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House of Representatives

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Monday, February 5, 2018

No. 58

CALL TO ORDER

At 4:00 p.m., Deputy Speaker Bai Sandra Sinsuat A. Sema called the session to order.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The session is called to order.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Everybody is requested to rise for the singing of the National Anthem.

Everybody rose to sing the Philippine National Anthem.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Please remain standing for the Invocation to be led by Rep. Jericho Jonas B. Nograles.

Everybody remained standing for the Invocation.

INVOCATION

REP. NOGRALES (J.). Almighty God, our Father, as we implore Your aid to build a just and humane society, we humbly ask that You inspire us with Your grace. Bless the Legislators and the Secretariat of the House of Representatives, the House of the People, that we may never forget our fundamental responsibility to be stewards of the Filipino people.

The Seventeenth Congress is at its halfway point and there are greater challenges ahead. We thank You for the opportunity to make meaningful change through our work. May these changes always be for the better. So, we ask, Lord, that You guide us so we may have the patience to discern Your holy will and through this discernment, may we obtain the wisdom and strength to do Your bidding. Amen.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Majority Leader is recognized.

ROLL CALL

REP. MERCADO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we call the roll.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER. (Rep. Sema). 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 reflected in Journal No. 58, dated February 5, 2018.**

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. The roll call shows that 229 Members responded to the call.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). With 229 Members present, the Chair declares the presence of a quorum.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL.

REP. MERCADO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we approve Journal No. 57, dated January 31, 2018.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; Journal No. 57, dated January 31, 2018, is hereby approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MERCADO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we proceed to the Reference of Business.

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

The Secretary General will please read the Reference of Business.

* See ANNEX (printed separately)

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary General read the following House Bills and Resolutions on First Reading, Communications and Subpoena Duces Tecum, and the Deputy Speaker made the corresponding references:

BILLS ON FIRST READING

House Bill No. 7049, entitled:
“AN ACT DECLARING THE PROVINCE OF CAMARINES NORTE AS THE SURFING CAPITAL OF THE BICOL REGION”
By Representative Panotes
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM

House Bill No. 7050, entitled:
“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE ESPERANZA – PLACER PROVINCIAL ROAD, PROVINCE OF MASBATE INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”
By Representative Lanete
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

House Bill No. 7051, entitled:
“AN ACT GRANTING ADDITIONAL BENEFITS AND PRIVILEGES TO SENIOR CITIZENS, FURTHER AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9994, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS ‘EXPANDED SENIOR CITIZENS ACT OF 2010’ ”
By Representative Lanete
TO THE COMMITTEE ON POPULATION AND FAMILY RELATIONS

House Bill No. 7052, entitled:
“AN ACT REQUIRING THE DECLARATION OF THE VALUE OF IMPORTED GOODS IN COMMERCIAL DOCUMENTS AND PROHIBITING FRAUDULENT ALTERATION OF CARGO MANIFEST, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10863, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘CUSTOMS MODERNIZATION AND TARIFF ACT’ ”
By Representative Marcoleta
TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

House Bill No. 7053, entitled:
“AN ACT EXCLUDING THE SERVICES PERFORMED BY EMPLOYEES OF RELIGIOUS ENTITIES FROM EMPLOYMENT SERVICES COVERED

BY SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM LAW, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8282 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘SOCIAL SECURITY ACT OF 1997’ ”
By Representatives Benitez, Nograles (K.A.), Vergara and Marcoleta
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ENTERPRISES AND PRIVATIZATION

House Bill No. 7055, entitled:
“AN ACT STANDARDIZING THE COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE (COLA) TO SEVENTEEN PERCENT (17%) OF MINIMUM WAGE AND EXTENDING THE SAME TO THE GOVERNMENT SECTOR”
By Representative Erice
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT AND THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 7056, entitled:
“AN ACT PROMOTING THE WELFARE OF REHABILITATED DRUG OFFENDERS, THROUGH GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT”
By Representative Erice
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

House Bill No. 7057, entitled:
“AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO RADIO WORLD BROADCASTING CORPORATION AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8219 ENTITLED ‘AN ACT GRANTING RADIO WORLD BROADCASTING CORPORATION, A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES’ ”
By Representative Macapagal-Arroyo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE FRANCHISES

House Bill No. 7058, entitled:
“AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE PROVINCIAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CENTERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6959, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFORE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”
By Representative Marquez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

House Bill No. 7059, entitled:
 “AN ACT MANDATING THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PERMANENT EVACUATION CENTER IN EVERY NATURAL DISASTER-PRONE LOCALITY”
 By Representative Castelo
 TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

House Bill No. 7060, entitled:
 “AN ACT ESTABLISHING A SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN BARANGAY TALIPAPA, QUEZON CITY, METRO MANILA TO BE KNOWN AS TALIPAPA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”
 By Representative Belmonte (J.C.)
 TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 7066, entitled:
 “AN ACT MANDATING GOLF CLUBS TO PROVIDE HEALTH, RETIREMENT AND OTHER BENEFITS TO GOLF CADDIES AND OTHER SERVICE WORKERS THROUGH A SHARED CONTRIBUTION SCHEME”
 By Representative Go (M.)
 TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

House Bill No. 7067, entitled:
 “AN ACT CONVERTING THE PROVINCIAL ROAD WHICH TRAVERSES FROM THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY IN TANJAY CITY TO BARANGAY NOVALLAS PROCEEDING TO BARANGAY PAL-EW AND PASSING THROUGH BARANGAY STO. NIÑO UNTIL THE NATIONAL ROAD GOING TO MABINAY, KALUMBOYAN TO BAYAWAN CITY, INTO A NATIONAL ROAD”
 By Representative Sagarbarria
 TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

House Bill No. 7068, entitled:
 “AN ACT ESTABLISHING A SENIOR CITIZENS’ GRIEVANCE DESK IN EVERY BARANGAY”
 By Representative Castelo
 TO THE COMMITTEE ON POPULATION AND FAMILY RELATIONS

RESOLUTIONS

House Resolution No. 1627, entitled:
 “A RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING

AND COMMENDING MS. KATARINA SONJA H. RODRIGUEZ FOR BEING CROWNED AS FIRST RUNNER-UP IN THE 48TH MISS INTERCONTINENTAL 2017 BEAUTY PAGEANT HELD IN HURGHADA, EGYPT ON JANUARY 24, 2018 (WEDNESDAY, MANILA TIME) AND FOR BEING DECLARED AS MISS INTERCONTINENTAL-CONTINENTAL QUEEN OF ASIA AND OCEANIA”

By Representative Billones
 TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1628, entitled:
 “A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE JOINT CONGRESSIONAL POWER COMMISSION TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON PURPORTED IMPROPER AND IRREGULAR AWARDING OF RENEWABLE ENERGY SERVICE CONTRACTS INVOLVING HYDROELECTRIC POWER PROJECTS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY TO RENEWABLE ENERGY APPLICANTS”
 By Representative Cosalan
 TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1629, entitled:
 “RESOLUTION URGING THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOOD GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE VARIOUS ALLEGED ACTIONS OF THE ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION (ERC) ALLEGEDLY AMOUNTING TO SERIOUS DISHONESTY, GROSS NEGLIGENCE OF DUTY, GRAVE MISCONDUCT, AMONG OTHERS, TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE FILIPINO CONSUMERS”
 By Representatives Alvarez (P.) and Herrera-Dy
 TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1631, entitled:
 “A RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES EXPRESSING PROFOUND CONDOLENCES ON THE DEMISE OF FILM AND TELEVISION DIRECTOR MARIO MARGARITO ‘MARYO’ JORLAN DELOS REYES”
 By Representative Nieto
 TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1632, entitled:
 “RESOLUTION CREATING A CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY,
AND ENGINEERING”

By Representatives Aumentado, Jalosjos and
Sambar
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1633, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY
IN AID OF LEGISLATION INTO THE
OFFICIAL ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE
PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE
CORPORATION (PDIC) IN RELATION TO
THE FRAUD INVESTIGATION REPORTS
ON THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE
DEFUNCT EXPORT AND INDUSTRY
BANK (EIB), ITS SUBSIDIARIES, MAJOR
STOCKHOLDERS, DIRECTORS AND
OFFICERS”

By Representative Belaro
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1634, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING PROFOUND
CONDOLENCES OF THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES ON THE DEMISE OF
PHILIPPINE VETERAN DIRECTOR MARIO
MARGARITO ‘MARYO’ JOROLAN DE LOS
REYES”

By Representative Olivarez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1635, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CONDEMNING IN THE
STRONGEST POSSIBLE TERMS THE
DISGRACEFUL GRENADE EXPLOSION
THAT TRANSPIRED IN LA PAZ, ABRA, TO
EXTEND ITS DEEPEST CONDOLENCES
AND SYMPATHIES TO THE FAMILIES
OF THOSE WHO WERE KILLED AND
INJURED AND TO EXPRESS SUPPORT
TO HON. JOSEPH ‘STO NINO’ B. BERNOS
IN HIS EFFORTS TO PROTECT HIS
CONSTITUENTS AND SEEK JUSTICE FOR
THIS HEINOUS INCIDENT”

By Representatives Savellano, Ortega (P.), De
Venecia, Vargas-Alfonso, Singson, Celeste,
Nolasco, Espino, Go (M.), Cosalan, Ting,
Mangaoang, Eriguel, Go (A.C.), Ortega
(V.N.), Aggabao, Bulut-Begtang, Panganiban,
Dy, Bataoil, Cuaresma, Arenas, Baguilat,
Primicias-Agabas, Chavez and Acop
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1637, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN
INVESTIGATION IN AID OF LEGISLATION

BY THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE OF
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON
THE COMPLIANCE OF ONLINE GAMING
OPERATORS WITH PHILIPPINE TAX
LAWS”

By Representative Suarez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1638, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION URGING THE COMMITTEE
ON HEALTH TO IMMEDIATELY
INVESTIGATE, IN AID OF LEGISLATION,
THE RECENT REPORT OF THE INSTITUTE
OF MOLECULAR BIOLOGY AND
BIOTECHNOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF THE PHILIPPINES-MANILA’S
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HEALTH (NIH)
ON THE RISE OF DRUG-RESISTANT HIV”

By Representative Castelo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1639, entitled:

“RESOLUTION MANDATING THE
APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE OF THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO
CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION ON
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REPUBLIC
ACT NO. 7699, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS
‘PORTABILITY ACT’, IN RELATION TO
REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9994, OTHERWISE
KNOWN AS ‘THE EXPANDED SENIOR
CITIZENS ACT OF 2010’, FOR THE
PURPOSE OF GRANTING RETIREES/
PENSIONERS UNDER THE ‘PORTABILITY
LAW’, EQUAL RIGHTS AND BENEFITS AS
RETIREES UNDER OTHER LAWS”

By Representative Datol
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

COMMUNICATIONS

Letter dated January 8, 2018 of Harry D. Florida,
Municipal Mayor, Municipality of Allacapan,
Province of Cagayan, submitting the Report of
Fund Utilization and Status of Program/Project
Implementation as of the end of the 4th Quarter of
2017 on the Assistance to Municipalities.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated 10 January 2018 of Atty. Jose Jobel
V. Belarmino, OIC, Deputy Administrator for
Administrative, Finance and AFCSD, Light Rail
Transit Authority (LRTA), submitting their Report
of Utilization of Operating Subsidy to the LRTA
for the 4th Quarter of CY 2017.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated January 12, 2018 of Zaldy S. Villa, Governor, Province of Siquijor, submitting the 4th Quarter Accomplishment Report of CY 2017 for the Larena – Basac – Maria Provincial Road funded under the KALSADA Program and the Siquijor – San Antonio – Campalanas Provincial Road funded by the CMGP.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS
AND HIGHWAYS

Letter dated 16 January 2018 of Jose Voltaire V. Ricafrente, Municipal Mayor, Municipality of Rosario, Province of Cavite, submitting their LGSF – ADM Quarterly Report for the Quarter ended December 31, 2017 on Fund Utilization and Status of Program/Project Implementation.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated January 17, 2018 of Teresa P. Alegado, Municipal Mayor, Municipality of Consolacion, Province of Cebu, submitting the Report on Fund Utilization and Status of Program/Project Implementation for the Quarter ended December 2017 of the Local Government Support Fund.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SUBPOENA DUCES TECUM

Pursuant to Section 152, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives transmitting the Subpoena Duces Tecum dated August 24, 2017 of Atty. Ryan R.S. Quilala, Assistant Special Prosecutor II, CRÈME Bureau of the Office of the Ombudsman, on Case No. SB-15-CRM-0054, directing Deputy Secretary General Dr. Ramon Ricardo Roque, CESO I, Administrative Department, House of Representatives, to submit within five (5) days from receipt hereof, clear and certified true copies of the following documents pertaining to Jose R. Sumalpong, former Chief of Staff of former Rep. Rizalina Seachon-Lanete:

1. Personal Data Sheet / Resume with picture;
2. Latest filed Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth; and
3. Latest Service Record.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MERCADO. Mme Speaker, we have officials of the local government unit of the municipality of Diadi, Nueva Vizcaya, guests of the Hon. Luisa Lloren Cuaresma of the Lone District of Nueva Vizcaya. I move that we acknowledge the presence of the following guests: honorable Mayor Norma Miguel, Vice Mayor Rolito Dulnuan, Kagawad Marvic Padilla,

Kagawad Warren Lunag, Kagawad Wilma Concillo, Kagawad Rommel Carino, Kagawad Edgar Ilantada, Kagawad Froilan Madume, Kagawad Rhodora Bilog and Kagawad Lolito Tumacder.

I move that we acknowledge their presence, Mme Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). To the guests of Representative Cuaresma, welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MERCADO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we also acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the guests of the honorable Rep. Salvador B. Belaro Jr. of 1-ANG EDUKASYON Party-List: the students of the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Pasig, headed by Professor Iluminada Vierne; the students of the University of Caloocan City, headed by Professor Rey Jetajobe; the students of Datamex College of St. Adeline, headed by Professor Dahlia Cabatlo, Professor Ruben Paquit and Dwight Entico; the scholars of 1-ANG EDUKASYON Party-List; Dr. April Alcazar, President of Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Pasig; and Marina Cadabuna and William Cadabuna, teachers of Kalayaan High School.

I so move, Mme Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). To the guests of Representative Belaro, you are most welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

The Majority Leader is recognized.

NOMINAL VOTING ON H.B. NO. 6649 ON THIRD READING

REP. MERCADO. Mme Speaker, I move that we vote on Third Reading on House Bill No.6649 and direct the Secretary General to read the title of the measure, and call the roll for nominal voting.

I so move.

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

Thereupon, the Secretary General read the title of the measure, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on January 30, 2018, pursuant to Section 58, Rule X of the House Rules.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6649, entitled: AN ACT STRENGTHENING FURTHER THE PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION PROGRAM FOR OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS TO INCLUDE FINANCIAL AND ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE

REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8042, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE MIGRANT WORKERS AND OVERSEAS FILIPINOS ACT OF 1995.

The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. Thereafter, pursuant to the Rules of the House, a second roll call was made. The result of the voting on Third Reading on the aforesaid measure is reflected in Journal No. 58, dated February 5, 2018.*

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 6649
ON THIRD READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). With 213 affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bill No. 6649 is approved on Third Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

NOMINAL VOTING ON H.B. NO. 6834
ON THIRD READING

REP. MERCADO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we vote on Third Reading on House Bill No. 6834 and direct the Secretary General to read the title of the measure, and call the roll for nominal voting.

I so move.

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

Thereupon, the Secretary General read the title of the measure, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on January 30, 2018, pursuant to Section 58, Rule X of the House Rules.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6834, entitled: AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE TO FREE EXPRESSION, TO PEACEABLY ASSEMBLE AND TO PETITION THE GOVERNMENT FOR REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES, REPEALING FOR THE PURPOSE BATAS PAMBANSA BLG. 880 OR “THE PUBLIC ASSEMBLY ACT OF 1985.”

The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. Thereafter, pursuant to the Rules of the House, a second roll call was made. The result of the voting on Third Reading on the aforesaid measure is reflected in Journal No. 58, dated February 5, 2018.*

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, my vote is “No” and I would like to explain my vote later.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). It has been noted.

REP. CASILAO. Mme. Speaker, my vote is “No” and I would like to reserve my right to explain my vote.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Yes, it has been noted.

REP. ZARATE. Mme Speaker, my vote is “No” and I will explain my vote later.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). It has been noted.

RESULT OF THE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The result shows 212 affirmative votes, 5 negative votes and no abstention.

House Bill No. 6834 is hereby approved on Third Reading.

EXPLANATION OF VOTES

May I call on Representative Brosas of GABRIELA Party-List to explain her “No” vote.

REP. BROSAS EXPLAINS HER VOTE

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, mga kapwa ko Kinatawan, ang Representasyong ito ay tutol sa panukalang batas House Bill No. 6834, kaugnay sa pag-amyenda sa mga mahahalagang probisyon ng Batas Pambansa Bilang 880.

Ang pagkakaroon ng mga karagdagang rekisito at paghihigpit sa kalayaang makapag-organisa, magtipon ng asembleya o makapagpahayag man lang ng saloobin at kahilingan sa pamahalaan ay direktang atake sa karapatang pantao.

Anong klaseng pamahalaan ang gusto nating ipamandila? Tayo ba ay pamahalaan para sa mamamayan o para sa iilan? Nitong mga nakaraan lamang nagpasá ng mga anti-mamamayang batas ang Kongreso ng hindi napakikinggan ang boses ng mamamayan. Kailan pa natin sila maririnig? Kapag mata na lang ang nangusap sapagkat dilat silang napatimbuwang sa Oplan Tokhang at extrajudicial killing? Kapag tanging

* See ANNEX (printed separately)

ang mga sikmurang kumakalam na lamang ang tunog na maririnig mula sa kanila?

Naninindigan ang GABRIELA Women's Party, kasama ang sambayanang Pilipino, na ang karapatan at kalayaan sa pamamahayag ay di lamang nararapat dahil ito ay ginagarantiya ng Saligang Batas, kundi higit pa nga ay bunga ng pandaigdigang laban ng mamamayan.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Honorable Casilao from ANAKPAWIS Party-List may now explain his vote.

REP. CASILAO EXPLAINS HIS VOTE

REP. CASILAO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Article III, Section 4 of the 1987 Constitution states:

No law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances.

Ang paniniwala po ng Kinatawang ito, Mme. Speaker, ay nais sanang ipasok at mawala ang Batas Pambansa Bilang 880 noong panahon na ipinatupad at ginawa ang 1987 Constitution. Alam po natin, BP 880 is a product of a Marcosian policy implemented during the martial law years. Lumusot ito at nagpatuloy habang nandiyan ang pagkilala sa batayang karapatan ng mamamayan na magreklamo, magprotesta o magorganisa. Kaya, Mme. Speaker, kahit na pinalitan ang probisyon that BP 880 is requiring an issuance or an application of permit in the conduct of an assembly or public activity, pinalitan po ito ng isang notice. Isang pag-atras po iyon o pag-abante sa pagkilala ng karapatan. Ngunit sa kabilang banda, kapag ikaw po ay naglulunsad ng isang indignation protest, halimbawa, mayroon kang narinig na policy na na-implement nang umaga at nais ng mga grupo, asosasyon o mga organisasyon na biglaang maglunsad ng indignation protest para kondenahin ang isang polisiya o programang ipinatupad noong araw na iyon, kapag ikaw po ay hindi nakapag-notify, ibig sabihin, mayroong paglabag sa batas. This will eventually restrict the freedom of our people in their right to redress the government.

Second, Mme. Speaker, ang pag-iba ng penal provisions dito na magkakaroon na ng mas malala o mas mabigat na pagkakakulong o mga pananagutan ng isang tao o organisasyon na lumabag sa batas na ito ay mas mahigpit at mas mabigat kumpara sa kasalukuyang estado. Sa ganitong katayuan, Mme. Speaker, I vote "No" on this House Bill.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Honorable Zarate is recognized to explain his vote.

REP. ZARATE EXPLAINS HIS VOTE

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, kapwa ko Mambabatas, bumoto po tayong "No" sa panukalang batas na ito.

Kagagaling ko lang po sa City Prosecutor's Office ng Manila dahil nitong nakaraang linggo, ang Kinatawang ito ay nakatanggap ng subpoena na ako raw ay sinampahan ng kaso ng Manila Police District sa paglabag ng Batas Pambansa Bilang 880, tungkol sa nangyaring mga protesta noong dumating ang pangunahing Chief Executive ng imperyalistang bansang Estados Unidos, si Donald Trump, noong November.

Mme. Speaker, ang Kinatawang ito ang pangunahin o ang principal author ng panukalang batas upang baklasin at i-repeal ang Batas Pambansa Bilang 880, sa kadahilanan na rin ng nasabi ng ating naunang dalawang kasamahan na dahil ito ay batas na pinairal sa panahon ng diktaduryang Marcos at hanggang ngayon ay umiiral para supilin ang karapatan ng ating mamamayan na magpahayag. Subalit dito sa panukalang House Bill No. 6834, na sinasabi nga rito na ma-repeal ang Batas Pambansa Bilang 880, napalitan naman ito at napasukan ng ilang probisyon na sa tingin ng Kinatawang ito ay lalo pa, at higit pang susupilin ang karapatan ng ating mamamayan na magpahayag at i-petition ang government sa kanilang mga kahilingan at kahinaingan.

Kaya sa ganito pong mga kadahilanan, Mme. Speaker, nilalabanan natin ang House Bill No. 6834 dahil sa tingin natin ay hindi ito para sa kagalingan at interes ng ating mamamayan.

Maraming salamat po.

REP. LAGMAN. Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Honorable Lagman is recognized.

REP. LAGMAN. May I know how my vote was recorded.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). A "No" vote was recorded for Congressman Lagman.

REP. LAGMAN. I am voting in the negative because this Bill contains regressive provisions inimical to the right of free expression, of peaceful assembly and the right to redress grievances. I shall explain my vote more extensively, and I reserve to file the same before the proper office of this Chamber.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Secretary General is directed to correct the vote of Representative Lagman.

REP. LAGMAN. It is a negative vote.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Please indicate the negative vote.

REP. LAGMAN. And I reserve my right to extensively explain my negative vote.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Yes, Sir. That is duly noted.

REP. LAGMAN. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 6834
ON THIRD READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). With 212 affirmative votes, 6 negative votes and no abstention, House Bill No. 6834 is approved on Third Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized

NOMINAL VOTING ON H.B. NO. 6710
ON THIRD READING

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we consider on Third Reading House Bill No. 6710 and direct the Secretary General to read the title of the measure, and call the roll for nominal voting.

I so move.

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

Thereupon, the Secretary General read the title of the measure, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on January 31, 2018, pursuant to Section 58, Rule X of the House Rules.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6710, entitled: AN ACT PROVIDING FOR ADDITIONAL PROHIBITIONS TO AND INCREASING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8484, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "ACCESS DEVICES REGULATION ACT OF 1998."

The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. Thereafter, pursuant to the Rules of the House, a second roll call was made. The

result of the voting on Third Reading on the aforesaid measure is reflected in Journal No. 58, dated February 5, 2018.*

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 6710
ON THIRD READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). With 224 affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bill No. 6710 is approved on Third and Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

NOMINAL VOTING ON H.B. NO. 6772
ON THIRD READING

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we vote on Third Reading on House Bill No. 6772 and direct the Secretary General to read the title of the measure, and call the roll for nominal voting.

I so move.

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

Thereupon, the Secretary General read the title of the measure, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on January 31, 2018, pursuant to Section 58, Rule X of the House Rules.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6772, entitled: AN ACT ENSURING THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7586, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "NATIONAL INTEGRATED PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM ACT OF 1992."

The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. Thereafter, pursuant to the Rules of the House, a second roll call was made. The result of the voting on Third Reading on the aforesaid measure is reflected in Journal No. 58, dated February 5, 2018.*

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 6772
ON THIRD READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). With 220 affirmative votes, 5 negative votes and no abstention, House Bill No. 6772 is approved on Third Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

NOMINAL VOTING ON H.B. NO. 6907
ON THIRD READING

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we vote on Third Reading on House Bill No. 6907 and direct the Secretary General to read the title of the measure, and call the roll for nominal voting.

I so move.

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

Thereupon, the Secretary General read the title of the measure, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on January 31, 2018, pursuant to Section 58, Rule X of the House Rules.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6907, entitled: AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE CREATION, PERFECTION, DETERMINATION OF PRIORITY RIGHTS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTERESTS IN PERSONAL PROPERTY AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NOTICE REGISTRY.

The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. Thereafter, pursuant to the Rules of the House, a second roll call was made. The result of the voting on Third Reading on the aforesaid measure is reflected in Journal No. 58, dated February 5, 2018.*

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 6907
ON THIRD READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). With 225 Members affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bill No. 6907 is approved on Third Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

PRIVILEGE HOUR

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, today being a Monday and pursuant to our Rules, I move that we hold the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the Privilege Hour is hereby opened.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Rodel M. Batocabe of Party-List

AKO BICOL, who wishes to avail of the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Rep. Rodel Batocabe of the Party-List AKO BICOL is recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. BATOCABE

REP. BATOCABE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Good afternoon, dear colleagues.

One of the truisms in the life of public servants is dealing with the difficult challenges in their personal lives while performing their official duties. Our public school teachers experience the same dilemma as they are dealing with their woes and problems while simultaneously ensuring that their students obtain the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in life.

This is the reason Republic Act No. 4670 or the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers was enacted, to protect the rights and privileges of our public school teachers. Section 21 of that legislation seeks to protect our public school teachers' salaries by prohibiting deductions in the monthly payslips of our teachers unless authorized by law to ensure that our teachers enjoy their hard-earned money. Unfortunately, Mme. Speaker, at present our public school teachers are continually being enticed, seduced by a plethora of credit and lending institutions. Private lending entities, seeking accreditation from the Department of Education to participate in the salary deduction scheme implemented by the Department, are mandated by law to initially provide proof that there is a specific authority of law authorizing the enforcement of such deduction. However, as time and many administrations go by, private interests to generate more profit and less of providing service grew and perturbed the mutual trust and confidence between lenders and public school teachers.

Inconsistent and sometimes conflicting policies have allowed big commercial and universal banks hiding in the corporate veils of rural and thrift banks to capitalize on the financial plight of our teachers. During the previous administration, the DepEd released Memorandum No. 228, Series of 2011, dated October 14, 2011, which allowed and further expanded the entry of private lending institutions other than the duly recognized institutions enforced through Section 21 of the Magna Carta. This led to the accreditation of a total of 214 private lending institutions. This was made possible through policy loopholes that allowed even commercial banks to enter through their conduit thrift and rural banks. This resulted, Mme. Speaker, in the low actual net take-home pay and long queues of undeducted obligations in the payslips of teachers.

Today, Mme. Speaker and esteemed colleagues, 7 out of the 20 largest commercial and universal banks of the country are already participating in the salary deduction schemes of DepEd through their subsidiaries, to name a few: BDO, Union Bank, EastWest Bank, China Bank, UCPB and RCBC. The presence of these big banks provides a limitless source of credit that they offer to the teachers through their respective rural banks, leading to their susceptibility to overborrow. With their low interest rates and quick loan approvals, our teachers are enticed to participate in such schemes until the unjustifiable penalty fees and service charges come to haunt them.

DepEd officials and personnel, especially those in the fiscally autonomous secondary schools who are supposed to defend our teachers' rights, contribute further in the commercialization of our teachers' plight by abusing their authority and acting as collecting agents of these private banks, and are compensated either in cash or leisure accommodations. This is the reason it is no longer surprising that the growing debt of public school teachers has reached exponential levels—amounting to P300 billion, as reported by the Department of Education. Our gathered data provide that out of the reported P300 billion teachers' loans, as cited by the Department, P177 billion are in the form of loans owed to private lending institutions, of which P112.226 billion are loans granted by entities owned and controlled by universal banks through their rural or thrift bank subsidiaries, for example, the City Savings Bank of the Union Bank with 471,555 loans granted amounted to P58.205 billion; EastWest Rural Bank of EastWest Banking with 142,019 granted loans amounted to P27.0061 billion; One Network Rural Bank of BDO with 93,834 granted loans in the amount of P14.680 billion; First Consolidated Bank with 80,276 granted loans in the amount P7.250 billion; and Philippine Resource Savings Bank Corp, which was acquired by City Savings Bank, has 35,799 granted loans in the amount of P5.03 billion.

The amount of P112.66 billion that was poured to the teachers had made them awash with debts. Instead of alleviating their financial conditions, it has actually aggravated their woes. With the acquisition by the City Savings Bank of the Philippine Resources Banking Corporation this January 2018, City Savings Banks' loan exposure to DepEd alone amount to a staggering P60 billion. As such, this Representation strongly believes that the indirect participation of big banks through their thrift and rural conduits has led to the commercialization of our teachers' need and primary right to borrow.

This Representation is also disheartened to discover that the teaching and non-teaching personnel of DepEd in Region V have an aggregated undeducted obligations amounting to P200 million from loans from private

lending institutions. The prevalence of PLIs and their collections to be deducted from the salaries of our teachers have risen since 2013. The Comparative Payroll Data of DepEd shows that from an aggregate amount of P300 million payables for PLIs or private lending institutions in June of 2013, our teachers now have a staggering amount of obligation in the amount of P597 million in December 2017. This is only in Region V. Adding up all salary deductions, the mandatory GSIS, PhilHealth, and Pag-IBIG contributions, along with taxes, GOCC loans and insurances, the average take-home pay of a teacher in the Bicol region alone is only 20 percent of their total take-home pay.

Reports from online news media, Mme. Speaker, state that a public school teachers' group in the Bicol region complained that teachers in the region receive less than P1,000 from their monthly salaries after being deducted of their loans from private lending institutions. These resulted from the unabated participation of many private lending institutions that aim to commercialize and profit from teachers who are in dire need of financial assistance. The deduction of such obligations in the salaries of our teachers should not exceed 50 percent of their basic salaries. Ang problema, Mme. Speaker, ang ibang sector, namomroblema tungkol sa access to credit. Dito naman po, pagdating sa ating mga guro, sobra-sobra ang pautang. While we note the Department's effort to address the problem, its present policy alternatives are still inefficient to solve the immediate and long-term problems of our teachers.

The financial problem that plagues our teachers will continue unless our public school teachers are provided with the appropriate tools and policy interventions that are comprehensive, well-rounded and relevant to properly address the issue of indebtedness among our public school teachers. This being said, Mme. Speaker, this Representation would like to use this opportunity to present some solutions which can help our public school teachers.

First, the queuing system implemented by the Department anent the salary deduction scheme is detrimental to the financial well-being of public school teachers as loan penalties are already charged to the monthly payslips of teachers even if the regular deduction schedule in the salaries of public school teachers has not started. The "first-in, first-served queuing system" protects the interests of private lenders as it guarantees loan payments even if the payments are not paid on time. This system only increases the obligation paid by school teachers due to the compounded interest in addition to the large penalties and other fees charged by lending companies to their principal loan. The concept behind this system, therefore, veers away from the culture of self-restraint in relation to public school teachers' borrowings which have been institutionalized

by previous DECS/DepEd administrations to prevent public school teachers from over-borrowing.

Second, as this Representation earlier stressed, Mme. Speaker, the root of the problem is the abusive participation of commercial and universal banks in the salary deduction scheme through their rural and thrift banks which have various standing memoranda of agreement with the DepEd. I call for the abolition of this practice which only existed as a policy during the previous DepEd administration to favor banks in the salary deduction scheme implemented by the Department. This agreement only bound the Department to the condition set forth by the private lender which may be harmful to the best interest of public school teachers and increased the Department's risk to lawsuits should the DepEd wish to strictly enforce rules and regulations supplementary to existing laws that are inconsistent with the conditions stipulated in the agreements. As such, Mme. Speaker, this Representation shall be filing a resolution mandating the Department of Education to cease and desist from entering into memoranda of agreement and accrediting rural and thrift banks which act as financial conduits of commercial and universal banks to end this vicious cycle once and for all.

Altogether, the Department should likewise terminate the renewal of a previous Memorandum of Agreement between private lending institutions disqualified by law in order to cleanse itself from allegations that DepEd officials and employees profit from the undertaking of these agreements with the abovementioned PLIs.

Lastly, the policy consideration for loan buy-outs of public school teachers' outstanding loan and the protracting of loan terms to more than a year should likewise be discouraged and overturned. Loan buy-outs only transfer payment obligation from one lending institution to another which obviously does not resolve the issue at hand. This transfer is also costly on the part of the public school teachers as this process involves service fees and refinancing charges in addition to fees and penalties accrued from the previous lender. Similarly, the lengthening of the loan payment terms is disadvantageous to public school teachers as it increases the risk of teachers defaulting on their obligations, making them more vulnerable to penalties and fees that add up to their principal balance.

Mme. Speaker, it is about time the DepEd act on this. Otherwise, even if we increase the salaries and the benefits of our public school teachers, they will always be burdened by debts. Lagi pong mababaon sa utang ang ating mga public school teacher dahil sila po ay magandang pautangin. Wala pong risk, may suweldong mataas, kaltas sa bawat suweldo, at kung mamatay man ay may insurance. So, practically, Mme. Speaker, there is no risk when you contract a loan with a teacher.

Mme. Speaker, esteemed colleagues, the plight of our public school teachers will continue and will definitely last unless decisive, coherent and responsive steps are taken. Private interests to make profit will prevail and will continue to keep awash our public school teachers with financial obligations. The question, therefore, to us now is, who will stand up for our teachers who, despite their cries, are not being given the protection they need?

I enjoin, therefore, Mme. Speaker, the Members of this august Chamber to support this initiative and to help our public school teachers in freeing themselves from this vicious cycle of commercial exploitation.

Thank you and good afternoon.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the privilege speech of the Hon. Rodel M. Batocabe to the Committee on Rules.

REP. OCAMPO. Mme. Speaker.

REP. GULLAS. I so move, Mme. Speaker.

REP. OCAMPO. Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. OCAMPO. Mme. Speaker, may I be recognized.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Yes, yes, Representative Ocampo is recognized.

REP. OCAMPO. This has reference to the privilege speech of Congressman Batocabe, and I am sorry that I was not recognized or seen by the Speaker before the privilege speech was referred to the Committee on Rules.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Yes, please proceed.

REP. OCAMPO. Well, you know, this is my ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. OCAMPO. Majority Leader.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I withdraw my previous motion to refer the privilege speech to the Committee on Rules.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Yes, the reference is deferred.

Representative Ocampo is recognized.

REP. OCAMPO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

This has been my advocacy since 2011 and this has reference to the little-known provision in the GAA which sets the minimum take-home pay of government employees from P3,000. Now, it is at the sum of P5,000 a month, and particularly because of private lending and automatic payroll deduction, and the biggest sector that is affected by this provision is our public school teachers. This is something that I really wanted to bring to the attention of the Members of the House because in the budget message of the President for 2018 which we deliberated on in 2017, they have already removed the different private lenders as specified in the past GAAs as authorized deductions from the payroll of our government employees. What happened was, this was the result of our meetings with the DBM and the Department of Education, particularly to address this problem of so much deductions which results in what Congressman Batocabe was saying that majority of these teachers in a particular region were only taking home something like 20 percent of their take-home pay.

Now, what happened was, when the final budget message was approved by Congress for 2018, the provision that was removed in the budget message of the President was restored, which means that it was through Congress again that we restored what should have been the solution to truly increasing the take-home pay of our government employees. Why? You would ask why. Why would the government, why would the Legislature legislate to keep the salaries of our government employees at the minuscule amount of P3,000 which is now at P5,000 a month? Because the tentacles of these private lenders are so far-reaching. This is truly a mega business. Tayo po, kung tayo ay pupunta sa bangko, napakahirap pag tayo ay na-credit investigation. Dito po, dahil ikaw ay teacher, pinautang ka ng higit pa sa kaya mong utangin sa suweldo mo buwan-buwan dahil po sa provision ng automatic payroll deduction. Wala po silang kahirap-hirap, nababayaran po sila, na fina-facilitate po ng sarili nating mga kahero sa Department sa kanilang pinapautang. Ito po ay talagang dapat usisain, pag-aralan at pakialamanan ng ating Kongreso, dahil po kahit na anong pagtataas ng suweldo na ibibigay natin sa mga empleyado natin, na hirap na hirap tayong maghanap para itaas ang suweldo ng ating mga kawani sa gobyerno, nauwi lang po sa private lenders.

Ang mga inuutang po ng mga teachers noong araw ay para po sa tuition ng kanilang mga anak. Ngayon po, pambili ng sasakyan, pambiyahe, pambili ng mga electronics at mga gadgets. Iyon po ang naging problema na ngayon na dapat po nating usisain. Kaya sinasamahan

ko po si Congressman Batocabe na napapanahon nang tayong lahat ay magising sa maanomalyang sitwasyon na ito na nagpapahirap sa ating mga empleyado, nagpapawala sa kanilang inspirasyon at dedikasyon sa trabaho, dahil ang inaatupag po nila ngayon ay ang pagbabayad ng kanilang mga pagkakautang, dahil sa buwan-buwan na iniuwi nila ay hindi sasapat para mabuhay po nang maayos ang kanilang sariling pamilya.

Kaya, maraming salamat din po kay Congressman Batocabe na sa kanyang masusing research, sa mas maayos na paraan ay maparating sa atin ang katotohanan na hinaharap ng ating mga kawani sa gobyerno, partikular ang mga teachers.

Dapat nga po, Congressman Batocabe, ang GSIS na ay handang-handa upang maging responsable sa pangkalahatang pagkautang ng mga teachers na ito dahil sila ang mayoryang member ng GSIS. Ngunit ang hindi po natin alam, last year po, more than 28,000 teachers who retired did not get their retirement pay. Why? Because in the hierarchy of debt payments of the teachers, even GSIS, which has a statutory obligation or deduction, sila po ay nasa huli sa hierarchy ng babayaran ng mga pagkakautang ng mga teachers dahil palakasan din po doon sa kahera na nag-aasikaso ng mga tseke ng mga teachers na iyan. Kaya kailangan pong pagtulungan nating lahat para po, kung sinasabi natin na ang mga teachers natin ay mga bagong bayani, kung hindi naman po sila inspiradong magturo, ano naman po ang magiging resulta sa mga batang tinuturuan nila?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Thank you for that manifestation, Representative Ocampo. Does Representative Batocabe have any reply?

REP. BATOCABE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

First of all, I would like to thank the Gentlelady from Manila for supporting this advocacy of mine. Really, it is true, there is a surplus of availability of credit. Our public school teachers are being seduced by all these credit and lending institutions. Tama po, before, ang inuutang lang po ng public school teachers iyong pang-tuition o kung maysakit. Ngayon, dahil napakarami po ng gustong magpautang ay kahit anu-ano na lang ay puwedeng utangin. Tama po ang sinabi po ng ating butihing Kinatawan sa Manila na pati ho mga gadgets, iyong biyahe, iyong TV, iyong sasakyan, motor, mayroon na pong available. There is over-availability of credit.

Before, we talked about the problem of access to credit. But with respect to the public school teachers, we have oversupply of credit. You know why, it cannot be stopped, unless we have the political will, Mme. Speaker. This is a P300-billion business. So, I think we have to put a stop, kasi tama po si Congresswoman Ocampo.

Kung hindi po natin mahihinto ito, kahit ilang beses po nating taasan ang suweldo ng mga guro, kahit ilang beses po natin dagdagan ang kanilang mga benepisyo, kung patuloy pa rin silang mangungutang ay masasadlak pa rin po sila sa kahirapan.

As of now, it is a reality, more or less, that the take-home pay of an ordinary teacher amounts only to about 20 percent in the Bicol Region. Ang entry level ng teacher po ay Salary Grade 11, so more or less, we have already increased the salary of our teachers. We have already given them dignity. Before, they complained that they are not given the dignity due to public school teachers; but through time, in fairness to the previous Congresses, we have already given them a decent take-home pay. Unfortunately, ang reality po ay hindi ganoon kasi nasasadlak po sa utang ang ating mga guro.

REP. OCAMPO. Mme. Speaker, may I be recognized.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Yes, Representative Ocampo is recognized.

REP. OCAMPO. I would like to add that the cost of lending to teachers is usurious. The interest rates that they are paying for their loans go as high as almost 40 percent per annum and their loans are evergreen, meaning to say, they are being lent money, forever may utang. Hindi natatapos ang kanilang pagkautang. Hindi pa po tapos ang kanilang utang, umuutang na naman po. Kaya ito po ay talagang dapat po nating gawan ng paraan at kung ang naging aksyon ng Kongreso sa huling budget natin ay ibinalik iyong provision na nagpapahirap sa mga teachers, ano pa po ba ang dapat nating gawin?

It was a very bold step for the DBM to omit those private lenders from the budget message of the President and yet, when it was approved, it was restored. So, tayo na po ay bahagi ng problema dahil hindi natin nakikita at nagiging bahagi tayo, kasangkapan tayo sa pamamagitan ng pag—we allowed it to happen because we approved it here, that they are allowable deductions from the salaries of our employees.

May I just add, for the information of our colleagues. The Department of Education, although there is a minimum take-home pay provision of P5,000 a year or, they have increased it, they did not take it as the minimum; it went up. Like the PNP, for example, on their own, their minimum take-home pay is P8,000 and they have increased it to P10,000 because they do not want their policemen to go home with no money. They do not want that to be an excuse for our policemen to be corrupt.

So, I think, in the next budget hearing, in the next

budget for 2019, kung collective tayo na iyon ang ating posisyon sa ating pangangampanya at pagmumulat sa ating mga kasamahan, baka po sa budget message ng 2019 ay maibalik natin, kapag maiparating natin ulit sa DBM na ito po ay collective position na ngayon ng Kongreso.

So, thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BATOCABE. Thank you for pointing that out, Lady from Manila. Indeed, I regret that I was also a part of this system and hopefully in the next budget deliberations, we will be able to carefully guard this insertion so that this practice will not be repeated again. Of course, hindi lang po ang ating mga guro, dinagdagan na po ang sweldo ng ating mga kawal at ng ating mga pulis, at hindi po malayo that they will be again attracted by these loan sharks from our lending companies.

So, we should also be vigilant against these nefarious practices in order to protect our public servants for, after all, if their service will be affected because of the burden of the debts or obligations they have, it is our people who will suffer, and in the case of our school teachers, our pupils, and our police personnel, the general public that they serve.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Thank you.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the privilege speech of the Honorable Batocabe and the interpellations to the Committee on Rules.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The same is referred to the Committee on Rules.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Aniceto “John” D. Bertiz III who wishes to avail of the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Hon. Aniceto “John” D. Bertiz III of the Party-List ACTS-OFW is recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. BERTIZ

REP. BERTIZ. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Good afternoon my fellow honorable colleagues.

Mme. Speaker, there is now tremendous pressure on our colleagues in the Executive branch to either lift or modify the suspension of the deployment of Filipino workers to Kuwait. The pressure appears to be coming from within the recruitment industry, as well

as externally from the government of Kuwait itself. Of course, such pressure is to be expected considering that so many people have come to depend on the continuous flow of Filipino domestic workers to and from Kuwait. Perhaps, this is a good time for us to look at how another labor-sending country, namely, Indonesia, dealt with incidence of maltreatment involving their own domestic workers. In numerous times in the past and more recently in 2015, the Indonesian government imposed deployment bans particularly for their domestic workers to countries where cases of abuse and maltreatment have been escalating. There was a time when the Kuwait government sent a minister to talk to the Indonesian government, and the minister said: “The royal family and the people of Kuwait are in need of domestic helpers from Indonesia. We hope that, especially for Kuwait, the Indonesian government can consider issuing a special policy.” Despite this appeal, Indonesia stood firm and said that it would not send domestic workers to Middle East countries especially Kuwait unless they are formal workers with specific skills, citing the lack of improvement in the treatment, not only of Indonesian workers, but also of domestic workers from other countries.

During the past few days, our country has shown the same moral backbone as Indonesia. Thanks to President Rodrigo Roa Duterte. And while the Kuwait government has taken offense in what the President had said, citing its “clean” human rights record, Nejjoud Al-Yagout, a columnist of *Kuwait Times* had this to say:

Nobody is insulting us. In fact, I am amazed at how long it took for this ban to be in place. Our Filipino brothers and sisters have been extremely patient in implementing this ban. Decades of patience on their part is highly commendable. And, still, according to the embassy here, the order is not yet official. The time is upon us to place our egos aside and address the obvious elephant in the room. Why are we closing our eyes? Everywhere I go, I hear new incidents about domestic helpers from various nations seeking help.

Mme. Speaker, it is not only Kuwait that has been closing its eyes on such report of abuses. As far back as November 2016, I already filed a resolution seeking a moratorium on the deployment of domestic workers to Kuwait because of the sheer number of runaway OFWs seeking refuge in our embassy shelters. In fact, the House Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs approved this resolution at the Committee level and came out with the unanimous decision to ask the Labor Department to impose the moratorium.

In January of 2017, the Kuwait government ordered the execution of our very own Jakatia Pawa despite

her protestations of innocence for the crime of murder. Our government did not protest the execution, and we did not consider imposing a moratorium even during that time. Despite all these welfare cases and monthly repatriations of 300 to 400 distressed workers from Kuwait, we chose to remain silent and our Labor Office in Kuwait and the POEA here in Manila even increased the number of job orders for domestic workers bound for that country.

Mme. Speaker, in 2016, out of 67,623 newly hired OFWs bound for Kuwait, 55,377 of them were hired as domestic workers. Our annual deployment of skilled and household service workers to Kuwait continues to rise from 70,098 in 2014 to 109,615 in 2016.

According to Kuwaiti government, there are 276,000 OFWs in their country, and according to the data from the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs, the total number of household service workers or HSWs is 165,000. This is where we must pause and reflect on the following:

- Why did we keep sending domestic workers to Kuwait despite the absence of a labor agreement for their welfare and protection? [Section 4 of Republic Act No. 8042, as amended by Section 3 of Republic Act No. 10022, paragraphs (a), (b) and (c)]
- Why do we continuously choose quantity over quality in relation to the hiring of domestic workers to Kuwait and in other Middle East countries as well?
- Why must it take no less than the President of the Philippines to shine the harsh and tragic light on seven deaths of Filipino workers in Kuwait within less than two months?

I asked these questions, Mme. Speaker, because no less than the dignity of our country and its workers is at stake, and I am worried because business interests and the fear of offending a valued ally may overcome the moral backbone that we now courageously present to the world and to our people.

I stand before you to say that our national interest lies always and clearly in upholding the rights and welfare of Filipino workers, especially those employed in the most vulnerable and risky occupations.

Contained in Administrative Order No. 25, signed by Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III are seven names of OFWs who recently died in Kuwait: 1.) Ms. Liezl Truz Hukdong; 2.) Ms. Vanessa Karissha Esguerra; 3.) Ms. Arlene Castillo Manzano; 4.) Maria Fe Saliling Librada; 5.) Devine Riche Encarnacion; 6.) Mr. Patrick Sunga; and 7.) Ms. Mira Luna Juntilla. These cases are now under investigation by both Kuwaiti authorities and our own embassy personnel. Three of these deaths were suicides committed in their employers’ homes. All tragic incidents took place from December 2017 to January this year. Less than two months, seven deaths, all in Kuwait.

Mme. Speaker, why must it take a deployment ban for the DOLE and the DFA to look into these cases?

When Vanessa Esguerra and Liezl Hukdong allegedly committed suicide in their employers' homes in December, what was done to prevent a third suicide in January? And with the DOLE allowing the deployment of domestic workers with OEC, what assurance can we provide their families that there are sufficient measures to prevent their abuse? What have we done since the imposition of the deployment ban to identify and correct our own inefficiencies in ensuring the protection of domestic workers not only in Kuwait but also throughout the Middle East and some parts of Asia?

I believe that it is in the mutual interest of the Philippines and Kuwait to have a long and frank discussion about the capacity of both countries in ensuring the protection of our domestic workers. But we also need a similar long and frank discussion about our own policies governing domestic workers here at home. Such discussions must lead to the signing of a Bilateral Labor Agreement that would reflect the strong commitment of both countries to migrant workers' rights. Unless such an agreement is forged, then I ask our government to stand firm on the suspension of the deployment of Filipino domestic workers to Kuwait.

Have we acted irresponsibly in declaring such a suspension? I do not think so. Since June 2016, our Philippine Embassy has already been reaching out to its Kuwaiti counterparts, seeking a dialogue and a firm response to escalating cases of abuses and contract violations.

Ambassador Rene Villa wrote a letter to the Ministry of Interior detailing the specific concerns involving the treatment of our domestic workers. That letter was completely ignored by Kuwaiti government.

More than a week ago, the Cabinet convened in Kuwait to discuss President Duterte's call for the talks between the two countries, with the deployment ban serving as trigger for such discussions. Could this have happened without the deployment ban? I do not think so.

Dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us unite behind our President in his call for the better protection of our migrant workers. This is the first time that no less than the President of the Philippines has called to task a distinguished friend and ally to come to an aid for our OFWs. We must show Kuwait and other labor-receiving countries that under this administration, the rights and welfare of its citizens abroad are paramount.

Is it not ironic that the very President that the international community has been painting as the number one violator of human rights is the only Philippine President who has openly and publicly declared his displeasure over the plight of distressed OFWs in Kuwait?

I, for one, as the lone elected OFW representative in Congress, am very proud to have Tatay Digong as our

President and tatay of all OFWs. I ask DOLE to show the same pride and trust in the President by standing firm on its suspension order and producing facts and evidence to show that much work has to be done by both sides to better protect our domestic workers in Kuwait.

I ask the DFA to support the Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait as he takes on the diplomatic challenges of keeping the doors open for bilateral discussion. I ask our workers who are applying for jobs in Kuwait to understand that this impasse is for their own long-term benefit and protection. I ask our friends in the recruitment industry to consider national dignity, first and foremost, and serve as partners of our own government in lighting the torch of migrant worker rights throughout the world. And I ask and appeal to my fellow legislators: Let us support the President. Let us support his efforts to obtain a clearer and more effective roadmap for migrant workers' rights and protection with Kuwait, and as well as other countries. If we weaken our resolve or cave in to too much pressure, then we are surrendering our OFWs to a fate of never-ending horrors.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Let us continue to pray for the safety and welfare of our modern-day heroes especially the maltreated domestic workers in Kuwait and other countries in the Middle East.

Magandang gabi po sa inyong lahat.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Thank you, Representative Bertiz.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of the Honorable Bertiz to the Committee on Rules.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The same is referred to the Committee on Rules.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Salvador B. Belaro Jr. of 1-ANG EDUKASYON Party-List who wishes to avail of the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Rep. Salvador B. Belaro Jr., Party-List 1-ANG EDUKASYON is recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. BELARO

REP. BELARO. It is one of life's ironies that the clearest of thinking happens in times of crisis. This is usually so because when we are so down, it is also the time for hindsight and foresight, assessment and analysis, evaluation and prescription.

In the past few months, we witnessed a crisis in leadership at the Commission on Higher Education or CHED. It apparently started with the resignation of then Chairman Patricia B. Licuanan, followed by the resignation of Director Karol Mark R. Yee last week. There appears to be more to these developments than what is obvious, much, much more.

Mme. Speaker, my dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon.

Today, I will be speaking on a matter which will complement the earlier speech of Hon. Rodel M. Batocabe and the discourse on basic education of Hon. Rosenda Ann Ocampo, but I will be talking about higher education.

My dear colleagues, I stand before you today as a proud Member of the most responsive Congress in recent history, for enacting life-changing legislations. In the field of education, this Congress did that with two game-changing legislation, the Free College Education Law and the Free Wi-Fi in Public Places Law. Thanks to our beloved Speaker Pantaleon D. Alvarez who has just the right mix of will and vision, our Majority Leader Rodolfo C. Fariñas who makes things happen, the entire House leadership, our very proactive Chairmen of Higher and Technical Education, Hon. Ann K. Hofer; of Communications and Information Technology, Hon. Victor A. Yap; and of Appropriations, Hon. Karlo Alexei B. Nograles; my fellow coauthors of said Bills and to all of you my dear colleagues for passing the legislation that will never be forgotten. In fact, they are revolutionary legislation. They are revolutionary, because they will change the Philippine educational landscape. With free college education, the perennial problem of access to education will now shift to ensuring quality education, and as far as the State is concerned, that college education will be responsive to national developmental goals. They will change the way we teach because with free Internet, a lot of traditional school tasks will be rendered obsolete. Our books, our classrooms and our teaching methods will become borderless. They will change the way we teach because with Internet, distance will no longer be a hindrance to access to education. Even the physical submission of reports from provincial to national offices is rendered unnecessary as they can now be made online. These developments should rightfully define the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte as that which has revolutionized Philippine education, and it is the Seventeenth Congress which made that one possible.

This afternoon, I wish to discuss three educational concerns that require urgent attention if we are to consummate the revolution in education that we started.

The first is CHED's lacking a graduate tracer study. What is a tracer study, Ladies and Gentlemen? Simply put, it refers to the data on the accomplishments of CHED relating in particular to the employability of its graduates. It is an index of performance of any agency, which measures efficiency and accountability of funds given to an agency vis-à-vis its goals. Such study would answer the questions that matter such as, "What happened to our college graduates, say two years after graduation or after a defined time frame?" "Were they employed?" If yes, "Were they employed in jobs related to their college courses?" During the last budget hearing, Ladies and Gentlemen, this Representation called the attention of CHED on this matter, and in fairness to them, I was assured that they will attend to the matter. How soon it will be attended to, I am not sure.

At this juncture of our national history where we just instituted various legislative reforms in education, the significance of such tracer study is paramount. For one, with respect to the Free College Education Law, the success of such law would be dependent on a proper diagnosis of how college education fared in the Philippines in the previous years, especially in providing employment to our citizens. We need evidence and hard facts to substantiate the policies that will be instituted by CHED. This Representation most respectfully submits that the determination of courses that will be shouldered by the State under the Free College Education Law should proceed from real data and the correct analysis of the data emanating from such study and not from guesswork. Otherwise, we will be witnessing the Free College Education Law metamorphosing into an avenue for massive wastage of public funds and inefficient allocation of government resources.

Such tracer study is also important as it should affect policies that will be formulated with respect to the other significant legislation in recent history—the law providing for K to 12. There is no doubt, Ladies and Gentlemen, of its good intention that it will make Philippine educational standards at par with the rest of the world in this era of globalization and ASEAN integration, and that it will result in K to 12 graduates who are already capable of being absorbed by the labor market. Two years after its full implementation, we as a nation still need to be fully apprised of where it is going.

Then, there is the curious case of TESDA, the agency tasked by law with, among others, the development of technicians, middle-level and para-professionals in the country. While it appears to be effective in job-generation—the word, Ladies and Gentlemen, is "appears,"—it is most respectfully submitted that the programs of TESDA would be optimized if it would be done in coordination with the policies of both the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education.

All the three agencies are tasked with a certain aspect of our educational system, and in view of the aforementioned developments, it is now, more than ever, that they need to talk to each other to synchronize our country's policies on education. That way, the three of them could altogether achieve gains which will be more than the summation of all the achievements of each of the three agencies taken all together.

The second problem that I wish CHED would focus its attention on is the equally urgent need to computerize and create an online portal for its records and to update its management information system. I will give you a specific example, Ladies and Gentlemen. If you call CHED right now and ask whether a certain school is fake or not, there is a chance that you will not get a correct answer. This is so as the records of CHED in this regard are not updated and not comprehensive, especially with respect to schools which are just undergoing the accreditation process.

Now, let us imagine that all such basic data relating to schools, students, graduates, faculty and course offerings could be made available online, it will be a whole new world. Fake diplomas, fake schools, fake credentials—these would be things of the past. The same will happen if we can transport online the status of scholarships and teaching applications. That would mean a lot of savings and would also prevent corruption. Now, more than ever, CHED should urgently address this problem in view of the approval of the Free Wi-Fi Law. As the law is now about to be implemented, CHED should already roll out the necessary preparations that would make its services in-sync with the Internet.

The last, Ladies and Gentlemen, last and third, is the inordinate delay in the release of scholarship funds. It is public knowledge that the payment to the scholars of various grants takes at least one year, if you are lucky; if you are unlucky, more than that. In this regard, the latest victims are the more than 9,500 teachers-scholars who are affected by the onset of our Senior High School Program. When asked about this, the former Chairman told us that the Scholarship Division of CHED is lacking in personnel.

To the mind of this Representation, being a former recipient of government scholarship funds himself, that is an answer which betrayed his lack of heart for the scholars. In fact, that was very insensitive. Scholarship funds are given to those who need them and that there is a timeframe for responding to their needs. Such answer smacks of callousness to such time-bound necessity. Scholarship funds cannot be late since if delay would be allowed, the scholars would go hungry and left at the mercy of forces beyond their control. The tragedy of Kristel Tejada, the UP student who committed suicide for not getting a scholarship, is an example of such vulnerability to uncontrollable forces.

In view of this, Ladies and Gentlemen, it may be about time that this august Body consider making it a criminal offense to delay without just cause the release of such scholarship funds or, at least, impose penalties for such delay. In this regard, the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act may appropriately be amended to include such delays as one of the punishable offenses under the Act.

While a crisis shows the worst, it also brings out the best in possibilities. This is exactly the message of the crisis in leadership at the CHED. It brought to the fore the pressing problems it confronts and needs to confront, as well as their urgency and need for resolution.

My dear colleagues, these developments in the field of education also convey to us a message for a call to action—to exercise our job of congressional oversight and to exercise our plenary duty to institute legislative reforms. Indeed, it is high time for a congressional investigation in aid of legislation to inquire whether a reorganization of the existing Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority is in order, as to whether these agencies of the government could be merged into a single entity akin to their monolithic predecessor—the Department of Education, Culture and Sports.

Thus, immediately after this privilege speech, this Representation is filing a resolution calling for an investigation in aid of legislation as to the propriety of merging the said three agencies into one and/or the amendment of the existing CHED Charter, RA No. 7722, so that said law could be made attuned to the need for synchronization of the country's educational policies in view of the implementation of the K to 12 Program, the Free College Education Law, and the ASEAN Integration, among others. In this regard, of special mention is Section 5 of RA No. 7722 which confers upon the Commissioners of the CHED a fixed term when all their counterparts at the DepEd serve at the pleasure of the President. Indeed, one of the good things that a crisis brings is that it pushes all of us to critical thinking which in turn leads to purposive doing, a sure indicator that change is coming.

My dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, with the fervent hope that we shall continue to become agents of change, I wish to thank you, once again, this afternoon, for lending me not only your ears but also your hearts and brains.

Thank you very much.

Long live Philippine education. Long live the Seventeenth Congress. Long live the Philippines.

Thank you and more power.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Thank you, Representative Belaro Jr.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the privilege speech of the Honorable Belaro to the Committee on Rules.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the same is referred to the Committee on Rules.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Arnolfo “Arnie” A. Teves Jr. of the Third District of Negros Oriental who wishes to avail of the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Hon. Arnolfo Teves is hereby recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. TEVES

REP. TEVES. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, good afternoon. Good afternoon everybody.

I rise here again today to speak on the condonation doctrine and graft.

The condonation doctrine is what we call the “Aguinaldo doctrine.” Sa alam ko sa history nito, na-apply ito dati on a case of something like a coup d’état. So, itong condonation doctrine, kapag nagkasala ka, sabay ibinoto ka ng tao, mapapawalang-sala iyong administrative cases mo. But this should not apply to graft cases dahil kung ia-apply natin ito sa graft cases, ang gagawin ng tao magnanakaw ka, bibili ka ng boto, mapapawalang-sala ka, mananalo ka, sabay mapapawalang-sala ka. Then, it will create a vicious cycle—nakaw ka lang nang nakaw, bili ka lang nang bili ng boto, parati kang nananalo, parati kang napapawalang-sala. Hindi ba? It is very, very wrong.

Other than that, this doctrine is a judicial legislation. Wala itong ginawang batas na nanggaling sa Kongreso. So, technically, it is encroaching on the powers of Congress to make the laws. Dapat tayo sa Kongreso, hindi pumayag dito. I do not know if we know anybody, close to us or what, who has benefitted from this, but nevertheless, mali ito dahil dapat lahat ng batas, nanggagaling sa Kongreso at hindi gawa-gawa lamang ng hudikatura, which is what we term as “judicial legislation.”

Isa pa, in the case of *Conchita Carpio Morales vs. Binay*, hindi ba mayroon silang ginawang parang progressive? Iyong nakaraang mga kaso, it will not apply pero iyong bagong kaso after it would apply. Hindi ba, dapat dalawa lang ang pagpipilian natin, either we apply it or we do not. I would rather that we do not because if we apply it, we apply it to all. Then again, we are encouraging pagnanakaw, dahil iyon na nga, magnanakaw ka, bibili ka ng boto, manalo ka, wala

ka na namang sala, magnanakaw ka na naman ulit. It is crazy. We should stop doing this.

I plan to make a letter addressed to the Justices of the Supreme Court. Sana naman may sumuporta na mga kasamahan natin dito. Tulungan ninyo akong pirmahan itong sulat na ito at ipadala natin sa Supreme Court. And, hopefully, we can straighten things up and make our country better.

Thank you very much. Good afternoon.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Thank you, Representative Teves.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of the Honorable Teves to the Committee on Rules.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the same is referred to the Committee on Rules.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, for our final privilege speech, I move that we extend the Privilege Hour for another 15 minutes.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the Privilege Hour is extended by 15 minutes.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the last to avail of the Privilege Hour, the Hon. Gary C. Alejano of the Party-List MAGDALO.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). MAGDALO Party-List Representative Gary C. Alejano is recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. ALEJANO

REP. ALEJANO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Magandang hapon po sa ating lahat.

What makes the prey so vulnerable is not so much as it lacking any sort of defensive capabilities, as much as it is the predator having far superior weaponry. Translated in our country’s defense-related woes, we can infer that the independence that we value, the peace that we enjoy, and the sovereignty that we exercise have been preyed upon time and again not because of our blatant helplessness, but rather because compared to those who dare trample our dignity as a nation, our capacity to defend ourselves is dwarfed by the burgeoning might of our oppressors. Even more troubling is our government’s failure to sufficiently equip our troops to more

effectively combat internal threats. Our armed units, whose courage and proficiency I do not doubt, have been bogged down by defective hand-me-downs and, ultimately, outdated equipment. I can only imagine the expeditious culmination of dangerous operations and the greater number of lives that could have been preserved if only our forces have for themselves the hardware that better served its desired purpose. Indeed, there is no denying that we have long been neglecting our now decrepit defense capabilities and this has exposed us to various glaring weaknesses that enemies from within and without are all too willing to exploit.

Defense has always been a national necessity. Forty years ago, Presidential Decree No. 415 was issued establishing a Philippine Self-Reliant Defense Posture Program or SRDP which aimed to develop a defense system of a self-respecting, independent nature that relies solely on the country's capabilities and resources.

In 2003, PD No. 415 has got some much-needed overhaul by means of Government Procurement Policy Board Resolution No. 06-2003, but only in terms of procurement in funding schemes. Judging by the state of our defense capabilities, PD No. 415 has not progressed the SRDP Program enough to alleviate our dire need for a reliable, indigenous defense industry. This is most likely the effect of foreign intervention on our foreign policy and development brought about by dependence on external, mostly American, support for defense requirements.

The country's overdependence on its allies has taken our Armed Forces, once the envy of Asia during the 1960s, into unfathomable lows. This once dominant past, however, cannot be overstated since we owe such strength not from our indigenous defense productions but to transfers of surplus American weaponry. The Mutual Defense Treaty with the United States and our dependence on their military assistance and logistical support blinded the previous administrations to the stark reality that such arrangements are inadequate and may not actually last in the long run. What has become of this overconfidence is the current dilemma we collectively suffer.

In the current SRDP Program, an annual appropriation of some hundreds of millions is allocated to pump-prime the defense industry. This is to provide for the necessary financial support to spur research and development in cooperation with local defense industries, yet it has only resulted in a defense industry which is meager at best. Concomitantly, there has been no clear-cut direction as to how the current SRDP Program is going despite its recent revival. Even with the publication of a 20-year strategic plan by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the 2013 revival of the DND's SRDP advocacy,

the program continues to stagnate. Moreover, what few reputable local defense manufacturers we have have often lost to their foreign competitors in the bidding and procurement processes, since their foreign counterparts are able to lower their prices more than what is possible for local manufacturers since production costs in the country are costlier. Ang masama pa doon, aking mga kasamahan, ang provision ng ating mga batas, kasama na iyong Modernization Program, ay hindi po makapag-compete ang mga local manufacturers.

In sum, following four decades of more than P4 billion worth of expenses in various projects, the program still failed to achieve its primary goals and several established industries were not sustained. The problems which plagued it were the inability to sustain demand for the defense industry, a decline in government support, the lack of upstream industries and the lack of a clear and definite SRDP Program strategy.

Clearly, we are running out of time to fill the gaping holes in our national security. In the midst of rapidly evolving security situations in and out of the country, we are placed in a precarious position as we remain unable to effectively address forces that continue to threaten our peace. In light of this, I urge all of you, my colleagues, to elevate PD No. 415 to a Republic Act in order to give it the full weight and force of a statute approved by the Chief Executive; and not only that, but also to authorize the establishment of a dedicated research and development agency that shall be referred to as the Defense Research and Development Agency.

This agency will be under the supervision of the Department of National Defense and shall possess corporate powers to enable it to venture into partnerships with private and, more importantly, local manufacturers. Also, by having the requisite training and education in defense, science, technology, and acquisition, the proposed DRDA is fully equipped to undertake the responsibilities of being the DND's foremost procurement arm. Never shall our Defense establishment's procurement processes be bogged down again by insufficient expertise and downright incompetence that could be taken advantage of by defense contractors and dealers. We must ensure that the procurement of our defense material is at par with the highest international standards and is, ultimately, based on technical expertise on such matters. The DRDA as the DND's procurement arm shall commit itself to this goal.

A defense research and development agency is not exactly a new concept. In fact, many of our neighboring countries have already instituted their own dedicated and indigenous defense research and development organizations, such as Singapore's

Defense Science and Technology Agency and South Korea's Defense Acquisition Program Administration. The establishment of these reputable agencies exemplify just how intense these states' appreciation of a self-reliant defense posture is for the advancement of their national security and survival. The implications of having a similar agency with the technical expertise of our own cannot, not in this age of increasing external threats, ever be discounted. Its benefits, if implemented with utmost care and dedication to excellence, will provide for our varied defense requirements a much-needed boost to keep up with the advances of our regional neighbors.

The proposed agency, I foresee, will not only yield gains on defense-related technologies, as evidenced by the United States' Defense and Development Agency, whose projects have provided significant technologies that influenced many non-military fields, such as computer networking, even the basis for the modern Internet and the graphical user interfaces in information technology. True enough, whatever reservations that we might have for establishing a research and development agency of our own should at least be diminished by such lucrative prospects.

In view of the aforementioned, I reiterate the AFP's foremost thrust in establishing a credible SRDP program which is "to produce locally, when feasible, materiel for our defense forces through partnership between the military and civilian establishments, while importing those that cannot be locally produced with the ultimate objective of acquiring the technology for the production of these materiel. Paramount to this objective is the primordial role of the military and government agencies of providing technical and financial assistance to civilian defense manufacturers" and also to our scientists. This simply is the goal of my proposed bill.

With China breathing down our necks as it looms large over our territorial waters, we have got no time nor enough reason to delay the development of our defensive capabilities any longer than we already did. We should not stand idly by as our troops struggle to scrape for the bare necessities of defending our homeland. We should not be lulled into complacency by this fragile peace that we hold for now, knowing that anytime it might shatter. We must face the challenges ahead of us in a position of strength.

We stand right now in a moral, even existential quandary of either living as a mule of greater powers or as a sovereign state with full control of Her destiny. I ultimately choose to fight, to stand like our heroes of eons past, against the tyranny of evil men who dare desecrate the sacred shores we call our home. I call for the exhaustion of all possible means, to not let fear cow us into duplicitous deals with a ravenous beast clad in human flesh. We shall have the means

to stave off those who attempt to poison and destroy our nation. As our forebears have paid a steep price for our independence, so shall we pay the price of keeping it.

Let us elevate PD No. 415 as a statute and establish the Defense Research and Development Agency.

Maraming salamat po at magandang hapon po sa ating lahat.

Mabuhay!

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Thank you, Representative Alejano.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the privilege speech of the Honorable Alejano to the Committee on Rules.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The privilege speech of Representative Alejano is hereby referred to the Committee on Rules.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, with no other Member wishing to avail of the Privilege Hour, I move that we terminate the Privilege Hour.

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

CHANGE OF REFERRAL OF CERTAIN MEASURES

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move for the change of referral of the following measures:

- House Bills No. 943, 2603, 2605, 3680, 4467, 4905, 5570, 5804 and 5851 – amending Republic Act No. 8794, otherwise known as "An Act Imposing a Motor Vehicle User's Charge on Owners of All Types of Motor Vehicles and for Other Purposes," from the Committee on Public Works and Highways to the Committees on Public Works and Highways, and Ways and Means;

- House Bill No. 3339 – providing for the establishment of the Farmers' Medical Center (FMC) to be located in the municipality of Zaragoza, province of Nueva Ecija, from the Committee on Agriculture and Food to the Committee on Health;

- House Bill No. 6732 – creating the Hinunangan Bay Development Authority, from the Committee on Natural Resources to the Committee on Government Enterprises and Privatization;

- House Bill No. 6909 – regulating motorcycles-for-hire, known as habal-habal or angkas, from the Committee on Local Government to the Committee on Transportation; and

- House Bill No. 6957 – authorizing the City or Municipal Civil Registrar, or the Consul General to update in the Civil Register the civil status of a Filipino spouse who was validly divorced by a foreign spouse, without the need of a Judicial Order, from the Committee on Justice to the Committee on Population and Family Relations.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

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

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

REP. GULLAS. Madam Speaker, I move that we adjourn the session until tomorrow, February 6, 2018.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none, the session is adjourned until tomorrow at four o'clock in the afternoon.

It was 6:28 p.m.