



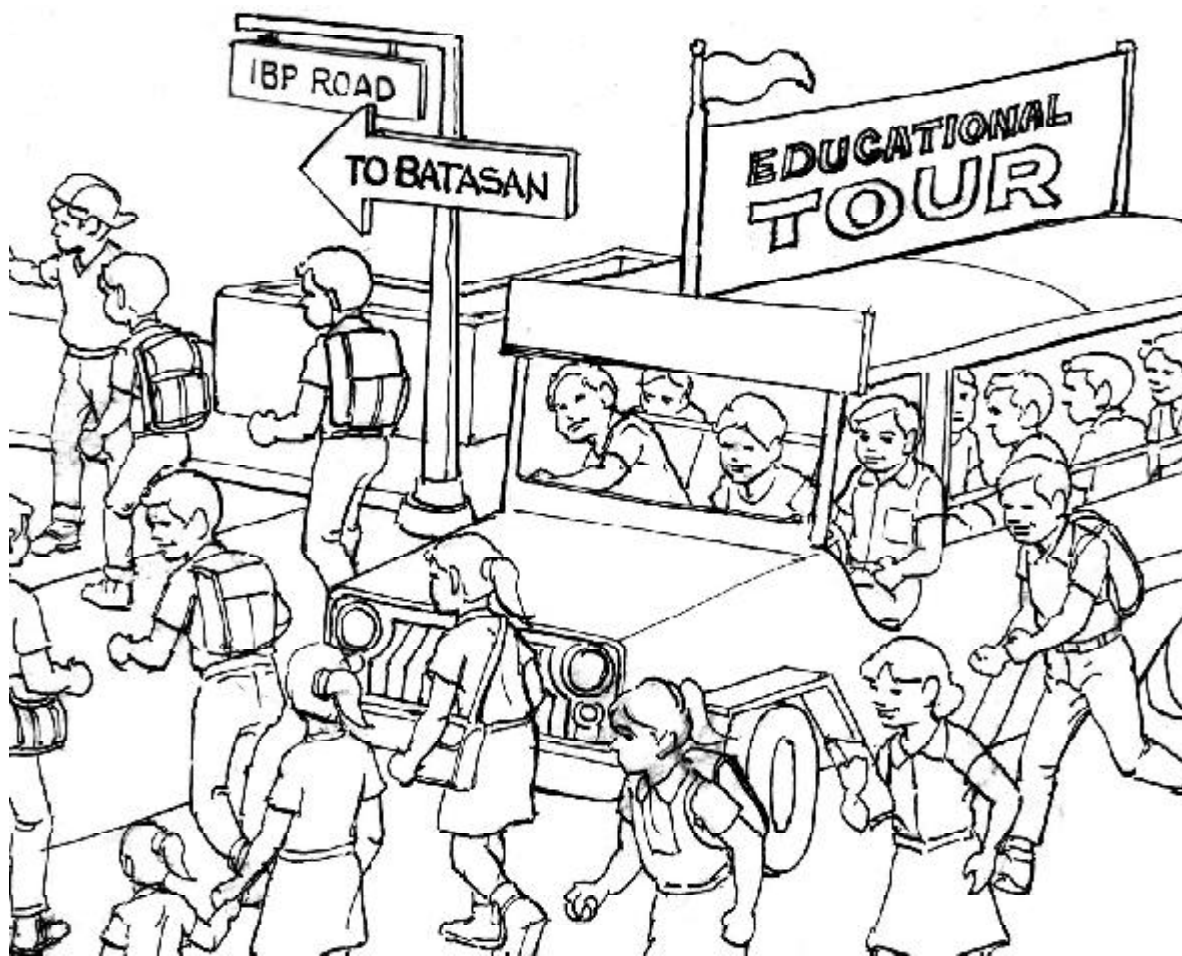
A Student Guide to the House of Representatives

Produced by the **Committee On Rules Secretariat** and
the **Printing and Reproduction Service** of the
Secretariat of the **House of Representatives, Philippines**



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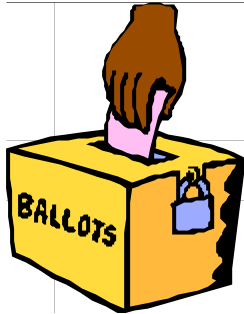
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Produced by the **Committee On Rules Secretariat** (Phone: 931-6538; 932-5213; 951-3002; 931-5001 local 7217)
 and the **Printing and Reproduction Service** (Phone: 931-5906; 931-5001 local 7601)
 of the Secretariat of the **House of Representatives, Philippines**

Your Legislature

At what age are you allowed to register as a voter?



What punishment will you get if you steal?

How fast can you drive your car on a highway?



Can you build a house on a vacant piece of land belonging to the government?

“RULES” OR LAWS DETERMINE THE ANSWERS TO these questions. They are made by lawmakers in the Philippine Legislature that is also called the Congress of the Philippines. Congress has two chambers or houses – the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Lawmakers in the House of Representatives are called Representatives or Congressmen/Congresswomen. They are elected to a three-year term by voters in their respective legislative districts. A Representative can serve for not more than three consecutive terms. There are 212 legislative districts in the country. You live in one of these districts along with about 250,000 other people! There are 212 representatives elected by district. In addition, there are Representatives elected through the party-list system who constitute not more than twenty percent (20%) of the total number of Representatives.

Lawmakers in the Senate are called Senators who are elected at large or nationwide by qualified voters to a six-year term. Senators can serve for not more than two consecutive terms. The Senate has twenty-four (24) Senators.

To qualify for election as a Representative, you have to be a natural-born citizen of the Philippines, a registered voter in the district in which you seek to be elected, a resident therein for not less than one

(1) year before the day of the election and at least twenty-five (25) years of age. To qualify for election as a Senator, you also have to be a natural-born Filipino citizen, a registered voter, a resident of the Philippines for at least two (2) years before the day of the election and at least thirty-five (35) years old.

Our Constitution provides that our Congress convenes for its regular session every year beginning on the 4th Monday of July. A regular session can last until thirty days before the opening of its next regular session in the succeeding year. The President may, however, call special sessions which are usually held between regular sessions to handle emergencies or urgent matters.

1. There are two types of lawmakers in the Congress of the Philippines. What are they called?

2. How many consecutive terms can a Representative serve?

Your House Of Representatives

THE SPEAKER LEADS, MANAGES AND PRESIDES over your House of Representatives.

A majority of all the Members of the House elects the Speaker. Those who voted for the Speaker belong to the Majority while those who voted for the Speaker's opponent belong to the Minority. Representatives belonging to the Majority choose the Majority Floor Leader who automatically chairs the Committee on Rules, and those in the Minority choose the Minority Floor Leader.



The other officers of the House of Representatives are the three (3) Deputy Speakers, the Secretary-General and the Sergeant-at-Arms who are also elected by a majority of all the Representatives.

Committees, or small groups of Representatives, headed by committee chairpersons, study proposed laws called bills, and other measures relating to issues and concerns affecting our lives, our communities and our society. They conduct hearings that give us, citizens, opportunities to express our views on proposed laws or measures. Employees of the House constituting Committee Secretariats provide the committees with legislative support services such as research, report preparation, policy studies and the like.

When you visit the House of Representatives, you may see your Representatives in action during sessions or committee hearings. If you wish to speak with any one of them during sessions or hearings, the Pages who assist and run errands for our representatives in the Session Hall and in our conference rooms, can bring your notes and messages to the Representative you wish to speak with.

You may also write to your Representatives, attend or testify at committee hearings, or ask for information about the legislative process or a specific bill. Your Representatives will appreciate hearing from you because they know how important your views are in making good laws that effectively address the welfare of our people.

3. *Luningning Guerrero, 25 years old, has lived in the 1st District of Ilocos Norte for 10 years but she registered as a voter in the 2nd District of Quezon City. Her father is on his third-term as Representative of the 1st District of Ilocos Norte. Can Luningning run for representative in her district? Why or why not?*

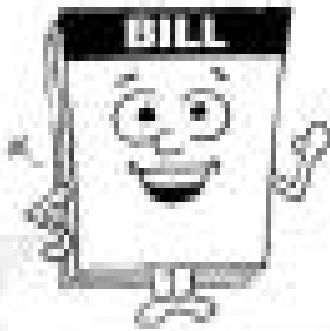
4. *In which district do you live? Who is your Representative?*

5. *Who leads, manages and presides over the House of Representatives?*

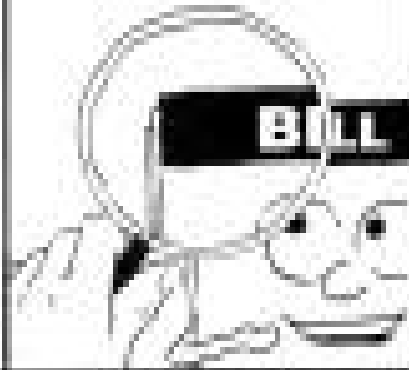
6. *What are committees and what do they do?*

How A Bill Becomes A Law

A bill may be introduced in the House of Representatives or the Senate.*



On 1st Reading, the title and number of the bill is read, and then, it is referred to the appropriate committee.



A committee studies the bill and conducts hearings on it. Thereafter, a committee report is prepared on the bill.**

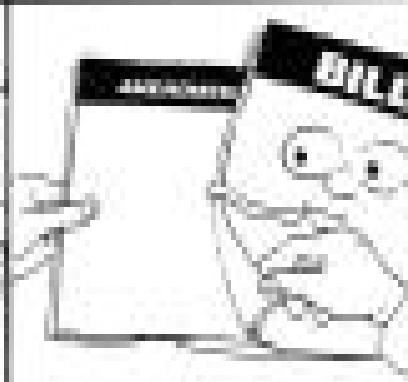


The committee report is read in open session, and together with the bill, it is referred to the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee can place the bill in the 2nd Reading Calendar or in the Calendar of Unassigned Business.

On 2nd Reading, a bill is subject to debate and amendment before being placed in the 3rd Reading Calendar for final passage.***

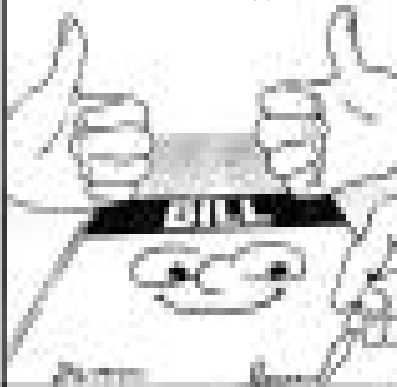


After its passage by one house, the bill goes through the same process in the other house.



If amendments are made in one house, the other house must concur.****

When the bill is passed by both houses, it is signed by their respective leaders and sent to the President for approval.



The President may sign the bill into a law, or veto all or part of it. The bill becomes a law if, within 30 days after receiving it, the President fails to sign or veto the bill. The bill, even if vetoed by the President, also becomes a law when Congress overrides the veto by a 2/3 vote of all its Members.



* A bill must relate to only one subject matter which must be expressed in its title.
 ** A Committee only prepares a report on a bill it decides to recommend for approval by the House.
 *** A bill must undergo 3 readings on 3 separate days except when the President certifies a bill as urgent to meet a public calamity or national emergency.

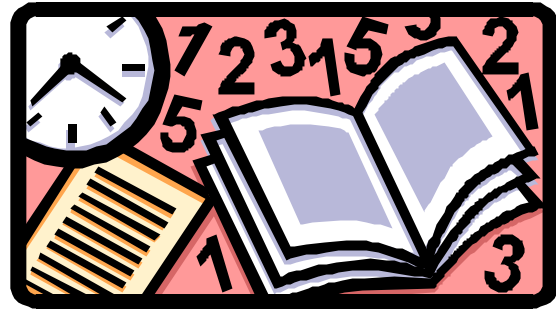
**** If a house has a counterpart bill to a bill passed by the other house, and these bills have conflicting provisions, a conference committee composed of representatives of each house is formed to harmonize the conflicting provisions. Thereafter, if the conflicting provisions are harmonized, a conference committee report is prepared for ratification or approval by both houses.

Legislative History

WHEN OUR COUNTRY WAS UNDER AMERICAN colonial rule, the legislative body was the Philippine Commission which existed from September, 1900 to October, 1907. The President of the United States appointed the members of the Philippine Commission.

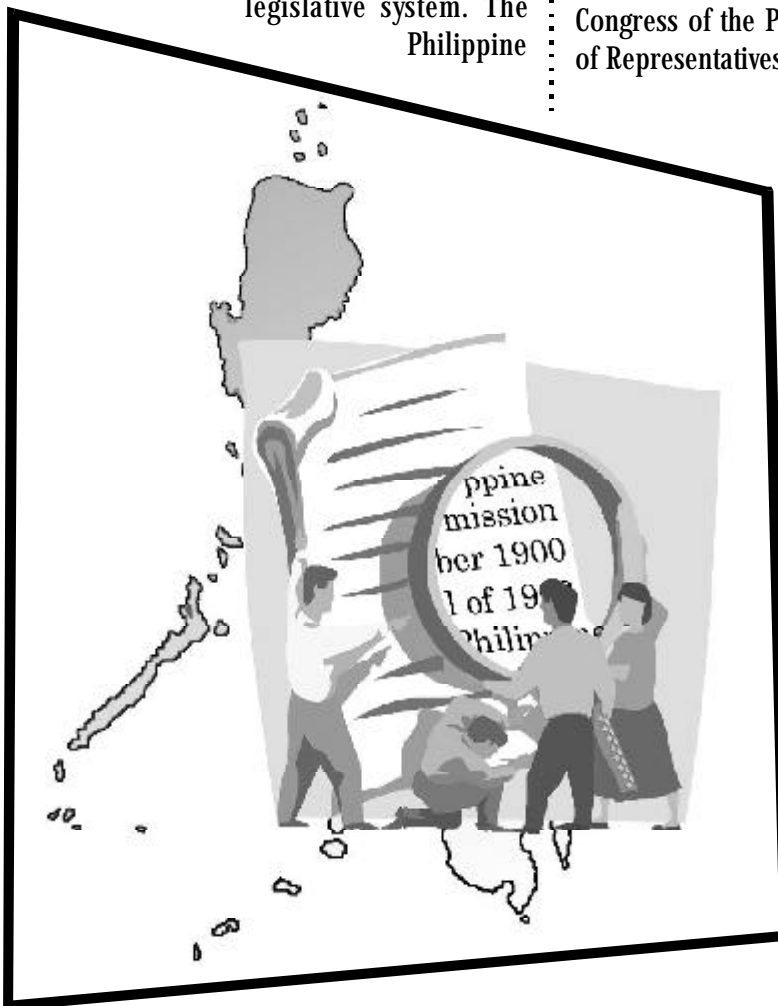
The Philippine Bill of 1902 mandated the creation of a bicameral or a two-chamber Philippine Legislature with the Philippine Commission as the Upper House and the Philippine Assembly as the Lower House. This bicameral legislature was inaugurated in October, 1907. Through the leadership of then Speaker Sergio Osmena and then Floor Leader Manuel Quezon, the Rules of the 59th Congress of the United States was substantially adopted as the Rules of the Philippine Legislature.

In 1916, the Jones Law changed the legislative system. The Philippine



Commission was abolished, and a new bicameral Philippine Legislature consisting of a House of Representatives and a Senate was established.

The legislative system was changed again in 1935. The 1935 Constitution established a unicameral National Assembly. But in 1940, through an amendment to the 1935 Constitution, a bicameral Congress of the Philippines consisting of a House of Representatives and a Senate was created.



Upon the inauguration of the Republic of the Philippines in 1946, Republic Act No. 6 was enacted providing that on the date of the proclamation of the Republic of the Philippines, the existing Congress would be known as the First Congress of the Republic.

The 1973 Constitution abolished the bicameral Congress and created a unicameral Batasang Pambansa in a parliamentary system of government.

The 1987 Constitution restored the presidential system of government together with a bicameral Congress of the Philippines.

Legislative Terms

Adjourn - to conclude a day's session or committee meeting.

Amendment - a proposal to change a provision of a bill.

Bill - a proposed law; also, the document containing a proposed law.

Calendar of Business - contains the matters to be taken up in a session and it includes the unfinished business, business for the day, business for a certain date and unassigned business of the House.

Caucus - a gathering or group of Representatives usually belonging to the same political party to select leaders or to discuss and decide on courses of action regarding certain issues and policies.

Committee - a small group of Representatives that studies bills, makes preliminary decisions about legislation and other issues, and reports its findings and recommendations to the entire chamber.



Committee Chair - a Representative who manages and directs the activities of a committee and is elected by the entire chamber upon nomination of the Majority Floor Leader.

Committee Secretariat - House Secretariat employees who provide legislative support services such as research, report preparation, information management, and the like, to a committee and its members.

Conference Committee - a group composed of

Representatives and Senators tasked to harmonize conflicting provisions of similar bills passed by both houses; also called Bicameral Conference Committee; the report it prepares for ratification by both houses is called a Conference Committee Report.

Constitution - fundamental law of the country that states the basic principles that determine the powers, duties and organization of government, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens; our present Constitution was adopted in 1987.

Constitutional Amendment - a proposal to change the Constitution or any part thereof which must be approved by the electorate in order to take effect.

Constituent Assembly - both houses of Congress, by a 2/3 vote of all their Members, can act as a constituent assembly to propose amendments to the Constitution.

Constitutional Convention - delegates elected in accordance with law constitute a convention or body that formulates proposed amendments to the Constitution.

Convene - to assemble for an official meeting.

District - area or constituency represented by a Member of the House; there are 209 districts in the country today.

First Reading - the reading of the title and number of a bill, and its referral to the appropriate committee for study.

Hearing - a scheduled meeting of a committee at which the public or stakeholders are given opportunities to express their views and sentiments about proposed laws.

Interim - the months between regular legislative sessions.

Legislature - the entire group of Representatives and Senators constituting the Congress of the Philippines.

Legislative Terms

Mace - symbol of authority of the House; it is displayed at the Speaker's rostrum when the House is in session and it serves as the warrant of the Sergeant-at-Arms in enforcing orders of the House.

Pages - the name given to Secretariat employees who assist and run errands for representatives in the Session Hall and in conference rooms during committee hearings.

Point of Order - is a question that raises or calls attention to a violation of the rules relevant to the matter being discussed on the floor.

President of the Senate - leads and manages the Senate; presides over Senate floor action and debate.

Privilege Hour - A period of time designated in the Rules, usually on Mondays, when Members of the House may speak on any matter of public interest.

Question Hour - A period of time designated in the Rules when department heads, because of their own request or because of the request of the House approved by the President, appear before the House and answer questions on any matter relating to their departments.

Question of Privilege - Matters affecting the duties, conduct, rights, privileges, dignity, integrity or reputation of the House or its Members; every Member has the right to raise a question of personal or collective privilege.

Representative - a person elected to the House of Representatives for a three-year term; Representatives are elected by district and through the party-list system.

Regular Session - Legislative session convened every year on the 4th Monday of July which can last until



30 days before the opening of the next regular session for the succeeding year.

Rules of the House - rules that provide for the powers, functions, organization and officers of the House; the number, jurisdiction and membership of its committees; how it conducts its proceedings during sessions and during committee meetings and hearings; and how a bill can validly become a law.

Second Reading - stage when a bill is subject to debate and amendment; bills on 2nd Reading may be returned to the committee that reported it out, amended or approved to advance to 3rd reading.

Sergeant-at-Arms - officer of the House responsible for security and the maintenance of order during sessions and committee hearings.

Speaker - Representative elected by a majority of all the Members to lead the House and preside over floor action and debate in the House.

Special Session - legislative session held for specific purposes between regular sessions; the President may call a special session at anytime.

Third Reading - final stage of legislative action on a bill; on 3rd Reading, a bill is read in its entirety, and thereafter, without debate, Representatives vote to approve or reject the bill.



Veto - disapproval of a bill or any of its provisions by the President; the bill is returned to Congress by the President without his/her signature together with an explanation why the bill or any of its provisions should not become law.

Veto Override - a 2/3 vote of all the members of Congress to overturn the President's veto, and make the bill into a law.

Word Search

Search for these legislative terms in the letters below. They may appear in all directions: forward, backward, up, down or diagonally in the puzzle. Find each word and draw a circle around each like the sample shown.

AMENDMENT
CONSTITUTION
LAW
REPRESENTATIVE

BILL
FLOOR
MACE
RULES

CHAMBER
HEARING
OVERRIDE
SESSION

COMMITTEE
INTERIM
PAGE
SPEAKER

B	R	D	A	E	F	W	F	V	E	X	T	J
J	E	H	O	B	E	B	U	D	K	U	U	J
Q	P	I	N	T	E	R	I	M	O	O	P	G
F	R	F	B	Q	O	R	U	L	E	S	O	A
L	E	B	Y	O	R	O	A	F	L	O	O	R
A	S	W	R	E	E	U	P	B	A	S	I	Y
S	E	O	V	H	O	P	X	D	W	G	T	A
H	N	O	I	T	U	T	I	T	S	N	O	C
Z	T	A	X	Z	M	M	I	Q	E	I	J	O
O	A	K	H	E	W	R	I	M	S	R	P	M
E	T	P	R	S	E	J	D	A	S	A	E	M
S	I	A	K	K	J	N	C	C	I	E	I	I
U	V	G	A	X	E	K	V	E	O	H	B	T
O	E	E	W	M	C	C	A	D	N	X	B	T
H	P	T	A	A	U	I	G	A	M	M	A	E
S	F	G	M	J	C	H	A	M	B	E	R	E

Matching

Match the terms/words on the left with the definitions on the right.

___ **Speaker**

___ **First Reading**

___ **Special Session**

___ **212**

___ **Sergeant-At-Arms**

___ **Third Reading**

___ **Committee**

___ **3 years**

___ **Regular Session**

___ **Second Reading**

___ **Party-list Representative**

A Legislative sessions held between Regular Sessions, usually called by the President to handle emergencies.

B Leads, manages and presides over the House of Representatives.

C The final stage of a bill during which the Document is read in its entirety and then, a vote is taken

D When the title and number of a bill is read and it is referred to the appropriate committee in open session.

E Number of districts in the Philippines.

F Responsible for security and maintenance of order during sessions and hearings in the House.

G A small group of representatives that studies and conducts hearings on bills and other legislative measures

H The length of a representative's term of office.

I The debating and amending stage for a bill.

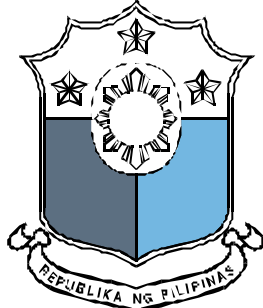
J A member of the House elected through the party-list system

K The annual regular meeting of Congress beginning on the 4th Monday of July each year.

National Symbols

The National Coat of Arms

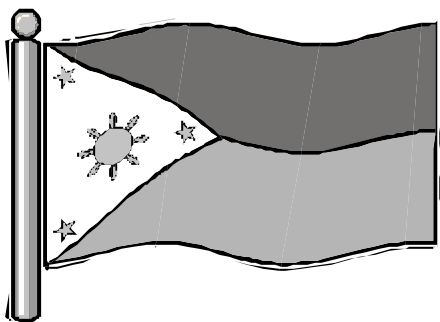
The national coat-of-arms of the Republic was approved by Commonwealth Act No. 731 on July 3, 1946. It was designed by then Captain Galo B. Ocampo, secretary of the Philippine Heraldry Committee. This was subsequently revised in February 12, 1998, under Republic Act 8491.



The national coat-of-arms shall have paleways of two (2) pieces, azure and gules; a chief argent studded with three (3) mullets equidistant from each other; and, in point of honor, ovoid argent over all the sun rayonnant with eight minor lesser rays. Beneath shall be the scroll with the words "REPUBLIKA NG PILIPINAS," enscribed thereon.

The Flag of the Republic of the Philippines

The Philippine flag stands for unity and national identity, and expresses the Filipino's aspirations for freedom, equality, justice and nobility. It is the only flag in the world able to signify peace or war. In time of peace, the blue stripe is on top of the red. In time of war, the red stripe is on top of the blue.



The red stripe symbolizes courage and the willingness of every Filipino to shed blood in defense of our country, while the blue stripe stands for peace and unity among all Filipinos.

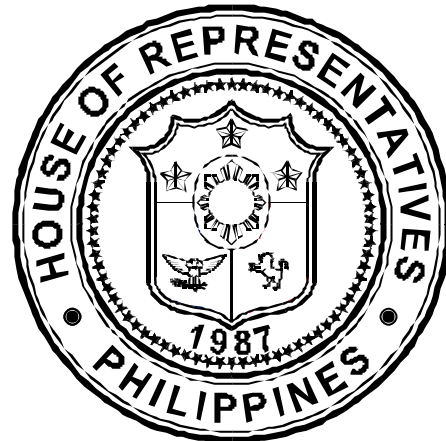
The equilateral triangle on the left side is symbolic of equality among men. The eight rays of the Philippine Sun in the triangle represent the eight provinces that first revolted against Spanish rule. The

three stars on each corner of the triangle stand for Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

The Seal of the House of Representatives

The Philippine Sun Rayonnant occupies the center while the three stars representing Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, occupy the chief of the shield. On the dexter (right side) on a field of blue is the bald-headed American eagle, and on the sinister (left side) on a field of red is the Lion Rampant.

This is surrounded by a circle of 74 stars representing the provinces of the Philippines in 1987. The year 1987 denotes the year when the House of Representatives was restored as the lower house in a bicameral Philippine Legislature under the 1987 Constitution in the wake of the demise of the unicameral legislature under the 1973 Constitution.



Do you know what is our:

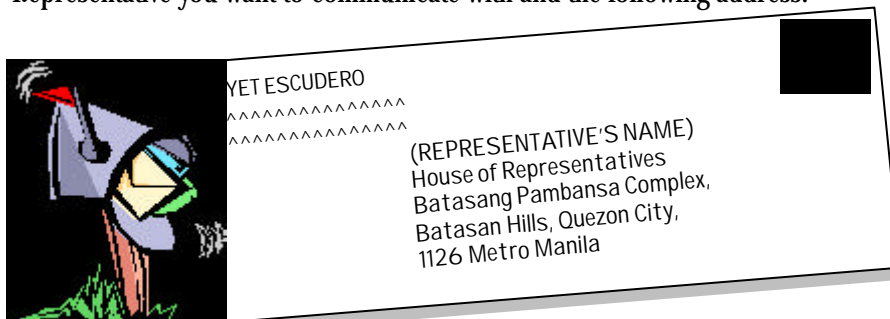
1. *National Flower?* _____
2. *National Anthem?* _____
3. *National Tree?* _____
4. *National Costume?* _____
5. *National Dance?* _____
6. *National Fruit?* _____
7. *National Bird?* _____
8. *National Fish?* _____
9. *National Animal?* _____
10. *National Game?* _____

Contacting Your Representative

YOU HAVE A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE MAKING OF our laws. You may not be able to vote for our local and national leaders until you are 18 years old, but as a citizen, you can contact your Representatives to let them know what you think and how you feel about existing and proposed laws, or your suggestions for new laws needed to make our lives and our society better.



Your Representatives enjoy hearing from young people like you. One of the best ways to be heard by your Representatives is to write letters to them. You need only to write on a stamped envelope the name of the Representative you want to communicate with and the following address:



You may also contact your Representatives by calling the trunkline of the House of Representatives at Tel. No. 931-5001. An operator will connect you to the office of the Representative you wish to contact. You may use the same telephone number to get in touch with offices of the House Secretariat for any assistance on legislative matters you may need.



We also encourage you to personally visit your House of Representatives. We can arrange a fun and interesting tour for your group, class, organization or school throughout the year. Contact us in advance for tour arrangements at Tel. Nos. 931-6581, 932-6138 or 931-5001 Loc. 7661.

Answer Keys

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGES 3 & 4:

(1) Representatives and Senators; (2) Three; (3) No, because Luningning is not a registered voter in her district; (4) as applicable; (5) The Speaker; (6) Committees are small groups of Representatives who study bills and conduct hearings to give citizens opportunities to air their views on proposed laws.

MATCHING (Page 10):

B, D, A, E, F, C, G, H, K, I, J

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 11:

(1) Sampaguita; (2) Lupang Hinirang; (3) Narra; (4) Baro't Saya/Barong Tagalog; (5) Cariñosa; (6) Mango; (7) Philippine Eagle; (8) Bangus; (9) Kalabaw; (10) Sipa

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