sure that they would grow. He believed that there was nothing wrong with it because it was meant to ensure that they do not neglect the other regions and instead create opportunities for such provinces. He then expressed his support to the *Balik Probinsya* program.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 380

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 380 was adopted by the Body.

COAUTHORS

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, all the Members present, including those in the teleconferencing, were made coauthors of the resolution.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR GORDON

Senator Gordon informed the Body that he sent a letter to Senate President Sotto to address the request of Xilca, daughter of late Sen. Heherson Alvarez and Cecile, who expressed her appreciation

to the Philippine Red Cross for giving blood when the Senator needed it. Relative thereto, he said that he filed Proposed Senate Resolution No. 390, honoring the life of former Sen. Heherson Alvarez by conducting a two-day voluntary blood donation drive on the occasion of the Senator's date of birth and the occasion of his death anniversary every year, in partnership with the Philippine Red Cross (PRC).

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri also requested the Secretariat to prepare a clear-cut protocol on how to conduct the daily sessions, especially on who would be handling the mute button on virtual sessions. He said that based on the Rules, he would recognize those who would like to participate and that he would ask the Senate President to recognize the particular senator.

Senate President Sotto that the Chamber was already doing it and suggested that they could put up computers the following day.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON

Senator Drilon commended Senate President Sotto and Senator Zubiri for the successful conduct of the session through electronic media which gave everybody, like him and the others, who were not physically present, to attend the session and to fully participate. He said that he would look forward to sessions like this in the future where teleconferencing would be allowed if the need arises as in emergency cases. He then thanked Senate President Sotto as well as Senator Zubiri for the efforts that they have put into the activity which allowed the senators to continuously debate even during difficult times.

Senator Zubiri said that the event was truly historic since it was the first time in the history of the Philippine Congress, particularly the Senate, that the senators were having virtual teleconferencing or video teleconferencing which is becoming to be the new normal around the world.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

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

It was 6:34 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:00 p.m., Tuesday, May 5, 2020, the session was resumed with Senate President Sotto presiding.

**SECOND ADDITIONAL
REFERENCE OF BUSINESS**

The Secretary of Senate read the following matters and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

BILLS ON FIRST READING

Senate Bill No. 1475, entitled

AN ACT TO ENCOURAGE MORE FILIPINO LAWYERS TO SERVE THE PEOPLE AND JOIN THE PUBLIC ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, ESTABLISHING FOR THE PURPOSE THE "ABOGADO PARA SA BAYAN" RETURN SERVICE PROGRAM, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Justice and Human Rights; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1476, entitled

AN ACT TO FURTHER ASSIST FILIPINO MIGRANT WORKERS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 10 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8042, AS AMENDED

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development; and Foreign Relations

Senate Bill No. 1477, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 95 (B) OF PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 856 OR THE CODE ON SANITATION OF THE PHILIPPINES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Health and Demography; Justice and Human Rights; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1478, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 5, PARAGRAPH 3 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9225, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "CITIZENSHIP RETENTION AND REACQUISITION ACT OF 2003"

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committee on Justice and Human Rights

Senate Bill No. 1479, entitled

AN ACT PROHIBITING PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES FROM BEING THE SOURCE OF MISINFORMATION, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE, PERTINENT PROVISIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6713 OR THE "CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES"

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committee on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation

Senate Bill No. 1480, entitled

AN ACT DEFINING AND PROHIBITING POLITICAL DYNASTIES, PROVIDING PENALTIES THEREFORE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Electoral Reforms and Peoples Participation; and Constitutional Amendments and Revision of Codes

Senate Bill No. 1481, entitled

AN ACT TO ASSIST INDIGENT CANCER PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES, ESTABLISHING FOR THE PURPOSE

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**A CANCER ASSISTANCE FUND
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Health and Demography; Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1482, entitled

AN ACT PRESCRIBING ELECTRONIC AND ONLINE MODALITIES FOR THE PROMULGATION OF LAWS, RESOLUTIONS, RULES AND OTHER ISSUANCES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 18, 24 AND 25 CHAPTER 5, BOOK 1 OF EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 292 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ADMINISTRATIVE CODE OF 1987

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committee on Public Information and Mass Media

Senate Bill No. 1483, entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE FORFEITURE POWERS OF THE STATE, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 1379, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "AN ACT DECLARING FORFEITURE IN FAVOUR OF THE STATE ANY PROPERTY FOUND TO HAVE BEEN UNLAWFULLY ACQUIRED BY ANY PUBLIC OFFICER OR EMPLOYEE AND PROVIDING THE PROCEEDINGS THEREFOR"

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committee on Justice and Human Rights

Senate Bill No. 1484, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) HUB IN EVERY LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF

THE PHILIPPINES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Science and Technology; Local Government; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1485, entitled

AN ACT PENALIZING THE ILLICIT ENRICHMENT OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES FOR ACQUISITION OF PROPERTIES THROUGH UNLAWFUL MEANS

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Justice and Human Rights; and Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation

Senate Bill No. 1486, entitled

AN ACT BROADENING THE OPPORTUNITIES OF FILIPINO YOUTH BY ALLOWING GRADUATES OF K-12 ENHANCED EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE THE PNP LAW, R.A. 6975 AS AMENDED BY R.A. 8551

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs

Senate Bill No. 1487, entitled

AN ACT ORDAINING A SYSTEM TO ENSURE AVAILABLE DOCTORS AND HEALTH CARE IN UNDERSERVED AND GEOGRAPHICALLY DISADVANTAGED AREAS BY CREATING A MEDICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RETURN SERVICE PROGRAM FOR DESERVING STUDENTS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Poe

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To the Committees on Health and Demography; Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1488, entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY OF THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN BY AMENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT 6770, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "THE OMBUDSMAN ACT OF 1989," AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Justice and Human Rights; and Ways and Means

Senate Bill No. 1489, entitled

AN ACT IMPROVING THE DISCLOSURE AND TRANSPARENCY OF THE EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Environment and Natural Resources; Public Information and Mass Media; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1490, entitled

AN ACT CREATING THE PHILIPPINE AIRPORTS AUTHORITY, DEFINING ITS POWERS, FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Government Corporations and Public Enterprises; Public Services; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1491, entitled

AN ACT CREATING A PHILIPPINE POLLUTANT RELEASE AND TRANSFER REGISTRY

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Environment and Natural Resources; Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1492, entitled

AN ACT REQUIRING THE USE OF PLAIN WRITING IN ALL GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS TO ENHANCE CITIZENS' ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND SERVICES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

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

Senate Bill No. 1493, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS TO THE SURVIVING CHILDREN OF MEMBERS OF THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE WHO WERE SLAIN IN THE LINE OF DUTY, CREATING THE PNP EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS FUND, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs; Basic Education, Arts and Culture; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1494, entitled

AN ACT TO STRENGTHEN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS SERVICE OF THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE, AND FOR THIS PURPOSE AMENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE PNP LAW UNDER REPUBLIC ACT SIXTY NINE AND SEVENTY FIVE (RA 6975) AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT EIGHTY FIVE HUNDRED AND FIFTY ONE (RA 8551), AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

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To the Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs

Senate Bill No. 1495, entitled

AN ACT TO REGULATE THE RATIONAL EXPLORATION, DEVELOPMENT AND UTILIZATION OF MINERAL RESOURCES, AND TO ENSURE THE EQUITABLE SHARING OF BENEFITS FOR THE STATE, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Environment and Natural Resources; Cultural Communities; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1496, entitled

AN ACT TO PROMOTE THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES AS A MEANS TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY, ESTABLISHING FOR THE PURPOSE THE *'POVERTY REDUCTION THROUGH SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP (PRESENT) PROGRAM'*, PROVIDING INCENTIVES AND BENEFITS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Trade, Commerce and Entrepreneurship; Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1497, entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTING A NATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK ON RESILIENT HOUSING AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1498, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING THE GROUNDS FOR LEGAL SEPARATION UNDER ARTICLE 55 OF THE FAMILY CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committee on Women, Children, Family Relation and Gender Equality

Senate Bill No. 1499, entitled

AN ACT ERADICATING ABUSIVE CONTRACTUALIZATION PRACTICES AND PENALIZING EMPLOYERS AND CONTRACTORS WHO COMMIT SUCH ABUSES, BY AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE BOOK THREE, TITLE TWO AND BOOK SIX, TITLE I OF PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 442, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LABOR CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES, AS AMENDED

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committee on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development

Senate Bill No. 1500, entitled

AN ACT RATIONALIZING AND EXPANDING THE POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY COMMISSION AND THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 1161, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8282, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "SOCIAL SECURITY ACT OF 1987"

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Government Corporations and Public Enterprises; and Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development

Senate Bill No. 1501, entitled

AN ACT TO PROTECT FILIPINO

CONSUMERS FROM SUBSTANDARD PRODUCTS, MANDATING FOR THIS PURPOSE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A "TIMBANGAN CENTER" IN ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE MARKETS IN THE COUNTRY, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE CHAPTER II OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7394, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "CONSUMER ACT OF THE PHILIPPINES"

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Trade, Commerce and Entrepreneurship; and Local Government

Senate Bill No. 1502, entitled

AN ACT EXPANDING THE BENEFITS OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM SO AS TO PROVIDE FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS THEREBY AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8282, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT OF 1997

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Government Corporations and Public Enterprises; and Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development

Senate Bill No. 1503, entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING A MECHANISM FOR THE MANDATORY AND EXPEDITED DISPOSITION OF ABANDONED IMPORTED GOODS FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE POOR AND UNDERPRIVILEGED IN TIMES OF CALAMITIES AND OTHER NATIONAL EMERGENCIES

Introduced by Senator Lapid

To the Committees on Ways and Means; and Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development

Senate Bill No. 1504, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT

NO. 9510, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "CREDIT INFORMATION SYSTEM ACT," BY PROVIDING CREDIT PROTECTION TO BORROWERS DURING CALAMITIES AND OTHER EMERGENCIES"

Introduced by Senator Lapid

To the Committee on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies

Senate Bill No. 1505, entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TERTIARY CARE HOSPITALS IN ALL REGIONS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Lapid

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1506, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE SOCIAL PENSION OF INDIGENT PERSONS WITH DISABILITY, AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Lapid

To the Committees on Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1507, entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ONLINE INFORMATION CENTERS DURING NATIONAL CALAMITIES AND OTHER EMERGENCIES, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Lapid

To the Committees on Public Information and Mass Media; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1508, entitled

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A GRANT

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**PROGRAM TO PROVIDE VISION
CARE TO CHILDREN**

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1509, entitled

**AN ACT PENALIZING PRANK CALLS
IN EMERGENCY HOTLINES**

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

**To the Committees on Public Services; and
Justice and Human Rights**

Senate Bill No. 1510, entitled

**AN ACT MAKING THE POSITION OF
A COOPERATIVES OFFICER
MANDATORY IN THE MUNICIPAL,
CITY AND PROVINCIAL LEVELS,
AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE
REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160, OTHER-
WISE KNOWN AS THE "LOCAL
GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991"**

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

**To the Committees on Local Government;
and Cooperatives**

Senate Bill No. 1511, entitled

**AN ACT PROVIDING PROTECTION
FROM LIABILITY TO VOLUN-
TEERS FOR ACTS OR OMISSIONS
COMMITTED IN THE PERFORM-
ANCE OF THEIR DUTIES DURING
EMERGENCIES"**

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

**To the Committees on Social Justice,
Welfare and Rural Development; and Justice
And Human Rights**

Senate Bill No. 1512, entitled

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE PHILIP-
PINE E-HEALTH SYSTEM IN THE**

**DELIVERY OF HEALTH SERVICES
WITH THE USE OF INFORMATION
AND COMMUNICATIONS TECH-
NOLOGY IN THE PHILIPPINES,
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR**

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committees on Health and Demography; Science and Technology; Ways and Means; and Finance

RESOLUTIONS

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 388, entitled

**RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE PROPER
SENATE COMMITTEES TO CON-
DUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF
LEGISLATION, ON THE POST-
TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER
AMONG MILITARY PERSONNEL IN
THE PHILIPPINES WITH THE INTEN-
TION OF BETTER UNDERSTAND-
ING THE MENTAL HEALTH RISKS
FACING FILIPINO SOLDIERS IN
THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR
DUTIES**

Introduced by Senator Binay

**To the Committees on Health and Demog-
raphy; and National Defense and Security,
Peace, Unification and Reconciliation**

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 389, entitled

**A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY
TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY IN AID
OF LEGISLATION ON THE SHORT,
MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM
RAMIFICATION OF THE CORONA
VIRUS DISEASE 2019 ON THE
PHILIPPINE UPSTREAM, MID-
STREAM, AND DOWNSTREAM OIL
AND GAS SECTORS AND THE
MEASURES TO BE EMPLOYED BY
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY TO
ADDRESS SUCH EFFECTS**

Introduced by Senator Gatchalian

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To the Committee on Energy

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 390, entitled

RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE OF FORMER SENATOR HEHERSON "SONNY" T. ALVAREZ BY CONDUCTING A BLOOD DONATION DRIVE ON OCTOBER 26 AND APRIL 20 OF EVERY YEAR, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PHILIPPINE RED CROSS

Introduced by Senator Gordon

To the Committee on Rules

COMMUNICATIONS

Letters from the Executive Secretary of the Office of the President respectfully transmitting to the Senate the first, second, third, fourth and fifth Report of the President to the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee pursuant to Section 5 of Republic Act No. 11469, otherwise known as the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act.

To the Committee on Finance

CHANGE OF COMMITTEE REFERRAL

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved to change the referral of Senate Bill No. 1473 from the Committee on Public Services to the Committee on Trade Commerce and Entrepreneurship as the primary committee and to the Committee on Public Services as the secondary committee.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

At this juncture, Senator Zubiri placed on record the Members who attended the session online: Senators Dela Rosa, Villar, Go, Gordon, Angara, Drilon, Pangilinan, Poe, Villanueva, Pacquiao, Revilla, Binay, Marcos, Cayetano, Lacson, Recto, and Hontiveros; while those inside the Session Hall were Senate President Sotto, Senator Tolentino, and Senator Gatchalian.

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 390

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no

objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 390, entitled

RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE OF FORMER SEN. HEHERSON "SONNY" T. ALVAREZ BY CONDUCTING A BLOOD DONATION DRIVE ON OCTOBER 26 AND APRIL 20 OF EVERY YEAR IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PHILIPPINE RED CROSS.

With the permission of the Body, only the title of the resolution was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the Record of the Senate.

Thereafter, the Chair recognized Senator Gordon for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GORDON

Prefatorily, Senator Gordon read to the Body the letter from the daughter of the late Senator Heherson Alvarez, Xilca Alvarez-Protacio, thanking the Philippine National Red Cross for the help they extended to her father, to wit:

"Dear Senator Gordon:

Thank you again for your consoling words. I just wanted to express again my gratitude to the Red Cross. I bore witness to your dedicated first responders after the ICU told me that my dad's hemoglobin was low and that I need to find a donor from our relative. I immediately called the Red Cross Hotline. Everyone I spoke to was tremendously helpful and I was pleasantly shocked at how fast I was able to secure the RBC stock albeit not in the quantity required given the high demand.

A nurse, Daisy, was even apologetic that they were running low on stock and I assure you that I understood completely and that I was nevertheless grateful for whatever help they could give. I am so grateful in fact that I pledge to do a blood drive with my friends. My father was thereafter transfused with one unit of Red Cross blood that Friday. Just a few days later, at the wee hours of Monday morning, I was told that my dad might need a platelet concentrate transfusion this time. I texted the Red Cross number, and much to my surprise even at the unholy hour, I immediately received a reply. It was nurse Jennica who corresponded with me

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this time, and I swear it seems like the Red Cross staff do not rest at all.

“Although they had very limited quantity on hand, I was told that they could spare some for my dad. Unfortunately, I had to inform them hours later that I would no longer procure this since my dad was already at the brink of death. And the doctors decided his body would no longer be able to accept it. Despite his demise, I would be forever grateful to the Red Cross for its quick assistance.

It is because of this that I have excitedly recruited my friends so that we can hold our own private blood drive when the lockdown ends. I think it would also be a fitting tribute to your amazing responders to hold the blood drive in the Senate. I am certain that there are many among the hundreds of Senate employees who will be more than willing to share their blood to save lives. If my dad was still with us, I am sure he would agree and would have wanted to support the Red Cross, especially in saving lives in a concrete and tangible way.

(Sgd.) Xilca Alvarez Protacio”

Senator Gordon stated that he was deeply touched by the letter as he confirmed that both Senator Alvarez and his wife Cecil Guidote, prior to being COVID-19 patients, have asked for blood assistance in the past and that they have always been supported by the Red Cross.

Senator Gordon clarified that the resolution was not about the Red Cross but about volunteerism and that it is only the Filipino people who could help one another especially during tight situations.

He stated that he submitted the letter to the Office of the Senate President so that the Senate could appreciate the effort made by a daughter to save her father’s life. He said that even Senate employees would seek medical assistance and blood donors from time to time.

Senator Gordon believed that it would not be stretching too far on the part of the Senate if it could give time and blood twice a year. He said that aside from the Senate, the blood drive could be done simultaneously with other institutions like Radyo Bombo, DZRH and other stations.

He then expressed hope that the Body would adopt the resolution to have blood drives twice a year

– one on the birthday of Senator Alvarez and the other on the anniversary of his death.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 390

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 390 was adopted by the Body.

SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 69 on Senate Bill No. 1411 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 69 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1411

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 1411 (Committee Report No. 69), entitled

**AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT
NO. 8972, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS
“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR BENE-
FITS AND PRIVILEGES TO SOLO
PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN,
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THERE-
FOR 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 Hontiveros for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Senator Hontiveros submitted Senate Bill No. 1411 to the Body for plenary consideration, and forthwith delivered her sponsorship speech, as follows:

*Kung mayroong pang nangangailangan na
patunay na sa lahat ng aspeto at hamon ng
buhay, mas mahirap ang dinaranas ng mga solo
parents kaysa sa mga two-parent households,
tinapos na ng COVID epidemic — at ang dala*

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niyang sigalot sa ekonomiya — ang usapan. A disproportionate number of the country's solo parents work in offices, factories, department stores, and BPOs, industries that have been adversely affected by the pandemic. Marami sa kanila ay mga arawan o di kaya ay mga online sellers na hindi makapagbenta ngayon dahil sa Enhanced Community Quarantine measures at hindi man lang makapag-deliver ng kanilang mga paninda dahil sila ay sumasakay sa public transportation dahil wala naman silang sariling mga kotse. Considering that there are approximately three million solo parent households, this means that there are almost three million families who are in danger of not being able to fulfill their daily needs. If their efforts to give their children a good and healthy life were difficult before, now it has become exponentially hard. To quote our solo parents themselves: "Ang dati nang hirap naming kalagayan upang makatawid sa araw-araw na paghahanap ng ikabubuhay ay makailang beses na pinalala ng COVID-19."

Ang simpleng usapin ng pag-grocery para sa mga mag-asawa ay mas mahirap para sa mga single parents. Isipin na lang po natin, hindi hinihikayat na lumabas ang mga bata habang ECQ pero kanino sila pwedeng iwanan ng mga solo parents kapag kailangan nila mag-grocery o mamalengke? Yung dating puwedeng mapakisuyuan na lolo o lola ay hindi na malalapitan basta-basta dahil sa takot na baka makaapekto tayo sa kalusugan nila.

The pandemic only shines a light on what solo parents — like myself — already intimately know: that raising a child as a solo parent is infinitely harder in every conceivable aspect than raising a child as a two-parent household.

In this light, I present to this Chamber Committee Report No. 69 or Senate Bill No. 1411 which is the Expanded Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2020. This committee report consolidates Senate Bills 86, 206, 238, 307, 951, 1014, and 164 filed by Senate President Sotto, Senators Gordon, Go, Zubiri, Revilla, Marcos, and me, respectively.

This bill provides a package of social protections for solo parents and their children, which includes livelihood development services, counselling services, and the provision of legal advice and assistance, among others. This bill also expands the classification of being a solo parent to include: (1) widowed parents and (2) spouses of OFWs in the low or semi-skilled worker category who had been away from the Philippines for an unbroken period of 12 months.

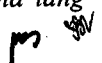
Under this proposed bill, solo parents are also qualified for a seven-day paid parental leave from their places of employment, whether public or private and regardless of their employment status. One of a solo parent's biggest concerns, especially if they have young children, is child-care. Senate Bill No. 1411 calls for government agencies and offices with more than 300 employees and private companies with 200 or more employees to establish in-house day care centers to accommodate the children of their employees aged five and below.

Financial hardships are common among two-income families who have two parents working for the family. The challenge is even more difficult for a solo parent who is forced to rely on one income stream. In light of this, the bill proposes a list of benefits for solo parents and their children. This includes a 20% discount on: (1) all medicines, vaccines, and other medical needs of the child; (2) their child's basic necessities; (3) the child's diapers until he or she is three years old; (4) the hospital bills, medical consultations, and laboratory fees of both the solo parent and the child; and (5) the child's tuition fees from kindergarten until college, both private and public.

The bill also provides additional support for solo parents who are abused, abandoned, or neglected by their spouses. As such, the bill grants the neglected spouse the right to retain a portion of their spouse's income, as agreed by both parents or by the court for the support of the child.

Our solo parents have been grinding and hustling and working very hard even before COVID. No amount of planning could have predicted that their jobs and earnings would be placed in jeopardy because of this pandemic and there are risks that they have to think about that do not simply apply to families with two parents present. *Bukod sa pag-aalala kung saan sila kukuha ng pangtustos sa pang-araw-araw nilang pangangailangan, kailangan din nilang isipin kung sino ang puwedeng takbuhan ng kanilang mga anak kung sakaling sila ay magkasakit o di kaya ay magpositibo sa COVID. Saan sila kukuha ng pambili ng pagkain? Sino na ang mag-aalaga sa kanilang mga anak? Paano na sila?*

In light of these issues and the gravity of the situation exacerbated by the pandemic, I urge the prompt passage of the Expanded Solo Parents Welfare Act. *'Ika nga ng mga miyembro ng United Solo Parents of the Philippines, "Hindi po naman namin nais na aasa na lang*



sa inyo panghabang buhay ngunit sadyang mahigpit naming kailangan ang inyong malasakit sa pagkakataong ito."

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR REVILLA

Senator Revilla delivered his cosponsorship speech as follows:

Batid po natin ang hiras ng pagtataguyod ng isang pamilya sa panahon ngayon. Ang oras na kailangan nating ilaan upang gabayan ang kanilang maayos, responsable, makabayan, at maka-Diyos na paglago ay dapat pagtuunan at bigyan ng ibayong halaga. Kaakibat pa niyan ay ang mga gastusin para sa pagpapalaki ng ating mga anak na patuloy na tumataas ay dapat bigyan din ng pansin. Dagdag pa po rito ang iba't ibang suliranin at pagsubok na kailangang tugunan ay hindi rin nawawala.

Ang lahat ng mga ito ay malaking hamon para sa ating mga magulang. Ngunit hindi lahat ng pamilya sa ating lipunan ay itinataguyod ng parehong nanay at tatay. Mararaming pamilya ang may "naytay" o "taynay." Sila po ang mga solo parents na mag-isang gumagabay at nagtataguyod sa kanilang mga anak. Dahil sa kanilang kalagayan, doble ang responsibilidad na kailangang gampanan. Doble ang sakripisyong kailangang ilaan.

Recognizing these facts and realities, Republic Act No. 8972, entitled "An Act Providing for Benefits and Privileges to Solo Parents and their Children, Appropriating Funds Therefor and for Other Purposes," otherwise known as the "Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2000," was approved on November 7, 2000. This law has been very helpful to many solo parents. For one, those who are employed were granted seven days parental leave which allowed them to attend to the needs of their children.

Twenty years after the enactment of the said law, circumstances and needs changed. It is imperative, therefore, to expand the coverage of RA 8972 and the benefits it grants to solo parents. Matagal na pong hinihiling ng mga solo parents at ng kanilang mga organisasyon ang karagdagang mga benepisyo para sa kanila.

Among others, this proposed law seeks to grant discounts on certain products and services to solo parents and their children. This will significantly unburden them of the financial worries and instead allow them to focus on the educational, psychological, and spiritual aspects of rearing up their children.

The proposed law expands the definition of the term "solo parent," increases the age of dependents, and shortens the required period of employment to enable the solo parent to avail of the benefits. The measure also proposes many other services, facilities and systems to help them ensure the security and education of their children, as well as to promote the welfare and well-being of both the solo parents and their children.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), which has been at the forefront of implementing RA 8972, supports the amendment of the law and includes the same among its priority measures. In 2018, in fact, the DSWD, together with nongovernment organizations, launched the First National Solo Parent's Summit to specifically push for the amendments of the Solo Parents Welfare Act.

The Department of Health also supports this measure and I would like to commend the committee for upholding their recommendation for the promotion of breastfeeding pursuant to relevant issuances.

Other concerned government agencies and stakeholders have also expressed their support to the measure and I am confident that our colleagues in the Senate will likewise support its enactment into law.

With the commitment of the President to grant additional benefits to solo parents as promised during his last State of the Nation Address (SONA), I am optimistic that all solo parents nationwide will also be able to enjoy such benefits soon.

Back in 2007, the World Health Organization (WHO), Department of Health (DOH) and the University of the Philippines–National Institutes of Health (UP-NIH) estimated the number of solo parents at around 14 million, 95% of which are women. This number has definitely increased, and our swift action is certainly expected.

Malaki po ang papel na ginagampanan ng ating mga solo parents para sa pagbuo ng mapayapa at maunlad na bayan. Kaya naman tungkulin nating ibigay sa kanila ang tulong at suporta na kailangan nila sa pamamagitan ng pagpasa ng panukalang batas na ito.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GO

Consponsoring Senate Bill No. 1411 under Committee Report No. 69 which seeks to amend Republic Act No. 8972 of The Solo Parents Welfare

GO

Act of 2000, Senator Go delivered the following speech:

Alam nating lahat na ang pagiging solo parent ay hindi madali. Solo parents are both the breadwinners and caregivers of their families. As such, they should be acknowledged appropriately.

As the law now stands, the privileges and benefits awarded to them are insufficient and show a lack of understanding of the complexity of their needs. The enhancement introduced to the law aims for provide redress for some 14 million solo parents in the country who are saddled with the hardship of raising their children single-handedly. As sought by this measure, more benefits and privileges will be given to them to ease their burden.

These additional benefits include providing solo parents with special discounts of basic purchases such as clothes, baby's milk, food, and medicines of children. Solo parents will also be entitled to tuition fee discount from public and private schools. Employment benefits are also included in the proposal under the existing law. Solo parent-employees who have rendered service of at least one year shall be granted parental leave of not more than seven working days. The proposed measure lowers the required length of service to six months instead and specifies that the leave should be granted with pay.

Moreover, penal provisions are now included in the amendments to ensure compliance with the dictates of the law *para mas makatulong talaga iyong batas sa ating mga solo parents.*

I am pushing for these amendments to the existing law to cater to as many solo parents as possible to help them build a stronger family and to support them as productive members of society.

Alam din natin na isa itong priority measure ng ating mahal na Pangulo at nabanggit niya po ito sa SONA niya last year, kaya hinihi-kayat ko ang ating mga kasamahan dito sa Senado na ipasa na ito sa lalong madaling panahon, pakitaan natin ng tunay na malasakit ang ating mga kababayan na patuloy nilang itinataguyod mag-isa ang kanilang mga pamilya.

As one of the coauthors of this measure, let me thank the good sponsor for pushing for this legislation.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri requested that his cosponsorship speech on the bill be inserted into the record.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR GORDON

Senator Gordon underscored the importance of the proposed measure considering that he saw it first hand in the city of Olongapo where there are a lot of solo parents. He said that the Philippine Constitution provides that "The State recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as the basic autonomous institution. It shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception." He stressed that even the unborn is protected by the law and by the Constitution itself and that the natural and primary right and duty of the parents shall receive the support of the government.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1411

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

SPECIAL ORDERS

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of the following from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders:

1. Committee Report No. 71 on House Bill No. 5888;
2. Committee Report No. 72 on House Bill No. 5811;
3. Committee Report No. 73 on House Bill No. 5854;
4. Committee Report No. 74 on House Bill No. 5852;
5. Committee Report No. 75 on House Bill No. 624;
6. Committee Report No. 76 on House Bill No. 5850;
7. Committee Report No. 77 on House Bill No. 5849;
8. Committee Report No. 78 on House Bill No. 1061;

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9. Committee Report No. 79 on House Bill No. 5851;
10. Committee Report No. 80 on House Bill No. 5831;
11. Committee Report No. 81 on House Bill No. 1778;
12. Committee Report No. 82 on House Bill No. 5853; and
13. Committee Report No. 83 on Senate Bill No. 1312.

LOCAL PUBLIC WORKS BILLS

With the consent of the Body, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, the following bills were considered on Second Reading, one after the other:

1. House Bill No. 5888 (Committee Report No. 71), entitled
AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE THIRD DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF M'LANG, PROVINCE OF COTABATO, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;
2. House Bill No. 5811 (Committee Report No. 72), entitled
AN ACT TRANSFERRING THE LOCATION OF THE SORSOGON SECOND DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE FROM BULAN, SORSOGON TO GUBAT, SORSOGON AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9689, ENTITLED, "AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE SORSOGON SECOND DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE PROVINCE OF SORSOGON AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR";
3. House Bill No. 5854 (Committee Report No. 73), entitled
AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE FIRST DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF LABO, PROVINCE OF CAMARINES NORTE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;
4. House Bill No. 5852 (Committee Report No. 74), entitled
AN ACT CONVERTING THE ALBAY DIVERSION ROAD IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF MINALABAC, BULA,

AND NABUA, ALL IN THE PROVINCE OF CAMARINES SUR, INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

5. House Bill No. 624 (Committee Report No. 75), entitled

AN ACT RENAMING THE KALIBO" BANGA" BALETE" BATAN" ALTAVAS NATIONAL ROAD WHICH IS PART OF THE KALIBO HIGHWAY, STRETCHING FROM THE NUMANCIA" KALIBO BOUNDARY AT BARANGAY LAGUINBANUA IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF NUMANCIA, TRAVERSING BARANGAYS POBLACION, ANDAGAO, ESTANCIA, TIGAYON, AND LINABUAN NORTE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KALIBO; BARANGAYS LINABUAN SUR, JUMARAP, MAMBOG, POBLACION, TABAYON, LIBAS, AND VENTURANZA IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BANGA; BARANGAYS FULGENCIO, FELICIANO, CALIZO, MORALES, POBLACION, CORTES, AND ARANAS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BALETE; BARANGAYS LALAB AND CABUGAO IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BATAN; BARANGAYS CABUGAO, LINAYASAN, ODIONG, POBLACION, MAN-UP, CABANGILA, UP TO THE CAPIZ"AKLAN BOUNDARY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF ALTAVAS, ALL IN THE PROVINCE OF AKLAN, AS CONGRESSMAN ALLEN SALAS QUIMPO NATIONAL HIGHWAY;

6. House Bill No. 5850 (Committee Report No. 76), entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE GUIMBATALUGTUG-UMINGAN PROVINCIAL ROAD IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF GUIMBA AND TALUGTUG, ALL IN THE PROVINCE OF NUEVA ECIJA AND THE MUNICIPALITY OF UMINGAN, PROVINCE OF PANGASINAN INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

7. House Bill No. 5849 (Committee Report No. 77), entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NATIONAL ROAD FROM THE JUNCTION OF LANA DEL NORTE INTERIOR CIRCUMFERENTIAL ROAD AT BARANGAY POBLACION, THROUGH

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BARANGAY LEMONCRET, MUNICIPALITY OF MAGSAYSAY, TO BARANGAY SAN MANUEL, MUNICIPALITY OF LALA, TO BARANGAYS PANSILAN AND KATIPUNAN, MUNICIPALITY OF SAPAD, TO BARANGAYS MAHAYAHAY, BEL-IS, MALINAS, SITIO DAO, BUTADON, BANSARVIL, AND TIPOLO, MUNICIPALITY OF KAPATAGAN, TO BARANGAY CALUBE, MUNICIPALITY OF SULTAN NAGA DIMAPORO, TO BARANGAY LANTUNGAN, MUNICIPALITY OF AURORA, ALL LOCATED IN THE PROVINCE OF LANA DEL NORTE INTO A NATIONAL ROAD TO BE KNOWN AS ILIGAN-AURORA NATIONAL HIGHWAY BYPASS ROAD APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

8. House Bill No. 1061 (Committee Report No. 78), entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE STA. IGNACIA – GUIMBA PROVINCIAL ROAD IN THE PROVINCES OF TARLAC AND NUEVA ECIJA VIA GERONA-PURA ROAD STRETCHING FROM BARANGAY NAMBALAN, MUNICIPALITY OF STA. IGNACIA TO BARANGAY BUENAVISTA, MUNICIPALITY OF PURA, ALL IN THE PROVINCE OF TARLAC INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

9. House Bill No. 5851 (Committee Report No. 79), entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE ROAD NETWORK CONNECTING BARANGAY GRIJALVO IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN FERNANDO AND THE MUNICIPALITY OF BULA, PROVINCE OF CAMARINES SUR INTO A NATIONAL ROAD;

10. House Bill No. 5831 (Committee Report No. 80), entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE GUIMBA – PURA PROVINCIAL ROAD STRETCHING FROM BARANGAY SAN RAFAEL, TO BARANGAY SAN MIGUEL, BOTH IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF GUIMBA, PROVINCE OF NUEVA ECIJA, AND TO BARANGAY BUENAVISTA IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PURA, PROVINCE OF TARLAC INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

11. House Bill No. 1778 (Committee Report No. 81), entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE ROAD STRETCHING FROM BARANGAY ANDUYAN, MUNICIPALITY OF TUBAO, PROVINCE OF LA UNION TO BARANGAY SAN PASCUAL, MUNICIPALITY OF TUBA, PROVINCE OF BENGUET INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

12. House Bill No. 5853 (Committee Report No. 82), entitled

AN ACT CREATING A DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE SEVENTH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF THE PROVINCE OF CEBU, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR; and

13. Senate Bill No. 1312 (Committee Report No. 83), entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE CONVERSION OF DINAPIGUE, ISABELA ROAD GOING TO DILASAG, AURORA INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, with the permission of the Body, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, only the titles of the bills were read without prejudice to the insertion of their full texts into the Record of the Senate.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Pacquiao for the sponsorship.

OMNIBUS SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR PACQUIAO

Preliminary, Senator Pacquiao expressed his gratitude that despite the changes in practices, the Members of the Senate have remained connected by their common desires to serve the country, and to the Almighty God for helping Senators Angara, Pimentel and Zubiri. He urged everyone to continue asking the Lord for His healing grace upon the nation and as they face complex challenges, they should continue serving the country by pushing for necessary measures as country eases out of the quarantine into a new normal.

Thereupon, Senator Pacquiao, on behalf of the Committee on Public Works, submitted for plenary consideration the following which the Committee

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considered before the country was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- 1) Committee Report No. 71 on House Bill No. 5888, entitled "An Act Establishing the Third District Engineering Office in the Municipality of M'lang, Province of Cotabato, and Appropriating Funds Therefor" by Representatives Tejada, Madrona, Ungab, Caoagdan and Sacdalan;
- 2) Committee Report No. 72 on House Bill No. 581, entitled "An Act Transferring the Location of the Sorsogon Second District Engineering Office from Bulan, Sorsogon to Gubat, Sorsogon Amending for the Purpose Republic Act No. 9689, entitled, 'An Act Establishing the Sorsogon Second District Engineering Office in the Province of Sorsogon and Appropriating Funds Therefor'" by Representatives Ramos and Madrona;
- 3) Committee Report No. 73 on House Bill No. 5854, entitled "An Act Establishing the First District Engineering Office in the Municipality of Labo, Province of Camarines Norte, and Appropriating Funds Therefor" by Representatives Tallado, Madrona and Ungab;
- 4) Committee Report No. 74 on House Bill No. 5852, entitled "An Act Converting the Albay Diversion Road in the Municipalities of Minalabac, Bula, and Nabua, All in the Province of Camarines Sur, Into a National Road and Appropriating Funds Therefor" by Representatives Villafuerte, Madrona and Ungab;
- 5) Committee Report No. 75 on House Bill No. 624, entitled "An Act Renaming the Kalibo"Banga"Balet"Batán"Altavas National Road which is Part of the Lalibo Highway, Stretching from the Numancia" Kalibo Boundary at Barangay Laguibanua in the Municipality of Numancia, Traversing Barangays Poblacion, Andagao, Estancia, Tigayon, and Linabuan Norte in the Municipality of Kalibo; Barangays Linabuan Sur, Jumarap, Mambog, Poblacion, Tabayon, Libas, and Venturanza in the Municipality of Banga; Barangays Fulgencio, Feliciano, Calizo, Morales, Poblacion, Cortes, and Aranas in the Municipality of Balet; Barangays Lalab and Cabugao in the Municipality of Batan - Barangays Cabugao, Linayasan, Odiong Poblacion, Man-up, Cabangila up to the Capiz-Aklan, Boundary in the Municipality of Altavas, All in the Province of Aklan as Congressman Allen Salas Quimpo National Highway" by Representatives Marquez and Dalcona.
- 6) Committee Report No. 76 for House Bill No. 5850 entitled An Act Converting the Guimba-Talugtug-Umingan Provincial Road in the Municipalities of Guimba and Talugtug, all in the Province of Nueva Ecija and the Municipality of Umingan, Province of Pangasinan into a National Road and Appropriating Funds Therefor" by Representatives Pransing, Madrona, and Ungab.
- 7) Committee Report No. 77, House Bill No. 5849 entitled "An Act Providing for the Construction of a National Road From the Junction of Lanao del Norte Interior Circumferential Road at Barangay Poblacion, through Barangay Lemoncret, Municipality of Magsaysay to Barangay San Miguel, Municipality of Lala, to Barangays Pansilan and Katipunan, Municipality of Sapad, to Barangay Mahayahay, Bel-is, Malinas, Sitio Dao, Botadon, Bansarvil, and Tipolo, Municipality of Kapatagan, to Barangay Calube, Municipality of Sultan Naga Dimaporo, to Barangay Lantungan, Municipality of Aurora, All located in the Province of Lanao del Norte into a National Road to be Known as Iligan-Aurora National Highway Bypass Road and Appropriating Funds Therefor" by Representatives N. K. Dimaporo, Madrona, and Ungab.
- 8) Committee Report No. 78 for House Bill No. 106 entitled "An Act Converting the Sta. Ignacia-Guimba Provincial Road in the Provinces of Tarlac and Nueva Ecija via Gerona-Pura Road Stretching from Barangay Nambalan, Municipality of Sta. Ignacia to Barangay Buenavista, Municipality of Pura, All in the Province of Tarlac Into a National Road and Appropriating Funds Therefor" by Representatives Yap, Madrona, Ungab, Savillano, and Cojuangco;
- 9) Committee Report No. 79 for House Bill No. 5851 entitled an "Act Converting the Road Network Connecting Barangay Grijalvo in the Municipality of San Fernando and the Municipality of Bula, Province of Camarines Sur into a National Road" by Representatives Villafuerte, Madrona and Ungab;
- 10) Committee Report No. 80 for House Bill No. 5831 entitled "An Act Converting the Guimba-Pura Provincial Road Stretching from Barangay San Rafael to Barangay San Miguel, both in the Municipality of Guimba, Province of Nueva Ecija, and to Barangay Buenavista in the Municipality of Pura, Province of Tarlac

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into a national Road and Appropriating Funds Therefor” by Representatives Juansing, Madrona and Ungab;

- 11) Committee Report No. 81 for House Bill No. 1778 entitled “An Act Converting the Road Stretching from Barangay Anduyan, Municipality of Tubao, Province of La Union to Barangay San Pascual, Municipality of Tuba, Province of Benguet Into A National Road and Appropriating Funds Therefor” by Representatives Erjel, Madrona and Ungab;
- 12) Committee Report No 82 for House Bill No. 5853 entitled “An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Seventh Legislative District of the Province of Cebu, and Appropriating Funds Therefor” by Representatives Calderon, Madrona, and Ungab; taking into consideration Senate Bill No. 1333 entitled “An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Seventh Legislative District of the Province of Cebu and Appropriating Funds Therefor” by Senator Zubiri; and
- 13) Committee Report No. 83, on Senate Bill No. 1312, “An Act Providing for the Conversion Oo Dinapigue, Isabela Road Going to Dilasag, Aurora Into a National Road and Appropriating Funds Therefor” by Senator Binay.

The rest of Senator Pacquiao’s sponsorship speech follows:

It is my privilege to sponsor these measures aimed in improving the services we offer to the public. All these 13 committee reports solidify our valued contributions towards the realization of our nation’s collective aspirations.

For our scrutiny, we were provided with a written recommendation of the Department of Public Works in favor of the passage of these measures.

The aim of the Committee on Public Works is to meet the growing needs of the people by improving public infrastructure in mitigating or fixing damages especially brought by natural calamities. Our goal is to expand the capacity of the engineering districts to carry out their mandate thereby creating and concluding more projects benefitting more people.

Today, we reaffirm our commitment to work in the pursuit of national transformation as we become responsive and relevant of the changing landscape of our global and local affairs. In the midst of this pandemic, we will rise to a new level of commitment in public service.

By God’s wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we will never be tired of steering our nation towards the path of its inclusive growth by steeping up national development.

With this, I urge you to support the passage of these measures.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NOS. 5888, 5811, 5854, 5852, 624, 5850, 5849, 1061, 5851, 5831, 1778, 5853 AND SENATE BILL NO. 1312

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bills

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY OF SENATOR ANGARA

At this juncture, Senator Angara inquired if the Senate Bill No. 1312, which was in the nature of a local bill, had a House counterpart version.

Senator Zubiri replied that pursuant to the Constitution and the Rules of the Senate, Senate bills that are in the nature of a local bill should not be reported out in plenary without an approved House counterpart measure.

Senate President Sotto stated that any Senate bill of local application is always referred to the Committee on Rules which, in turn, would refer it to the appropriate committee once its House counterpart measure is transmitted to the Senate.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON

Senator Drilon stated that there was something wrong with the procedure of a Senate bill being reported out when what should be reported out and approved is the House bill taking into consideration the Senate bill. He pointed out that even if the House bill has been passed, the Body could not pass the Senate bill independently of the House as it is a local bill. He reiterated that for bills of such nature, it should be the House bill that should be reported out and approved, taking into consideration the Senate bill because, technically, local bills could not originate from the Senate.

REFERRAL OF SENATE BILL NO. 1312 TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no

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objection, Senate Bill No. 1312 was referred to the Committee on Rules.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY OF SENATOR GATCHALIAN

Senator Gatchalian stated that some senators would have virtual committee hearings the following week but the procedure as to how the virtual hearings could proceed accordingly were not clear. He also disclosed the admission of the committee secretaries that they were not yet ready to conduct virtual hearings due to lack of training. Thus, he hoped that the Secretariat could come up with a procedure on virtual hearings so that the committee secretaries could be trained immediately.

Thereupon, Senate President Sotto directed the Secretariat to train the committee secretaries, noting that the procedure regarding the conduct of virtual hearings was currently being prepared and would be disseminated at the soonest time possible.

On another point, Senator Gatchalian inquired as to how the e-signatures in some committee reports would be treated and validated. Senate President Sotto explained that the committee reports with e-signatures would be accepted by the Bills and Index Service as long as they are filed by the senator's staff or the committee secretary.

Senator Gatchalian suggested the crafting of a clear procedure on e-signatures for everyone's guidance. Thereupon, Senate President Sotto instructed the Secretariat to craft a procedure regarding the acceptance and verification of e-signatures.

Senator Zubiri said that he already asked Deputy Secretary Bellen to come up with the guidelines on the electronic filing (e-filing) of bills which the latter would submit later in the afternoon. He said that per initial recommendation, the e-signature must be accompanied by a certification from the chief of staff, or a duly authorized representative from the Senator's office who could countersign the same.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR LACSON

Senator Lacson stated that as agreed upon during the caucus, the Body would only suspend the session for two days every week. However, he noted that the word "adjournment" was listed in the last item of

the agenda. Senator Zubiri clarified that the session would be suspended until Tuesday.

Asked whether the roll would be called on Monday's session, Senator Zubiri stated that since the Body would adjourn the session on Wednesday evening, there would be a roll call on Monday.

INQUIRY OF SENATOR TOLENTINO

Senator Tolentino asked if the committee chairpersons would be allowed to select any technological platform — Skype, Zoom or Google — which they could use during committee hearings, or whether they would be restricted to use only the Webex platform. Senate President Sotto replied that upon the Secretariat's recommendation, Cisco Webex would the system to be used in committee hearings for purposes of an orderly recording of the proceedings of the Senate.

To Senator Tolentino's concern that some committee chairpersons who would conduct committee hearings outside the Senate might not be assisted by Webex technology personnel, Senate President Sotto stated that a training was already scheduled by the Secretariat. He further assured that IT personnel of the Senate would assist in the conduct of all committee hearings, and that all the committee secretaries would be well informed of the teleconferencing procedures.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO

Senator Cayetano believed that securing counter-signatures from the chiefs of staff for purposes of validation and verification, defeats the purpose of e-signatures or virtual technologies especially since one could confirm bank deposits and withdrawals through a simple phone call. With only 24 senators, she reasoned that the Secretariat could easily call or text the designated authorized person in the senator's office for any validation instead of endangering the chiefs of staff or any personnel who would transport the committee report. She enjoined everyone to think past the physical barrier and be open to change and innovation.

Thereupon, Senate President Sotto directed the Secretariat that for purposes of verification of the senator's e-signature, text message or phone call would suffice.

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MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR POE

Senator Poe stated that the verification of the e-signature would be better if it is written down as a text so there would be a record of it. Senate President Sotto concurred.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri thanked his colleagues for the historic and successful conduct of the plenary sessions.

REQUEST OF SENATOR DRILON

Senator Drilon requested Senator Zubiri to provide the Members with the copy of the next day's agenda to allow them to prepare for the session early enough.

REQUEST OF THE CHAIR

Senate President Sotto requested that the Perjury Bill which seeks to amend Articles 183 and 184 of the Revised Penal Code be included in the next day's agenda.

Senator Zubiri directed his staff, the Committee on Rules, and the Secretariat to remind the senators of the bills which they would like to tackle in the next few weeks so that they could be listed in the agenda.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR RECTO

Senator Recto suggested the possibility of the Senate convening as a Committee of the Whole in order to hear updates and information, and to be informed by the Executive branch about the government's plan to address the current problems of the country regarding COVID-19. He said that the public must be informed of what responses or undertakings the national government was doing.

Senate President Sotto disclosed that the Department of Finance has requested a meeting with the senators, and that Senator Cayetano might be able to give them the perspective on the matter since she has been directly coordinating as chairman of the Senate Oversight Committee on the Bayanihan to Heal As One Act.

Senator Recto believed that his recommendation was relevant to the issues that would be tackled in the committee hearings apart from demonstrating to

the people the Senate's initiative in helping the Executive department respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senate President Sotto said that he would get in touch with the Executive department for feedback on the next session day.

INQUIRY OF SENATOR POE

Senator Poe asked if the senators must be physically present for the roll call on Monday.

Senate President Sotto replied that while the country is still under a national emergency, the Body would continue to conduct a roll call with the hybrid version.

Senator Poe reminded her colleagues that the Committee on Public Services would be conducting a hearing at 10:30 a.m. on Monday on the new protocols for transportation. She invited the Body to join as her committee was about to send notices of the hearing. She said that the hearing was in line with the suggestion of Senator Recto on the relevant topics to be taken up regarding Covid-19.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR LACSON

On the matter of the e-signature, Senator Lacson stated that there are members of the Body who do not carry his or her gadget and simply designate a member of their staff to answer communications for them. To avoid future controversies, he suggested that the Secretariat come up with an acknowledgment form wherein the principal indicates the name of the designated staff whom he or she has authorized to submit his or her e-signature. Senate President Sotto acknowledged the concern raised by Senator Lacson. He then directed the Secretariat to take note of Senator Lacson's manifestation.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO

Senator Cayetano confirmed that Secretary Karl Chua of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) has already offered to meet with the Members of the Senate and co-organize the meeting with the other members of the economic team.

As regards the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act as earlier mentioned by the Senate President, Senator

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Cayetano asked whether the Body wanted to have a joint congressional oversight committee hearing or Senate's own committee hearing as she reminded the Body of the existence of the oversight committee. Senate President Sotto confirmed that he wanted a Senate-only hearing.

INQUIRY BY SENATE PRESIDENT SOTTO

Asked by the Senate President if his suggestion was merely a Senate meeting, a Senate hearing, a congressional oversight including the House of Representatives, or merely a dialogue meeting between the Senate and Executive Department, Senator Recto expressed preference for a Committee of the Whole because all the Members would be interested to hear the Executive department updating the Senate on what they plan to do, including the economic stimulus plan, not to mention that by July or by August the Executive will be submitting a budget for 2021.

Asked if he was suggesting a full-blown hearing via teleconferencing with the Executive Department and not a mere meeting or dialogue, Senator Recto replied that he would assume that all the Members would be interested to participate and that a hybrid mode could be used so that both those who may want to go to the Senate and those who would avail of the use of teleconferencing could participate.

Asked by Senator Zubiri whether the meeting would be similar to a caucus of all members with the Cabinet members his attendance, Senator Recto replied that he would assume that there would be a full-blown hearing and the possibility of a caucus at the same time, adding that agreements are made in caucus in both instances.

Senator Drilon said that the way he understood the proposal of Senator Recto was that it would be a Committee of the Whole, which meant that the Senate as a body would be converted as a committee with the resource persons attending the hearing. He expressed support to the proposal that the Senate constitute itself into a Committee of the Whole conducting a committee hearing instead of a plenary.

Senate President Sotto stated that it shall be a full-blown hearing and his office would ask the Executive department on the availability of the resource persons to be invited and probably schedule it either Tuesday or Wednesday next week.

Senator Lacson cautioned the Body on the nomenclature, suggesting that they refrain from calling it an oversight committee hearing because in doing so, the Body might be in violation of the provision of Republic Act No. 11469. Senate President Sotto agreed, saying that the best procedure would be to invite resource persons from the Executive department into a hearing of the Committee of the Whole to avoid conflict with R.A. No. 11469.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR BINAY

Senator Binay pointed out that there were already three committees conducting a hearing on the effects of COVID-19, namely, the Committee on Tourism, the Committee on Economic Affairs, and the Committee on Health and Demography. She asked if the Senate could just have either a second hearing or could just course their concerns through the three committees instead of doing it in a Committee of the Whole.

But Senator Zubiri noted that each of those committees would be hearing several bills specifically intended for certain sectors under their respective jurisdictions, such as the hearing of Senator Poe on Monday with the transport sector. He then requested that he be allowed to confer with the secretariat of the Committee on Rules on how the Body can conduct just one hearing, unless all the chairpersons would object, and if the Body would allow that the bills be taken up individually by the committees aside from the Committee of the Whole.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR RECTO

Senator Recto pointed out that the Body should look at the situation in a larger context and not just the bills or Republic Act No. 11469. He stated that the pandemic is primarily a health issue that has become an economic issue that is also a social issue that needs to be discussed openly in plenary. He said that what the Body intends to do in convening the Committee of the Whole was not only in exercise of their oversight function over the Bayanihan Act but also to be informed of what government plans to do moving forward on concerns such as the following: updates on the social amelioration program; status and progress on the COVID-19 testing capacity; economic stimulus; and available resources the government can spend in addressing the crisis.

Senate President Sotto agreed with Senator Recto, recalling the manifestation of Senator Pangilinan that

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the pandemic was an issue that all the committees are involved in, except the Committee on Ethics and Privileges. He then asked the Body if they can already constitute into a Committee of the Whole and invite resource persons. Senator Zubiri recommended that they do it on Monday afternoon as the transport officials would already be present on Monday morning to attend the hearings of Senator Poe.

Senate President Sotto proposed to invite the Department of Finance (DOF), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Agriculture (DA), and NEDA.

Senator Recto suggested that the Committee of the Whole conduct the hearing by topic per day.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR POE

Senator Poe manifested that the meeting that her committee would be having with the transport sector could already start the discussions on the matter.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PANGILINAN

Senator Pangilinan suggested that the Body review, through the Committee on Rules, if they could adjust the rules on notice of committee hearings considering that based on the proposal, if accommodated by the Senate President Pro Tempore, they will have a day for agriculture and another day for tourism. He said there has been a precedent and the Committee can adopt the records of the proceedings but with the requirement of the suspension of some of the rules. He said the Committee on Rules can study the matter for the Body to adjust to the reality of the difficulty of having hearings at the present time.

In reply, Senate President Sotto said that in a Committee of the Whole, the three-day rule is dispensed with.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva suggested that the Body adopt a housekeeping rule in teleconferencing for Members to be in mute mode when it is not yet their turn to talk so that they could understand each other clearly.

He also expressed his support to the proposal of Senator Recto to constitute into a Committee of the Whole and to conduct hearings by topic as he recalled a manifestation during the previous session about the need to realign the national budget.

Lastly, he asked if they would be required to be physically present when filing a committee report or if it can be done online using e-signature. Senate President Sotto replied that a confirmatory text by the senator informing the Bills and Index would suffice.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO

Senator Cayetano manifested that, for the past five weeks, she has been tasked to collate her colleagues' comments on the President's report. She said that the submission of a hundred pages was indicative of their interest and concern and should be a guide for them to compartmentalize discussions, whether it is the Committee of the Whole or individual committees. She added that despite the vastness of topics, having read her colleagues' comments, she would prefer to personally hear all their comments and answers. She also recommended that there be specific times and days for specific agencies.

In the interest of safety, she recommended that they first conduct a one or two-hour briefing from the economic team online before bringing them to session or hearing to avoid prolonging the discussion. She explained that she was merely trying to be very cautious because when the Body deliberated on the Bayahinan To Heal As One, despite best efforts, they were not able to observe social distancing. She reiterated her concern for the safety of everyone. She also suggested that the Body consider conducting the hearing partially through internet technology and then, if they deem it necessary to meet physically, they would do so.

Also, Senator Cayetano reminded everyone of the new Committee on Sustainable Development Goals, Innovation and Futures Thinking and that she filed a resolution with the same objective—to ensure that every agency is using strategic thinking, innovating and looking at possible futures beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. She said that in the hearings that she would be conducting, she would invite international experts on futures thinking to help the Members see what was being done as well as other technologies

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that would foresee the possible scenarios brought about by the pandemic.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON

Senator Drilon stated that it was the first time the country was experiencing a pandemic, and that its effects are felt not only in the country but also abroad; thus, it is important for the Senate to be informed of what is happening. Regarding the holding of individual committee hearings, he pointed out that it would be difficult for them to attend multiple hearings of various committees. He agreed with the suggestion of Senate President Pro Tempore Recto to convert the Senate into a Committee of the Whole where the Cabinet members would be asked to be present depending on the topic that would be discussed. That way, he said that they would be able to understand the issue holistically. Since the Secretariat may not yet be capable of providing teleconferencing during the committee hearings, he said that the best alternative would be the suggestion of the Senate President Pro Tempore and Senator Villanueva to do it as a Committee of the Whole but to address issues by topic to enable them to have a better grasp of the whole situation.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR RECTO

Senator Recto stated that the Committee of the Whole could start with asking the Executive Department, through the IATF and the economic managers, to make a presentation on what has been done and what their plans are. From there, he said that the Body could decide on how to approach the issue by topic. For instance, he said that the most important issue to be dealt with is about health, as well as the issues on reopening the country and an economic stimulus plan thereafter; later, issues on agriculture and the supply chain, and everything else would follow.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ANGARA

Senator Angara informed the Body that the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) has issued a cease-and-desist order against ABS-CBN in contravention to the resolutions passed by both Houses of Congress last March 11. He expressed his reservations on the action taken by the NTC especially at a time of a pandemic where people need to be informed. With the shutting down of one of the sources of reliable information that is practically in

every Filipino household, he asked where else should the people get their news, noting that amid the pandemic, the internet is littered with fake news and text messaging is filled with spam.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR MARCOS

Senator Marcos lauded the suggestion of Senate President Pro Tempore Recto, and requested that should they move forward with an Executive briefing, the Members should be provided with reading materials ahead of time so that they could study the situation and be well-informed.

Senate President Sotto suggested that the Senate President Pro Tempore and the Majority Leader sit down and prepare the agenda, and to provide the Senate their proposal so that they could make the proper motion to constitute the Committee of the Whole and if finalized in the next day's session, they could start on Monday with the IATF and the economic managers in attendance.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR POE

Regarding the ABS-CBN franchise, Senator Poe said that it would be up to Congress if they pass it, noting that ABS-CBN has ten days to answer the cease-and-desist order of the NTC, and within those ten days, the ABS-CBN franchise could possibly be acted upon.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Senator Hontiveros recalled that both the Senate and the House of Representatives have expressed their view that nothing would prevent the NTC from issuing a provisional authority to ABS-CBN until the issue of the removal or non-removal of their franchise has been settled by Congress. She added that even the Secretary of Justice was present during the hearing conducted by Senator Poe wherein he proposed a similar possible course of action. She stated that the country needs more, not fewer, voices of free and responsible media and press, especially during the time of a pandemic when complete and accurate information is necessary.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri reiterated his previous statement that it is highly irregular or improper to cut off a

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major television station that provides information dissemination, as well as information gathering, to the people during an international pandemic. He lamented the move of the NTC, and he declared that he would stand up and fight for the right of any network to operate and inform the public.

He pointed out that there are many broadcast corporations, particularly in the provinces, that are operating on provisional authority while their franchise renewal is still pending in Congress. He added that there are a lot of radio stations that are operating even without national, or even local, franchises, and are still in the process of applying with Congress. He said that ABS-CBN could seek redress from the Supreme Court and ask for a TRO, invoking instances when the NTC gave provisional authority to other corporations that are still applying for their franchise.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON

Senator Drilon joined Senator Angara and Senator Zubiri in condemning the act of NTC as being contrary to law and in grave abuse of discretion. He explained that there are enough precedents, and that the Supreme Court itself said that a provisional authority can be issued where the application for the renewal of the franchise is pending. He recalled that even the Secretary of Justice himself opined that with the concurrence of the two Houses of Congress, NTC can issue a special authority while the legislative franchise is pending. But he asked if their condemnation would move the NTC to act; thus, the suggestion that the House should start acting on the measure within the next ten days was valid. He acknowledged that the House has full discretion whether to act on it or not; thus, he agreed with Senator Zubiri that the only remedy is to file a petition before the Supreme Court. He opined that there was no harm in allowing ABS-CBN to continue broadcasting as it would benefit the public for information to continue to flow at such very difficult times.

Senator Drilon reiterated that the NTC might be within its prerogative, but it is a grave abuse of discretion which can be corrected by a petition before the Supreme Court.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR POE

Senator Poe pointed out that even with the pandemic, ABS-CBN and other networks continue

to pay their talents even if they are not on regular broadcasting schedule. With the shutdown and with no security of their revenues in the coming months, she expressed concern that many would lose the benefit of having some form of support while there is no work. She said that it is another angle that needs to be considered by NTC after going ahead with the shutdown at a time when a lot of people have no work.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva concurred with the statements made by Senators Angara, Zubiri, Drilon, and Poe. Apart from considering the pandemic being addressed by the nation and the situation of the workers and talents of ABS-CBN as reasons for condemning the act of NTC, he emphasized that the NTC had given their word during the Senate hearing, so the news came as a shock to many. He hoped that the Chamber could do something about the matter as a national policy.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri informed the Body that he would be meeting with Senator Recto to come up with the agenda for the following next week.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the session was suspended until three o'clock in the afternoon of the following day.

It was 5:02 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:00 p.m., Wednesday, May 6, 2020, the session was resumed.

THIRD ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary read the following matters and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Letter from the House of Representatives, informing the Senate that on 11 March 2020, the House of

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Representatives passed the following House Bills, in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate:

House Bill No. 5832, entitled

AN ACT CREATING THE DEPARTMENT OF FILIPINOS OVERSEAS AND FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT, DEFINING ITS MANDATE, POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

To the Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development; Foreign Relations; and Finance

and House Bill No. 59, entitled

AN ACT SETTING THE MINIMUM PAID-UP CAPITAL AND LOCALLY PRODUCED STOCK INVENTORY REQUIREMENTS FOR FOREIGN RETAIL BUSINESS ENTERPRISES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8762, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "RETAIL TRADE LIBERALIZATION ACT OF 2000"

To the Committee on Trade, Commerce and Entrepreneurship

Letter from the House of Representatives, informing the Senate that on 11 March 2020, the House of Representatives adopted Senate Bill No. 640 as an amendment to House Bill No. 831, entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE BED CAPACITY OF THE BICOL MEDICAL CENTER IN NAGA CITY, PROVINCE OF CAMARINES SUR FROM FIVE HUNDRED (500) BEDS TO ONE THOUSAND (1000) BEDS, UPGRADING ITS SERVICE FACILITIES AND PROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES, AUTHORIZING THE INCREASE OF ITS MEDICAL WORKFORCE COMPLEMENT, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8053, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

To the Archives

Letter from the House of Representatives, informing the Senate that on 11 March 2020, the House of Representatives concurred with the Senate amendments to the following House bills:

House Bill No. 1477, entitled

AN ACT UPGRADING THE CARAGA REGIONAL HOSPITAL IN BARANGAY WASHINGTON, SURIGAO CITY, SURIGAO DEL NORTE INTO A TERTIARY LEVEL HOSPITAL, INCREASING ITS BED CAPACITY FROM ONE HUNDRED FIFTY (150) TO FIVE HUNDRED (500) BEDS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

House Bill No. 1799, entitled

AN ACT RENAMING THE TALISAY DISTRICT HOSPITAL IN TALISAY CITY, PROVINCE OF CEBU, INTO CEBU SOUTH MEDICAL CENTER, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7799, ENTITLED 'AN ACT ESTABLISHING A DISTRICT HOSPITAL IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TALISAY, PROVINCE OF CEBU, TO BE KNOWN AS THE TALISAY DISTRICT HOSPITAL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR; and

House Bill No. 5871, entitled

AN ACT UPGRADING THE MARIA L. ELEAZAR DISTRICT HOSPITAL IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TAGKAWAYAN, PROVINCE OF QUEZON INTO A LEVEL III GENERAL HOSPITAL TO BE KNOWN AS THE MARIA L. ELEAZAR GENERAL HOSPITAL, UNDER THE DIRECT SUPERVISION AND CONTROL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

To the Archives

Letter from the House of Representatives, informing the Senate that on 23 March 2020, the House of

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Representatives adopted Senate Bill No. 1418 as an amendment to House Bill No. 6616, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE EXISTENCE OF A NATIONAL EMERGENCY ARISING FROM THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19) SITUATION AND A NATIONAL POLICY IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, AND AUTHORIZING THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES FOR A LIMITED PERIOD AND SUBJECT TO RESTRICTIONS, TO EXERCISE POWERS NECESSARY AND PROPER TO CARRY OUT THE DECLARED NATIONAL POLICY AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

To the Archives

RESOLUTIONS

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 391, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, TO DETERMINE THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC TO THE COUNTRY'S BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEM, IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS THE ISSUES AND CHALLENGES CONFRONTING THE GOVERNMENT IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, LEARNERS, AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS, FOR THE PURPOSE OF CRAFTING LEGISLATION THAT WOULD ENSURE AN IMMEDIATE, EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT RESPONSE, INCLUDING RECOVERY AND TRANSITION MEASURES, DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, THEREBY MITIGATING ITS IMPACT AND PROVIDING FOR A SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT EDUCATION SYSTEM IN EMERGENCIES

Introduced by Senator Gatchalian

To the Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 392, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE STATUS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10929 OR THE FREE INTERNET ACCESS IN PUBLIC PLACES ACT FOR THE PURPOSE OF IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING IMPLEMENTATION GAPS, ISSUES, AND CHALLENGES, AND SPECIFICALLY TO DETERMINE ITS IMPLEMENTATION COVERAGE AND EFFECTIVITY IN THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM CENTERS, AND OTHER LEARNING CENTERS IN THE COMMUNITY, AS WELL AS IN STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES, FOR THE PURPOSE OF CRAFTING COMPLEMENTARY AND/OR AMENDATORY LEGISLATION, TO INCLUDE MECHANISMS FOR THE AVAILABILITY OF UNINTERRUPTED, FAST, AND RELIABLE INTERNET CONNECTIVITY DURING PANDEMICS, ENDEMICS, OUTBREAKS, AND OTHER EMERGENCY OR CRISIS SITUATIONS TO ENSURE THE CONTINUOUS E-LEARNING OF LEARNERS AMIDST SUCH SITUATIONS

Introduced by Senator Gatchalian

To the Committees on Basic Education, Arts and Culture; and Science and Technology

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 393, entitled

RESOLUTION URGING THE COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, INNOVATION,

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AND FUTURES THINKING TO CONDUCT A HEARING, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON VARIOUS SECTORS, THEIR INNOVATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO PREPARE FOR AND ADAPT TO THE NEW NORMAL, AND THEIR ACTION PLANS TO PREPARE FOR ALL POSSIBILITIES AND OUTCOMES IN THE NEW NORMAL AND POST-COVID-19, TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION STRATEGIC FORESIGHT TO ANALYZE POSSIBLE FUTURES BASED ON AVAILABLE INTELLIGENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

Introduced by Senator Cayetano

To the Committee on Sustainable Development Goals, Innovation, and Futures thinking

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee Report No. 84, prepared and submitted jointly by the Committees on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; and Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development, on Senate Bill No. 1513 with Senators Lapid, Revilla Jr. and Villanueva as authors thereof, entitled

AN ACT INTEGRATING LABOR EDUCATION IN THE TERTIARY EDUCATION CURRICULUM,

recommending its approval in substitution of Senate Bill Nos. 278, 1205, 1218, taking into consideration House Bill No. 4466.

Sponsors: Senators Villanueva, Revilla Jr. and Lapid

To the Calendar for Ordinary Business

Committee Report No. 85, submitted by the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, on Senate Bill No. 1216, introduced by Senator Villanueva, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING MAY 18 OF EVERY YEAR AS THE NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION DAY,

recommending its approval without amendment, taking into consideration House Bill No. 4851.

Sponsor: Senator Villanueva

To the Calendar for Ordinary Business

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri informed the Body that aside from Senator Tolentino who was present inside the session hall, the other members attending the session via teleconferencing were Senators dela Rosa, Villar, Drilon, Poe, Villanueva, Cayetano, Revilla, Marcos, Pangilinan, Binay, Hontiveros, Angara, Gatchalian and Lacson.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR TOLENTINO

Rising on a matter of personal and collective privilege, Senator Tolentino defended the Senate from criticisms regarding its alleged inaction amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The full text of his speech follows:

I rise today in defense of the Senate as an institution that has stood firm and steadfast, independent and united, and loyal to the Constitution and the Filipino people. Throughout our history, even prior to World War II when our countrymen have looked for new ways to uphold the principles of our Constitution and to solve their problems, and even during the most desperate moments, many times they have turned to the Senate, the Philippine Senate.

Noong World War II, napakaraming mga senador ang nakulong at may na-execute pa, si Sen. Jose Ozamis.

We are confronted with what is perhaps the most challenging chapter in contemporary Philippine history. COVID-19 continues to cripple the world in ways that seemed unimaginable, yet are now painfully unfolding right before our very eyes. Even economies of the world perceived to be strong and stable have been shocked, and shaken, by this disease. COVID-19's aftermath is a reality to be feared as well.

Amidst all the chaos and confusion, *habang tayo po ay naka-quarantine*, there are those who still manage to malign the integrity and commitment of the Senate in advancing the country's and the people's ultimate good. The Senate has

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been accused of doing nothing, of failing to rise and serve the people at a time when they needed their leaders the most. Such statements are unjust and disheartening.

If I alone had been the target of these attacks, I should not take a moment of the Senate's valuable time today, but I believe that other senators who have been unjustly and willfully assailed, hold the same attitude upon this that I do.

The reckless provocations, fake news, most often for pettiest and personal reasons – not having to do whatsoever with the role of a senator in the current coronavirus crisis– should never be regarded as new normal. We should never allow purveyors of fake news and vested interests to desecrate the Senate as an institution. The Philippine Senate holds the distinction of remaining open, with our adoption of hybrid proceedings by virtue of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 372, while other legislatures in other countries – with all due respect, China, Madagascar, Czech Republic, Malaysia, and Mexico – have remained closed.

I rise today in recognition of the efforts and sacrifices made by our colleagues here in the midst of the pandemic. Three of our colleagues were affected by COVID-19 and 20 staff were tested positive.

Lastly, I rise today to give a highlight of the accomplishments of our colleagues, starting with the landmark measure that laid down the framework for the recovery and rehabilitation of the country. We started last February 4, 2020, when we held a committee hearing to tackle the coronavirus. Then on March 23, we tackled the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, or Republic Act No. 11469.

Bakit nila sinasabi na wala tayong ginagawa?

Not only recognizing the present but foreseeing the future needs of our countrymen and the economic and fiscal measures needed to boost the economy, beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, our colleagues have crafted pieces of legislation which aim to help our country into moving forward as we usher in the “new normal.” To follow is not an exhaustive and comprehensive list, but I hope that this gives justice to the hard work of my colleagues:

The Senate President filed resolutions honoring and commending our frontliners against COVID-19 through Proposed Senate Resolution No. 351 and calling for an investigation on the status of the implementation

of the National ID System to aid the faster distribution of subsidies in this time of pandemic through Proposed Senate Resolution No. 352. I also understand that the Senate President filed a bill calling for amending the opening of the school calendar.

Sen. Ralph Recto, our resident economist, yesterday called for the formation of the Committee of the Whole to tackle on a macro-economic perspective what this country will face. Senator Recto has filed Senate Bill No. 1474, to provide an economic stimulus strategy for the effects of COVID-19 and appropriating funds therefor, and likewise filed Proposed Senate Resolution No. 387 to conduct an investigation on the status and progress of the national strategy against the disease.

Our good majority leader, Sen. Miguel Zubiri, who himself was COVID-19 positive and has recently recovered, called for an inquiry on the preparedness of the concerned government agencies, particularly the Department of Health (DOH), in the event that the coronavirus spread in the Philippines and become an epidemic. This was filed several weeks ago. As I can recall, he even donated boxes of masks and test kits coming from his own pocket.

Bakit nila sinasabi na wala pa tayong ginagawa?

Our Minority Leader, Sen. Franklin Drilon, has supported the privatization of government assets. He called on the economic managers of the President to mount a “speedy review of State assets that could be sold off immediately to generate funds for the COVID-19 crisis and counter the growing budget deficit due to the pandemic.”

Sen. Sonny Angara did not let his COVID-19 positive condition deter him from his duties and filed Senate Bill No. 1417, for an appropriation of P108 billion for a 2020 fiscal stimulus package to address the pandemic's economic impact.

Sen. Nancy Binay suggested the formation of teams of trained COVID-19 “trackers,” and she mentioned this during the February 4 hearing, that could be the key to curbing the spread of the virus in communities as the country transitions from the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) to general community quarantine (GCQ). She also urged the government to shoulder the cost of cremating the remains of victims of COVID-19. Senator Binay, as I heard, is also calling for a tourism committee hearing.

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Sen. Pia Cayetano, aside from leading the formulation of the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, filed a bill, Senate Bill No. 1442, providing for the "Establishment of Additional Quarantine Stations, Grounds and Anchorages" and Senate Bill No. 63 for "Priority Health Infrastructure." She also serves as our liaison to the Inter-Agency Task Force.

Sen. "Bato" Dela Rosa, while quarantined in Davao, has been distributing relief items to his constituents in the region. He likewise filed Senate Resolution 364, "Commending All the Frontliners and Essential Workers Who Risk Their Own Health and Safety in Order to Serve Their Fellow Filipinos in the Midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic."

Sen. Win Gatchalian called on the government to look for ways to ease payment terms of consumers whose electricity bills are expected to pile. Senator Gatchalian, I heard a while ago, filed several bills concerning basic education. He even went to several municipalities in Bulacan as well as in CAMANAVA area in Metro Manila.

My good friend Senator Bong Go filed a Senate resolution urging the Executive department to formulate and implement a Balik-Probinsya Program. Sen. Bong Go has never left Metro Manila and, probably, is no longer well versed in the Visayan language when he returns to Davao.

Sen. Richard J. Gordon, through his role in the Red Cross, has facilitated the entry of thousands of test kits and donation of personal protective equipment into the country for our frontliners. The Red Cross, as we know, is leading the testing measures for our countrymen.

Sen. Risa Hontiveros filed Proposed Senate Resolution. No. 1436, or the "Mandatory Protection of Health Workers, Frontliners and Patients Act" which aims to address threats and acts of violence and harassment against health workers and patients in their respective communities.

My kababayan, Sen. Panfilo "Ping" M. Lacson, called on the utilization of unused 2019 funds of the Government for the COVID response. Along with Senator Dela Rosa, he backed the proposal to sell military golf courses for additional COVID-19 funds. Senator Lacson, my kababayan, is very knowledgeable and has mastered the lingo of doctors and epidemiologists.

Sen. Lito Lapid filed Senate Bill No. 1503, to institutionalize a mechanism for the mandatory and expedited disposition of abandoned imported goods for the poor and underprivileged in times of calamities and other national emer-

gencies. He also pushed for the establishment of information centers during times of calamities and other emergencies with his bill, Senate Bill No. 1507.

Sen. Imee Marcos likewise filed several economic measures, such as Senate Bill No. 1414 or the establishment of the emergency response and recovery package to counter the COVID-19 pandemic, entitled, "*Pag-Asa: Alaga, Sustento, At Angat Sa Panahon Ng Covid-19 Crisis*," and Senate Bill No. 1429 in order to grant full tax benefits to donations provided during a state of a calamity. Senator Marcos is behind the push for the revival of Kadiwa Centers to provide affordable and basic vegetables and goods.

Senator Pacquiao proposed in Senate Bill No. 1461 the enforcement of measures to mitigate the spread of contagious diseases in the community and select public establishments. He also aims to file a "New Normal" bill that will set guidelines on how day-to-day activities — from business operations to the conduct of government agencies — will run in an environment reshaped by the global pandemic. He was the first to donate thousands of rapid test kits and masks to the PNP.

Bakit pa rin sinasabi nila na walang ginagawa ang mga senador?

Sen. Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan urged the extension of the government's cash aid program for formal sector employees and overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who were displaced due to the work stoppage during the coronavirus crisis.

Sen. Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III, who was himself COVID-19 positive and has recently recovered, called on the DOH to issue childbirth protocols during the pandemic as pregnant women are one of the most vulnerable at this time.

Sen. Grace L. Poe proposed in Senate Bill No. 1450 the creation of a Center for Disease Control to strengthen national preparedness and response to public health emergencies. Senator Poe will conduct a hearing relative to bus operators next week.

Sen. Bong Revilla Jr. filed Senate Bill No. 1512, calling for the establishment of the Philippine E-Health System in the delivery of health services with the use of information and communications technology in the country. He likewise donated sacks of rice to the needy.

Sen. Joel Villanueva, who continues to champion for the rights of workers in the midst of the pandemic, has filed Senate Bill No. 1453 to grant hazard pay to workers in critical industries

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during a state of calamity or emergency or public health emergency. He championed the grant of payment for the JOs.

Sen. Cynthia Villar reiterated her call for the government to promote home gardening and backyard farming as a way to help citizens attain food security. She also recommended labor-intensive sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and construction to ensure stable food supply and provide displaced workers with income amid the extended enhanced community quarantine.

Even Senator De Lima filed several bills relative to COVID-19.

Among the other measures passed by our Members, representing the collective will of 14 of our members, is Senate Resolution No. 362, calling for the resignation of the Department of Health Secretary, which shows that we know and feel very much the reality of the situation posed by the pandemic.

The most recent measure that we have taken up in this Chamber is Proposed Senate Resolution No. 372 which calls for the adoption of hybrid proceedings by combining both teleconference and in-person attendance by the senators in the session.

‘Yung sinasabi po nila na walang ginagawa ang Senado, ang sagot diyan ay, “No.” The Senate has not remained silent, nor has it succumbed to inaction. Allow me to congratulate our colleagues in this august Chamber, who despite the risks, despite ill health, despite unjust accusations, remain anchored to the mandates of the Senate in pursuit of the welfare of our countrymen.

And now as we look to the future, after this coronavirus pandemic, people will still rely on the Philippine Senate as the bedrock of innovative solutions, of solutions to the looming recession, unemployment, possible fiscal problems, stretched health systems and depleted government resources and even closed small businesses—not to mention the hundreds of grieving families, thus far. Recovery will be a long road, months and even years to travel. But the greatest danger is not the lack of funds or resources – the greatest danger is when voices will sow distrust amongst us to satisfy private interests. If that happens, who will then speak for the Filipinos? Who will stand for the marginalized? It is the Senate. Hence, we ought to remain solid and strong.

Gat Andres Bonifacio once said: “Reason tells us to be united in sentiment, thought and

purpose in order to have the strength to combat the prevailing evils in our country.”

MANIFESTATION OF SENATE PRESIDENT SOTTO

Senate President Sotto thanked Senator Tolentino for articulating the voice of some Members who do not speak publicly about what they had done for the country. He noted that senators have a habit of just helping out, not having media tag along when they help or extend assistance.

MANIFESTATIONS OF THE MEMBERS

At this juncture, the following Members expressed their appreciation to Senator Tolentino for speaking in defense of the Senate in relation to its actions in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic:

By Senator Angara

Senator Angara thanked Senator Tolentino for standing up for his colleagues and the Senate as an institution.

By Senator Marcos

Senator Marcos congratulated and thanked Senator Tolentino for defending the Senate as she echoed Senate President Sotto’s remarks that the senators just go about doing charitable deeds without need for media attention.

By Senator Zubiri

Senator Zubiri thanked Senator Tolentino for sharing the sentiments of the Members, underscoring that they have done their share silently in the fight against the pandemic.

By Senator Poe

Senator Poe expressed her appreciation to Senator Tolentino for defending the Senate as an institution and for including the accomplishments of Members across party lines.

By Senator Gatchalian

Senator Gatchalian noted that through his speech, Senator Tolentino gave dignity to the Senate and its members who do their work without need for fanfare

or media coverage. He also lauded Senator Tolentino for being physically present in the session hall for the session that day.

By Senator Villanueva

Senator Villanueva commended Senator Tolentino for the latter's efforts not only in relation to the pandemic but even during calamities like the Taal volcano eruption. He noted that Senator Tolentino helped people without fanfare or media coverage.

By Senator Dela Rosa

Senator Dela Rosa thanked Senator Tolentino for taking up the cudgels for the Members who were doing their work silently. He said that Senator Tolentino also acknowledged how he had purchased rice grains and personal protection equipment (PPE) for those who needed them.

By Senator Recto

Senator Recto congratulated and thanked Senator Tolentino, pointing out that even the Special Amelioration Program (SAP), which is an idea of Senate President Sotto, is one of the biggest items budgeted under the Bayanihan Act, as it acknowledges that the COVID problem is essentially a health problem which became an economic problem and possibly a social problem if government had not acted sooner. He likewise congratulated Senator Cayetano for having come up with a very good bill in the Bayanihan Act which she sponsored last March 23 and was supported by all the members.

By Senator Revilla

Senator Revilla thanked Senator Tolentino for taking up the cudgels for all the Members, as he maintained that the present time calls for people to help rather than criticize each other. He said that he was prepared to sacrifice his life for the nation and will not let anyone simply put him down. He believed that all the senators are working for the welfare of the country.

By Senator Pacquiao

Senator Pacquiao thanked Senator Tolentino for defending the Senate and its members. He believed it was best not to pay any attention to the critics since they are people who talk much and blame

others but do not do anything to help unlike those who simply do their work silently. He believed that rather than finding fault with how others do their work, people ought to focus on what it is they themselves are doing to help the country. He stressed that he was not intimidated by such people.

**FOURTH ADDITIONAL
REFERENCE OF BUSINESS**

The Secretary of the Senate read the following matters and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

BILL ON FIRST READING

Senate Bill No. 1514, entitled

**AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING A
NATIONAL TELEMEDICINE SYSTEM
IN THE PHILIPPINES**

Introduced by Senator Tolentino

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance

RESOLUTION

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 394, entitled

**AN ACT RECOGNIZING AND HONOR-
ING THE HEROISM OF THOSE IN
THE FRONTLINES IN LEADING
THE NATION'S BATTLE AGAINST
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND
FOR THEIR RELENTLESS SPIRIT
IN KEEPING THE FILIPINO SAFE
IN THE FACE OF THIS UNSEEN
ADVERSARY**

Introduced by Senator Zubiri

To the Committee on Rules

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri informed the Body that Senator Recto had previously proposed that the Senate constitute itself into a Committee of the Whole so that the Chamber may be informed and appraised by the Executive department of the status and progress of the national strategy to address the coronavirus

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disease or COVID-19. He said that Senator Recto's proposal was supported by Senators Drilon, Cayetano, Villanueva and Binay along with several others. He likewise concurred with the proposal as it would enable the Senate, when it sits as a Committee of the Whole, to thoroughly scrutinize the issues and matters at hand and to immediately consider proposed actions and policies to address problems brought about by the coronavirus disease pandemic. He cited Rule X, Section 14 of the Rules of the Senate which states that, "Whenever necessary, special committees shall be organized, the membership and jurisdiction of which shall be determined by the Senate President."

CONSTITUTION OF THE SENATE AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Senate was constituted as a Committee of the Whole with the Senate President as its chairperson.

Senator Zubiri stated that having already constituted the Senate as a Committee of the Whole, Senate President Sotto, as the committee chair, would decide on the time the meeting would start on Monday the following week, as well as on what cluster meetings would be called to present their respective COVID-19 strategy.

Senate President Sotto then asked the Members what their preference was, whether the meeting of the Committee of the Whole would be held before or after the plenary session.

Senator Zubiri suggested that the day's session be adjourned and that they start the Monday session early so that Committee of the Whole could convene after the roll call.

Senate President Sotto stated that the Committee of the Whole would start at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, to which Senators Zubiri and Drilon agreed.

Senate President Sotto stated that due to the urgency of the matter and as suggested by Senator Recto, the Committee could already start sending out invitations to the IATF heads and the economic managers.

INQUIRY OF SENATOR REVILLA

Asked by Senator Revilla if privilege speeches

would be allowed on Monday, Senate President Sotto stated that there is nothing that prevents a Member to rise on a question of personal privilege, but he appealed to the Member to reserve their privilege speech at a later time.

Senator Drilon stated that while a Member cannot be prevented to rise on a question of personal privilege as provided for in the Rules of the Senate, the privilege hour is deemed suspended when they convene as a Committee of the Whole.

Senate President Sotto suggested that anyone who would like to avail of the privilege hour could do so after the Committee of the Whole has adjourned. He then reminded the Body that the session would adjourn that day and that invitations to the economic managers and IATF heads would be sent out that day. He reiterated that the plenary session would start at 1:30 p.m. on, Monday, May 11, 2020.

INQUIRY OF SENATE PRESIDENT SOTTO

Senate President Sotto then asked for the sense of the Body on whether they would allow those invited to participate in the hearing via teleconference.

Senator Zubiri suggested that those principally involved like Secretary Galvez should come to the Senate while the Members of the Senate could opt to either be in the hall or stay home and join the hearing via teleconferencing.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PANGILINAN

Senator Pangilinan suggested that the Committee of the Whole be flexible with the attending parties. Senate President Sotto took note of the manifestation.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri said that the Members would be informed of the cluster to be invited on Monday and the days thereafter. He announced that on Monday, the invited departments are the Department of Health (DOH), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF), and Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), together with the economic managers from Department of Budget and Management (DBM),

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Department of Finance (DOF), and National Economic Development Authority (NEDA). He said that on Tuesday, the cluster to be invited would be the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Transportation (DOT), and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). He agreed with Senate President Sotto that should there be pending issues with the Department of Health (DOH), the agency would be asked to return the following day.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR BINAY

Senator Binay proposed to limit the number of Cabinet secretaries coming to the Senate to three, and that they provide the Body with an advanced copy of their data or documents that they would be bringing with them to allow the Members to review the documents.

Senate President Sotto stated that Secretariat would inform the attendees to provide the Senate with advanced copies of their data or documents when they send out the invitations.

At this juncture, Senator Zubiri informed the Body that Senators Villanueva and Recto have joined the teleconferencing.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva agreed with Senator Binay that the number of Cabinet officials to be invited should be limited to three, pointing out that for the IATF alone, one or two days would not be enough for the Members to air their concerns.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

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

It was 3:51 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:52 p.m., the session was resumed.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR RECTO

Adverting to his earlier recommendation to hold meetings by cluster, Senator Recto stated that the

Committee of the Whole should start with an overview presentation to be conducted by the IATF, to include Mr. Vince Dizon; the economic managers – NEDA, DOF, and DBM; and the health sector – the DOH and WHO representatives. He said that after the overview presentation, they could proceed to discuss issues on health like testing capacity, contact tracing, isolating patients, treatment, and other health concerns with the DOH, academe, members of the science community,

As regards an overview of the economy, including GDP forecasts, Senator Recto said that the Committee should invite the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Tourism and Department of Labor and Employment.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON

Senator Drilon agreed to the suggestions of Senators Binay, Villanueva and Recto that the presentation be clustered and that the hearing should not be limited to just two days because concerns on the health crisis situation is critical. He said the IATF and economic managers should go first as they are the sources of information.

Agreeing with Senator Drilon, Senate President Sotto stated that the IATF, DOF, DBM, and NEDA would be invited on Monday, especially Secretary Galvez of the IATF, along with other inter-agency members and economic managers.

Senator Recto suggested inviting DOH Secretary Duque as a member of the IATF and a WHO representative.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR GO

Agreeing with the suggestions that the discussions should be clustered, Senator Go likewise suggested inviting the DSWD and DILG to give an update on the Social Amelioration Program as it is deluged with complaints from the beneficiaries.

INQUIRY OF SENATOR CAYETANO

Senator Cayetano inquired if the Committee on Public Services would still hold a hearing on the transportation sector on Monday. She suggested, however, that the transportation hearing and other committee hearings be held in abeyance until after the overview hearing of the Committee of the Whole.

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MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR POE

Senator Poe informed the Body that her committee's public hearing would push through on Monday as invitations to the concerned agencies have already been sent out, hoping that the Committee could come up with protocols in the event that the transportation sector opens up. She said that the hearing would be done by teleconferencing and that those invited were General Manager Monreal of the Manila International Airport Authority, the LTFRB, DOTr, as well as transport organizations like Grab and Angkas.

Senator Poe stated that although the IATF and the DOTr have come up with guidelines and protocols, the aim of the hearing is to get expert opinion on how to go about those protocols and guidelines. Relative thereto, she informed the Body that representatives from companies like Megawide Corporation, the firm responsible for constructing the Cebu airport and the Clark terminal, would be invited to give their opinion on how to go about building disinfection facilities in case the airports open up in the coming days.

At this juncture, Senate President Sotto asked whether the public hearing set by the Committee on Public Services at 10:30 a.m. on Monday at the Session Hall albeit via teleconferencing would have a direct effect on the clustered hearing of the Committee of the Whole at 1:30 p.m. that day,

Senator Recto said that although his preference is an orderly hearing on the government's response to the COVID-19 crisis, he would defer to Senator Poe if she has already scheduled a hearing with the transportation sector. However, he supposed that concerns on the transportation sectors would be part of the discussion of the Committee of the Whole, especially on the protocols of how and when to open it up, what the preparations are should the ECQ status is downgraded to GCQ. He said that the Committee on Public Services could continue with its hearings and then later on, the Committee of the Whole could also proceed with its own hearings.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO

Senator Cayetano said that since she would want to see the bigger picture, she might have to force herself to attend the transportation hearing and then also attend the hearing with the Committee of the Whole, and both hearings, she noted, would be

attended by the IATF. She said that it might be difficult for the Members of the Body to follow a meeting if other relevant agencies are not present. This, she said, was precisely the reason why Senator Recto requested that the key people should already be present when the Committee of the Whole starts its hearing. Also, she noted that there are other senators who would not conduct their own hearings, even on issues relevant to COVID-19, precisely because they would want to align with the Committee of the Whole hearing of the Senate.

Senate President Sotto said that if the hearing of the Committee on Public Services is confined only to the DOTr and does not involve the IATF and the Department of Health (DOH), then there would be no problem.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR POE

Preliminarily, Senator Poe thanked Senator Cayetano for raising concern over having different representatives in the hearing of the Committee on Public Services, but she pointed out that when she called for a hearing on the transportation sector, the Senate, as a body, had not yet come up with the idea of convening itself into a Committee of the Whole, and she thought then of coming up with its own guidelines, for instance, the best possible social distancing health measure, because of her concern that the transportation sector, being the fastest way to transmit the disease, may not be ready should the ECQ is lifted. She gave the assurance that her committee hearing would not contradict with the hearing of the Committee of the Whole, but that it would, in fact, contribute to the discussion in the hearing.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON

Senator Drilon stated that Senator Poe should be allowed to proceed with her committee hearing because she had already prepared for it and the convening of the Committee of the Whole should not prevent any committee chair to conduct his/her own hearings. He believed, however, it would be better to have just one hearing of the Committee of the Whole.

Senator Drilon then requested Senator Zubiri to ask the resource persons of the Committee of the Whole to furnish the Members of the Body with the briefing materials that they intend to use so that they

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would not be hearing first-time reports. He also asked that the materials be submitted to the Senate and to the senators electronically by Friday afternoon so that they could study it in preparation for the hearing of the Committee of the Whole on Monday, May 11, 2020.

Senator Drilon reiterated his recommendation to allow Senator Poe to continue with her committee hearing on Monday morning, and that in the afternoon, the Body could proceed with the Committee of the Whole.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR POE

Senator Poe said that when the Committee of the Whole convenes, there would be too many resource persons, the reason for the recommendation to filter the resource persons attending the hearing. She said that she would comply if the directive of the Senate President is that there should be no holding of individual committee hearings, reiterating, however, that when she scheduled a hearing of the Committee on Public Services, she was not aware that the Body would convene as a Committee of the Whole.

Senate President Sotto said that there would be no conflict at all because the topic of the hearing of the Committee on Public Services, which is the transportation industry, would not be taken up by the Committee of the Whole that afternoon because they would start with an overview presentation by the economic managers. He said that since the committee hearing has already been scheduled, he would not prevent the committee from proceeding even if the Committee of the Whole has already been constituted. He clarified that committees could convene in other days depending on their topic as long as it is a hearing and not an inquiry or an investigation, otherwise, teleconferencing is not allowed.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Noting that the committee hearing of Senator Poe on the transport industry would be pushing through, Senator Hontiveros pointed out an equally urgent and important issue that Senator Villanueva, chairman of the Committee on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development, should look into, which concerns the labor sector, such the issue of safety at work, as well as the issue of safety in going to work which hopefully would be discussed in the hearing of Senator Poe.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva thanked Senator Hontiveros for pointing out the labor sector, saying that he had already filed some bills and resolutions which were already referred to the Committee on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development.

He also thanked the Senate President Sotto for allowing the senators to conduct their respective committee hearings despite the convening of the Committee of the Whole, but he stated that he would defer to the general presentation that the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) would conduct before the Committee of the Whole.

As regards the decision of the IATF to open up or lift the quarantine on the Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGO) sector, Senator Villanueva placed on record the recent apprehension of about 56 workers illegally operating POGO in Makati and another 44 illegal workers in Parañaque City.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Anent the serious concerns of Senator Villanueva regarding the opening up of the POGOs, Senator Hontiveros cited the other POGO-related concerns like human trafficking, prostitution and money-laundering.

She lamented that while some parts of country were still under the ECQ and have not transitioned to GCQ, and with the Filipino workers still under lockdown, there was the decision to let the POGO Chinese workers go back to work. In this regard, she disclosed that there were reports of flights from China to Cebu carrying POGO workers. As the Senate committees were still deliberating on the plight of the POGO related issues, she urged the government to prioritize its own citizens.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri said that since they have already approved to convene into a Committee of the Whole, the Senate, through Secretary Villarica and the Secretariat, should already send letters of invitation to the Cabinet secretaries, as well as to the members of the IATF. He added that per request of Senator Drilon, the resource persons should also be reminded

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to furnish the Senate with their presentation reports not later than Friday afternoon.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO

Senator Cayetano said that her understanding of the matter was for the Body to convene a Committee of the Whole to hear issues of the various sectors.

She said that if committee hearings are allowed, and they could conduct hearings outside of the schedule of the Committee of the Whole, the Committee on Rules should then set the appropriate guidelines. For instance, she proposed that the committee chairs should coordinate their schedules because she would like to attend all hearings and she would not want to see a conflict of hearing schedules.

She then asked whether the hearing of the Committee of the Whole would be until Thursday, given that if it would be so at 1:30 p.m., hearing could be had in the morning. She also asked if Friday is also in the schedule.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON

Acknowledging the prerogative of each chair to convene their committees, Senator Drilon appealed, however, to defer any committee hearing while they convene as a Committee of the Whole because it would be difficult for the Members to be attending several committee hearings on the COVID-19. He believed that there would be no harm if the senators are asked to refrain from calling committee hearings relative to the COVID-19 while they are having the Committee of the Whole.

Senate President Sotto said that he did not see any problem because the Committee of the Whole has a very short lifespan and would only convene during session time. He said that the Committee of the Whole would be conducting hearings on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, except the hearing of Committee on Public Services which has already been scheduled. He added that the work of the Committee of the Whole would be deemed completed once it submits its committee report.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri noted that there were eight COVID-related resolutions filed and referred to

the different committees, all of which, he believed, could be discussed in the Committee of the Whole, to wit:

- Proposed Senate Resolution No. 389, "The Philippine Upstream, Midstream and Downstream Oil and Gas Sector," to the Committee on Energy;
- Proposed Senate Resolution No. 384, "On-Site Assistance and Programs (OFW)," to the Committee on Labor Employment and Human Resources Development;
- Proposed Senate Resolution No. 377, "Lock-down (COVID-19) to the Committee on ----;"
- Proposed Senate Resolution No. 375, "Pass or Drop Grading System," to the Committee on Higher Education;
- Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 357 and 356, "Debt Moratorium (COVID-19 Pandemic)," to the Committee on Economic Affairs;
- Proposed Senate Resolution No. 345, "Inquiry on the Economic Impact of the Novel Corona Virus Outbreak," to the Committee on Economic Affairs;
- Proposed Senate Resolution No. 335, "Emergency Financial Stimulus Packages to Assist the Domestic Tourism Industry," to the Committee on Tourism.

Senator Cayetano stated that she has the same understanding as Senator Zubiri that the different issues contained in those resolutions could be discussed in the Committee of the Whole, that was why she asked earlier that they should be clearly guided to prevent confusion. She said that she was one with Senator Drilon in the appeal not to conduct hearings so that they would be present for the Committee of the Whole.

Senator Recto stated that the Committee of the Whole could conduct hearings within a two-week period so that everyone would have a good overview of the situation based on the presentation of the IATF, the economic managers and the health department, after which each individual committee could have their hearings on specific topics.

Senator Zubiri agreed to Senator Recto's suggestion, adding that if the Committee of the Whole could conduct marathon hearings for two weeks, the individual committees would still have three weeks to conduct their respective hearings.

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Senate President Sotto hoped that the committee chairpersons would coordinate their schedule given that some senators like Senator Drilon would be having a hard time attending. He also suggested that the teleconferencing for committee hearings would be limited only to three hearings.

Senator Zubiri agreed as he confirmed the difficulty of attending and even monitoring simultaneous hearings. He urged the Body to focus in the meantime on the meeting of the Committee of the Whole because anyway resource persons invited to the Committee of the Whole meeting would be the same persons to be invited by the different committees.

Relative thereto, Senate President Sotto suggested allowing the chairperson of a particular committee to take over the Committee of the Whole proceedings when discussing an issue that falls within his/her committee jurisdiction. He stated that he would merely be an arbiter and would allow the chairperson of the committee to preside. For instance, he said that he would let Senator Villanueva handle the proceedings when labor issues are going to be taken up. As agreed upon earlier, he said that the Committee of the Whole would hear on Monday the overview presentation to be conducted by the IATF, and the economic managers, and thereafter, the Committee would then decide on the issues to be taken up on Tuesday and Wednesday next week.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PANGILINAN

Senator Pangilinan noted that as mentioned earlier by Senator Zubiri, there were a number of resolutions that contain COVID-related issues that were referred to various committees. He then suggested that said resolutions be concurrently referred to the Committee of the Whole so that they would become part of the agenda of the Committee of the Whole.

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE REFERRAL

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 389, 384, 377, 375, 361, 356, 357, 345, 335, 391, and 393 were also referred to the Committee of the Whole.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 49 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1354

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no

objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of Senate Bill No. 1354 (Committee Report No. 49), entitled

AN ACT AMENDING ARTICLES 183 AND 184 OF ACT NO. 3815, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE REVISED PENAL CODE

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Lacson for his cosponsorship speech..

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR LACSON

Senator Lacson, as cosponsor of the measure, expressed support for the initiative to uphold the sacredness of oath in testimonies and sworn statements by increasing the penalty for their commission.

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

Somebody once said, "He who tells a lie is not sensible of how great a task he undertakes; for he must be forced to invent twenty more to maintain that one."

Nonetheless, in my decades of experience as a public servant, I have come face to face with countless instances where a witness went the extra mile to invent countless instances or to invent hundreds of other lies just to maintain the first lie that he or she made under a sacred oath of truth.

I need not go far. I myself had been a victim of untruthful testimonies fabricated with the end goal of destroying my person. Never would I forget the unadorable persons answering to the names of Ador Mawanay and Cezar Mancao, and a host of other "souls-for-sale" characters to weave unthinkable lies and narratives of the crimes that I supposedly committed.

Not only that in their quest to put this Representation behind bars, even government prosecutors were used and even sent abroad to assist in the preparation of affidavits containing lies and innuendos that the Court of Appeals found to be incredible to believe. This led to my acquittal with finality by the Supreme Court via the dismissal of the said cases and served as the final naked saga of litigation campaigned against me since 2001.

This bill was initially filed by this Representation on May 19, 2011, during the Fifteenth

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Congress and refiled during the Seventeenth Congress. Unfortunately, it remained languishing in the legislative mill during the Fifteenth and Seventeenth Congresses. That is why I speak with a stark of sentimentality as this measure is finally advancing in our legislative agenda, thanks to my chairman in the Committee on Justice and Human Rights, Sen. Dick Gordon.

When a person answers the question, "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" with a resounding, "I do," he affirms and answers to the sacred oath of truth. Hence, this Representation finds it vital to increase the penalty for the commission of false testimonies, particularly, by amending Article 183, Book II, Title IV of Act 3815, entitled "False testimony in other cases and perjury in solemn affirmation." It goes without saying that this measure will deter the commission of crimes on false testimony and perjury in solemn affirmation and uphold the sacredness of oath in testimonies and sworn statements by increasing the penalty for their commission.

It is for these reasons that I fully support the passage of this measure.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR DRILON

At the outset, Senator Drilon expressed his full support for the passage of the proposed measure that would give teeth to such ancient crime, saying that if perjury were water, then people would be drowning. He lamented how little the offense is taken seriously, recalling reading a treatise on crimes and punishments where the author said that "No oath has ever yet made any criminal speak the truth". He then asked how a false testimony is exactly defined.

Senator Gordon replied that perjury is committed by any "person who, knowingly makes untruthful statement and not being included in provisions of the crimes of false testimony, shall testify under oath, or make an affidavit, upon any material matter before a competent person authorized to administer oath in cases in which the law so requires."

Senator Drilon said that as he was going over Articles 181, 182 and 183, he never realized that perjury would generate so many complicated penalties. For instance, he pointed out that the penalty for giving a false testimony in favor of the prosecution and a penalty in favor of the defendant in a civil case are treated differently. He again asked if the false testimony being talked about in the bill is a statement

not given in a judicial proceedings. Senator Gordon replied in the affirmative.

Asked if the specific provision would apply to Police Major Baloyo and Commissioner Faeldon, both of whom made false testimony before a Senate proceeding for which they were both cited for contempt, Senator Gordon again answered in the affirmative, as he also reiterated his affirmation that the proposed amendments refer to testimonies outside of the court or false testimonies given not in judicial proceedings.

Asked for the rationale of the proposal to amend the first paragraph by increasing the prison term from four months and one day to six years and one day to 10 years, Senator Gordon replied that his proposal was, in fact, a penalty of two years to six years, while the bills of Senator Lacson, Senator De Lima and Senate President Sotto proposed a more severe penalty because apparently a culture of lying and not a culture of truth-telling was being created.

Asked if the proposal to increase the penalty is to deter the commission of perjury, Senator Gordon replied in the affirmative, lamenting that oaths were being taken for granted and that it was high time that when one takes an oath especially when appearing before proper bodies, he or she should take the oath seriously.

Senator Drilon noted that the amendment to the first paragraph of Article 183 simply increases the penalty for the crime of perjury from four months and one day, to six years and one day to 10 years, and that it applies to a false testimony that does not involve any incrimination or imputation of a crime. He then asked if the third paragraph of Article 183, which penalizes a person who incriminates or imputes a commission of the crime with the same penalty being imputed, would apply if the false testimony or false affidavit would impute the commission of the crime, for instance, whether a person who falsely accuses someone as a murderer would suffer the penalty of life imprisonment under the proposed measure. Senator Gordon replied in the affirmative.

To the observation that punishing a person who committed perjury with life imprisonment seemed a little harsh, Senator Gordon agreed that the penalty may be a little harsh as Senators Lacson and De Lima were proposing a harsher penalty so that everybody would realize the importance of the bill, particularly

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the indignities of being lied upon and the impact of being falsely accused.

Senator Drilon said that while he concurs to the idea, imposing a life imprisonment to a person who falsely accuses another of being a murderer is a little harsh and could run afoul to certain constitutional provisions which prohibit cruel and unusual punishment, especially since the provision refers to a false testimony given outside the court or outside the judicial proceeding. Senator Gordon agreed to an amendment at the appropriate time.

But Senator Lacson pointed out that sending someone to jail and even serve life imprisonment is so harsh that the one imputing lies to put such person behind bars should also suffer an equally harsh penalty. He put on record that if an amendment would be proposed, he would oppose or object to the amendment.

Senator Drilon explained that at issue is perjury committed outside of the court, not false testimony in court but a testimony executed in an affidavit which states under oath the imputation of a crime against another person. Thus, he believed that the imposition of the penalty corresponding to the crime being imputed is a little harsh. Furthermore, he noted that the Revised Penal Code provides graduated penalties, as when the testimony is given in a criminal case whether in favor of the accused, or in favor of the prosecution in a civil case. He added that since the issue being tackled on the floor is perjury outside of the court proceedings, he finds the penalty being imposed a little harsh.

Senator Lacson noted that if an affidavit based on a perjured testimony is brought to a prosecutor and became the basis for filing a case in court, and which penalty imposed on the crime is unbailable, i.e., life imprisonment or capital offense, then the person who is supposed to be a victim of a perjured statement would suffer imprisonment. Senator Drilon said that at the appropriate time when the amendment is presented, they could further expound on the matter.

Agreeing with Senator Drilon, Senator Gordon said that there are many decided cases by the Supreme Court and American jurisprudence which find the penalty as flagrantly and plainly oppressive, or wholly disproportionate to the nature of the offense as to exact the moral sense of the community. He believed that there would be no clash if the questions

regarding the bill are clarified and that what the bill seeks to emphasize is the fact that people should not lie because if they do so, they would have to suffer the consequences of a major penalty.

Senator Drilon noted that under Article 180, when a false testimony is given in a judicial proceeding which should be taken more seriously, the penalty does not correspond to the penalty being imposed on a false testimony imputing a particular crime. He said that Article 180 provides the penalty of *reclusion perpetua* (twelve days and one day to twenty years) if the defendant shall have been sentenced to death; hence, the present law does not impose death penalty even in a judicial proceeding on one who imputes the crime of murder.

He said that he has no problem with regard to the proposed imposition of a fine and absolute disqualification from holding public office because the penalty of P1 million is consistent with the Indexation Law or Republic Act No. 10951 which he authored and passed in the Senate.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR REVILLA

Asked by Senator Revilla if the intention of the proposed measure is to punish those who lie or give false testimony against a person, Senator Gordon replied in the affirmative.

Asked if the measure also covers cases under Article 180 of the Revised Penal Code, particularly those giving false testimony against the defendant in any criminal case, Senator Gordon replied in the negative.

Senator Revilla said that he filed Senate Bill No. 796 which punishes a person giving false testimony with a penalty that is commensurate or equal to the penalty of the crime of which the defendant is accused. He then asked if Senate Bill No. 1354 has the same intent as Senate Bill No. 796 which is to impose a penalty of *reclusion perpetua* or death. Senator Gordon replied in the negative.

At this point, Senator Revilla expressed his full support for the measure.

COAUTHOR

Upon his request, Senator Revilla was made coauthor of Senate Bill No. 1354.



INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR LACSON

Asked by Senator Lacson why the penalty for subornation of perjury under Article 184 would be proposed to be increased, Senator Gordon explained that since subornation of perjury was included because it is almost like a principal by inducement wherein a person persuades another to lie. He agreed to Senator Lacson's observation that there was no longer need to incorporate it in the bill because trying to suborn or to induce a person to commit perjury is fully within the scope defined under Article 17 subsection 2 of the Revised Penal Code; thus, one who suborns a person to commit perjury would suffer the same penalties as proposed under the measure.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

There being no further interpellation, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations.

INQUIRY OF SENATOR ANGARA

Asked by Senator Angara why the penalty for perjury is commensurate to the crime imputed by the accused, Senator Gordon said that both him and Senator Drilon have agreed that the penalty was too harsh, the reason why the bill should be studied further.

Asked if there was an actual instance where the actual penalty is lower than the current imposable penalty like in the crime of slight physical injuries, Senator Gordon replied that the mode was provided for in the first paragraph of Article 183 wherein the person shall suffer the same penalty as provided for, which, as proposed, is six years and one day to 10 years.

With respect to crimes that are punishable by very light penalties like *destierro* (banishment) or prohibition from residing within the radius of 25 kilometers from the actual residence of the accused for a specified length of time, Senator Angara asked what would happen if in the future, there is a case where the imposable penalty would be lowered than what was being imposed in the bill, considering that there is a penalty of one day to 30 days under the current Revised Penal Code. He asserted that making the penalty commensurate to the penalty for perjury, as when one was only accused of a small crime,

makes the penalty for perjury equivalent also to a small crime.

Senator Lacson acknowledged the point raised by Senator Angara.

Senator Angara pointed out that what could happen was they might be rewarding a person for lying – which he may be inadvertently doing – when currently the court already punishes his criminal intent. He then warned the Body to watch out for such cases.

Senator Drilon invited the attention of Senator Angara to the proposed amendment to Article 183 of the Revised Penal Code, which states:

“PROVIDED, FURTHER, THAT IF WHAT IS BEING INCRIMINATED OR IMPUTED TO A PERSON PROVIDES FOR A LESSER PENALTY THAN WHAT IS PROVIDED FOR IN THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF THIS ACT, THAT PERSON SHALL SUFFER THE SAME PENALTY AS PROVIDED THEREOF.”

Senator Drilon said that he was of the understanding that if the offense imputed is penalized by *destierro*, if it was false, then he would suffer the penalty of six (6) years.

In reply, Senator Angara said that Senator Drilon's explanation answered his question as the intent is that they will not be inadvertently lowering the penalty since the Revised Penal Code already says that a deed is punishable because it is of a certain criminal maliciousness.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1354

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

CORRECTION IN PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NOS. 363 AND 390

Senator Zubiri asked that the entry of the birth date of the late Senator Heherson Sonny Alvarez in Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 363 and 390 that the Body adopted the previous week be changed to October 16, 1939 instead of October 26, 1939. Senate President Sotto placed the correction on record.

pb

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri reminded the Members that the Body would convene and constitute itself to a Committee of the Whole at 1:30 in the afternoon on Monday.

Senator Drilon then stated that once the Body calls the Senate to session, they would have the roll call and immediately proceed to convert the Body into a Committee of the Whole.

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no

objection, the Chair declared the session adjourned until 1:30 in the afternoon of Monday, May 11, 2020.

It was 5:06 p.m.

I hereby certify to the correctness of the foregoing.



ATTY. MYRA MARIE D. VILLARICA

Secretary of the Senate



Approved on May 11, 2020