The 15th Congress opened on July 26, 2010, in a social climate of vibrant hope for authentic reform in governance under a new administration.

In the House of Representatives, the people’s aspiraions for good governance and their eagerness for change are clearly expressed in the election of Rep. Feliciano Belmonte Jr. (6th Dist., Quezon City) as Speaker.

Speaker Belmonte, whose career spans outstanding terms in both the executive and legislative branches of government, is an accomplished public servant who previously served as Speaker of the House during the 11th Congress.

Cultivating Governance Reform Through Legislation

Major educational reforms underway

Reconfiguring the educational system for competitiveness ranks high in the priorities of the House. The bill that seeks to institutionalize kindergarten education (HB 3832) lays the foundation for the Department of Education’s “5-12 Plan” that aims to extend the number of years for basic education from 10 years to 12 years. Other approved bills reinforce the country’s educational system. These include strengthening the ladderized interface between preschool, basic education and training and higher education (HB 4525); establishing a Philippine High School for the deaf (HB 4231) regulating the use of mobile devices while driving (HB 4533); protecting institutional and organizational communications systems in government and in the private sector (HB 3833); and prohibiting the acts of discrimination against women (HB 3831).

Accountable, transparent and effective governance

The House upholds the integral participation of the people in all phases of policy-making. HB 4231 fosters the participation of local civic groups in local, regional, and national development planning. To secure the

For the informal sector, the House enacted the Extension of the Lifeline Housing and Resettlement Program (HB 4373). For the urban poor displacing the racketeers and professional squatters who hold onto properties, the bill contains provisions that secure resources for employees on the rights of workers, and for the well-being of children were also put in place (RA 10152), bills advancing access to education for the family of overseas workers, HB 6539 opens up credit assistance of up to P300,000 with daily indicative rates in the first few months of their breadwinner’s absence.

Catalyzing Governance Reform Through Legislation

Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr. (center, in dark suit) gives the thumbs-up sign alongside fellow Members of the House on June 8, 2011, the culminating day of the First Regular Session.

Flagship pro-poor program— the Pantaoan Pamalakay Pilipino Program (4%), which grants conditional cash transfers to qualified indigent families.

The House approved other bills on Third reading that empower disadvantaged segments of the society, such as students, if it approved on Third reading the bill granting undenominational religious and technical education students tuition-free, according to other educational necessities (HB 4373). For the informal sector, HB 6539 opens up credit assistance of up to P300,000 with daily indicative rates in the first few months of their breadwinner’s absence.

The 2011 budget (RA 10147) contains provisions that secure resources for public health care, particularly for the construction of more health facilities in rural areas. Apart from the new law providing for mandatory immunization of infants and children (RA 10152), bills advancing the well-being of children were also approved on Third reading, including the bill requiring mandatory oral prophylaxis on newborns (HB 4070) to prevent the untimely occurrence of blindness in infants, and HB 3848 which promotes breastfeeding as an essential component of family planning and responsible parenthood.

Upholding people’s rights and safety

The House of Representatives passed the Children in Conflict Areas Protection Act (HB 4400) with children in times of displacement triggered by war or conflict. It also approved bills ensuring that the people care for abandoned and neglected children and facilities such as the Daycare Home (HB 4401) and another bill providing for a longer period for the notification of stabilized bottled water (HB 3840). Also passed on Third reading are HB 4230 which grants free information services to employees on the rights of workers, and HB 3546, which protects the rights of students to enroll in review centers of their choice. In support of the House approved bills penalizing persons driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs

The 2011 national budget (RA 10147) contains provisions that secure resources for public health care, particularly for the construction of more health facilities in rural areas.