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SESSION NO. 40
Monday, January 23, 2023

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

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CALL TO ORDER

At 3:01 p.m., the Senate President, Hon. Juan Miguel "Migz" F. Zubiri, called the session to order.

PRAYER

Sen. Aquilino K. Pimentel III led the prayer, to wit:

Our Heavenly Father, the Almighty God, who created and governs the whole universe, we come before You as the year 2023 begins, grateful for Your love and grace. We give You thanks for the blessings of the past year and ask for Your continued blessings in this new year.

We humble ourselves before You as we worship and praise Your Holy Name.

You said in the Book of Jeremiah (33:3), "Call unto Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know." We claim Your promise, O God, in the Holy Scripture that You are going to do new great and mighty things for our nation as we call on You in our prayers.

When Jesus was allowed by Peter to use his boat, Peter experienced a new thing in his life. His situation changed from having no catch of fish to a catch that almost broke the fishing nets and sank the boat.

Here in the Senate, we allow You, God, to get in our boat, so that whatever we do will be fruitful and we will live according to the calling and mandate that You have given us through the people.

Today, as we start our session for this year, we pray for your guidance and blessings. We, Your legislators, recognize that without You, we can do nothing.

Proverbs 14:34 says, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any man." We pray that You be present, O Lord, in all our undertakings so that Your righteousness may manifest in everything that we will do. Let the fear of God be upon us as we make laws, so that the welfare our people will be actually served.

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As believers of God, we declare that this year 2023 will be a year that God's hands of protection, provision, peace, and prosperity be upon our beloved nation.

We implore that we be spared from natural calamities, pray that our people be healthy and industrious, our food production increase and be more than enough, our economy be better, and our society be just and fair to all.

Bless all of us, most especially our Senate President, with wisdom and understanding as he presides over our sessions so that every item in our agenda will be discussed fairly and productively, so we can objectively pursue the welfare of the Filipino people.

Let us not rush anything here in the Senate, including, and most especially, our prayers.

So, thank You, Lord, for Your continuous blessings and protection for our nation. Specifically, we ask for Your protection and provision for all those who are in need, especially those who are suffering from poverty, illness, and oppression.

We ask You Lord to bring peace to troubled regions, and comfort to those who are grieving.

We pray for those who are searching for hope, that in this new beginning, they may find it in You, with the Senate doing its part in giving our people hope for a better life.

Amen.

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

At the instance of Senate President Zubiri, the Members greeted Senators Pimentel and Dela Rosa on the occasion of their birth anniversaries.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Thereafter, the Body sang the national anthem.

ROLL CALL

Upon direction of the Senate President, the Secretary of the Senate, Atty. Renato N. Bantug Jr., called the roll, to which the following senators responded:

Angara, S.	Marcos, I. R.
Binay, M. L. N. S.	Padilla, R. C.
Cayetano, A. P. C. S.	Pimentel III, A. K.
Cayetano P. S.	Poe, G.
Dela Rosa, R. B. M.	Revilla, Jr., R. B.
Ejercito, J. V. G.	Tolentino, F. T. N.
Estrada, J.	Tulfo, R. T.
Gatchalian, W.	Villanueva J.
Go, C. L. T.	Villar, C. A.
Hontiveros, R.	Villar, M. A.
Lapid, M. L. M.	Zubiri, J. M. F.
Legarda, L.	

With 23 senators present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum.

Senator Escudero was not able to attend the session because he was out of the country, as indicated in the letter of his Chief of Staff dated January 23, 2023.

OPENING REMARKS OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

In addressing the Body upon the resumption of the First Regular Session of the Nineteenth Congress for 2023, Senate President Zubiri delivered the following statement:

It is nice to see you all again, right here in the beating heart of this institution, where ideas are discussed, laws are forged, and change for the greater good is made.

I do not want to call our short recess a vacation because all of us worked through the holidays. To cite one example, through the able leadership of Senator Cynthia Villar, we peeled the layers of mystery behind the surge in the prices of onion and the shortage of its supply.

Habang pinapakinggan po natin ang hearing, para tayong nagbabalat ng sibuyas. Nakakaiyak – sa galit, hindi sa tuwa.

Her Committee on Agriculture next tackled the crisis in table salt, an irony in an archipelagic country surrounded by the ocean.

If concerns about our food security have migrated from staples like rice and sugar to condiments, it becomes a challenge to the Senate to help find solutions instead of merely amplifying the problems. And Senator Cynthia, together with many of our colleagues, had given out their prescriptions.

And I am proud to say that this kind of constructive approach, a Senate trademark—to point out cures instead of merely pointing fingers—was on full display during Sen. Grace Poe's masterful handling of the NATA air navigation system crash.

After banging the gavel, it did not take her too long, and all our colleagues present, to lift the fog of confusion and the haze of conjectures surrounding the airport meltdown, which caused pain to thousands on what ought to be a happy new year.

Kaya naman hindi umubra ang sinumang may balak noon maging Pontio Pilato.

Let me also point out that it was during our break that the Blue Ribbon Committee released its report on the DepEd computer controversy. I have been told that as to explaining the anatomy of the alleged crime, the report is incisive. As to recommending measures to prevent its repeat, it is instructional.

These should be the nails on the coffin, so to speak, so this kind of anomaly should not resurrect in the future to haunt us again. *Kaya maraming salamat, Senator Tol.*

Also over the past few weeks, we had hearings on various bills seeking to strengthen the protection and conservation of our cultural heritage, under the Committee on Culture and the Arts, headed by Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda; the Filipino Migrant Workers bill, expanding the use of Free Legal Assistance Fund, under the Committee on Migrant Workers headed by Sen. Raffy Tulfo; and a hearing on the bills amending RA 11709, which prescribes the fixed terms of key officers of the AFP, under the Committee on National Defense headed by Sen. Jinggoy Estrada.

And even this morning, *may pahabol pa, iyong hearing ng Committee on Ways and Means of Sen. Win Gatchalian to fix the problem of POGOs in our country.*

Lahat naman sa atin nagtrabaho mula Pasko, so we can hit the ground running this year. And I thank the Minority for participating, together with our distinguished colleagues who participated in these hearings. We hit the ground running because technical working groups were convened and reports were written in the run up to the resumption of our session today.

So, I believe that as we restart our plenary business, we return here refreshed and raring to do our work—committed to make the first quarter of this year a productive one.

I think this should be our collective new year's resolution—to craft measures not for the sake of improving our scoreboard of laws, but improving the lives of our people.

'Yan naman po talaga ang mahalaga. Hindi para sa atin, pero para sa bayan.

On this note, let me call on the Majority Leader to guide us through the agenda for today.



REMARK OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva lauded the continuing efforts of Senate President Zubiri in leading the Body.

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

Likewise, at the instance of Senator Villanueva, the Members greeted Senators Ejercito, Tolentino, Pimentel, and Dela Rosa on the occasion of their birth anniversaries on December 26, 2022, and January 3, 20, and 21, 2023, respectively.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 3:13 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:17 p.m., the session was resumed.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

Senate President Zubiri congratulated Senator Villanueva for receiving the Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, from the Bulacan State University (BSU). In response, Senator Villanueva thanked the Senate President for recognizing his hard work.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva congratulated Senator Legarda for having been conferred the "Commendatore" to the Order of Merit of the Republic of Italy, in appreciation of her role in strengthening bilateral relations between the Philippines and Italy. He added that the award was the second recognition bestowed to the Senate President Pro Tempore by the Italian government, and that, with the senator's effort, the Philippines was able to return to the Venice Biennale after its 51-year hiatus.

Senate President Zubiri likewise mentioned that Senator Legarda was also named "Chevalier," or a knight in the French government.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

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

From the Climate Change Commission (CCC)

- Sec. Robert E.A. Borje;
- Commissioner Albert P. Dela Cruz Sr.;
- Commissioner Rachel Anne Herrera;
- the Commission's Technical Staff;

From the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC)

- Chairman Richard E. Bachmann;
- Executive Director Atty. Guillermo B. Iroy, Jr.;

From the Philippine Jiu-jitsu Team

- Margarita Ochoa;
- Kimberly Anne Custodio;
- Coach Stephen Kamphuis.

Senate President Zubiri welcomed the guests to the Senate.

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body dispensed with the reading of the Journal of Session No. 39 (December 14, 2022) and considered it approved.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

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

BILLS ON FIRST READING

Senate Bill No. 1611, entitled

**AN ACT PROMOTING OPEN ACCESS IN INTERNET SERVICES AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES**

Introduced by Senator Villanueva

To the Committees on Science and Technology; and Public Services

Senate Bill No. 1612, entitled

**AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9136, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE
ELECTRIC POWER INDUSTRY REFORM ACT OF 2001**

Introduced by Senator Villanueva

To the Committees on Energy; and Public Services

Senate Bill No. 1613, entitled

**AN ACT STRENGTHENING PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS, APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

Introduced by Senators Zubiri and Villanueva

**To the Committees on Public Works; Economic Affairs; Ways and Means; and
Finance**

Senate Bill No. 1614, entitled

**AN ACT CREATING AN ADVANCED STUDIES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
FOR EXCEPTIONAL EMPLOYEES FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND THE
PRIVATE SECTOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

Introduced by Senator Angara

To the Committees on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1615, entitled

AN ACT RECOGNIZING THE MUNICIPALITY OF BALER IN THE PROVINCE OF AURORA AS THE "BIRTHPLACE" OF PHILIPPINE SURFING

Introduced by Senator Angara

To the Committees on Tourism; Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1616, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE SEVENTH DAY OF NOVEMBER OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NATIONAL WORKING HOLIDAY IN COMMEMORATION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST PHILIPPINE MOSQUE AND THE INTRODUCTION OF ISLAM IN THE PHILIPPINES

Introduced by Senator Angara

To the Committee on Cultural Communities and Muslim Affairs

Senate Bill No. 1617, entitled

AN ACT REORGANIZING AND CONVERTING THE INSURANCE COMMISSION INTO A COLLEGIAL BODY, AMENDING SECTIONS 437, 438 AND 439 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10607, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "INSURANCE CODE," AS AMENDED

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committee on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies

Senate Bill No. 1618, entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING RURAL BANKS IN THE PHILIPPINES, AMENDING FURTHER FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7353, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE RURAL BANKS ACT OF 1992, AS AMENDED

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

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

Senate Bill No. 1619, entitled

AN ACT CREATING THE LAGUNA LAKE CONSERVATION AUTHORITY (LLCA), THEREBY REPEALING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 4850, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LAGUNA LAKE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY ACT OF 1966, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committees on Government Corporations and Public Enterprises; Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1620, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE BULACAN STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM, INTEGRATING ALL ITS CAMPUSES, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Villanueva

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

Senate Bill No. 1621, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING 13TH MONTH PAY TO GOVERNMENT CONTRACTUAL AND JOB ORDER PERSONNEL

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

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

Senate Bill No. 1622, entitled

AN ACT UPGRADING THE BANGUI DISTRICT HOSPITAL IN BARANGAY ABACA, MUNICIPALITY OF BANGUI IN THE PROVINCE OF ILOCOS NORTE, INTO A LEVEL II HOSPITAL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

To the Committee on Rules

Senate Bill No. 1623, entitled

AN ACT CREATING THE CAGAYAN RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, PRESCRIBING ITS POWERS, FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Marcos

To the Committees on Government Corporations and Public Enterprises; Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1624, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS TO THE CHILDREN OF MEMBERS OF THE UNIFORMED PERSONNEL OF THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE, ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES, BUREAU OF



FIRE PROTECTION, BUREAU OF JAIL MANAGEMENT AND PENOLOGY, PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD, NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, PHILIPPINE DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY, AND BUREAU OF CORRECTIONS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREOF AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Villar (M)

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

Senate Bill No. 1625, entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE GRANT OF TRANSPORTATION ALLOWANCE FOR ALL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Villar (M)

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

Senate Bill No. 1626, entitled

AN ACT FACILITATING THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE BY STRENGTHENING THE FRAUD DETECTION, PREVENTION AND ELIMINATION CAPABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT BY CREATING A PHILIPPINE DEATH CHECK (PDC) REGISTER AND ONLINE DEATH VERIFICATION (ODV) SYSTEM UNDER THE PHILIPPINE STATISTICS AUTHORITY, AMENDING SECTION 6 OF ACT NO. 3753, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committees on Economic Affairs; Science and Technology; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1627, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE DRUG PRICE REGULATORY BOARD TO REGULATE THE PRICES OF DRUGS AND MEDICINES IN THE PHILIPPINES AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9502, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE CHEAPER AND QUALITY MEDICINES ACT OF 2008 AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committees on Trade, Commerce and Entrepreneurship; and Health and Demography

Senate Bill No. 1628, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE PHILIPPINE ENTREPRENEURS' ACADEMY, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

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To the Committees on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; Trade, Commerce and Entrepreneurship; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1629, entitled

AN ACT UPGRADING THE KAWIT KALAYAAN HOSPITAL IN KAWIT, CAVITE TO A LEVEL II DISTRICT HOSPITAL AND INCREASING ITS BED CAPACITY TO ONE HUNDRED, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committee on Rules

Senate Bill No. 1630, entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES OF STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES (SUCs) AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

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

Senate Bill No. 1631, entitled

AN ACT PROMOTING BUSINESS GROWTH AND RECOVERY BY REDUCING THE COST OF BUSINESS COMPLIANCE FOR MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (MSMEs), AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE THE NATIONAL INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1997, AS AMENDED

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

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

Senate Bill No. 1632, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A SPECIAL DEFENSE ECONOMIC ZONE (SPEDEZ) INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT ARSENAL DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL ESTATE LOCATED IN CAMP GENERAL ANTONIO LUNA, LAMAO, MUNICIPALITY OF LIMAY, PROVINCE OF BATAAN, CREATING FOR THIS PURPOSE THE SPECIAL DEFENSE ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY (SPEDEZA) AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committees on Economic Affairs; National Defense and Security, Peace, Unification and Reconciliation; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1633, entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS IN BASIC EDUCATION GOVERNANCE BY EMPOWERING THEM AS PARTNERS IN EDUCATING THE LEARNERS,



ENGAGING THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE DELIVERY OF BASIC SERVICES AND ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVITY AND EFFECTIVENESS THEREOF, AND INTEGRATING THEIR INTERVENTIONS TO ACHIEVE THE SHARED GOAL OF QUALITY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTIONS 98, 99, 100 AND 272 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991, AS AMENDED, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Ejercito

To the Committees on Local Government; Basic Education; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1634, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A MORE RESPONSIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE REGULATION FOR THE LICENSING, REGISTRATION, CERTIFICATION AND PRACTICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SANITARY ENGINEERS, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SANITARY ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGISTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL AND SANITARY ENGINEERING TECHNICIANS IN THE PHILIPPINES, FOR THE PURPOSE OF AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT 1364, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Ejercito

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

Senate Bill No. 1635, entitled

AN ACT REQUIRING MANDATORY INSURANCE OF ALL BUILDINGS AND OTHER PHYSICAL STRUCTURES OWNED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE"

Introduced by Senator Ejercito

To the Committee on Local Government

Senate Bill No. 1636, entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DAYCARE CENTERS IN ALL NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, INSTRUMENTALITIES AND/OR GOVERNMENT-OWNED AND -CONTROLLED CORPORATIONS FOR THE EMPLOYEES' CHILDREN AGED FIVE (5) YEARS OLD AND BELOW, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Villar (M)

To the Committees on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1637, entitled

AN ACT PROMOTING COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES THROUGH HIRING OF AT LEAST ONE PSYCHOLOGIST PER CITY OR

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MUNICIPALITY, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Villar (M)

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Local Government

Senate Bill No. 1638, entitled

AN ACT CREATING THE OFFICE OF THE BUILDING OFFICIAL IN ALL PROVINCES, CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES AND AMENDING SECTIONS 443, 454, AND 477 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991" AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Ejercito

To the Committee on Local Government

Senate Bill No. 1639, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7662, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LEGAL EDUCATION REFORM ACT OF 1993, CREATING FOR THE PURPOSE A LEGAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RETURN SERVICE PROGRAM, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Villanueva

To the Committees on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; Justice and Human Rights; And Finance

Senate Bill No. 1640, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS UNIFIED INITIATIVES TO DISTRESSED ENTERPRISES FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY (GUIDE), APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Villanueva

To the Committees on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies; Government Corporations and Public Enterprises; Ways And Means; And Finance

Senate Bill No. 1641, entitled

AN ACT PROHIBITING GAME-FIXING AND PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS THEREOF

Introduced by Senator Estrada

To the Committees on Sports; and Games and Amusement

Senate Bill No. 1642, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10366, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS TO ESTABLISH

PRECINCTS ASSIGNED TO ACCESSIBLE POLLING PLACES EXCLUSIVELY
FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND SENIOR CITIZENS”

Introduced by Senator Estrada

To the Committee on Electoral Reforms and People’s Participation

Senate Bill No. 1643, entitled

AN ACT REGULATING THE REGISTRATION, LICENSURE, AND PRACTICE OF
PHYSICAL THERAPY, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Estrada

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

Senate Bill No. 1644, entitled

AN ACT REDUCING WASTAGE BY DONATING AND RECYCLING EXCESS
EDIBLE FOOD

Introduced by Senator Estrada

**To the Committees on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform; and Social Justice,
Welfare and Rural Development**

Senate Bill No. 1645, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE PUBLICATION OF LAWS IN THE PRINT OR
ONLINE VERSION OF THE OFFICIAL GAZETTE AND OF A NEWSPAPER
OF GENERAL CIRCULATION

Introduced by Senator Estrada

To the Committee on Public Information and Mass Media

Senate Bill No. 1646, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR DEVELOPMENT AND MODERNIZATION FUND FOR
THE CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY OF THE PHILIPPINES (CAAP), TO
ENSURE UPGRADES TO ITS STANDARDS, SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES
PRESCRIBED FOR CIVIL AVIATION PRACTICES AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committee on Public Services

Senate Bill No. 1647, entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTING THE MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS AND APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFOR



Introduced by Senator Legarda

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1648, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR BENEFITS AND PRIVILEGES TO UNPAID CARE WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Legarda

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

Senate Bill No. 1649, entitled

AN ACT DEFINING THE MARITIME ZONES UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

Introduced by Senator Legarda

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

Senate Bill No. 1650, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A SYSTEM OF REDISTRIBUTING AND RECYCLING FOOD WASTE TO PROMOTE FOOD SECURITY

Introduced by Senator Tulfo

To the Committees on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform; Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; and Ways and Means

Senate Bill No. 1651, entitled

AN ACT RATIONALIZING THE CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL HOLIDAYS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9492

Introduced by Senator Tulfo

To the Committee on Constitutional Amendments and Revision of Codes

Senate Bill No. 1652, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING EVACUATION CENTERS IN EVERY CITY AND MUNICIPALITY, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Tulfo

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

Senate Bill No. 1653, entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE LEGAL EDUCATION BOARD, THEREBY AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7662, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "LEGAL EDUCATION REFORM ACT OF 1993," AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Tulfo

To the Committees on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; Justice and Human Rights; Ways And Means; And Finance

Senate Bill No. 1654, entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY OF THE PHILIPPINES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9497, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY ACT OF 2008

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committee on Public Services

Senate Bill No. 1655, entitled

AN ACT MAINTAINING AND PRESERVING FILIPINO FILMS, CREATING THE PHILIPPINE FILM ARCHIVE, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

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

Senate Bill No. 1656, entitled

AN ACT TO DESIGNATE SEPTEMBER AS PHILIPPINE FILM INDUSTRY MONTH AND MANDATE THE FILM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF THE PHILIPPINES TO CONDUCT EVENTS ON VARIOUS FILM-RELATED DISCIPLINES DURING ITS CELEBRATION, TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

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

Senate Bill No. 1657, entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING INDUSTRY CLUSTER-BASED PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS THROUGH INTER-LOCAL COOPERATION AND PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

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



Senate Bill No. 1658, entitled

AN ACT CREATING THE OFFICE OF TANODBATA AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committees on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1659, entitled

AN ACT CREATING THE 'TRABAHO SA ORAS NG PAGBANGON' PROGRAM, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Marcos

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

Senate Bill No. 1660, entitled

AN ACT FULFILLING THE EMANCIPATION OF AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES FROM THE DEBT BURDEN THROUGH THE SUBROGATION BY THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT OF AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES UNDER THE VOLUNTARY LAND TRANSFER AND DIRECT PAYMENT SCHEMES AND THE ASSUMPTION OF THEIR DEBTS THEREUNDER, TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Marcos

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

Senate Bill No. 1661, entitled

AN ACT FULFILLING THE EMANCIPATION OF AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES FROM THE DEBT BURDEN THROUGH THE FREE AWARD OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS UNDER THE COMPREHENSIVE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM, TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Marcos

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee Report No. 18, submitted by the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, on House Bill No. 4635, introduced by Representative Adiong, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE ADIONG MEMORIAL STATE COLLEGE FROM THREE (3) YEARS TO FOUR



(4) YEARS IN ACCORDANCE WITH REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8292, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE 'HIGHER EDUCATION MODERNIZATION ACT OF 1997', AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8651, AS AMENDED, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,

recommending its approval with amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Escudero

To the Calendar for Ordinary Business

Committee Report No. 19, submitted by the Committee on Accountability of Public Officers and Investigations on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 120, introduced by Senator Pimentel III, entitled

A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ACCOUNTABILITY OF PUBLIC OFFICERS AND INVESTIGATIONS (BLUE RIBBON), TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED OVERPRICED AND OUTDATED LAPTOPS PROCURED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DEPED) THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT SERVICE (DBM-PS);

and Proposed Senate Resolution No. 134, introduced by Senator Cayetano (AP), entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ACCOUNTABILITY OF PUBLIC OFFICERS AND INVESTIGATIONS (BLUE RIBBON) TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE PROCUREMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, THROUGH THE PROCUREMENT SERVICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT, OF LAPTOPS FOR TEACHERS FOR USE IN DISTANCE LEARNING,

recommending the approval of the committee report.

Sponsor: Senator Tolentino

To the Calendar for Ordinary Business

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 250

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 250, entitled

RESOLUTION HONORING AND COMMENDING THE OUTSTANDING WOMEN IN THE NATION'S SERVICE (TOWNS) 2022 AWARDEES,

taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 252, 283, 312, and 424.

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*.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR ANGARA

In sponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 250, Senator Angara delivered the following speech:

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Again, Happy New Year to all of us and greetings to our birthday celebrants.

We proudly join our colleagues standing today in this august Chamber to recognize the 11 women chosen in the search for The Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service (TOWNS) Awards.

Women have long played an outsized and singularly vital role in our society — from the pre-colonial matriarchal days of the *babaylan* to the various revolutions our people have waged against repression and injustice—up to today as the Philippines continues to be a world leader for gender equality and women empowerment.

However, despite this long history, many Filipinas continue to face struggles. Their voices go unheard, their dignity diminished, and their wisdom and experience marginalized from the wider public narrative. There remain several ways that women can be further empowered, and for their contributions to the betterment of our society to be more widely recognized.

That is why in our early days as a legislator, back in the House of Representatives, we authored the Magna Carta for Women, or Republic Act No. 9710, which further enshrines the critical role women play in nation-building, ensures the substantive equality between all genders, and establishes the broad legal framework that upholds and safeguards the rights of women. This is also why we speak today to sing praises and admiration for our TOWN's awardees.

Kahanga-hanga po ang mga awardees natin ngayon, iba-iba man ang kanilang mga larangan at propesyon, lahat sila ay may malaking naiambag para sa ikabubuti at ikauunlad ng ating lipunan. Ang 2022 TOWN's awardees ay sina:

- Dr. Ani Rosa Almario ng Adarna House at Raya School para sa edukasyon at entrepreneurship;
- Rubilen "Bingkay" Amit na kilalang world-class billiards player para sa sports;
- Dr. Pia Bagamasbad na kasalukuyang direktor ng National Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology sa U.P. Diliman para sa medicine at public health;
- Dr. Beverly Lorraine Ho na direktor ng Health Promotions Bureau ng DOH para din sa medicine at public health;
- Dr. Erika Legara, propesor sa Asian Institute of Management (AIM) at coauthor ng National Artificial Intelligence Strategy Road Map para sa Data Science;
- Keisha Alena Mayuga para sa kontribusyon sa transportasyon bilang isang local urban planner, active mobility advocate, lead convener ng Life Cycles PH at isa sa mga nangunguna sa Move as One Coalition na nagtulak para magkaroon ng nationwide bike lane system;
- Ana Patricia Non para sa community service sa kaniyang pagtatayo ng pinakaunang community pantry noong 2021 sa Teacher's Village noong panahon ng pandemya;
- Anna Rosario Oposa, environmentalist, advocacy campaigner, at co-founder ng Save the Philippine Seas Movement para sa Marine Ecology Conservation;
- Patricia "Pia" Marie Ranada ng Rappler for investigative journalism;
- Georgina Romero para sa Women Empowerment through Information and Communications Technology, bilang founder ng Connected Women na isang social enterprise na nagtuturo ng mga digital skills at mga remote work competencies para sa mga kababaihan sa mga mahihirap at malalayong lugar; at
- Dr. Aletta Yñiguez para sa kontribusyon niya sa marine science, bilang isa sa mga faculty ng U.P. Marine Science Institute kung saan marami sa kaniyang mga pagsasaliksik ay nagamit para tugunan o paghandaan ang mga extraordinary events tulad ng mga harmful algal blooms na nakakasira sa ecosystems ng ating mga dagat.

Napakainam po na sa unang araw ng muling pagbukas ng ating sesyon, nakapaglaan tayo ng kaunting oras para kilalanin ang mga babaeng karapat-dapat parangalan, pahapyaw man po nating binanggit ang kanilang mga nagawa at tagumpay para sa ikabubuti ng ating bansa. Kaya sana sa ating munting talumpati, maudyok ang sambayan na lalong kilalanin ang labing-isang babae na binanggit dito at alamin ang kani-kanilang mga kuwento dahil silang lahat po

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ay mga ehemplo na dapat tularan. Sila ay mga patibay na kahit sino ay maaaring maging mitsa ng pagbabago basta may tamang paninindigan at umaapaw na sipag at tiyaga, posible ang anumang reporma at pagbabago na kritikal ang ambag ng kababaihan sa bawat aspeto ng lipunan na hindi balakid ang kasarian para makapagserbisyo at makatulong sa sambayanan.

Sana ay hindi lamang mauwi sa simpleng paghanga ang ating parangal sa TOWN's awardees ngayong araw. Sana ay tunay na magsilbing inspirasyon ang mga awardees sa ating lahat para umakasyon at gamitin ang kakayahan at talent para sa ikabubuti at ikauunlad ng ating bansa.

Ayon sa isang sinulat ng pinakaunang babae na Supreme Court justice na si Justice Cecilia Muñoz Palma: "Woman was created for a nobler purpose than to simply admire and be admired." Kaya iwaksi na po natin ang anumang pagmamaliit sa kababaihan. Palaganapin pa natin ang kaisipan na talagang napakalaki ang kanilang kontribusyon sa ating lipunan. Sama-sama natin silang parangalan, ang 2022 TOWN's awardees!

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR REVILLA

Upon request of Senator Villanueva, the following cosponsorship speech of Senator Revilla on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 250 was deemed read and inserted into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

I would like to associate myself with the pronouncements of the good senator from Aurora.

Ang mga kababaihan ang ilaw ng ating tahanan. They have come a long way from being bound by glass ceilings of a particular society meant to restrain them.

Today, we rise and laud the women who shape our society and empower their fellowmen with their triumphs and remarkable achievements.

The awardees of The Outstanding Women in Nation's Service (TOWNS) 2022 exemplify how women continue to shine their light to the great benefit of our people. This only proves that wherever women are placed – regardless of the mountains that need to be overcome and the high barriers that confront them – they will soar and thrive. In Proposed Senate Resolution No. 370, this Representation highlighted the role of the awardees as excellent catalysts for change who inspire the society to do more and better in the spirit of selfless service to humanity.

We are confident that the future is in great hands – knowing that our children are raised, reared and nurtured by strong, courageous and empowered women.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR BINAY

In cosponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 250, Senator Binay delivered the following speech:

Today, I rise to sponsor Senate Resolution No. 250 honoring and commending the 2022 Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service (TOWNS) awardees.

Ang mga kababaihang kasama natin ngayon ay nagbigay ng mahalagang kontribusyon sa kanilang mga napiling adhikain. Nararapat lamang na sila ay ating parangalan at ipagmalaki dahil na rin sa kanilang paglilingkod sa ating bayan at sa ating mga kapwa Pilipino.

They are an inspiration, especially to fellow women and young girls, showing us that it is possible to excel despite adversities and hardships.

Nariyan si Teacher Ani Rosa Almario, isang children's book publisher at educator. Isa sa kaniyang mga adbokasiya ay siguruhin na, bukod sa literary merit ng mga akda, ay mailalathala ang mga kuwento at napapanahong isyu na dapat malaman ng mga bata. The progressive school teacher Ani Rosa is also known for instilling a sense of country and cultural pride to students.

Nariyan din si Rubilen Amit, who is one of the best 10-ball players in the world regardless of gender. A former world champion and a 10-time Southeast Asian Games gold medalist, ipinakita



ni Rubilen na kaya nating mga kababaihan na makipagsabayan kahit kanino sa larangan ng bilyar.

Dr. Pia Bagamasbad, meanwhile, is a key player in the country's pandemic response. Dr. Pia helped increase our country's testing capacity and also trained medical technologists across the country on the proper use of RT-PCR test.

Si Asec. Beverly Lorraine Ho ng Department of Health ay isa sa mga nanguna sa ating BIDA and Resbakuna informational campaigns noong kasagsagan ng pandemya. With this recognition of Dr. Beverly, we hope to encourage women to get into public health as a legitimate field apart from frontline clinical services.

We also have Dr. Erika Legara, a physicist and an advocate of data-driven culture. A recipient of the Outstanding Young Scientist Award by the National Academy of Science and Technology, Dr. Erika pushes for data-driven science in policymaking to help future-proof our country.

Another Pinay pride is Keisha Alena Mayuga, an urban planner and urban transport specialist, who advocates for better public transport and safer bike infrastructure in Metro Manila. Keisha is also the founder of Life Cycles Ph, which helped in providing bikes to frontliners at the height of the transportation problem during the pandemic.

Si Anna Rosario Oposa naman ay kinilala dahil sa kaniyang mga kontribusyon pagdating sa marine ecology conservation. Binuo ni Anna ang Save Philippine Seas Movement, na tumutulong sa pangangalaga ng marine biodiversity sa ating bansa.

Nariyan din si Dr. Aletta Yñiguez mula sa University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute, na kinilala sa kaniyang kontribusyon pagdating sa marine science. Dr. Aleta helped create tools to promote sustainable fisheries, and made it accessible to small-scale fishers. She is also leading projects on developing early warning systems for harmful algal blooms in the country.

Ms. Georgina Romero is the co-founder of a text startup, which provides online skills development and remote work opportunities for women. So far, Georgina's company has trained 40,000 women on entrepreneurship skills for the digital economy, and is set to train 1,000 more women on skills in the artificial intelligence industry.

Si Ana Patricia Non naman ay kinilala sa pag-organisa ng mga community pantry na nakapagbigay ng inspirasyon sa mga Pilipino na magtulungan noong kasagsagan ng lockdown sa bansa. From one community pantry in Maginhawa, Patreng moved our kababayans to give and help in different ways with at least 6,700 community pantries sprouting nationwide within weeks.

And last, but definitely not the least, is Ms. Patricia Marie Rañada, a journalist who covers politics and the environment. Tricia has been recognized for in-depth and investigative pieces. She is an inspiration not only to women but to all media practitioners to continue to pursue the truth in their reporting.

Each of this women are leaders in their own right and it only shows that, in every sphere of influence, a woman's voice is essential. *Huwag sana kayong magsawa sa inyong serbisyo sa kapwa at sa bayan, at nawa ay patuloy kayong magbigay lakas, lalong-lalo na sa mga kababaihan, na hindi hadlang ang ano mang balakid para makamtan ang minimithing hangarin.*

It is with utmost pride that I present to you The Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service 2022 awardees.

Maraming salamat sa inyong mga kontribusyon sa lipunan at mabuhay ang mga kababaihan.

COSPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF SENATOR LEGARDA

In cosponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 250, Senator Legarda, being one of the authors, associated herself with the sponsors of the resolution. She thanked Senator Villanueva for referring the bill in a timely manner, which allowed her to deliver her cosponsorship remarks that day.



She then paid tribute to the 2022 TOWNS awardees being honored in the resolution. She stated that without mentioning their names, some of them were already known to the public, while others' works had been featured in the news. She signified her intention to work with the TOWNS awardees in their respective fields.

Senator Legarda shared to the Body that she herself was a TOWNS awardee in 1995. She said that although it has been a long time since she became an awardee, what matters was the work that the current awardees do. She then invited past and present awardees to get together, and to find out how they could help in terms of policy and how to improve the state of affairs of the country.

COSPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

In associating herself with the sponsors and cosponsors of Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 250, 252, 283, and 312, Senator Hontiveros gave honor and special mention to some of the 2022 TOWNS awardees, namely:

- Ani Rosa Almario, who was once a teacher of her youngest child. Coming from a family whose members were known for their works in the arts and sociology, her life work was in the field of education, being a writer of Filipino children's books;
- Dr. Beverly Lorraine Ho, who, like Senator Ejercito, was known for her work and advocacy on the Universal Health Care Law. Dr. Ho was one of the best and with the highest integrity in the Department of Health;
- Ana Patricia Non, who inspired the whole country during the dark years of the pandemic by feeding the poor and hungry through a community pantry despite the challenges of being red-tagged;
- Anna Rosario Oposa, for continuously pursuing her family's works in caring for the country's ecology; and
- Patricia "Pia" Marie Ranada of Rappler, who joined the victory of Maria Ressa in the latter's acquittal on tax evasion charges, and continued to face the challenges of free and defiant journalism.

Senator Hontiveros believed that whenever stories of strong women are told, women's strength is being celebrated – all that women can do, and all that women can be. She then honored the women who stood strong in the face of tenacious attacks and rank misogyny – the women journalists; women in the medical, and science and technology professions who have been the light during the dark times of the pandemic; environmentalists, entrepreneurs, and community leaders. She said that these women have shown the country that it does not need to ask for space at the table for women as they have claimed their spaces, and have claimed it for all the women. She then thanked the Body for honoring the 2022 TOWNS awardees.

COSPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF SENATOR CAYETANO (P)

Senator Cayetano (P) joined the other Members in honoring the TOWNS awardees present in the hall, as well as those who were not.

She then emphasized that when women's achievements are showcased, it is usual for little girls to witness them and realize their full potential and, as such, the honorees play a role in paving the way for young girls.

Senator Cayetano (P) disclosed that she had the opportunity to speak to two of the female members of the jiu-jitsu international champions in the gallery and that she told them: "Aside from



inspiring the little girls, they are also inspiring the future of boys who mingle with these little girls. These boys will understand that women equally hold the fort. Women are equal partners.”

Further, she stated that in many instances, many of the male senators would admit that their partner is the better partner – doing the household, running the household, taking care of the children, and also having their own career. She stressed that until men and even young boys are able to see it through women like the TOWNS recipients who pave the way, society will continue to have to struggle with inequality.

Thereafter, she congratulated and thanked the Body for taking time in honoring the TOWNS awardees.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECHES

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following cosponsorship speeches on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 250 into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

By Senator Lapid

Sa loob ng maraming taon, ikinahon ang kababaihan bilang mga musa ng mga artista, ngunit sa kasalukuyang panahon, nasaksihan natin ang kanilang tapang at paninindigan at sa kanilang sariling mga kamay nagpasya na ipinta ang kanilang sariling mga obra.

Sa pahintulot ng mga kagalang-galang na kasama sa bulwagang ito, hayaan ninyo akong bigyan ng pagkilala at pagpupugay ang mga kagila-gilalas na mga kababaihan na nagpasyang sumalungat sa agos at pangibabawan ang mga balakid upang ipursige ang kanilang mga sinisinta, minimithi at adhikain. Ang labing-isang kababaihan mula sa iba't ibang larangan na binigyan ng karangalan ng The Outstanding Women in Nation's Service ay ang mga sumusunod:

Dr. Pia D. Bagamasbad *para sa* Molecular Biology;
 Dr. Beverly Lorraine Ho *para sa* Medicine and Public Health;
 Dr. Erika Fille Legara *para sa* Data Science;
 Dr. Aletta T. Yñiguez *para sa* Marine Science;
 Georgina Romero *para sa* Women Empowerment Through Information
 and Communications Technology;
 Patricia Marie Ranada *para sa* Investigative Journalism;
 Keisha Alena Mayuga *para sa* Transport Planning;
 Ana Patricia Non *para sa* Community Service;
 Anna Rosario Oposa *para sa* Marine Ecology Conservation;
 Rubilen Amit *para sa* Sports; *at*
 Ani Rosa Almario *para sa* Education and Entrepreneurship.

Ating kinikilala ang mga nabanggit na mga natatanging kababaihan. Ipinakita sa kanilang mga buhay at tagumpay sa kanilang mga larangan na kaya nating basagin ang mga limitasyon, higit pang itulak ang mga hangganan at hawanin ang daan upang sundan ng higit pang bilang ng mga kababaihan.

Ito ay malaking ambag sa ating ninanais na pagbabago sa pamantayang panlipunan, politika, pangkasariang pagkapantay-pantay at higit na pagpapatibay sa kababaihan bilang matatag na haligi ng ating lipunan. Patunay lamang ito na ang mga kababaihan ay kayang maghatid ng pagbabago sa ating lipunan.

Mabuhay ang mga awardees ng The Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service 2022! Mabuhay ang lahat ng mga kababaihan!

By Senator Estrada

I am associating myself with the manifestations made by my colleagues. The Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service, initiated and facilitated by the TOWNS Foundation, Incorporated,



has for forty-eight years been a prestigious venue where we are able to feature the genius talent, the passion, the praise-worthy achievements, and commendable service of our exemplary Filipinas.

Our TOWNS awardees have all contributed positively to strengthening national capability and shaping the nation's future. They all served as catalysts for economic, social and cultural development, national security, and national unity by unselfishly providing their time, talent, and resources.

I commend our 11 TOWNS awardees for 2022. The endeavors of education and entrepreneurship, sports, medicine and public health, data science, transportation, community service, marine ecology conservation, investigative journalism, and marine science in the Philippines have all benefitted with the brand of service and leadership that our Filipina TOWNS awardees have contributed.

With the indulgence of our proponent, I would like to be made coauthor and sponsor of Senate Resolution No. 250. *Muli, ang aking pagbati sa ating mga pinarangalang TOWNS 2022 awardees.*

By Senator Villanueva

I join my good friend, the senator from Baler, Sen. Sonny Angara, and all our colleagues in honoring and celebrating The Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service (TOWNS), who graced us with their presence today.

Without a doubt, most forms of human achievement, especially those that truly matter, rest on the shoulders of great women. I am speaking from personal experience. I would not be the man and the public servant that I am today if not for the love and the strength of the most important women in my life—my mother (Sr. Dory Villanueva), my wife Gladys, and my sisters.

I see my mother's, my wife's, and my sisters' dedication and selflessness in our guests. These remarkable women, who have made an impact in their chosen fields, serve as role models to all Filipinos, especially to the younger generation of women. They have shown remarkable competence and a sincere desire and unwavering commitment to serve our country and transform the lives of many.

These 11 Filipinas, who join the ranks of 178 outstanding Filipino women recognized since 1974, are as follows:

1. Dr. Pia D. Bagamasbad (Molecular Biology);
2. Dr. Beverly Lorraine Ho (Medicine & Public Health);
3. Dr. Erika Fille Legara (Data Science);
4. Dr. Aletta T. Yñiguez (Marine Science);
5. Georgina Romero (Women Empowerment Through Information and Communications Technology);
6. Patricia Marie Ranada (Investigative Journalism);
7. Keisha Alena Mayuga (Transport Planning);
8. Ana Patricia Non (Community Service);
9. Anna Rosario Oposa (Marine Ecology Conservation);
10. Rubilen Amit (Sports); and
11. Ani Rosa Almario (Education and Entrepreneurship).

Our distinguished guests are a testament to the indispensable role of women in nation-building. We thank our TOWNS 2022 awardees for using their passion, intelligence, talent, and time in contributing to our country's economic, social, cultural, and environmental development.

Thank you very much. God bless us all.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PADILLA

Regarding the measure as commendable, Senator Padilla expressed his support for it and joined his colleagues in honoring the TOWNS awardees. He informed the Body that January 23 commemorates the establishment of the First Republic of the Philippines, also known as the Malolos Republic, in Malolos, Bulacan. He emphasized that the First Republic would not have been possible if not for the sacrifices of the women at that time, including Melchora Aquino, Gabriela Silang, Trinidad Rizal, and Gregoria de Jesus.



He believed that the Philippine Republic was rooted in its women. He remarked that the toughest senators in the Senate are women, as their male counterparts remain silent whenever they speak. He reiterated his support for the resolution honoring the TOWNS awardees.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

As a follow-up to Senator Padilla's statement, Senator Villanueva informed the Body that Republic Act No. 11014 which was passed into law in 2017, commemorates "Araw ng Republikang Filipino," or the First Philippine Republic Day, declaring January 23 of each year as a special working holiday in the entire province of Bulacan, and that it was the 124th anniversary of the First Philippine Republic on that day, since its establishment in 1899. He stated that the Malolos Republic was the culmination of the Philippine revolution that began with the Katipunan and led to the creation of the first constitution and republican government in Asia.

COSPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF SENATOR EJERCITO

In cosponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 250, Senator Ejercito noted that majority of the awardees were doctors. He then commended all of the awardees for their service to the nation.

Specifically, he stated that he had worked with DOH Assistant Secretary Dr. Beverly Lorraine C. Ho in passing the Universal Health Care Act. He said that Dr. Ho was with the committee every step of the way. He noted that Dr. Ho would also receive the TOYM award for 2022, thus it was a feat to be receiving two prestigious awards in a single year. He then thanked Dr. Ho for her work.

As a TOYM awardee himself, along with Senators Legarda, Angara, Gatchalian, Escudero, and Hontiveros, Senator Ejercito reminded the awardees that it is not enough that they are good public servants, mayors, media practitioners, and doctors; they must be extraordinary. He then challenged the TOWNS awardees to continue serving the nation, making a difference, and being exceptional.

COSPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF SENATOR GATCHALIAN

Senator Gatchalian joined his colleagues in commending the awardees of TOWNS 2022 which recognizes the vital role of the women laureates in nation-building. He said that the awardees have shown extraordinary competence, dedication to serve the country, and desire to contribute to the nation's development through their respective fields. He believed that inspired by the narratives and achievements of the 2022 TOWNS awardees, the next generation of Filipinas would follow the footsteps of the awardees.

Thereafter, Senator Gatchalian requested that he be made coauthor and cosponsor of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 250.

COAUTHORS

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, all senators were made coauthors of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 250.

REMARKS OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

In congratulating TOWNS 2022 awardees, Senate President Zubiri also recognized the presence in the gallery of Anna Oposa, a former TOYM Awardee and daughter of Attorney Oposa, with whom he had worked well in saving the country's oceans and seas when he was part of the Concerned Divers of the Philippines during his first term as a senator.



ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 250

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body adopted Proposed Senate Resolution No. 250, taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 252, 283, 312, and 424, subject to style.

Thereafter, Senator Villanueva invited the awardees of TOWNS 2022 to the podium for a photo opportunity, along with Jiu-jitsu athletes Kimberly Anne Custodio and Meggie Ochoa, honorees of Senate Resolution No. 277 which was adopted on December 14, 2022.

At this juncture, Senate President Zubiri mentioned that the country would also be sending, for the first time, a football team to compete in the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 in New Zealand in summer.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 4:04 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:13 p.m., the session resumed with Senator Ejercito presiding.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR LEGARDA

Rising on a matter of personal and collective privilege, Senator Legarda delivered the following speech to raise the alarm over the Philippines being ranked as the most vulnerable country from disaster and climate risks and hazards:

The Philippines is now the country with the highest disaster risk in the world.

The World Risk Report 2022 assessed the level of exposure, susceptibility, and lack of coping and adaptive capacities of countries from disaster and climate risks and hazards and we came out as the most vulnerable.

This is no longer new to us. Year after year, we have ranked high among the countries most at risk of disasters and climate change — a reminder of both our natural situation and our vulnerability.

Mulat na tayo sa epekto nito sa mga Pilipino at sa ating ekonomiya. Napapawalang-saysay ang deka-dekada nating aksyon upang maitaas ang antas ng buhay ng bawat pamilyang Pilipino at mapalago ang ekonomiya dahil sa matitinding bagyo, tag-tuyot, pagbaha, pagguho ng lupa, at iba pang mga delubyo't sakuna. Mula nitong Disyembre, may shear line na nagdulot ng baha sa Mindanao at hindi pa nga nakakabangon ay tuloy pa rin ang baha doon.

Taun-taon, P506.1 billion ang nawawala sa atin dahil sa mga sakunang ito. Katumbas na iyan ng pinagsamang budget ng DOH at ng DSWD para sa 2023. Kung gaano man kalaking halaga ang matitipid kung tayo ay mas handa ay maaari na sanang mailaan sa iba pa nating pangangailangan.

Unfortunately, climate events are not single, unrelated disasters. With each devastation, our vulnerabilities multiply, reverberating through all aspects of human life and biodiversity and bringing us closer to multiple ecosystem points of no return.

These effects have a feedback loop that make succeeding effects much worse. Whenever we assess damage to crops and infrastructure from disasters, we fail to take into account the damage to ecosystems. Ravaged forests and coral reefs have much reduced capacity to provide services such as water retention, flood prevention, cultivar sources, air filtration, and carbon sequestration.

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Due to the sea level rise each passing day, we risk losing our coastlines and entire islands. We will lose entire cities and townships along the coast if we do not succeed, resulting in chaos. This fact needs to be integral to all our planning.

Way back in 2009, we passed the Climate Change Act. We followed it up with the People's Survival Fund. Despite their best efforts reducing requirements and assisting in proposal development, the Climate Change Commission has only been able to approve one third of the initial allocation from 11 years ago. This fund should not be a wasted opportunity.

Now, on our Nationally Determined Contribution, our country needs climate finance to build our defenses and safeguard every Filipino from climate impacts. But we also need climate finance to transition our economy and society towards low carbon development and growth, the kind that would mitigate global warming and the intensity of climate change.

Thus, in 2021, the Philippines submitted our Nationally Determined Contribution, or NDC, conveying a 75% greenhouse gas emissions reduction and avoidance target by 2030 for agriculture, waste, industry, transport, and the energy sectors. Of this target, almost three percent is unconditional, or it will be undertaken using domestic resources. The rest is conditional, or will be implemented through support for technology development and transfer, capacity building, and climate finance by developed countries, as mandated by the Paris Agreement.

We have an ambitious NDC despite our negligible contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions. But we need to look at these commitments as investment plans, a massive opportunity for us to have the long view to modernize our sectors and transform our society past the climate crisis.

Consider how we could make our industries and households run on cheap and clean renewable energy and not on imported fossil fuels, or how we could reinvent our car-centric transport sector to deploy more inclusive low-carbon public vehicles and mass transport systems, or how agriculture can thrive on natural fertility and microbiomes not reliant on imports. Think of a life without disposables and planned obsolescence and of reversing the pollution they bring to us and the living environment. Think of the sustainable practices and products that could become economic opportunities in a changed world.

Change is just inevitable and we have to use the momentum of how fast things are changing to ride that tide and chart the direction of our nation's future.

Now on COP 27. Just late last year, world leaders and country delegations spent two weeks in November discussing the implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement to keep global warming from breaching 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels, and providing support to vulnerable developing countries such as ours. It was already the 27th COP, Conference of Parties, of the UNFCCC.

While certain decisions or non-decisions are still lacking, the COP nevertheless made history as countries finally agreed to operationalize funding arrangements to address loss and damage – finally. It took 30 years for the Parties to the UNFCCC to reach this decision, but, as I say, it is better late than never. We can now hope that as the details are fleshed out, our situation as most vulnerable will open the tap for funds to come in to help us recover and shift to climate resilient development.

This loss and damage fund cannot bring back what we have lost in terms of lives, livelihoods, assets, and opportunities, but just like post-war reparations, these will help get us on an appropriate development track. Loss and damage are now enshrined as the third pillar of climate action, alongside mitigation and adaptation. I remember standing here 20 years ago, we would talk about mitigation adaptation; now, loss and damage.

At COP 27, the Philippines was also able to advance national interests by progressively phasing out subsidies for fossil fuels, promoting renewable energies, reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and non-market approaches to climate action.

Our country also recently joined the High Ambition Coalition (HAC) for Nature and People. The commitment of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, finally, in joining the HAC has set an aspiration of protecting at least 30% of



the world's land and ocean, through increased public and private financing, to ensure long-term management and local governance, and clear implementation mechanisms to nature so we can recover ecosystems by the year 2030.

This target was adopted by the Conference of Parties in another COP—the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). In COP 15 of the CBD, state parties also agreed on major shifts in societies necessary to halt mass extinction. *Mas pinag-uusapan ang COP ng UNFCC; kasing halaga po ang COP ng CBD.*

This is consistent with the United Nations' declaration of this decade as one for Ecological Restoration. *Lahat nakatugma sa dekadang ito po.* Not surprisingly, 2030 is also the target for reaching our Sustainable Development Goals, and I am glad that our colleague is on the floor, the chairperson of the Committee on Sustainable Development Goals, Innovation and Futures Thinking.

We have very little time and I urge this august Chamber to think about these goals in every piece of legislation we craft, at least, as we transition to survive and thrive past the climate crisis.

On this note, I wish to thank the Philippine Delegations for both COPs, headed by Environment Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, and representatives from the DENR, CCC, DA, DFA, DOE, NEDA, and civil society, for relentlessly pushing for better targets and making developed nations deliver on their commitments.

But while I commend the delegations, I also urge our leaders to make good on their climate pronouncements. We are way past the point when we can pay lip service to mitigation and adaptation and still avoid blame. We all carry the burden of a just energy transition but we in government need to show the way.

Our work in this battle against climate change, considered the greatest existential threat to all of humanity, continues. It is inextricably linked to the biodiversity crisis. There is no time to lose, and I want all of us—as legislators who pass laws, conduct oversight, and allocate budget—to embrace the critical role we play in this global climate emergency.

Our work in the Senate in this 19th Congress will be a testament to our commitment to improving the lives of every Filipino and safeguarding our nation's future in light of the growing challenges amid this climate crisis. *Buhay, kabuhayan, at kinabukasan ang nakataya. Hindi na pwedeng "hindi kaya," dahil kailangan.*

The people have placed their utmost trust and confidence in all of us. Let us not waste this opportunity to do good, to do what is right, and in all our endeavors imagine a different future past this twin crisis of climate and biodiversity collapse.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO (P)

Senator Cayetano (P) commended Senator Legarda for bringing to light the situation caused about by climate change that the Philippines had the highest disaster risk ranking according to the most recent report.

She expressed concern regarding the loss of P506.1 billion due to climate change. She stated that the Senate leadership had not been negligent in bringing the issue of climate change and the need to put fund into the Climate Change Commission to the attention of the entire nation. However, she inquired what else was necessary given the Philippines' in the center of the typhoon belt.

At this juncture, Senator Ejercito relinquished the Chair to Senate President Zubiri.

Senator Legarda affirmed that the Philippines ranked first in terms of vulnerability and global disaster risk, despite being one of the lowest emitters of greenhouse gases in the world, at only one-third of 1%. She lamented, however, that every deluge, rain, or storm roughly 20 per year erodes the GDP. She stated that the country had lost more than P500 billion and that, according to the Department of Finance, P48.9 billion or .33% of GDP were lost annually as a result of climate change.

Senator Legarda, concurring with Senator (P) Cayetano's observation that the country may not be at fault for greenhouse gas emissions, emphasized the importance of advocating for climate change adaptation alongside climate change mitigation and loss and damage.

Senator Cayetano (P) requested clarification on the advocacy for loss and damage prior to climate change adaptation. She asked why the country, which accounted for less than 1% of greenhouse gas emissions, continued to feel the effects of climate change more than developed or industrialized nations, which are responsible for greenhouse gas emissions and should be required to pay for damages. In relation to the concept of climate change adaptation for the preservation of a country, she inquired as to what legislators and citizens could do to ensure that those responsible for damages caused by climate change compensate the country for its losses.

Senator Legarda responded that the Philippines ratified the Paris Agreement in order to gain access to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) provided by industrialized nations. She noted that under the agreement, the industrialized nations responsible for the climate crisis will contribute US\$100 billion. She stated that the process of accessing the GCF was a complicated process, but that when she was a member of the GCF board a few years ago, PAGASA received a grant of US\$10 million from the fund. She stated that 209 projects totaling US\$42.4 billion were approved, of which US\$11.3 billion were financed by GCF via grants and equity investments, among others. She stated that PAGASA was able to secure a grant for a multi-hazard impact-based forecasting and early warning system, but that the Philippines was merely one of the many other recipients.

Senator Legarda opined that the Philippines should not rely solely on grants like the GCF, as it will not alter the situation and shear line adaptation. She expressed hope that a national strategy could be developed to address the climate emergency, including the mobilization of all government agencies and the utilization of all department budgets under the GAA. As an illustration, she stated that, as if the country were in an emergency room, the DENR must prioritize the management of protected areas, while the DepEd must prioritize environmental education awareness. She suggested that the 1,600 LGUs and 42,000 barangays examine the use of early warning systems, the evacuation of people, and the use of mapping to avoid constructing DepEd schools or evacuation centers in areas prone to landslide. She emphasized that all other departments, including the DA and DOTr, must do everything possible to help manage the effects of the climate change crisis.

Senator Cayetano (P) thanked Senator Legarda for highlighting the importance of the "Whole-of-Nation Approach" to the issue of climate change. Adverting to the Sustainable Development Goals, Senator Cayetano (P) stated that unless government agencies consider the bigger picture in every project they undertake, they will always fall short of their objectives and waste funds. She emphasized that the SDG must serve as the framework for government plans, particularly in the areas of health and education.

Rather than putting their energy to military training, Senator Cayetano (P) opined that the youth should be made to understand the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals so they, especially those who live in remote villages, would be inclined to care for nature. She believed that while national security was imperative, sustainable agriculture, food security, clean water, and improved air quality should also be prioritized.

Saying that the SDG should be taken seriously because climate change had brought economic and non-economic consequences which were beyond adaptation or mitigation, Senator Legarda broached the bad weather induced by the shear line in Visayas and Mindanao which brought the death toll at 52, and affected more than 10,100 farmers; P315 million damage to agricultural sector; and P262 million damage to infrastructure. She admitted that it was for these reasons she indicated in the overarching provisions that the GAA must be aligned with the SDG because climate relates to all government agencies, not only the DENR or the Climate Change Commission.

She believed that the climate crisis could be prevented if government agencies were given the budget in accordance with the SDGs. She then suggested indicating the aspects of the climate crisis to every SDG, taking into consideration all existing laws or proposed legislation and programs of the government which already addressed a specific SDG but which was not complied with due to the climate crisis, and in case a legislation, policy or funding was lacking, it would be addressed in order to form a matrix of the SDG *vis-a-vis* climate crisis, policy/legislation, and budgeting.

Agreeing thereto, Senator Cayetano (P) proposed the review of the laws and bills that were still pending to ensure that they were aligned, as some were not really sustainable like the e-cigarettes and vapes which were promoted as an alternative to smoking although there was no sufficient evidence to the claim that it was the proper alternative. She then cautioned the Body in realigning funds with the intent to save lives but only proved unnecessary and inefficiently utilized.

At this juncture, Senate President Zubiri relinquished the Chair to Senator Ejercito.

For her part, Senator Cayetano (P) committed to look at every bill through the lens of sustainability to ensure that its purpose would be to achieve the SDG. By way of example, she disclosed that some energy efficient vehicles did not meet the required process in securing a franchise; thus, adding to heavy traffic which could have been avoided if people only worked together to pass a sustainable law.

Senator Legarda noted that in seven years or by 2030, the SDG would expire but the country has not even reached the target. Thereupon, she suggested keeping a restorative attitude because “sustaining” only keeps things as it was while “restoring” moves one step further— that is, making something better than how it was.

Senator Legarda then articulated that she would draft a resolution discussing how every SDG had been seemingly unattainable due to the climate crisis, and how the Philippines responded by legislation and budgetary allocation.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR TOLENTINO

At the outset, Senator Tolentino asked if Senator Legarda was aware of the exact budget committed to climate change initiatives in the Philippines. Senator Legarda replied that the DBM only tagged P432 billion or 9% out of the P5-trillion budget which was very minimal as against the whole-of-nation initiative, the reason why she was recommending the passage of the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System (PENCAS) bill to reflect the impact of climate change to natural environment. Noting that the United Nations has been using natural resource accounting for many years, and that NEDA likewise started using a similar system, she hoped that the PENCAS would be passed into law to ensure that the budget allocation was geared towards nature-based solutions.

On the report that President Marcos has committed that the Philippine’s climate change budget would be increased, Senator Legarda stated that she was not privy to the statement of the President. She then pondered if the “climate change budget” was for adaptation, to be spread out in various government agencies, or it would just be for the Climate Change Commission.

For her part, she recommended a Whole-of-Nation approach and inclusivity to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as loss and damage for all government agencies to initiate savings, increase the level of adaptation, and minimize loss of lives and livelihood.

Regarding the statement that President Marcos has issued an executive order or circular exempting from taxes all electric vehicles coming abroad, to promote net zero carbon emission or



carbon neutrality in the country, Senator Legarda remarked that aside from industrial sources, transport or mobile sources has truly contributed to air pollution; nevertheless, she hoped that the e-vehicles would run on renewable energy and not on fossil fuels.

Noting the private sector's role in the Whole-of-Nation approach, Senator Tolentino stated that the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was now replaced by Environmental Social Governance (ESG). To cite an instance, he mentioned that according to PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), coming from the pandemic, governments were more trusted than the business sector because the former provided the vaccines that enabled most people to return to their jobs.


Asked how much the ESG budget was, and how much was allocated by the Top 100 companies who committed to climate change initiatives, Senator Legarda stated that since the ESG was in place for some time, and that the Securities and Exchange Commission had already issued the guidelines through Memorandum No. 4 in 2019, she surmised that there was an ESG budget provided for the capacity building of the private sector. She mentioned that she delivered a keynote speech on ESG with the SEC and the participants of the Capability Building on Innovative Leadership for Legislative Staff (CBILLS) program on building the capacity of the private sector.

Senator Tolentino noted that 60% to 69% of Asia-Pacific chief executive officers have committed to have either net zero or carbon-neutral targets, which was well above their global peers by 9% to 13%. However, he pointed out that in the list published by PwC, the Philippines was not among the Asia-Pacific countries that outperformed their global peers in reducing carbon intensity in 2021. He enumerated the countries heading the list as follows: Australia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam. On that note, he emphasized the need for collaborative actions between government, business, and investors, in order to achieve a net zero or carbon-neutral target.

He believed that the decarbonization journey a matter he was totally supportive of; and for which he lauded Senator Legarda for bringing the matter to the Body's attention should not just be a stronghold or turf of the national government, but of the business community as well. He then assumed that it was high time for the Body to encourage the private sector, provide initiatives, and place a cap in that regard. He opined that if the ideal target for a good defense budget was 4% of the total national budget, there should also be an ideal budget for ESG climate change initiatives for corporations.

For her part, Senator Legarda recommended that the private sector adopt a strategy akin to the whole-of-government approach relative to the crafting of the General Appropriations Act (GAA)—that aside from the CSR or the ESG, it should also consider sustainability issues in every course of action that they would take. Having said that, she mentioned that big and small companies, including micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), as well as top corporations have, along with government leaders, initiated climate action involving both mitigation and adaptation strategies.

She recalled that for many years, she had worked with the SM Group; and that about 10 years ago, she introduced Mr. Hans Sy to Margareta Wahlstrom, head of the disaster risk reduction branch of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, formerly known as the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR). She also informed the Body that the UNISDR has a private sector council that inspired Mr. Sy to create a similar private sector alliance in the country. She then mentioned that Secretary Loyzaga of the DENR, who was with the Manilla Observatory at that time, was the Philippine council's adviser, composed of companies such as SM, Ayala, and even small companies. She opined that due to their use of capital and human resources, the private companies could even be better than the government insofar as environmental sustainability was concerned.



At this point, she proposed to the Body not to put a cap on how much the companies should allocate for ESG, but rather consider the effects of every private venture on the environment, as well as on the well-being of the Filipinos. She surmised that the reports of the private companies to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) as regards their sustainability actions, in compliance with the 2019 guidelines issued by the Commission, would provide the sum total of the private sector's ESG requirements.

Senator Tolentino agreed that there should be no cap with regard to ESG allocation of companies. However, he opined that the Body should encourage the increase in the allotment, as his research pointed to an ESG revolution that was currently happening; adding that societal and business needs would soon converge, which would augur well for climate change initiatives.

Finally, he thanked Senator Legarda for raising the issue, which he deemed very timely considering President Marco's Switzerland trip and the electric car incentive. He then reiterated the ESG buzzword—E for the environment; S for the social; and G for governance—and subsequently expressed hope that with its granular increase to a higher level, the gaps within government initiatives would surely be filled through private sector actions.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Preliminarily, Senator Hontiveros informed her fellow senators of a warning raised by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that by 2030, the world would be experiencing food shortage. Noting that the country was experiencing problems of high prices and supply shortage of various food items which included not only vegetables but fish and meat products as well, she inquired as to the steps being taken by the government, the private sector, and the civil society to address the aforementioned concerns.

In response, Senator Legarda acknowledged that many Filipinos have been experiencing hunger, which she deemed ironic because the country is rich in natural resources. She stated that given the richness of the country's land and seas, there should not be a need to import food items as Filipinos could just grow their own food, and even export them at the same time.

To illustrate her point, she stated that although the Philippines had imported salt in the last few months, the small local government unit of Belison in her province of Antique was known to produce salt of high quality, and the province itself had been producing a large volume of salt. She also mentioned that during the pandemic, considering that 15 out of the 18 LGUs in Antique are coastal towns, she initiated salt-making projects through the MSMEs via the Zoom application. She also said that through her effort via DOLE's Kabuhayan Program, the salt industry was revived. In this connection, Senator Hontiveros mentioned the province of Pangasinan while Senator Legarda added the Ilocos Region and Alburquerque, Bohol as places known for salt production.

Senator Legarda then acknowledged the earlier point of Senator Hontiveros, that food shortage was an associated issue of climate crisis. She also mentioned coral bleaching to be an effect of rising temperature affecting surface waters. On that note, she surmised that once fishes living in corals have been affected, fisherfolk income would likewise suffer; affecting the food supply of Filipinos as a result.

On the other hand, she stated that marine resources such as tuna are naturally abundant in Northern Antique; adding that these only need to be stored in blast freezers, processed, and bottled, which are value-added procedures that had to be taught to the people. Relative thereto, she informed the Body of the need to conduct resource mapping activities per region of the country; and to have appropriate processing facilities therein. She then reiterated that due to the richness of natural resources in the country, no family would go hungry, as they could even export their

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excess food items to adjacent areas, as Antique had been exporting its food products to neighboring areas like Boracay Island, in Aklan. She added that the government should provide equipment and capital assistance to fisherfolk and farmers. Having said that, she deemed it important that the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) had been constructing community fish landing, giving out fiber glass fishing boats as well as handing out P1,000 cash assistance to individuals and communities through her efforts when she was a congresswoman in order to help the fishing industry.

On the pending legislative measures as regards food security, Senator Legarda mentioned the following bills: 1) the Food Forest Gardening Act; 2) the Zero Food Waste; 3) the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System (PENCAS); as well as 4) the single-use plastics regulation. She mentioned that although the PENCAS has yet to be enacted, the National Economic and Development Authority was already utilizing the United Nations initiative.

As regards single-use plastics, Senator Legarda said that an exhibit had been launched in the corridors of the Senate showing how single-use plastics affect marine life, and the seas in general. She added that exhibit was launched in coordination with the following organizations: 1) Oceana; 2) Mother Earth Foundation; 3) Ecowaste Coalition; 4) Greenpeace; and 5) the Climate Change Commission (CCC).

Senator Hontiveros averred that large marine animals choke from ingestion of plastic materials, as she cited the possible harm of micro plastics in seafood items for consumption. She also stressed the importance of proper facemask disposal—placing particular importance on the plastic loops of the masks that might possibly choke marine animals, and affect country's marine ecosystem as well.

Senator Legarda concurred with Senator Hontiveros' observations. She then informed the Body that she was drafting a bill on greening the supply chain, and expressed hope that Senator Hontiveros would coauthor the measure. In that regard, she cited the example of the Estrada couple, Andy and Ace from the non-government organization Rural Rising, who would conduct rescue buys during the pandemic, in areas such as Sta. Catalina in Ilocos Sur and provinces in the Cordillera region. She said that the couple, after obtaining preorders from the Facebook application, would buy excess produce from the aforesaid areas, and would subsequently bring them to Manila. She added that she herself was inspired by their example that she bought one ton of cauliflower from Rural Rising, and distributed the same to Barangay Tatalon in Quezon City; benefiting informal settlers therein, particularly a group of mothers who called themselves Nanay Power. She stated that rescue buys have helped the farmers, and provided food assistance badly needed at the height of the pandemic.

On that note, she mentioned that she would introduce the Estrada couple to the Senate, and would bring vegetables for the enjoyment of the employees, similar to the "box all you can," an earlier effort she made in her own office—wherein instead of holding a Christmas party, she brought her staff to the Rural Rising headquarters in UP Diliman and they filled their boxes with fresh produce from the provinces. She said that for the upcoming activity, it would already be "*bayong* all you can."

Senator Hontiveros thanked Senator Legarda for her advocacy, and looked forward to the upcoming event. She hoped that the warnings issued by the IPCC would be a wake-up call to every sector in the country. On the part of the government, she reiterated her suggestions for the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Industry as regards agricultural mapping and food processing.

At this juncture, Senator Ejercito relinquished the Chair to Senator Villanueva.



Senator Hontiveros reiterated her earlier call for the President to appoint a full-time agriculture secretary. She added that it could also serve as a wake-up call for the private sector, particularly those in the agricultural mapping and food processing industries, as well as the vulnerable sectors of society who are willing and able to work with the government to address the issue.

In response to a question about government, private sector, and civil society initiatives to mitigate climate change, Senator Legarda replied that while she believed in mitigation as a function of adaptation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, implementing it as a way of life was equally important. She stated, for instance, that local governments can utilize early warning systems, such as PAGASA advisories, to alert fisherfolk of weather disturbances. She stated that climate-resilient agriculture can also be achieved by LGUs encouraging their farmers to alter their crop selection and time their field operations, and by teaching their communities water conservation techniques such as water impounding and harvesting.

In addition, she recalled a memorandum or executive order regarding incentives for the use of electric vehicles as part of government initiatives to promote sustainable transportation. She expressed hope that the nation would eventually have a more efficient mass transportation system as a result of the projects like the ongoing construction of the subway system which aims to reduce traffic congestion.

Concerning energy efficient technologies, Senator Legarda expressed optimism that with the implementation of the 2008 law on the utilization of Renewable Energy (RE) resources, the country's energy portfolio will expand, as RE is a natural resource that is less expensive than fossil fuel.

On the management and restoration of natural resources, Senator Legarda stated that the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) should know how to manage the Philippines' 114 protected areas and wetlands, as they are sustainable food sources. She believed that there was no reason for any Filipino family to go hungry due to the abundance of agriculture and marine resources in the country. She said that she was speaking from experience because the produce she grew in her backyard helped to feed more than 25 families during the pandemic lockdown. She emphasized the significance of sustainable gardening and expressed hope that Senator Tulfo could persuade the 25 million subscribers to his YouTube channel, which is a quarter of the country's population, to grow their own food as well.

Asked how the government's climate action plan would address the needs of the most vulnerable sectors of society, Senator Legarda responded that pursuant to the Climate Change Act of 2009, which created the Commission on Climate Change, local government units are mandated to formulate their own Local Climate Change Action Plan (LCCAP) to address their specific climate change concerns. She stated that 80%, or roughly 1,600 LGUs, have already complied with the LCCAP.

Senator Legarda stated that the People's Survival Fund (PSF), an amendment to the Climate Change Act, was another climate change measure, but that it has not been properly implemented since the management of the fund was transferred to the Department of Finance. She believed that either the PSF should be returned to the Climate Change Commission (CCC) or Congress should urge the DOF to use the funds, as the law stipulates that P1 billion must be allocated for local governments' climate change projects as long as they apply for it. However, she lamented that acceptance of such proposals could take months or even years.

Senator Hontiveros said that she would support Senator Legarda if the senators would legislate the transfer of the funds to the CCC because the High Ambition Coalition (HAC) embodies the global perspective on the response to global warming, and the funds would be better

managed by the commission. Senator Legarda stated that she would look into potential stumbling blocks to the proper utilization of the PSF, as the funds must be used to assist the local governments.

Senator Hontiveros expressed hope that the basic sectors in the 80% of LGUs that have complied with the LCCAP were actually involved in the implementation of the action plans, and that the remaining 20% that have not formulated their LCCAP should include such sectors in their program, as they are considered to be frontliners in the climate response efforts.

Senator Legarda then requested Senator Hontiveros to remind the LGUs in Lambunao, Iloilo to submit their LCCAP.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR TULFO

In associating himself with the privilege speech of Senator Legarda, Senator Tulfo made the following manifestation:

If anyone can testify to the effects of climate change, it is us Filipinos. Last year, when Typhoon Karding hit the Philippines, it gave new meaning to rapid intensification when it blew up from a tropical storm with 50 miles per hour winds to a Category 5 monster with 155 miles per hour the next day. Signal No. 5 *po. Noong kabataan ko*, Signal No. 3, *delubyo na iyon. At kung sasabihin mo na may Signal No. 5, malamang end of the world na iyon.*

Every year, we are bearing the brunt of climate change. It is clear that climate change increases the upper limit on typhoon strength and rain rate and that it also raises the average sea level and storm surge. Every year, the damage is exponentially increased by the wind speed. Storm surges, landslides, and floods have claimed lives, destroyed livelihood, halted business operations, and damaged utility infrastructures.

Unfortunately, *parang nasanay na lang tayo na taon-taon ay nasasalanta tayo ng bagyo, at libo-libong buhay ang naapektuhan at bilyon ang halaga ng nawawala sa kagamitan at negosyo nating lahat.* We should not get used to this. We should not rely on our people's resilience. Instead, we have to enact measures that could reverse or temper climate change.

I am in support of all climate change policies that could recover our environment for our future generation. As chairman of the Committee on Energy, it is my priority to provide policies that would launch the use of sustainable sources of energy or Clean Energy. I filed a Zero Food Waste Bill that would address food waste that contributes to climate change since food left in landfills release methane, a powerful greenhouse gas 25 times stronger than carbon dioxide. Methane gas lingers for 12 years and traps heat from the sun. Our irresponsible use of food products has an adverse impact on the physical land itself. Moreover, it harms the biodiversity of the environment's ecosystem.

I am also looking into filing a bill that will ban the use of tarpaulin during elections because the tarps take about 1,000 years to decompose. *Patay na po tayo lahat, nandiyan pa ang tarpaulin na may mukha natin.* The tarpaulins end up in landfills and sometimes in bodies of water too, causing pollution and flood.

We have to continue working on more laws that would reverse the damage that we have done. Again, I commend the effort of MFS, "My Favorite Senator," Sen. Loren Legarda.

And by the way, *iyon pong suggestion kanina ng lady senator, noted po iyon. Ise-share ko po yon sa aking mga subscribers, iyon pong lahat ng kaniyang programa sa climate change at food security.* I will always be at your service. Just let me know and I will be there.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR LEGARDA

Senator Legarda reiterated that she would be very grateful if Senator Tulfo could persuade his 25 million Youtube followers to follow proper waste segregation practices in accordance with

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RA 9003 (Ecological Solid Waste Management Act), as it would be of great benefit to the environment and to the general public.

She stated that if the senators took the time to visit the coastal areas, they would be able to see the plight of the informal settlers due to the amount of unsegregated plastic trash that has been dumped into the oceans.

At this juncture, Senator Villanueva relinquished the Chair to Senator Ejercito.

REMARKS OF THE CHAIR

Senator Ejercito commended Senate President Pro Tempore Legarda for consistently fighting and advocating for environmental protection issues. He emphasized the urgency of addressing the issue of global warming and climate change, as it represents a clear and present danger.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva associated himself with Senator Legarda's privilege speech. He stated that the recent annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland highlighted the fact that 3.6 million people worldwide are exposed and vulnerable to the effects of climate change. He stated that no nation or economy is immune to the effects of the climate crisis.

He stated that ever since he joined the Senate, Senator Legarda has been a consistent and contagious influence on him. He stated that when Senator Legarda asked him to accompany her at the Biennale, he did not mind if it would take him a day to travel from Milan, Italy to Venice and back.

He stated that in the Eighteenth Congress, he introduced a bill requiring companies to have a clear plan for the disposal and recycling of beverage containers. He stated that with the assistance of Senator Villar, the bill was eventually integrated into the Extended Producers Responsibility Act, or Republic Act. No. 11898. He further stated that the Nineteenth Congress would continue to advocate for the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) Act, with the Department of Finance throwing its full support behind it, as it will be the Freedom of Information Act for the extractive industries. He underscored that Senator Legarda was also very influential in his pushing for her advocacies, including the Single Use Plastics Regulation and Management Act, or Senate Bill No. 246, that he coauthored.

He then thanked Senator Legarda for the privilege speech and expressed his full support to her advocacy in ensuring that the country would be a better Philippines.

Senator Legarda responded by thanking Senator Villanueva for his advocacy, vigor, and passion. She also thanked all the Members for their support, not for her but for the entire Filipino people and future generations.

REFERRAL OF SPEECH TO COMMITTEE

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair referred the privilege speech of Senator Legarda and the interpellations thereon to the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

In accordance with Section 10 of Republic Act No. 11899, or the Second Congressional Commission on Education, and per instruction of Senator Gatchalian, chairperson of said commis-

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sion, Senator Villanueva informed the Body that the technical secretariat has been organized, with Dr. Karol Mark Yee serving as its executive director, and that EDCOM II would convene formally.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUEST

At this juncture, Senator Villanueva acknowledged the presence in the gallery of Dr. Karol Mark Yee.

The Chair welcomed the guest to the Senate.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 5:44 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:46 p.m., the session was resumed.

SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 17 on Senate Bill No. 1604 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 17 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1604

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 1604 (Committee Report No. 17), entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN ACADEMIC RECOVERY AND ACCESSIBLE LEARNING (ARAL) PROGRAM, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the *Rules of the Senate*, with the permission of the Body, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, only the title of the bill was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the *Records of the Senate*.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Gatchalian for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GATCHALIAN

In sponsoring Senate Bill No. 1604, or the "Act Establishing An Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and For Other Purposes," Senator Gatchalian delivered the following speech:

As we usher into the new year, more than two-thirds of our population have received at least two doses of COVID-19 vaccines. Cases have stayed at manageable levels since the last major surge in January. Lockdowns have become a thing of the past, and the new normal has taken hold.

Now that we have learned to live with COVID-19, we are at a stage where we can optimistically say that the worst of this pandemic is finally behind us, at least from the public health perspective.



Viewed from an economic lens, however, the road to recovery from the consequences of the pandemic is just beginning.

Data from UNESCO Data Institute show that basic education schools in the country were closed for about 375 school days between the first quarter of 2019 to 2020 school year up until the 2021 to 2022 school year. This is equivalent to 1.8 school years, the longest period of COVID-19 school closure in the entire world.

As a result of such protracted closures, the World Bank estimated that there could be a decrease of 1.4 to 1.7 years in Learning Adjusted Years of Schooling (LAYS) due to the pandemic. LAYS is an index combining quantity and quality of learning.

From 7.5 years pre-pandemic, LAYS could fall between 5.8 to 6.1 years, translating to learning losses of about 19% to 23% in terms of LAYS. Learning loss refers to “any loss of knowledge or skills or deceleration of, or interruption of academic progress, most commonly due to extended gaps or discontinuities in a student’s education.”

Another metric that quantifies learning loss is Learning Poverty. These recent estimates of the World Bank, UNICEF, and UNESCO show that 0.4 percentage point increase in learning poverty from an already high rate of 90.5% in July of 2021 to 90.9% in June of 2022.

Using actual enrolment figures for school year 2021 to 2022, this translates to 1.7 million out of the 1.87 million Grade 5 learners in the country who cannot read and understand a simple story.

Unfortunately, the estimates from international organizations are backed up by actual assessments data collected by the Department of Education with the support of the United States Agency for International Development or USAID.

The Comprehensive Rapid Literary Assessment, or CRLA, measures the grade readiness or non-readiness of early grade learners. For Grade 1 learners, the assessment covers their proficiency in applicable mother tongue-based multilingual education subject, such as Tagalog or Bicolano. The Grade 2 learners are assessed on their Filipino language skills, while Grade 3 learners are assessed on their English skills.

According to the CRLA, conducted at the beginning of 2021 to 2022 school year in the National Capital Region, more than 1/3 of the 358,922 Grade 1 to Grade 3 learners assessed do not have the basic set of literacy competencies to be considered ready for the grade levels they are in.

The data from the CRLA conducted in the Bicol region during the same period are even more alarming. Approximately 75% of the 405,161 Grade 1 to Grade 3 learners assessed in the Bicol Region do not have the basic set of literacy competencies to be considered ready for the grade levels they are in. That is three out of every four learners assessed.

Significantly, the National Economic and Development Authority further estimates that school closures in the Philippines will cost about P10.1 trillion in wage and productivity losses over the next 40 years. This is about 42% of the country’s projected nominal GDP for 2022 - an alarming large figure.

The long-term economic losses projected by NEDA are the results of learning losses suffered during the pandemic. Left unattended, the severe economic consequences of learning loss resulting from the pandemic will be borne by our current basic education learners and the country as a whole for the next four decades.

This is not a situation we can let stand.

In this context, I am sponsoring the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning, or ARAL Program Act. This legislation seeks to establish a free and effective national intervention program to provide learners who experienced pandemic-driven learning losses with supplemental lessons to close learning gaps and enable them to catch up to the standards required in their respective grade levels.

Once passed into law, the ARAL Program Act will institutionalize a tutorial-based system for learning loss recovery in our education system. This program will be applied not only to



COVID-19 related learning losses, but also to other instances of loss of knowledge and skills due to gaps or discontinuities in a learner's education, whether today or in the future.

Under the ARAL Program Act, no learner will be left behind.

This law would require the Department of Education to consolidate, retool, and expand its existing pandemic-related learning recovery interventions into an institutionalized national learning intervention program for students enrolled in public and private basic education institutions.

The ARAL Program shall cover the essential learning competencies under the K-12 basic education curriculum with an emphasis on fundamental reading and numeracy skills. Language and mathematics will be covered for Grades 1 to 10, while science will also be covered from Grades 3 to 10.

Specifically, the ARAL Program will provide for the following key interventions:

- Well-systemized tutorial sessions which demonstrate higher achievement gains;
- Well-designed intervention plans and learning losses following a learner-centered approach that is supportive and emphatic of the learner's needs, motivation and behavior;
- Effective and accessible delivery modes for tutors and learners;
- Careful determination and assessment of learners;
- Involvement of curriculum and reading specialists and other stakeholders;
- Well-chosen and trained tutors and learning facilitators; and
- Adequate development and provision of nutritional, social, emotional, and mental health programs to support and ensure the holistic wellbeing of learners, build resilience against adversity and equip them with skills and confidence to seek help for early intervention during their educational journey.

Learners in need of enrollment in the ARAL program due to pandemic-related schooling stoppages will be identified by the Department of Education through its Learner Information System, which it is also mandated to update. Meanwhile, learners who have not reached the minimum proficiency levels in core subjects shall also be enrolled in the program based on assessment results.

The heart and soul of the ARAL program is the transfer of knowledge from qualified tutors to recovering learners. As such, recovering learners will engage in specialized hands-on tutorial sessions with an army of teachers, para-teachers, and tertiary level students who are at or above 75 percentiles of their respective school cohorts in the subject they will be teaching, and receive positive feedback on a mock tutorial session assessment administered by DepEd.

To ensure that the ARAL program tutorials will result in the highest possible improvement of learning outcomes for recovering learners, tutors will be required to undergo capacity building training, focusing on effective pedagogies, interpersonal skills, social-emotional learning, cultural competencies, and other topics that will empower them to help recovering learners shore up their essential learning competencies.

Essentially, the ARAL program will fully harness the great potential of our country's professional educators and educators in training to guide recovering learners along the path to academic achievement and success in later life.

Teachers and para-teachers will be compensated accordingly from public funds. Tutorial services provided by pre-service teachers under this Act shall also be considered relevant teaching experience when applying for plantilla positions with DepEd schools. Meanwhile, tertiary level students will receive literacy training service credits under the National Service Training Program (NSTP).

Another important thrust of the ARAL program is to foster more equitable access to online learning materials for learners and tutors.

In line with this, public telecommunication entities will be required to provide free access to all DepEd-exclusively hosted learning management system applications, including web-based

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applications, online educational platforms, digital libraries, and other online knowledge hubs exclusively hosted by DepEd.

Significantly, no data charges will be incurred by learners and tutors while using applications under the bill. The ARAL Program Act also mandates the DepEd to provide learners and tutors with subsidized data plans for the use of these applications.

The bill also reiterates the provision of the Children's Television Act of 1997, which requires broadcasting networks to air supplemental tutorial video materials within the regular programming schedule. Compliance with this provision shall be a requirement for the renewal of their respective franchises.

This legislation also requires the DepEd to involve local government units, as well as parents and guardians of learners in the process of learning recovery.

The ARAL Program Act has benefited from the active collaboration of several public and private stakeholders during the public hearing, and four Technical Working Group meetings of the Committee on Basic Education. As Chair of the committee, I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their indispensable contributions.

From the public sector: the DepEd, NCCT, CHEd, TESDA, DBM, DILG, NTC, DITC, DOF, NEDA, and PIDS. From the private sector: PNU, PEMEA, UNICEF, ULAP, Globe, DITO, and Smart.

I have spoken at length in the past about the education crisis our country is currently facing. The crisis was already existing well before pandemic; COVID-19 has only made things worst.

In this context, the ARAL Program Act is an essential piece of education reform legislation designed to help our learners get back on track. Based on NEDA's projection, this legislation is also critical in avoiding more than P10 trillion worth of economic losses over the next four decades.

Under the ARAL Program Act, learning recovery and economic recovery will be achieved together, leading us towards a brighter and more prosperous future for the Filipino youth and our nation as a whole.

COSPONSOR

Upon his request, Senator Villanueva was made cosponsor of Senate Bill No. 1604.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

In cosponsoring Senate Bill No. 1604 under Committee Report No. 17, Senator Villanueva delivered the following speech:

It is this Representation's honor and privilege to coauthor and cosponsor this very important piece of legislation. The Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning Program or the ARAL Program is a timely and essential intervention.

We are faced with, perhaps, one of the more difficult challenges in the education sector as we give our best shot to address and recover the learning losses incurred by our learners.

While various international assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) have shown that there is a lot more work that needs to be done, the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated our education situation.

We cannot overemphasize the necessity of providing support to all our learners, particularly in education. The Philippines' 2020 Human Capital Index, which the World Bank uses as a measure to determine the amount of human capital that a child born today can expect to attain by age 18, is at .52 (highest at 1.00). In other words, a Filipino child born in 2020 can expect to be 52% as productive when he/she grows up.

One of the factors that affects the Human Capital Index is the "learning-adjusted years of school"—a measure of the actual number of years students learns in school—which is only at 7.5 years, whereas, Filipino children are expected to be in school for 12 years.



The National Economic and Development Authority projected in 2021 that the total cost of the pandemic is around P41.4 trillion over the next 40 years. Out of this figure, P11 trillion represents the reduction in future wages and productivity as a result of the suspension of face-to-face classes in school year 2020 to 2021, and lost wages of parents who forego or reduce work hours to accompany children in online classes. These were 2021 estimates and based on the hearing conducted by the good sponsor, Sen. Win Gatchalian, we found that the total long-term economic losses now stands at a whopping P74 trillion—of this figure, P36.1 trillion or 49% accounts for future year investments and returns; P21.6 trillion or 29% for two years of school closures; P8.6 trillion or 12% for health; P4.8 trillion or 6% for consumption and; P2.8 trillion or 4% for 2020 investments and its returns. Further compounding these projections is the Asian Development Bank's projection that every year of lost schooling leads to a 10% permanent decrease in future wages.

Thus, the problems we face today is not merely a short-term concern, but one that extends for at least a generation. It is of utmost importance that we put in place policies that pertain to addressing the learning losses we incurred before and during the pandemic. This is one of the reasons why over the years, this Representation, together with our esteemed colleague, the chairperson of the Committee on Basic Education, Sen. Win Gatchalian, worked tirelessly in pushing for various landmark legislations with the goal of improving the education sector, including the Philippine Qualifications Framework Act (Republic Act No. 10968), the Excellence in Teacher Education Act (RA 11713), and the Second Congressional Commission on Education Act (RA 11899), among others.

So, again, we thank our good sponsor for all his hard work on this bill together with our esteemed colleagues, Senator Angara, Senator Hontiveros, Senator Pimentel, Sen. Robinhood C. Padilla, who are all supporters and champion of education in this august Chamber.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR ESTRADA

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the following cosponsorship speech of Senator Estrada on Senate Bill No. 1604 under Committee Report No. 17 was inserted into the *Record of the Senate*:

As an advocate of quality education and brighter future for the Filipino children, this Representation, with the permission of the sponsor, would like to have the honor to be a coauthor and cosponsor of Senate Bill No. 1604 under Committee Report No. 17, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education; Ways and Means; and Finance, entitled "An Act Establishing an Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes," and authored and sponsored by Sen. Win Gatchalian, our chairperson who is a steadfast champion of quality and inclusive education for all. This piece of legislation will be beneficial to our children, especially those who were marginalized because of the recent events in our country.

We have all seen how our children suffered from the interruption in education brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. For one, many students were not able to enroll during the height of the pandemic in school year 2020-2021 because of health and financial reasons. For those who were able to continue their schooling, the challenges of the new modalities of teaching limited their ability to learn. Truly, it was a difficult time for the students, as well as for the other stakeholders in education, particularly teachers and parents.

Ngunit sa totoo lamang, ang pagbibigay ng kalidad na edukasyon sa ating bansa ay matagal na nating suliranin. Ito ay bunsod ng maraming dahilan at patuloy naman itong sinisikap na tugunan ng ating pamahalaan. Subalit hindi pa din sapat ang mga hakbang na kasalukuyan nating ginagawa.

Various surveys and studies reflect the deplorable state of education in our country:

- According to the World Bank, pre-pandemic learning poverty in the Philippines was 90.5%. This translates to nine (9) out of every ten (10) Filipino learners aged 10 who are unable to read and understand simple text.

- In 2021, our ranking in the UNESCO global education monitoring report declined from 52nd in 2020 to 55th.
- Our ranking in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) was rated last in reading, and second to last in science and mathematics among 79 countries.
- In the fourth-grade assessment of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 2019, the country placed last among 58 countries in both mathematics and science.
- In the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics in 2019, the country landed in the bottom half of the six (6) countries in reading, mathematics, and writing literacy.

These figures, however disheartening, serve as a challenge to our legislators to craft a piece of legislation that will respond to our limitations by harnessing resources outside the formal educational system.

The ARAL Program Act is one innovative approach to address the learning gaps being experienced by our students. Through the help of Para-teachers and qualified college students, among others, we will be able to help them have better learning and comprehension of essential learning competencies in language, mathematics, and science.

Sa pamamagitan ng pagtutulongan ng iba't ibang miyembro ng ating lipunan bilang tutors, matutulungan natin ang ating mga mag-aaral na kailangan ng karagdagang paggabay habang binibigyan din natin ng insentibo ang mga nasabing tutors. Ito ang matatawag nating "win-win solution" dahil ang lahat ng nakikilahok sa ARAL Program ay makikinabang tungo sa kanilang pag-unlad.

I am in full support for the swift passage of the ARAL Program Act and I would like to congratulate our chairperson, Senator Gatchalian, for a commendable endeavor.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR PADILLA

In cosponsoring Senate Bill No. 1604 under Committee Report No. 17, Senator Padilla delivered the following speech:

Audhu billah himinas shaytanir rajim. Bismillahir Rahman-ir Rahim.

Sa ating mga kasamahan sa bulwagang ito, nais ko pong ipahatid ang aking buong suporta at tiwala sa Senate Bill No. 1604, o ang "Aral Program Act".

Hindi po natin maikakaila na isa ang edukasyon sa mga sektor na lubhang pinadapa ng pandemya sa nakalipas na halos tailong taon. Marami na ring mga pag-aaral ng mga eksperto patungkol sa hindi maiiwasang mga negatibong epekto ng naganap na lockdown at limitasyon sa pisikal na interaksyon sa ating mga mag-aaral. Kasama na rin po dito ang mental.

Kung kaya naman ang inyong lingkod ay nagagalak sa inisyatiba ng ating minamahal at hinahangaang kasamahan—ang atin pong Einstein ng Senado, Sen. Win Gatchalian—sa kanya pong pagsisikap na magsulong ng mga makabuluhang panukala upang iangat ang antas ng edukasyon para sa ating mga kabataan lalo na po sa karunungan magbasa, magsulat, at magbilang para sa kindergarten, at sa mga aralin po ng mga languages kasama na po ang Arabic, Alhamdulillah, Matematika, at Siyensya para naman sa Grades 1-10.

Bilang isang magulang at isang Muslim, batid po ng inyong lingkod ang napakalaking tulong na maihatid ng pagkakaroon ng sistematikong tutorial sessions para sa ating mga mag-aaral na hindi nagkaroon ng pagkakataong makapag-enroll noong 2020-2021 at mga estudyanteng nahuhuli sa lebel ng kahusayan sa ating mga pamantayang pang-edukasyon.

Naniniwala po ang inyong lingkod na ang edukasyon ay karapatan at hindi pribilehiyo. Sa pamamagitan po ng panukalang ito, binibigyan natin ang bawat kabataan na matamasa ang kanilang karapatan, maabot ang kanilang buong potensyal, at maging bahagi ng pag-unlad ng ating lipunan.

Muli po, ipinahahayag ko po sa lupon na ito ang aking nag-uumapaw na suporta sa Senate Bill No. 1604 sa ilalim ng Committee Report No. 17.



COAUTHOR

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Senator Villar (C) was made coauthor of Senate Bill No. 1604.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1604

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

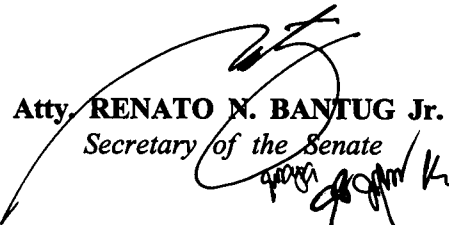
ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair declared the session adjourned until three o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday, January 24, 2023.

It was 6:11 p.m.

I hereby certify to the correctness of the foregoing.

Approved on January 24, 2023


Atty. **RENATO N. BANTUG Jr.**
Secretary of the Senate