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CALL TO ORDER

At 4:00 p.m., Deputy Speaker Eric D. Singson called the session to order.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The session is now called to order.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Please rise for the singing of the Philippine National Anthem.

Everybody rose to sing the Philippine National Anthem.

PRAYER

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Please remain standing for a minute of silent prayer.

Everybody remained standing for the silent prayer.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, may we have a few minutes suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The session is suspended for a few minutes.

It was 4:01 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:07 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The session is resumed.

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we defer the calling of the roll.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we defer the approval of the Journal of the previous session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Edno Joson who has signified that he wishes to speak on a question of personal and collective privilege.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). What is the pleasure of the Honorable Joson?

REP. JOSON. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise on a question of personal and collective privilege, Mr. Speaker, and this involves the questions or problems of violence, poverty, injustice and dishonor which persist up to now, and which affects the integrity, reputation and honor of the Members of this Congress and the continuing existence of this institution called Congress of the Republic of the Philippines.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Gentleman has 10 minutes.

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE OF REP. JOSON

REP. JOSON. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was a Member of the regular Batasang Pambansa in 1984, Mr. Speaker, together with a few others here. Time flies so swiftly and everything that has happened seems to be but a memory and just like a dream.

A Japanese haiku stated it very philosophically, "Life is but a dream." There is also a Christian saying that everything shall pass away but My words shall not pass away.

Ang buhay daw ay isang panaginip lamang at lahat ng bagay sa mundo, bukod tangi sa salita ng Diyos, ay lilipas din. Mayroon ding kasabihan, Mr. Speaker, that the more things change, the more they remain the same. The only constant in the universe is change itself.

In this context, Mr. Speaker, and way back in 1984, and even before, I believed in four principles—the principles of peace, progress, justice and honor for all. These four principles arise as a counterpoint or solution to four problems—the problem of violence in our society, the problem of extreme poverty, the problem of injustice and the problem of dishonor. Regarding the problem of violence, starting with the ideological conflict, communism versus democracy, up to our brother Muslims' rebellion in Mindanao, these conflicts have worsened and persisted to this day. The terrorism element

has also come into the picture and with this added element, what is clearly emerging is a never-ending bloody struggle to win all the battles and the war. Peace has never been an end of, for and by itself. Political violence is also on the rise. In my 25 years in politics, prominent victims, as well as the nameless, abound. My brother, Vice Mayor Danding Joson, along with two others were also victims of political violence. From Assemblymen to Congressmen to mayors, nobody is safe and unmarked. When we go down the line, barangay captains and ward leaders are fodder for the dogs of war or mercenaries or guns for hire. The latest incident in Maguindanao highlights the freebies in our KBL—Kasal, Libing, Binyag or dependency or patronage culture in action. Ngayon, hindi lang libre ataul, libre libing pa at marami ka pang kasama o damay na ilililing din kapag pinatay ka. At kung dati baril lang ang ginagamit, ngayon bomba na.

The Akbar killing here in our own Congress circa 2007-2010 highlights the phrase, “Surviving Congress.” Indeed, we have gone a long way, Mr. Speaker, from the simple axe murders, chop-chop killings, tortures and burning the victims, kidnappings, abductions to the improvised explosive devices or IED and backhoe which are all images permanently etched in the national consciousness. Truly, Mr. Speaker, the evil that men do lives after them. Do we have then a culture of violence and collaterally a culture of impunity, Mr. Speaker?

These are some of the worst kinds of violence, Mr. Speaker, but if we consider the other forms or kinds of violence being experienced by our nation collectively and by the victims individually, it would seem that we are not going anywhere. Hunger alone is said to be the worst kind of violence for it involves slow death and brings a sense of hopelessness and despair to the body and soul of our masses. Other forms of violence permeate almost all aspects of our society, from the hazing in schools to violence in the picket lines, in strikes, in public rallies whether in Mendiola or Luisita, bugbugan at pananakit sa atin mismong mga kaanak, karahasan sa sports na dati boxing lang, ngayon ultimate fighting championship o UFC na at sa iba pang lugar o gawain na hindi natin akalain na karahasan pala ang nangyayari.

Kailan kaya tayo magkakaroon ng tunay na kapayapaan, Mr. Speaker? When are we going to realize that the violence we accept and do today will still be the violence of tomorrow? When are we going to learn? Matututo pa kaya tayo, Mr. Speaker, na mabago ang dapat baguhin o patuloy nating tatanggapin na kasama lang lahat sa buhay ng tao ang mga ito? Na kung may masama, may mabuti; kung may mayaman, may mahirap; kung may tanga, may matalino; kung may giyera, may kapayapaan? In other words, Mr. Speaker, we accept the contradictions in life and there is no need for change. One cannot exist without the other; yin and yang; war and peace; love and hate; rich and poor; beginning and end; good and evil; black and white; et cetera.

The three other problems, Mr. Speaker, progress and poverty, kaunlaran versus kahirapan, justice versus injustice or katarungan versus kawalan nito at karangalan or honor versus dishonor or kawalan ng karangalan, hew along the same historical facts and statistics. Lahat ay palala at hindi maganda ang kasalukuyan lalo na ang hinaharap. Hanggang ngayon, lahat inaasa pa rin ng ating mahihirap ang kanilang pangangailangan sa gobyerno. Mula sa pagkain, gamot, pag-aaral ng anak, trabaho ng anak, pabahay, pagpapaospital at palibing ng anak, politiko at gobyerno pa rin ang dapat

managot. Ang masakit, pati pagsinop ng basura, inaasa na rin kay kapitan o mayor. Ang problema sa populasyon ay mukhang ngayon lang nawawarian o nagigising ang ating mga dukha na dapat ang bumubuhay sa pamilya ay magulang at hindi ang mga anak. Mabuti na nga lang, Mr. Speaker, at marami pa ring trabaho na nakikita at napapasukan ang ating mga pursigidong mga kababayan sa abroad.

Sa kabuuan, Mr. Speaker, mahirap pa rin tayo sa mga daga. Kung dati galunggong at Pajero economy, ngayon tuyo pa rin nguni't dalawang tuyo naman ang ulam at BMW economy na. In other words, the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen. Hindi lang Gap o Giordano kung hindi Lacoste na, na nagkataong buwaya ang trademark, Mr. Speaker.

Tuloy pa rin ang political commodity ng bigas at ang nasasakripisyo hanggang ngayon ay ang kita ng ating mga magsasaka. Wala pa rin tayong preferential option for our farmers and laborers. And global competitiveness will always be a myth because of the existing economic, monetary and financial structures which are almost impossible to change or rationalize. In other words, Mr. Speaker, the cycle of poverty remains. We have not broken this vicious cycle and circle of life and poverty. We have been left behind, Mr. Speaker. And no amount of statistics or economic theories can hide the beggars in our streets and the ugliness of our slums which are danger zones literally and symbolically, and unfit for human habitation. The kariton school of Efren Peñaflorida only made more stark the reality of poverty not only in the body but also the poverty of the mind by our long-suffering masses.

Kailan kaya tayo tunay na uunlad, Mr. Speaker? Kailan kaya tayo makakahabol sa ibang bansa na nagkaroon ng development for all at hindi development for a few? Maybe, Mr. Speaker, there is a need for a new paradigm. Social justice must only be one of the norms. Economic justice or opportunity for all to progress or to better one's self is the new standard by which government efficiency should be judged.

Peace and progress, Mr. Speaker, are the two basic conditions without which, there can be no justice and honor for all. Pang-aapi ang karahasan sa kapwa. Pang-aapi ang kalagayan ng kahirapan. Justice, which is giving everyone his due, will not be realized if we continue to be at war with ourselves. There can be no rule of law if force and the rule of the gun prevails. The rule of men must be a rule of reason. Faith must also be tempered with reason.

Greed for power or money or for whatever kind has no place in a civilized society. Greed destroys the essence of the common good, democracy and individual freedom. Social conscience and honest-to-goodness public service, meaning, honesty in public service and goodness in public service, are critical elements for our nation to progress and reduce the number of our poorest of the poor. A level of contentment must be reached, Mr. Speaker, for without the self-imposed limitation on our basic nature—na ang tao ay walang kasiyahan—to be honorable will be impossible to achieve. A sense of duty to country will also help, Mr. Speaker, for duty proceeds from love of God and love of nature.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, life goes on. The show must go on and each one of us has a part to play. The struggle never ends. Faith and hope springs eternal. Despair and frustrations must be set aside. We do what we must do but always in the context of love for one another, love for God,

country and Mother Earth for ultimately, the earth is the Lord. We must try to make the right choices. The principles of peace, progress, justice and honor for all are there in a pedestal. Kapayapaan, kaunlaran, katarungan at karangalan para sa lahat. Reality and pragmatism on the other side beckons. The future is a vision. There are no more excuses for the continuing misery and poverty of our people. We must draw the line sometime, somewhere, somehow in our lives as leaders of this nation. And despite the silence of the centuries, the silence of the shepherds and lambs, Mr. Speaker, our people wait. Sana, Mr. Speaker, hindi pa huli ang lahat.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Yes, the Honorable Marcoleta is recognized.

REP. MARCOLETA. May I know if the good Representative from Nueva Ecija is prepared to answer a few questions by way of interpellation?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). What is the...

REP. JOSON. Yes, willingly, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Gentleman may proceed.

REP. MARCOLETA. First of all, I would like to thank the Gentleman, Mr. Speaker, for relating the issue of poverty in the context of his privilege speech.

I would like to know if the good Gentleman is familiar with the Magna Carta for the Poor that has already been passed on Third Reading by this Congress?

REP. JOSON. Yes, Mr. Speaker. I think I went over that in one of the committees that I am a member of. I am most aware of the Magna Carta for Small Farmers which has been passed some 20 years ago, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. Then that Magna Carta for the Poor, Mr. Speaker, seems to be the bible of the poor because it encompasses at least three important rights of the poor: his right to food, his right to shelter, his right to medicine, and his right to gainful employment.

If that bill, Mr. Speaker, is passed into law, I would like to believe that it is a very concrete medium or vehicle to alleviate poverty in this country. Would the Gentleman agree?

REP. JOSON. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. Would the Gentleman know if the status of that bill, which lamentably has been passed in the Fourteenth Congress, is now languishing in the dockets of the Senate?

REP. JOSON. Right now, I am not aware of the status of the said bill but I think it has not passed Third Reading, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. It has passed Third Reading already, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, in 2008, it has been there. The problem is that I believe it is one of the 151 measures already passed by this Congress not transmitted to the other House but seems to be languishing, as I have said, in the dockets of the Senate.

It is unfortunate, if not regrettable, Mr. Speaker, that that very important piece of legislation will deny, again, the poor an important shield for them to be given the chance to at least live in peace, prosperity and comfort.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I congratulate, again, the Gentleman from Nueva Ecija for such a splendid privilege speech.

Thank you very much.

REP. JOSON. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer to the appropriate committee the speech of the Honorable Joson and the interpellations thereon.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Is there any objection to the motion? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Cresente C. Paez from the party-list COOP-NATCO who has signified his intention to rise on a question of personal and collective privilege.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). What is the pleasure of the Gentleman from COOP-NATCO?

REP. PAEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of personal and collective privilege. This concerns the abuse of power and questionable integrity of the present leadership of NORECO 2. This is an electric cooperative in Negros Oriental which is contrary to the principle of democratic control.

The issue also involves the abusive oversight function of an administrator of the CDA (Cooperative Development Authority), Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Gentleman has 10 minutes.

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE OF REP. PAEZ

REP. PAEZ. Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, as a Representative of the cooperative sector, I am bereft of words on how to express my repulsion to the recent developments in the governance of the Negros Oriental Electric Cooperative II and the CDA's involvement which propagated the present issue of questionable governance.

I have come across an article posted by the *Negros Chronicle* in its website on January 26, 2010 breaking out the news that the NORECO 2 Board of Directors got a one-year CDA lease or extension in their term as directors.

Briefly, Mr. Speaker, NORECO 2 is a CDA-registered multi-billion electric cooperative, providing electric power needs to more or less 13 towns within the Negros Oriental province.

As the terms of the elected members of the board of directors of NORECO 2 will expire in 2010, the electric cooperative is in the thick of preparations for the scheduled February elections. Astonishingly, however, the incumbent members of the board of directors, while at the time currently holding a session, received a CDA Advisory dated January 20, 2010, to postpone the conduct of the fixed district elections to the first quarter of 2011 instead of the original schedules in February this year. Unsurprisingly, the board of directors lost no time and unanimously voted to adopt the advisory.

The CDA Advisory invoked COMELEC Resolution No. 8716 dated January 17, 2009, which deputized the electric cooperatives in the local government units to provide uninterrupted power supply on the day before and on election day until the termination and conclusion of the canvassing of the election returns and proclamation of elected officials are completed.

As a result, the members of the board, through this fantastic coincidence, were undeniably blessed with good luck as they obtained a one-year lease in their terms as directors.

Mr. Speaker, according to the article, Board Secretary Juper Aguilar stated that among the incumbent directors whose terms are supposedly slated to lapse this year and would benefit from the CDA Advisory are James Fontelo of District 2, Cheryl Nalam of District 8 and Board of Directors Chairperson Lennie Joy Alviola of District 6.

Mr. Speaker, the timing of the issuance of the CDA Advisory is extremely dubious. If you would note, the COMELEC Resolution was promulgated on January 17, 2009. Then only after a year when NORECO 2 was about to hold its elections, the CDA issued the advisory. What a stroke of fate, indeed.

Moreover, the recent developments present two legal issues, Mr. Speaker. First, is the CDA Advisory a correct and sound interpretation and/or implementation of the COMELEC Resolution? Second, assuming that it is, can the COMELEC Resolution and the CDA Advisory supersede Republic Act No. 9520, otherwise known as the Philippine Cooperative Code of 2008, which explicitly limits the term of office of the board of directors to two years only?

As a true-blooded cooperative man, to my mind, the advisory is over-arching in its interpretation or implementation of the COMELEC Resolution. I could not fathom any justification why it had to direct NORECO 2 to postpone the February elections to next year. How could the board of directors' elections scheduled three months before the national and local polls, in any way, affect and jeopardize its assignment to provide uninterrupted power supply for the May 2010 elections?

Instead, by doing so, Mr. Speaker, the CDA gravely abused its regulatory and supervisory powers as it deprived the electric cooperative members their right to elect a new set of directors, not to mention the fact that it violated Article 37 of Republic Act No. 9520 providing for a two-year limit in the term of office of the board of directors.

Mr. Speaker, without exaggeration, consumers and

members of NORECO 2 are apparently disgusted by the news. In the *Negros Chronicle* website, one blogger, obviously appalled, voiced his abhorrence in vulgar expressions. He suspects that the board adoption of the CDA advisory wrecks unscrupulous motives. The blogger wrote, and I quote:

The useless board are probably laughing because it means each has another year to fatten their wallets.

And to the CDA, he further wrote:

The CDA, on the other hand, is another useless government entity just like NORECO 2. Just because a money-time-wasting activity is coming up in May, they want to take away from us the opportunity to replace the current useless board.

We cannot deny, Mr. Speaker, that the members of the electric cooperative are passionate for a new management. They desire a new leadership.

At this point, my sympathy goes to them. For the information of this Body, in November of last year, I filed a resolution directing the Committee on Cooperatives Development to conduct a probe on NORECO 2 because of reports coming from credible sources regarding numerous irregularities and anomalies committed and being committed by certain board and the officers of the electric cooperative. I cannot help but suspiciously speculate on the real motives of the proponents.

To us in the cooperative movement, the supreme power resides in the general assembly and this power is exercised most effectively in the members' right to vote. The postponement of the election of the members of the board of NORECO 2, sanctioned by the CDA, erodes the Cooperative Code as it disenfranchises the electorate of the cooperative.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, it is on this regard that I am laying on the table the concerns of NORECO 2 members and calling upon the cohesive attention of this Body to look into the situation of the electric cooperative, particularly in its present governance and more so to the supervisory and regulatory conduct of the CDA.

Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer to the appropriate committee the speech of the Honorable Paez.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Janette Garin who has signified her intention to rise on a question of personal and collective privilege.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). What is the pleasure of the Congresswoman?

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE OF REP. GARIN

REP. GARIN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, I rise on a question of personal and collective privilege to once again bring to

your attention an issue that this Representation believes to be worthy of a discussion before the end of the Fourteenth Congress, worthy to be one of the urgent issues that will be addressed in the next Congress and more importantly, worthy to be included in the electoral agenda of those who are vying to be the next President of our country. I am referring, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, to the issue of HIV/AIDS or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. The HIV/AIDS situation in the Philippines, on which I rose on a question of personal and collective privilege late last year, has just recently reached epidemic proportions.

Late last year, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, I have spoken about the same issue with the fear that an HIV/AIDS epidemic might be inevitable. Sad to say, the time has now come.

Mr. Speaker, one man before me once said, "You are not angry. You do not feel the gun on your head." I believe that it explains our problem with the rising HIV/AIDS cases in our country. We are simply not angry enough in order to address this issue effectively because of our belief that the situation is still manageable. We are simply not angry enough that is why this dreaded disease is now at an epidemic level.

The Department of Health recently reported that in the year 2009, a total of 709 cases were recorded as compared to only 508 in 2008. The agency also said that two HIV/AIDS cases were recorded daily.

Just last week, Dr. Edcel Salvana of the University of the Philippines College of Medicine, an Associate Professor and Philippine General Hospital Infectious Diseases Department Chairman, confirmed that the HIV/AIDS situation in the country is at an epidemic level right now and that the spread of said disease continues at a rapid pace.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, if such rate continues, the country will be seeing around 20,000 confirmed cases of HIV/AIDS by 2020. If we are referring to confirmed cases, these are but symptomatic HIV/AIDS patients who were transformed into full blown cases up to an estimate of 10-15 years of being symptomatic. Imagine the degree spent in such a span of time.

What is worse is that majority of the recent HIV cases tend to be younger, mostly 15-29 years old and most, if not all of them, are well educated.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, these data might just very well be the gun pointing at our heads. If these do not anger us, I do not know what will.

Time and time again, our government declares its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. Goal number 6 of the MDG says, "it intends to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS." In order to do this, we should be able to allocate resources for programs including information dissemination, education and even the treatment and care for those who are already infected with the disease. In the publication of the UP National College for Public Administration and Governance or NCPAG, entitled "Moving Forward with the Millennium Development Goals: May Pera Pa Ba?," a two-billion peso financing gap for the HIV/AIDS program has been estimated for the years 2005-2015.

The same source also revealed that majority of our funding for HIV/AIDS come from the ODA. In the year 2005,

for instance, the table shows how more than half of our resources for HIV/AIDS come from Overseas Development Assistance.

The Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis is one, if not the country's biggest donor, for our HIV/AIDS programs. However, last year, the Global Fund suspended all five of its grants to the Tropical Diseases Foundation (TDF) of the Philippines after evidence of unauthorized expenditures emerged.

The TDF holds 87 percent of the total Global Fund grants in the country covering eight of their 10 grant contracts, including the allocations for HIV and AIDS.

An investigation by the Office of the Inspector General of the Global Fund revealed that some of the funds from the grant were spent on activities beyond the terms of the grant agreement. The Global Fund has demanded repayment of the unauthorized expenditures.

The following are some of the results of the audit that was conducted by the Global Fund:

1. Use of program funds for activities that were not in the approved work plan and budget. For example, TDF's use of 27,140,779.36 pesos (Approx US\$577, 463.39) of program funds to purchase two properties.

2. The TDF's financial management systems were not adequate to safeguard program resources as evidenced by:

- a. Proper books of account which were not maintained, numerous alterations and deletions of transactions in the financial systems;

- b. Review of budget versus actual expenditures revealed large variances which were never explained;

- c. A total of P92 million was held in various TDF bank accounts although in its report to the Global Fund, the Tropical Disease Foundation management represented that, these amounts had been already disbursed to sub recipients; and

- d. The Office of the Inspector General further noted expenditures outside of the program scope.

3. The TDF operated over 90 banks accounts, 43 of which were related to the programs being funded by the Global Fund. However, audit reports revealed that a reasonable number of Global Fund program bank accounts would have been about 16 accounts. TDF only disclosed 16 of these accounts which is a misrepresentation of data meant for decision-making.

4. Effort to reconcile the funds in the bank accounts revealed that funds amounting to P535,625,816 were transferred out of the Global Fund accounts without any justification or supporting documentation.

5. The Global Fund monies were placed in short-term investments which were then reclassified as General Fund investments and terminated into a bank account that was used to settle bills for constructing a building. These amounted to P8,350,000 and again was asked to be refunded.

6. The rates used to bill the Global Fund for tests undertaken for MDR TB patients were in excess of the rates approved by the Global Fund which is more or less similar to the Philhealth exposé year ago. The TDF frequently increased the rates without consultation with the Global Fund and the differences in the actual rates charged and the rates approved resulted in overbilling of Global Fund

grant by P12,323,250 which is now being asked to be refunded.

7. The TDF also billed patients for some tests that it had also charged to the Global Fund which amounted to P542,126.75.

8. The TDF was also contracted by the Department of Health to undertake the NTPS for US\$720,000 and the TDF, in fact, was paid for that study. However, the Tropical Disease Foundation still drew funds from the bank accounts to allegedly fund the same study without approval from the Global Fund.

9. The TDF failed to provide the total amount of funds transferred into the General Fund for staff salaries. As a consequence, the Global Fund could not obtain assurance that the amounts charged to the grants as salaries were actually paid to the staff.

Mr. Speaker, the Tropical Disease Foundation has been a principal recipient for some of the various grants from the Global Fund since 2003. Such mishandling of the funds for HIV/AIDS will make us wonder how much was compromised in the Global Fund's humble effort to assist our government and our country in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS, and even malaria and tuberculosis.

The Global Fund assures that the incident with the Tropical Disease Foundation Incorporated will not affect their objective to aid the country in its programs for malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. The Department of Health is now the principal recipient of the said grants of the Global Fund. However, Mr. Speaker, the tolerance of the Global Fund should not be made as an excuse for us not to take necessary actions that will ensure that this unfortunate incident will not happen again.

As a medical doctor, I am disheartened that this happened to one of our foreign partners in improving the health outcome of our country. The Philippines already has a difficulty, as it is, to adequately fund an effective HIV/AIDS program, hence, the lack of awareness among the people, especially the youth, on the disease. Being humiliated like this in the international arena and the donor community will certainly not help us in acquiring more support and assistance to improve the delivery of social services.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, there should be stringent measures to safeguard the aid being given by donors so as to guarantee continuous assistance from international funding communities as well as international donors for our interventions, especially insofar as HIV/AIDS is concerned.

The Philippine Congress, with the coordination of the executive branch of the government, should come up with policies with regard to the oversight of foreign grants as major as that of Global Fund being given to NGOs, another private individuals.

Mr. Speaker, this Representation appeals for the serious consideration of these issues beginning next Congress. We cannot afford for this embarrassment to happen again simply because we cannot afford to compromise any endeavor to better the condition, especially the health condition of our fellow Filipinos.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished colleagues.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, I move....

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, a few questions only by way of interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Honorable Marcoleta is recognized.

REP. MARCOLETA. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am quite thankful that the Gentleman brought this issue because it seems to me that the funding is really quite a problem insofar as addressing this affliction HIV/AIDS.

I recently attended a consultative meeting in Bangkok where I was confused as to how this funding is being utilized. One speaker admitted that the total fund for HIV/AIDS is about \$20 billion per annum. But one speaker also admitted that out of that fund, only one out of seven persons got access to clean needles and syringe. Now, first of all, I would like to know whether the Gentleman's privilege speech is in the context of questioning only the funds or he is in a position also to question the entire program on how this Global Fund is trying to address this social menace.

REP. GARIN. Mr. Speaker, my intention is to question both. First is the manner by which the Global Fund grants are being disbursed especially that we have a current report of an order to pay back, more or less, P536 million and the accountability will be that of a private organization which is the Tropical Disease Foundation in this matter.

The second, Mr. Speaker, is that I also intend to question the advocacy, the campaigns and the manner by which said organizations are disbursing the funds in relation to an intention to curb the high incidence of HIV/AIDS in our country. Because if we can see the statistics, if we take a look at the recent report, including that of San Lazaro Hospital and UP-PGH, it is evident that the incidence of confirmed cases of full-blown HIV and AIDS has reached an epidemic level. Meaning to say, Mr. Speaker, there is a big possibility that either the funds are being misused or the programs being implemented are not actually in the proper context as it should be done.

REP. MARCOLETA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The reason I am raising this is that in that meeting, I found out that the program is only on harm reduction. Meaning to say, the program is in the form of palliatives. The fund is not really being utilized in order to prevent HIV/AIDS. But what is being done, I noticed, was that of a mitigation of the entire problem. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, one speaker said that the real problem in the HIV issue is that it is now being facilitated by what they call IDU, injecting drug use, and it is very surprising that instead of preventing the use of drug by injection, they were advocating the use of clean needles. Meaning to say, they will allow injecting drug abuse provided that the abuser is using clean needles and syringe. And so I told them that I cannot accept the entire program because they are trying to encourage what they seek to prevent in the first place. The whole program which is funded by the Global Fund is not about prevention, Mr. Speaker. It is about mitigation. It is only about harm reduction. So, even if

there is \$20 billion funding on an annual basis, it will not even be enough because it is not prevention at all.

And then in that meeting, they were trying to advocate that the use of drugs be decriminalized. Meaning to say, the penalty should be removed. I told them that it is not acceptable in our country because we have penal laws calibrated to punish drug users. But in their economies and in their social context, they say that it is now—I do not know if it is true—acceptable for societies to allow the use of alcohol and they are now legalizing cigarette smoking. And they are now advocating that if we can allow the use of cigarettes and alcohol, then we might as well legalize drug use.

Incidentally, I would like to inform this Body that I did not attend that meeting alone but I was accompanied by the distinguished Congressman from Aurora, Sonny Angara, and both of us were really amazed at how these people approached the entire program.

I am happy now, Mr. Speaker, that the Honorable Garin is now looking into it. I would like to suggest that we do not look only into the Global Fund. I think we should also look into the whole program because the program is not about prevention. It is only about harm reduction.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN. Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleague, I agree with what the Honorable Marcoleta, our distinguished colleague, mentioned. Precisely, my point is that we do not have a concrete plan of action. We have an HIV/AIDS Council in our country but people do not even know what it is doing. We do not know the objective of this council. I do not even think that there is a concrete plan or strategy on how we can reach these objectives and how we can maximize the grants and assistance given to us by developed countries.

REP. GOLEZ. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Honorable Golez is recognized.

REP. GOLEZ. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, may I know if this Representation can make a short interpellation, with the indulgence and approval of our distinguished colleague from the First District of Iloilo.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). What does the Honorable Garin say?

REP. GARIN. Willingly, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Gentleman may proceed.

REP. GOLEZ. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at the outset, I would like to congratulate our colleague from Iloilo for her very scholarly presentation on the AIDS problem in the Philippines. And it is indeed very timely. I would just like to ask her opinion about this article that came out in the newspapers today. This is dateline Manila and the title of the article which came out in the *Philippine Star* today is “Online Social Networking Blamed for Rise of AIDS cases in RP.” I would like to quote some items here:

Health officials blamed yesterday online social networking for the rise in the cases of HIV/AIDS in the country last year.

Speaking at the weekly Kapihan sa Manila Hotel media forum, Ferchito Avelino, Philippine National AIDS Council secretariat director, said the “mushrooming of social networking sites in the past three years could be linked to the rising AIDS cases in the Philippines.

And then the article also quoted Dr. Eric Tayag, National Epidemiology Center Director, who said in a previous interview, that some social networking sites cater to people looking for sex partners.

And then a very interesting information submitted by these health officials would be the following:

The mode of AIDS/HIV transmission, as well as the profile of infected persons, have changed over the past three years from heterosexual intercourse to “men who have sex with men, he added.

In other words, a homosexual encounter.

Tayag said most of the AIDS/HIV cases involved young male adults between 25 and 29 years old.

But of course there is this observation that “men who have sex with men are not all homosexuals,” he added.

A majority of HIV/AIDS cases are found in Metro Manila, Metro Cebu, and Davao City he added.

Of course, this is probably because of the fact that these are the most populous centers in the country.

And then, finally, there is this observation that “HIV/AIDS infection can be prevented through abstinence; delay in sexual orientation; faithfulness or monogamy; safe sex; avoiding the use of the same needle in injections; and prenatal screening.” So, this is the observation.

I am not going to ask questions, but I would like to request our distinguished expert in this health concern—because I am very sure that in the next Congress, this is something that we will discuss, and since our colleague will surely, as sure as the sun will rise tomorrow morning, be coming back to the House of Representatives as a Member of the Fifteenth Congress—to take note of this so that in tandem with the other health advocates of the House of Representatives, they can take note of this and probably even summon the officials that I mentioned so that we can address this health issue in a very effective way, taking into consideration the observations of the named health officials.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank very much our distinguished colleague from Iloilo.

REP. GARIN. Mr. Speaker, the Honorable Golez is right. It has been considered as one of the hypotheses that the increase in HIV/AIDS cases, especially the confirmed ones, has been facilitated by social networking simply because it makes communication more accessible. It makes uploading of illicit videos more accessible, and further it propagates misinformation. It is likewise true that MSM or “men having sex with men” seems to be prevailing now in the Philippines. In addition to this, there is a new term called “CS” which does not stand for caesarean section but which actually stands for “casual sex.” While it is true also that abstinence and delay in sexual intercourse are two of the practical, if not the most feasible, methods of curtailing the spread of HIV/AIDS cases, allow me to comment that these two methods are better said than done. Abstinence and delay in sexual intercourse is

something that we believe in but we should look into. We cannot stay forever in the hypocrisy of presuming that our teenage children and the young people of our generation, the young Filipinos, actually remain virgins in our society.

This, Mr. Speaker, is actually an avenue where we can prove the need for a reproductive health care program, especially reproductive health education that will address HIV/AIDS and even other sexually transmitted diseases. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. TEVES. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Honorable Teves is recognized.

REP. TEVES. Yes. I would like to ask the Lady from Iloilo a few questions.

REP. GARIN. Willingly, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Gentleman may proceed.

REP. TEVES. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I met a journalist last week and we had a casual conversation about a related matter on the rise in AIDS cases. He was specifically telling me that the rise in AIDS cases is very particular or noted in call centers. When I saw the screen that was shown, the data showed that most are educated and between the age of 15 to 29. I think that is right on point. Those are mostly people working in the call centers. Would his assumption be true?

REP. GARIN. Mr. Speaker, in the privilege speech I delivered last year, I made a comparison of the profile of HIV/AIDS patients before, as compared to the current trend. Surprisingly, it showed not only a decrease in the age range but it likewise showed a variation from the expected populace. Whereas before it was predominant in overseas workers, and allow me to use the term "prostitutes," now it has shifted to the young professionals. And it is also alarming to note that employees of call centers are seemingly starting to fill the profile of HIV/AIDS cases.

The questions were posted and one of the answers that was given to us especially coming from confirmed cases is the manner by which they practice MSM as our distinguished colleague has mentioned and casual sex and these can probably be attributed to the lack of information and the misperception that clean-looking women and clean-looking men cannot transmit HIV. Coupled with this, there is a lag of 10 to 15 years where patients inflicted with HIV remain asymptomatic, paving way for them to transmit the virus unknowingly and silently in the next 10 to 15 years before being diagnosed as a full-blown AIDS case.

REP. TEVES. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to know if we or the Health Department have data on other countries with booming call center businesses, if the same trend is true on their part.

REP. GARIN. During the latest HIV-AIDS annual conference in Bali, Indonesia that I attended and where I

delivered three presentations, I also learned that a similar trend is starting to exist and they are attributing this, number one, to exposure to technology, exposure to social networking, and more so misinformation, as well as poor campaign and advocacy especially that there are a lot of sectors who repeatedly say that condoms are not effective in preventing HIV and AIDS, which pave way to for them to feel that it is safe to go with natural ways, have not been contracting HIV. But then, as I have mentioned earlier, while we campaign and people advocate for abstinence, it cannot be 100 percent guaranteed because people by physiological make-up would have the adrenalin and the hormones, the sexual hormones in them to enjoy the privilege of having contact.

REP. TEVES. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we must take a very close look at this while we are opening our country to call centers for the job generation that it can bring us. If this has so much stress in it and maybe sex is becoming a stress-reliever for them given an "opposite" time clock wherein everytime they go home, the parents are not home and they are free to do what they do, then we must take a serious look at it for the long term because we cannot just open our doors to jobs and have a very unhealthy populace in the long run, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN. Well, that is true, Mr. Speaker, and I laud my distinguished colleague here, the Honorable Teves, because while we do open our economy to investments like these, we should also look at the other side of the wall. We should start with advocacies. We should start with proper education. We should overcome hypocrisy and face reality that indeed, sexual intercourse, casual sex, and even MSM on an experimental basis are happening within our neighbors.

REP. TEVES. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Lady from Iloilo.

REP. GARIN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, my dear colleague.

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, the Honorable Bello wishes to interpellate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Yes, the Honorable Bello is recognized.

REP. BELLO. Yes, I would just like to ask the Lady a few questions regarding her interpellations.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Lady has already taken her seat. I think so.

REP. BELLO. Thank you.

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of the Honorable Garin, together with the interpellations, to the appropriate committee.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, may I be allowed, with the permission of the Members, to greet some of the guests in the gallery from the Local Government Unit from Milaor, Camarines Sur, headed by Mayor Rogelio A. Flores.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Please rise to be recognized.

REP. ROMULO. Vice Mayor Andre Hidalgo, Municipal Kagawad Roberto Cano, Municipal Kagawad Senen Bermas, Municipal Kagawad Leodel Menes, Municipal Kagawad Anthony Reyes, ex-Municipal Kagawad Antonio Vida, ex-Mayor Angel Tanao-tanao and the Barangay Captains from the Municipality of Milaor. All are guests of Reps. Luis Villafuerte, Datu Arroyo and Felix Alfelor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

REP. CERILLES. Mr. Speaker.

REP. ROMULLO. Mr. Speaker, the Honorable Cerilles ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Honorable Cerilles of Zamboanga is recognized.

REP. CERILLES. May I rise on a question of personal and collective privilege, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). What is the reason of the Gentleman ...

REP. CERILLES. The basis of my personal and collective privilege is the article that appeared in today's *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, entitled, "Our Voters will Not Vote for Good Governance."

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Gentleman has 10 minutes.

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE OF REP. CERILLES

REP. CERILLES. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, my dear colleagues.

In today's paper, it appears that there were 10 "worst-governed" provinces in the Philippines for the year 2005. The year 2005 is the basis. And what I think is malicious, Mr. Speaker, is that the basis is 2005 and today is February 2, 2010. Unfortunately, one of the 10 provinces mentioned is the Province of Zamboanga del Sur, two others, with the provinces of Maguindanao, Camarines Sur, Masbate, Lanao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Camarines Norte, Zamboanga Sibuyan and Romblon.

According to this paper, the survey is based on the study measuring the good governance index (GGI) of 79 provinces all over the country. And the reason it appeared here is that it says, our voters do not vote for good governance. According to these papers, there were 10 governors who were doing their best or had done their best and yet they lost the 2007 election. The source of this news is supposed to be a certain Mr. Virola of the National Statistical Coordination Board or Secretary General, Dr. Romulo Virola.

I managed to read this paper, Mr. Speaker, because, first, I suspect that there is something malicious to it because I honestly believe that when the basis is 2005 and we are talking here of 2010, or five years ago, we need to know why all of a sudden this appeared in a daily paper of national circulation. That is a \$64 question.

So, I have to do my research, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, first, I checked the Local Poverty Index of the Philippines. The province of Zamboanga del Sur is not even in the top 10 of the poorest provinces. It is not even in the top 20. It is not even in the top 30. If I have to mention the top 10 poorest or where poverty incidence is prevalent: first, Sulu; second, Maguindanao; third, Masbate; fourth, Sarangani; fifth, Agusan del Sur; sixth, Sultan Kudarat; seventh, Lanao del Sur; eighth, Oriental Mindoro; ninth, Tawi-Tawi; and tenth, Cotabato. That is the top 10 list.

I read the thesis done by Dr. Romulo Virola, entitled, "The Best And Worst Provinces In The Philippines: What Happened To Their Leaders In The 2004 Elections?," co-authored by Severa de Costo, Joseph Addawe, Leonor G. Reyes, from the National Statistical Coordination Board, located at 403 Midland, Buendia Building, Senator Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City.

They say that good governance has become the latest buzz word not only in the public sector but also in the private sector. More than a decade since the implementation of the Local Government Code, local government units and executives have had excellent chances to improve the situation in their respective areas. Various indicators and measurement and methodologies have been developed in an attempt to quantify good governance and present a holistic picture of its impact in the provinces.

Mr. Speaker, I read the other index used like the Growth Competitive Index or GCI, the Human Development Network or Human Development Index, and the so-called Good Governance Framework, which use several statistics.

According to them, they covered three types of governance. First is economic governance with two areas: one, sustainable management of resources such as natural, financial and human; and two, enhanced government responsiveness to the poor. Second is political governance which includes the following areas of concern: improvement of internal and external security, law enforcement and administration of justice, and elimination of graft and corruption. Third is administrative governance which covers the areas of concern – efficiency in the delivery of services, improved transparency and accountability, continuous building of capacities, and expanded use of information and communication technology.

Mr. Speaker, let me go straight to the point. According to the study, the 10 best provinces in 2002 – eight in Luzon, one in Mindanao, and one in the Visayas are the Provinces of Laguna, Batanes, Rizal, Benguet, Cavite, Bulacan, Bataan, South Cotabato, Batangas, and Siquijor. Except for South Cotabato, according to this report, everybody did well in economic governance. South Cotabato was pulled up significantly by its telephone density index, with 181 telephone lines per thousand population, double the density of the entire country. And they used the benchmark for 2000. As a matter of fact, they came out with a report as to the 10 most improved provinces – five in Visayas, four in Mindanao, one in Luzon.

The 10 most improved provinces between 2000 to 2002 are: Aklan, Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Compostela Valley, Bohol, South Cotabato, Negros Occidental, Leyte, Sorsogon and Northern Samar.

Among the most improved five are from the Visayas, four from Mindanao and only one from Luzon.

They even came up with the 10 worst-governed provinces in 2002, namely: the Provinces of Masbate, Sulu, Maguindanao, Romblon, Northern Samar, Surigao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Sultan Kudarat, Camarines Norte and Sorsogon. What is bad to my mind, Mr. Speaker, is that they are being compared to the cities in the National Capital Region. According to the same report, three of the worst performing are from Mindanao, the provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Norte, Sulu and North Cotabato.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe in the latest news. First, the parameters for Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao are not the same. You improve the peace and order in Mindanao and maybe, the provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Tawi-tawi will be more improved than other provinces in Visayas and Luzon. As I would insist, the parameters are not correct. Talking here of density of telephone, Mr. Speaker, personally, I was in favor of that ZTE broadband because that could give a chance to the government to come into play in the fifth, fourth, and third class provinces in Mindanao because the original concern of this ZTE national broadband is that only first-class cities are supposed to be covered.

If we talk about health index, Mr. Speaker, look where medical centers and regional hospitals are located. Medical centers are located mostly in highly-urbanized cities. For example, in the island of Mindanao, where are the medical centers where the government spends billions of pesos? In my region, it is in Zamboanga City; in region 10 it is in Cagayan de Oro City; in Southern Mindanao, it is in Davao City; in Northern Caraga, it is in Butuan City. You go to other areas, in Visayas, for example, you see the medical center in Iloilo, you see the regional hospital in Bacolod City; regional medical center in Cebu; regional hospital in Dumaguete; and in Tagbilaran, you see the medical center in Tacloban. Only in big cities, Mr. Speaker.

In short, provinces are forced to invest in health care so they have to use their internal revenue allocation. That is why they cannot compete as far as infrastructure is concerned because they utilize most of their internal revenue allocation for the health care problem. That is why in the province of Zamboanga del Sur, Mr. Speaker, we have to adopt the scheme of bond flotation so that we can improve our medical services before. But, if you compare the investment that we have with the province of Zamboanga del Sur, governing the City of Zamboanga, they do not use any of their money to address the health problem because the national government is there and they are running the medical hospital in the City of Zamboanga.

When you talk about education, most of the state colleges and universities are located in big cities and not in rural areas. That is why richer provinces, like for example Rizal, Bulacan, Laguna and Cavite or Cebu do not spend on tertiary education because there are so many state colleges and universities located in rich provinces. That is why it is not balanced, Mr. Speaker. Poorer provinces or provinces located farther from regional growth areas have to invest more on education and also on health effectively just like the national government.

Because we borrow so much money, we also sacrifice 30 percent or 35 percent of our national budget which can be used for social services. But instead, look at our national government. They are spending 33 percent of our budget to pay our debt or "utang."

So, sometimes, in a way, Mr. Speaker, an index like this does not have the same parameters. For example, the reason we insisted on the Mindanao Economic Development Authority is that we want to have direct participation as far as the development of Mindanao is concerned. That is why, all of us Representatives from Mindanao have been pushing for that MEDA bill. I am happy that Representatives from Luzon and Visayas understood the plight of Mindanao and now it is almost to be signed. As a matter of fact, the head of the MEDA becomes a permanent sitting member in the NEDA board, which representation is needed by Mindanao.

What I am trying to say here, Mr. Speaker, is that first, it seems that the coming out of the publication is ill-timed—a few months before the election. Second, the basis of the so-called "good governance index" is 2005. It is now 2010. It is misleading, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, going through the pages, I have not seen the Province of Zamboanga del Sur but I can see other provinces. I am just surprised why my province is included among those 10 worst provinces when in their study, the Province of Zamboanga del Sur is not mentioned. The national government should be careful in coming out with data like this. It is not fair to people or public officials representing Mindanao. Even on the sharing or distribution of the IRA. Yes, that is correct, all Members of Congress have their own Congressional Development Fund. But if you count the number of Mindanaoans in the Senate wherein each is entitled to P200 million, how many of their members are from Mindanao? We speak of Senator Pimentel and Senator Zubiri. If they are utilizing their Congressional Development Fund or PDAF for Mindanao, that is P400 million additional for Mindanao.

But for Luzon, how many Senators are there from Luzon? More than 20. If all receive their Priority Development Assistance Fund, P200 million x 20 is P8 billion, Mr. Speaker. You add the number of medical hospitals that they have in Metro Manila. You add the number of state colleges and universities they have in Luzon. Then why should they point at Mindanao as less in governance when they also used peace and order as one of the indices for good governance? That is not fair, Mr. Speaker.

I challenge those public officials who claim that they come from the less-governed areas to go to Tawi-Tawi, Cebu, Maguindanao or Lanao del Sur. Compare our environment with yours. Go now, share your bounties with us, your resources. This is not fair, Mr. Speaker. That is why the coming out of the so-called report is ill-timed. As a matter of fact, there is no factual basis in their own documents.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the time.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Honorable Escudero is recognized.

REP. ESCUDERO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is our second to the last session day, the penultimate. Can we at least implement what the multi-

party caucus decided upon in five weeks which is to call the roll at five o'clock in the afternoon? At least, dalawang araw na lang tayó. Ipatupad naman natin.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Will the Floor Leader...

REP. SOON-RUIZ. I move to second the motion of...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, before we call the roll, may we refer the speech of the Honorable Cerilles to the appropriate committee.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Is there any objection to the motion? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

ROLL CALL

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we call the roll.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General will please call the roll.

The Secretary General called the roll, and the result is as follows, per Journal No. 39:*

| | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Abayon | Clarete |
| Ablan | Climaco |
| Agbayani | Cojuangco |
| Albano | Colmenares |
| Almario | Coscolluela |
| Alvarez (G.) | Cruz-Gonzales |
| Amatong | Cuenco |
| Angara | Datumanong |
| Antonino-Custodio | Dayanghirang |
| Apostol | Daza |
| Arnaiz | De Guzman |
| Arroyo (I.) | Defensor (A.) |
| Arroyo (M.L.) | Dela Cruz |
| Balindong | Del Mar |
| Bello | Del Rosario |
| Belmonte | Diaz |
| Binay | Domogan |
| Biron | Dueñas |
| Britanico | Dumarpa |
| Cabilao | Ecleo |
| Cagas | Emano |
| Cajes | Enverga |
| Canonigo | Escudero |
| Cari | Estrella (C.) |
| Cayetano | Francisco |
| Celeste | Fua |
| Cerilles | Garcia (A.) |
| Chiongbian | Garcia (P.) |
| Chong | Garcia (P.J.) |
| Chungalao | Garcia (V.) |

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| Garin | Palatino |
| Go | Palparan |
| Golez | Pancho |
| Gonzales (N.) | Pancrudo |
| Hernandez | Piamonte |
| Hofer | Ping-ay |
| Ilagan | Piñol |
| Jaafar | Plaza |
| Jalosjos | Ramiro |
| Jalosjos-Carreon | Remulla |
| Javier | Reyes (C.) |
| Jikiri | Reyes (V.) |
| Joson | Robes |
| Lacson-Noel | Rodriguez |
| Lagman | Rodriguez-Zaldarriaga |
| Lapus | Roman |
| Lazatin | Romualdez |
| Limkaichong | Romualdo |
| Locsin | Romulo |
| Madrona | Roxas |
| Maglunsod | Salimbangon |
| Magsaysay | San Luis |
| Malapitan | Santos |
| Mandanans | Sarmiento III |
| Mangudadatu | Seachon-Lanete |
| Marcoleta | Silverio |
| Mariano | Singson (E.) |
| Matugas | Soon-Ruiz |
| Mendoza (M.) | Sy-Alvarado |
| Mendoza (V.) | Syjuco |
| Mercado | Tañada |
| Montemayor | Teodoro |
| Nicolas | Teves |
| Noel | Tupas |
| Ocampo | Umali (A.) |
| Olaño | Uy (E.) |
| Ong | Valencia |
| Ortega (F.) | Villafuerte |
| Ortega (V.) | Villarosa |
| Osabel | Vinzons-Chato |
| Pablo | Zialcita |
| Padilla | Zubiri |
| Paez | |

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. The House is in receipt of the official notice of absence of the following Members: Reps. Diasnes, Macapagal Arroyo, Mendoza (M.), Ponce-Enrile,, Seares-Luna, Yap and Zamora (M.).

The roll call shows that 145 Members responded to the call.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). With 145 Members present, the Chair declares the presence of a quorum.

REP. PIAMONTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of personal and collective privilege on my behalf, as a Member of this House, representing the A Teacher Party-List, of which I am the founding Chairman and President. I rise also, on behalf of the Members of this House who helped our party-list in the last May 2007 elections, and who continuously support us to this day.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Honorable Piamonte has 10 minutes.

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE OF REP. PIAMONTE

REP. PIAMONTE. Since I assumed office in this House, sometime in July 2007, I have been beset by many detractors who relentlessly spread blatant lies and malicious allegations against me, which have seriously damaged my integrity as a Member of this House, as head of my party-list and as a well-known personality in the education sector. I am so saddened that among my detractors are well-known educators, some of whom are Catholic and religious educators. It pains me no end that the values taught to me by the Catholic schools where I studied are no longer the same values that my detractors are exhibiting today. For so long, I have chosen to remain silent and did not react nor dignify the vicious attacks on my integrity, hoping that in due time, these attacks will subside and fade away.

However, as time went by, and contrary to my expectations, the vicious attacks have intensified to a level that I can no longer tolerate and bear. The blatant lies and malicious allegations have been spread far and wide through the help of technology, such as the Internet and e-mails, and so my friends and relatives who heard about them have asked me to come out and respond because my continuing silence might be misconstrued as my affirmation of the allegations.

Before I reveal who my detractors are and their baseless allegations against me, let me share with you the brief history of the A Teacher Party-List. In May 1996, the board of directors of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines appointed me as the executive director, succeeding Mrs. Carolina Porio, who in turn, succeeded Atty. Ulan Sarmiento III. I had been one of the longest-serving members of the CEAP board, representing Region XI since 1984. Since the CEAP President at that time also served as the Chairman of the coordinating council of the Philippines, I was also designated as the COCOPEA Executive Director, coterminous with the Chairman.

Since 1986, I represented both the CEAP and COCOPEA in many public hearings conducted by the Committees on Education in both Houses of Congress. Hoping that I could be more effective in defending the welfare of private education and strengthening its complementary role in public education, I and my colleague in COCOPEA, Mr. Fabian Quitales, Executive Director of the Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities or ACSCU, introduced to the COCOPEA Board, sometime in year 2003, the idea of an educators' party-list. Some COCOPEA Board Members expressed some reservations in forming the said party-list using COCOPEA as its sector because COCOPEA might not be considered by the COMELEC as a marginalized sector due to the fact that its Board of Directors is composed of the heads of some of the biggest private schools in the country. The proposal, therefore, was set aside.

Sometime in year 2004, Mrs. Carolina Porio, Executive Director of FAPE, revived the idea of an educators' party-list group and sought my assistance. Both of us, including her bestfriend, Ms. Juliet Cortuna, decided to push through with the formation of a party-list group. After some meetings of FAPE and gathering of some information materials from the

COMELEC regarding party-list accreditation, we firmed up our plans. We wanted to have our party-list incorporated and SEC-registered in order to have a legal personality and to raise funds and issue official receipts. We needed also a minimum of five incorporators and directors as required by the SEC as well as a minimum of five party-list nominees as required by the COMELEC. Mrs. Porio suggested to invite her two friends, Atty. Ulpiano Sarmiento III of San Beda College and Dr. Nenita Habulan of De La Salle University to join our group. I formulated the party-list name "Advocacy for Teachers' Empowerment through Action, Cooperation and Harmony towards Educational Reforms" with the acronym A TEACHER. I also prepared all the documents submitted to the SEC and the COMELEC with the help of some group members, except Atty. Sarmiento, who was always absent in our meetings.

Ms. Juliet Cortuna advanced the membership contributions of the group members as capital of the association, duly deposited in a bank account to be shown to the SEC. Ms. Cortuna also paid the cost of the publication in two newspapers of national circulation of our petition to the COMELEC for party-list accreditation. The A TEACHER was SEC-registered as a non-stock, non-profit organization on July 30, 2004 and accredited by the COMELEC as a party-list on February 12, 2007 to participate in the 2007 elections.

The five of us, namely, myself, Atty. Sarmiento, Mrs. Porio, Dr. Habulan and Ms. Cortuna, served as the incorporators and board members of A TEACHER, with myself elected as founding Chairman and President. We also served as party-list nominees of the A TEACHER Party-List, ranked in that order. Let it be noted that when the A TEACHER was organized as a non-stock, non-profit organization and as a party-list, we did it in our private capacities, not as representatives of any organization such as the CEAP, COCOPEA, FAPE or any school.

After the COMELEC accreditation, we launched our national campaign in Bacolod City through a motorcade organized by Pastor Exequiel Guanzon, our regional A TEACHER Coordinator for Region VI. Upon recommendation of Mrs. Carolina Porio, we set up our national campaign secretariat in Makati at the ground floor of Concord Condominium where FAPE Executive Director holds office on the seventh floor.

The campaign secretariat was composed of a campaign director, assistant director and around half a dozen staff. We also raised donations from various donors, including educational associations and institutions supportive of our cause. The total amount raised was around P3.5 million, half of which was raised by me – from educational associations and other sources. Some board members also spent personal money for the campaign. Ms. Juliet Cortuna spent the most, followed by myself and then by Mrs. Porio. All campaign expenses which totaled more than P5 million were duly reported to the COMELEC.

During the campaign period, most campaign efforts throughout the country were done by Mrs. Cortuna and myself because Mrs. Porio was advised by her doctor not to travel due to the recurrence of her stage 3 to 4 breast cancer while Atty. Sarmiento was reported to be taking vacation with his family in the United States of America, and Dr. Habulan was taking her sabbatical leave also in the United States of America. Both Atty. Sarmiento and Dr. Habulan returned home

and joined the campaign in the last few weeks before the elections when the A TEACHER Party-List ranked among the top 10 in the surveys of SWS and Pulse Asia. During the campaign period, some board members complained about the absence of Atty. Sarmiento in group meetings and campaign activities. Some board members commented, "Must we hand in to Atty. Sarmiento the second nomination on a silver platter? He must campaign and spend as much as we do to deserve his nomination. It is not fair to those of us who are not even nominated in the top three (3)."

Despite our limited campaign funds and preparations and the lack of well-organized national campaign machinery, the A TEACHER Party-List won. Thanks to the help of the private schools, especially the ESC and participating schools, of the COCOPEA, CEAP, CEM and other organizations and individuals. The A TEACHER ranked no. 6 in the elections with total votes of almost half a million. However, it obtained only one (1) seat, which I assumed as the first party-list nominee.

Soon after I assumed office in Congress, Atty. Sarmiento and Mrs. Carol Porio were very much disappointed for not being able to sit in Congress. Atty. Sarmiento started telling people in the academe, "Hindi naman si Mr. Piamonte ang dapat makaupo diyan. Ako ang first nominee. Pero nakatalikod lang ako sandali para magpunta sa Amerika, pinalitan ako at ako'y naging second nominee." Mrs. Porio was also quoted to have said, "Si Atty. Sarmiento at hindi si Mr. Piamonte ang dapat unang makaupo sa Kongreso dahil mas qualified siya at abugado." Of course I was terribly hurt by these blatant lies being spread around. Atty. Sarmiento knew from the very beginning that he was the second nominee even if he did not deserve it because he was not one of the three (3) original founders of A TEACHER and he did very little in terms of election campaign efforts and expenses compared to other board members.

Mrs. Porio also knew about this and should not belittle my qualifications because academically I excelled in all levels from elementary up to graduate school, including law school at the Ateneo de Davao University where I graduated at the top of my class and delivered the message to the graduates during the university graduation. When I studied law, I was working full-time as Executive Director of the Davao Association of Colleges and Schools and part-time Mathematics instructor at the Ateneo de Davao as well as research and statistics instructor in three (3) graduate schools in Davao City. I also obtained my Master of Science in Educational Management at De La Salle University with straight A+ grades in all subjects. Mrs. Porio should not belittle my academic qualifications because she herself has not finished her masteral degree and we can verify this at the De La Salle University Graduate School.

Also, during the first A TEACHER board meeting after my assumption to office, we evaluated our election campaign performance including that of our campaign secretariat. The board felt that had some board members, especially the second nominee, Atty. Sarmiento, worked harder, the party-list could have earned more seats in Congress. The board also considered that the campaign secretariat did not perform well and only wasted our campaign funds by dining on sumptuous meals and snacks from Via Marie, Jollibee, McDonalds and other famous food outlets while many of our campaigners in the rural areas survived on poor man's food. Ms. Porio who disbursed our campaign funds did not provide financial support to our campaign coordinators except for a few favored ones...

REP. LOCSIN. Mr. Speaker.

REP. PIAMONTE. ... like Dr. Levita Castro of Region II.

REP. LOCSIN. Mr. Speaker, how many more...

REP. PIAMONTE. But what dismayed our board members was when we discovered that Ms. Porio disbursed hundreds of thousands to anonymous payees for what she claimed as "vote protection expenses." We asked her...

REP. LOCSIN. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Yes, the Honorable Locsin is recognized.

REP. PIAMONTE. ... who the payees are, which until now she refuses to reveal. Some board members...

REP. LOCSIN. Mr. Speaker, by the way, I am recognized.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Honorable Locsin is recognized.

REP. LOCSIN. I would like to know how much longer this exciting history is going to continue because with my heart condition, I do not know if I can take the suspense. What is the final conclusion of his long history so we can get on to other business?

REP. PIAMONTE. Mr. Speaker, ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). May I ask the Honorable Marcoleta ...

REP. PIAMONTE. ... let me finish first.

REP. GONZALES (N.). Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Yes, the Sr. Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GONZALES (N.). The Gentleman from the party-list A TEACHER has been recognized on a question of personal and collective privilege.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Yes.

REP. GONZALES (N.). And he has the floor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. LOCSIN. But for how long will he have the floor?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Chair gave him 10 minutes and ...

REP. LOCSIN. How many minutes have passed? Thirty minutes have passed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). So, the time of the Gentleman has lapsed.

REP. PIAMONTE. May I ask for an extension. It is my time.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Gentleman will please wind up his speech.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker.

REP. LOCSIN. The suspense is killing us.

REP. PIAMONTE. During our board meetings, shouting matches were usually initiated by Atty. Sarmiento who made insulting remarks to some of our ladies who sometimes cried in humiliation. The insulted board members no longer want to attend meetings for the next two (2) years because they feel that they are not psychologically ready to face Atty. Sarmiento. And so, as Chairman and President of the party-list, I have no choice but to make unilateral decisions in consultation with some board members on party-list matters.

The party-list continues to operate and provide services and training programs as well as implement our various projects. Our party-list, as shown in its performance report over the last two and a half years, accomplished a lot compared to other party-lists groups. Yet, Atty. Sarmiento and Mrs. Porio spread talks that “sinosolo ko ang pagpapatakbo ng party-list.” What do they expect me to do under a crisis situation when they themselves did not offer to help me ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Please wind up the speech.

REP. PIAMONTE. ... but instead continued to discredit me to other people and malign my character? Mrs. Porio was supposed to be A TEACHER Executive Director, yet she never set foot on our A TEACHER National Office in Cubao, Quezon City to perform her duties. I thought that my main detractors were only Atty. Sarmiento and Mrs. Porio. To my surprise, I learned that Msgr. Gerardo “Gerry” Santos has joined them in the hate campaign against me.

Msgr. “Gerry” Santos is the current President of the CEAP and former Chairman of the COCOPEA. He is also the President of MAPSA. Let it be noted that Atty. Sarmiento was a former legal counsel of MAPSA and board member of CEAP. In COCOPEA and CEAP board meetings, Msgr. “Gerry” was reported to have insisted that A TEACHER be made accountable to COCOPEA and CEAP because of their support to the former during the May 2007 elections. He also insisted that COCOPEA and CEAP must have a say on who should sit in the party-list and how the pork barrel projects be implemented.

Some COCOPEA and CEAP board members were reported to be uncomfortable with Msgr. “Gerry’s” statements. Some asked why should COCOPEA and CEAP interfere with the affairs of A TEACHER which is a separate corporation and entity and whose establishments, COCOPEA and CEAP were never part of?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). May I remind the Gentleman that his time has elapsed.

REP. PIAMONTE. May I ask for a short extension, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Just for one minute, to wind up his speech.

REP. PIAMONTE. Ten minutes.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). One minute.

REP. PIAMONTE. Ten minutes, please.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker.

REP. PIAMONTE. Because in the past, Mr. Speaker ...

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker.

REP. PIAMONTE. ... there were those who were given very long period and I rarely make privilege speeches and therefore I ask ...

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Sr. Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GONZALES (N.) I move that the time of the Gentleman be extended by another 10 minutes. I so move.

REP. LOCSIN. I object. It is too long. We have the last two days of Congress.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). There is an objection from ...

REP. LOCSIN. Unless there is a move here to delay important bills that need to be acted on, there is no explanation for another 10-minute extension.

REP. GONZALES. Mr. Speaker, before we vote on the motion, just to briefly respond, there were several and numerous instances where Members were allowed extensions, in fact, more than 10 minutes, and more than several extensions. And I do not see the reason the same privilege could not be accorded to the party-list Member who was recognized on a question of personal and collective privilege. But there being an objection, Mr. Speaker, I move that we vote on the ...

REP. LOCSIN. If I may answer that, I will answer that. The answer to that is that on any other occasion throughout the past three years, you could ask for any extension. By the way, I never did. I confined my insults to 15 or 30 seconds and no more. In all that time, you can have all the extensions you want. These are the last two days and there are critical bills that need to be addressed. That is why he should be denied his 10 minutes. I am not going to waste any more the time of this Congress. I just want you to know that this is a delaying tactic.

Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). We will now proceed to the...

REP. ESCUDERO. Mr. Speaker.

REP. GONZALES (N.). There is a motion to extend and that has been ...

REP. ESCUDERO. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Honorable Escudero is recognized.

REP. ESCUDERO. I join the Gentleman from Makati for a different reason. I find this a very sad day. Teachers, educators washing dirty linen in public. I am a teacher-politician and this is a very sad day not only for the House of Representatives but for the whole country. If our teachers are behaving like this, what can we expect of our students, pupils? To say the least, nakakahiya, nakakadiri, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). There is a motion to vote on the issue of extension.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). As many as are in favor, please say *aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). As many as are against, please say *nay*.

FEW MEMBERS. *Nay*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The *ayes* have it, the Gentleman may continue.

REP. PIAMONTE. In a recent COCOPEA Kapihan with A Teacher, where myself, Atty Sarmiento and Mrs. Porio were the panel of resource persons, Atty. Sarmiento and Mrs. Porio insisted that A Teacher is subordinate to COCOPEA because of the latter's support to the former and suggested that COCOPEA supervise the A Teacher general assembly and elections. I vehemently opposed Atty. Sarmiento and Mrs. Porio's view and suggestion because I maintained the position that COCOPEA and the A Teacher must be treated as partners. Relative to the CEAP support to the A Teacher, I said that all that I asked from then CEAP President was a letter of endorsement and appeal for support to the A Teacher which was sent to all member schools. I also said that for delicadeza, being the then CEAP Executive Director, I did not ask for a single centavo of support because for me the CEAP President's endorsement was enough. However, my statement was taken out of context and was interpreted by Atty. Sarmiento, Mrs. Porio and the CEAP secretariat officers as a manifestation of my non-recognition of CEAP's help. I had a copy of the tape recorded of the proceedings of the said Kapihan, and clearly, I did not say that I did not recognize the CEAP's help. They were putting words into my mouth

because they were always biased against me. They continue to picture me as a *persona non-grata* to CEAP.

I am truly hurt by this. May I remind my detractors in CEAP that when I took over as CEAP Executive Director in 1995, CEAP was totally bankrupt. Atty. Sarmiento and Mrs. Porio were the CEAP Executive Director and Executive Secretary, respectively, who managed the CEAP National Secretariat. All the money of the CEAP in the amount of around P13,500,000 were stolen right under their noses. Atty. Sarmiento recommended to the CEAP board the appointment of his best friend, Mr. Ricardo Sison, as CEAP controller. Mr. Sison, without the knowledge of the CEAP board, included his name as one of the authorized bank signatories in the board resolution designating the signatories after it was notarized. The executive director was always an ex-officio signatory and two signatories were always required. Mr. Sison also included his signature, in the signature cards after they were signed by the authorized signatories. Because of too much confidence in his friend, Atty. Sarmiento signed several blank checks with vouchers containing complete details. Then, subsequently, Mr. Sison wrote any amount on the blank checks and affixed his signature thus enabling him to steal all the money and even leaving CEAP payables amounting to a million pesos to office suppliers and other creditors. The CEAP board formed an investigation committee composed of Bro. Rolando Dizon, FSC, then CEAP Vice-President, as chairman, and two board members, including myself. After a thorough investigation, the committee recommended to the CEAP board that Atty. Sarmiento be asked to resign for two reasons. One, command responsibility for being the head of the secretariat and a CEAP bank signatory, and for signing blank checks despite the fact that he was a lawyer.

Mrs. Porio was asked to replace Atty. Sarmiento as CEAP Executive Director. Shortly after, she resigned and I was unanimously appointed by the CEAP board as her successor. Some stolen money of the CEAP were recovered through the help of then CEAP Retirement Program Chairman, Bro. Andrew Gonzales, who pressured the trustee bank of the retirement program to help restore the stolen money. The bank manager was in cahoots with the the CEAP controller who ran away with the money. Unfortunately, the recovered money was invested, although in good faith, by the succeeding finance officers in an investment house which eventually collapsed. I helped recover the lost money of the CEAP so that when I resigned as CEAP Executive Director in July 2007 to assume my present position in Congress, I left the CEAP some P45 million in assets which included more than P30 million in cash. Also from July 2007 to April 2008, because the CEAP board could not find a qualified person to succeed me, I continued to help the CEAP Secretariat by providing guidance and consultancy to the staff *pro bono*, without compensation, to enable the secretariat to function well. To my detractors in the CEAP, you are the *persona non grata* to me and not the other way around. I call on the CEAP Secretariat to stop sowing baseless and malicious intrigues against me because by doing so, you are degrading the integrity of that office before the eyes of the Catholic schools and the academic community.

On April 21, 2009, the Supreme Court ruled on a petition filed by the Bayan Muna, A Teacher and Abono and other party-lists, allowing 32 new Party-list Representatives to be proclaimed as additional Members of this House, raising the

total number of Party-list Representatives from 22 to 54, thus fulfilling the constitutional mandate that 20 percent of the Members of the House of Representatives shall be Party-list Representatives.

The A Teacher was fortunately granted a second seat, and thus, its second nominee, Atty. Ulpiano Sarmiento III, was subsequently sworn in as its second Party-list Representative. He should have been happy and contented that at long last, his dream of becoming a Congressman was fulfilled. Instead, he and his fellow detractors continued with their hate campaign against me, and even with the extent of planning to remove me as Chairman and first nominee of my party-list.

Surprisingly, sometime in August 2009, Mrs. Carol Porio suggested to me and the other board members that it was time that I convene the A Teacher Board because of the need for reconciliation among board members and the need to plan for a long overdue A Teacher general assembly in preparation for the May 10, 2010 elections. In good faith, I agreed. So, we held our board meeting on September 5, 2009, where all the board members were present. In the said meeting, after the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting, our treasurer, Mrs. Cortuna, presented the A Teacher financial report, after which she asked Atty. Ulan Sarmiento about his P100,000 monthly contribution to the A Teacher national office operation which he should have given since the time he started receiving his monthly operating budget of more than P300,000, retroactive to the time he assumed his office in April 2009. Mrs. Cortuna said that it was so unfair that the board required me, Representative Piamonte, to immediately share P100,000 monthly contribution to the National Office as soon as I started to receive my monthly operating budget from Congress, and the board would not require the same from Atty. Sarmiento. Before Atty. Sarmiento could reply to Mrs. Cortuna's query, Mrs. Porio said, "Huwag muna ngayon kasi marami pa siyang mga utang na binabayaran sa akin. Malaki pa ang kanyang utang." Dr. Habulan stood up and said, "Ano ba iyan? Pera ng gobyerno, pambayad pala ng personal na utang." Instead of spontaneously refuting Mrs. Porio's and Dr. Habulan's remarks, Atty. Sarmiento told Mrs. Cortuna, "Mag-usap na lang tayo tungkol diyan. Saka ko na lang ibibigay ang aking mga resibo."

Until now, Atty. Sarmiento has never given even a single centavo contribution to the A Teacher national office. Neither did he make a financial statement on his operating budget, like what I did in previous board meetings. I was struck by what Mrs. Porio said, because even before she could sit in Congress as a Party-list Representative, she was already thinking of misusing government funds. Her undesirable values were revealed in her unguarded moments through her tactless statements. How dare her accuse me of corruption in my government funds and pork barrel!

In that same meeting, Atty. Sarmiento insisted that a general assembly and elections be held because the present board was on a hold-over capacity and that the general Assembly should have been held on the 3rd Wednesday of May 2009 as provided in the by-Laws. Dr. Habulan asked Atty. Sarmiento whether there was a possibility that some of the board members might be removed or not elected during the elections, and he replied, "Yes." He forewarned the board that if his suggestions would not be followed, the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) might oppose our COMELEC

accreditation and ask the COMELEC to look into our operations. He also threatened to ask the SEC to order the conduct of the general assembly and supervise the same. Ms. Cortuna reacted that if Atty. Sarmiento would cause trouble in the association, the board might as well consider dissolving the party-list. I pacified them and then proceeded with the meeting. Mrs. Porio stressed the need to reorganize and regionalize the association to have a better preparation for the coming elections, and suggested that regional assemblies be held prior to the general assembly. Considering that regional assemblies could be more expensive and time-consuming for the board members to attend, the board decided that only the general assembly will be held because this is a requirement in the by-Laws. The board also clarified the role of ESC-EVS coordinators in the coming elections. Some board members expressed reservations in their involvement because of their divided loyalty between the FAPE and the A Teacher. Atty. Ulan Sarmiento insisted that we cannot remove the ESC-EVS coordinators as A Teacher coordinators because their names have been submitted to the COMELEC in the past 2007 election. Regarding the party-list nominations to be submitted to the COMELEC, some board members suggested that a status quo be maintained, that is, the present nominees be retained and ranked the same, and that the general assembly be asked to approve the suggestion for formality.

In the same meeting, Ms. Porio revealed that DepEd Undersecretary Sunga wanted to be one of the nominees of our A Teacher Party-List. She further said: "Atin-atin lang ito ha? Off the record. Sa totoo lang, si DepEd Secretary Jesli Lapus ang talagang may gustong maging party-list nominee, dahil hindi siya siguradong mananalo sa pagka-senador. Tulungan naman ninyo ako dahil boss ko siya sa FAPE." Some board members reacted by saying that in choosing nominees, we should give priority to our board members and regional coordinators who worked hard during the last elections ...

REP. ESCUDERO. Mr. Speaker, ...

REP. PIAMONTE. ... and thereafter continue to work for the party-list.

REP. ESCUDERO. Mr. Speaker, ...

REP. PIAMONTE. The board declined Mrs. Porio's request and directed her to inform the ...

REP. ESCUDERO. Mr. Speaker, ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Gentleman's time has expired.

REP. PIAMONTE. ... DepEd Secretary and Undersecretary concerned ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). May I remind the Gentleman that his time has expired.

REP. PIAMONTE. I ask for 10 more minutes.

REP. ESCUDERO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn the session.

REP. PIAMONTE. Ten minutes more, Mr. Speaker.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The session is suspended.

It was 6:08 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 6:30 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The session is resumed.

Majority Leader.

REP. PIAMONTE. Mr. Speaker, I will go direct to my...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Gentleman will please wind up his speech.

REP. PIAMONTE. Mr. Speaker, I will go to my concluding statement, but I would like to ask that the rest of my privilege speech be inserted in today's Journal or Record.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Yes, the Gentleman's speech will be inserted in the Record.*

REP. PIAMONTE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Atty. Ulan Sarmiento, Mrs. Porio, Monsignor "Gerry" Santos and all others who believe their lies and now have also become detractors like them who continue to backstab me and malign my integrity, spreading baseless and malicious allegations about my misuse of government funds and pork barrel to my detractors, I say, face me in the open and bring out your evidence. Let us debate fair and square on your allegations. If you cannot put up, just shut up.

Mrs. Carol Porio, instead of attending to the problem of FAPE, especially the delayed releases of payments to the ESC-EVS participating schools, is busy pressuring our ESC-EVS coordinators to resign as A TEACHER coordinators and also pressuring the ESC-EVS participating schools not to support the A TEACHER in the coming elections. There are reports that FAPE is causing the delay in submitting the ESC-EVS documents to the DepEd, which in turn cannot request the DBM for prompt fund releases. Mrs. Porio should be investigated by the appropriate committee of this House because her office is paid more than enough service fees to do her job relative to the ESC-EVS implementation.

Since Atty. Ulan Sarmiento and Mrs. Porio have resigned as A TEACHER board members and party-list nominees, they could no longer benefit from A TEACHER Party-List as such, and therefore their ultimate agenda now is to destroy the A TEACHER Party-List and prevent its reelection so that no one else will benefit. What they do not realize is that the ultimate victim of their evil scheme of eliminating the A TEACHER Party-List is actually the private education sector, especially the small schools. The A TEACHER Party-List is the only party-list which can fully guarantee that the interest

and welfare of private education, as complementary partners of public education will be promoted and defended in Congress.

I therefore call on Representative Sarmiento to resign from A TEACHER Party-List for he no longer has the moral right to represent the party-list that he is trying to destroy. The A TEACHER board has recently withdrawn its recognition of Representative Sarmiento as its second party-list Representative in this House.

I also call on CEAP, COCOPEA and other organizations and educators to stop listening to my detractors and playing into their hands. Give me a chance to be heard, to tell my side of the story. I am not asking you to take sides with me. All that I ask is for you to be fair, honest and just in making judgments to the A TEACHER Party-List and its board members, in accordance with the Christian values that we are all expected to promote among our students. Let us not be hypocrites, but be real educators who live the values that we teach.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you my colleagues, for your kind indulgence.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Majority Leader.

REP. CERILLES. Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAFUERTE. Mr. Speaker.

REP. SARMIENTO. Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAFUERTE. May I be recognized.

REP. CERILLES. Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAFUERTE. Mr. Speaker.

REP. SARMIENTO. Just a short manifestation.

REP. VILLAFUERTE. I would just like to make a parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Honorable Villafuerte.

REP. VILLAFUERTE. You know, Mr. Speaker, I would also...

REP. CERILLES. Mr. Speaker, I have also the right to interpellate the Gentleman from the party-list A TEACHER.

REP. VILLAFUERTE. Mr. Speaker.

REP. CERILLES. I would like to reserve my right to interpellate the Gentleman from the party-list.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). We will make that reservation.

REP. CERILLES. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* See ANNEXES (printed separately)

REP. VILLAFUERTE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to urge the Sr. Dep. Majority Leader that we go back to the basics of the session, at least, that we should tackle the Reference of Business.

REP. GONZALES (N.). Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Majority Leader.

REP. VILLAFUERTE. Mr. Speaker, there are committee reports that require urgent and priority reference to the Committee on Rules ...

REP. GONZALES (N.). Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAFUERTE. ... because tomorrow will be our last day, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GONZALES (N.). Mr. Speaker, if we are to talk about the basic principle in the Rules or in the session, the Gentleman from the party-list stood on a question of personal and collective privilege. In the hierarchy of motions, it is a privileged motion, Mr. Speaker. That is why we were not able to go to the ordinary Order of Business, which includes the Reference of Business, because the matter of personal and collective privilege is a privileged motion.

REP. SARMIENTO. Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAFUERTE. Mr. Speaker, I accede to the explanation of the Sr. Dep. Majority Leader but since my colleague just concluded his privilege speech, I decided to stand up and make a request that we now go back to the Reference of Business.

REP. SARMIENTO. Mr. Speaker.

REP. CERILLES. Mr. Speaker, ...

REP. SARMIENTO. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Majority Leader.

REP. CERILLES. ... I made a reservation a while ago, Mr. Speaker. When I stood ahead of the Gentleman from Camarines Sur, my intention was to interpellate the Representative of party-list A TEACHER.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). The Chair has recognized the Gentleman's request. We can go back to...

REP. SARMIENTO. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). But the other thing is that the Honorable Piamonte has already taken his seat.

REP. SARMIENTO. Mr. Speaker.

REP. CERILLES. If I will not be allowed to interpellate, do we have the numbers to transact business?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Is the Gentleman questioning the quorum?

REP. CERILLES. Obviously, because another Gentleman was asking for the ...

REP. SARMIENTO. Mr. ...

ROLL CALL

REP. CERILLES. I have the highest privilege, Mr. Speaker. I am now questioning the quorum.

I move that we call the roll.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General will please call the roll.

The Secretary General called the roll, and the result is as follows, per Journal No. 39:

| | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Abaya | Garcia (A.) |
| Agbayani | Garin |
| Albano | Go |
| Alcala | Golez |
| Alvarez (G.) | Gonzales (A.) |
| Antonino-Custodio | Gonzales (N.) |
| Arnaiz | Ilagan |
| Arquiza | Jaafar |
| Asilo | Javier |
| Balindong | Jikiri |
| Bello | Joson |
| Binay | Lagman |
| Biron | Lazatin |
| Britanico | Leonen-Pizarro |
| Canonigo | Limkaichong |
| Cari | Madrona |
| Cayetano | Maglunsod |
| Cerilles | Magsaysay |
| Chipeco | Mandanas |
| Cojuangco | Marañon |
| Coscolluela | Mariano |
| Crisologo | Mercado |
| Cruz-Gonzales | Montejo |
| Dangwa | Montemayor |
| Datumanong | Nava |
| De Guzman | Omar |
| Del Mar | Ong |
| Del Rosario | Ortega (F.) |
| Dilangalen | Osabel |
| Dy | Padilla |
| Emano | Paez |
| Escudero | Palatino |
| Estrella (C.) | Pancho |
| Estrella (R.) | Piamonte |
| Ferrer | Ping-ay |
| Francisco | Piñol |
| Fua | Ramiro |

Reyes (V.)
Robes
Rodriguez
Roman
Romualdo
Romulo
San Luis
Sarmiento
Singson (E.)
Sy-Alvarado
Tañada

Teves
Tomawis
Tupas
Umali (A.)
Ungab
Valencia
Velarde
Villarosa
Vinzons-Chato
Zialcita

The roll call shows that 95 Members responded to the call.

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson, E.). With only 95 Members responding to the call and for lack of quorum, the session is adjourned until four o'clock tomorrow.

It was 6:49 p.m.

