



Congressional Record

PLENARY PROCEEDINGS OF THE 17th CONGRESS, THIRD REGULAR SESSION

House of Representatives

Vol. 1

Monday, August 6, 2018

No. 7

CALL TO ORDER

At 3:00 p.m., Deputy Speaker Fredenil "Fred" H. Castro called the session to order.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). The session is called to order.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). Everybody will please rise for the singing of the National Anthem.

Everybody rose to sing the Philippine National Anthem.

PRAYER

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). Everybody will please remain standing for a minute of prayer and meditation.

Everybody remained standing for the silent prayer.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

ROLL CALL

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). 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. 7, dated August 6, 2018.**

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. Mr. Speaker, the roll call shows that 231 Members responded to the call.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). With 231 Members responding to the call, the Chair declares the presence of a quorum.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. HERRERA-DY. Mr. Speaker.

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. HERRERA-DY. Considering that copies of the Journal of the previous session have been distributed to the Members, I move that we dispense with the reading of the Journal.

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, ...

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

REP. DAZA. ... may I speak ...

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

REP. HERRERA-DY. Mr. Speaker, I move for the approval...

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. HERRERA-DY. ... of the Journal of the previous session, Journal No. 5, dated July 31, 2018.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). Is there any objection to the motion to approve the Journal? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

* See ANNEX (printed separately)

REP. HERRERA-DY. Mr. Speaker, I move that we acknowledge the presence of the guests of Reps. Ramon C. Nolasco, Baby Aline Vargas-Alfonso, Randolph S. Ting, and Magnolia C. Antonino—Honorable Melvin “Boy” Vargas, Vice-Governor of the province of Cagayan, ... *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.) Please rise. *(Applause)* Welcome to the House of Representatives.

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. HERRERA-DY. ... as well as the Presidents of the ...

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. HERRERA-DY. ...Associations of ...

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. HERRERA-DY. ...Barangay Chairmen of...

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. HERRERA-DY. ...the province of Cagayan, ...

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. HERRERA-DY. ...led by Ex-Officio Provincial Board Member Bryan Paul Vargas.

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.) Please rise.

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.) Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

REP. HERRERA-DY. Mr. Speaker, may I move to acknowledge the presence of the guests of Rep. Jeffrey D. Khonghun—the officers of SUBIKEÑA Municipal Level of the municipality of Subic, Zambales, ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.) Please rise.

REP. HERRERA-DY. ... led by its President Sylvia Del Pozo *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.) Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)* The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. HERRERA-DY. May we also please acknowledge the presence of the guests of Rep. Seth Frederick P. Jalosjos—the Association of Civil Registrar Inc. of Region IX, headed by their Regional President, Mr. Samson Barrientos.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.) Please rise. Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)* The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. HERRERA-DY. Mr. Speaker, I move that we now proceed with the Reference of Business and request that the Secretary General be directed to read the title of the bills and resolutions on First Reading as well as Communications and Committee Reports.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.) Is there any objection? *(Silence)*

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, I object.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.) The Chair hears none; ...

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, I object.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.) ... the motion is approved.

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, I objected ...

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. Reference of Business ...

REP. DAZA. ... because I have been seeking ...

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. Bills on First Reading ...

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, may I be recognized.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary General read the following House Bills and Resolutions on First Reading, Messages from the Senate, Communications and Committee Report, and the Deputy Speaker made the corresponding references:

BILLS ON FIRST READING

House Bill No. 7967, entitled:
“AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE GOVERNMENT

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM, AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Cua
TO THE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE
AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, I have been kind in seeking recognition from the Chair. Does the Chair not hear that I am seeking recognition from him?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). We will recognize the Gentleman after the Reference of Business.

REP. DAZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). Cong. Raul Daza of Northern Samar, we will recognize you later.

REP. DAZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). But we will first finish the Reference of Business.

REP. DAZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

Continuation

House Bill No. 7968, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING THE DEPARTMENT OF DISASTER RESILIENCE, DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Romualdez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION AND THE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY

House Bill No. 7969, entitled:

“AN ACT APPROPRIATING THE SUM OF ONE BILLION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-ONE MILLION SEVEN HUNDRED TEN THOUSAND PESOS (P1,161,710,000) AS SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR FY 2018 AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Sy-Alvarado
TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 7970, entitled:

“AN ACT MANDATING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS TO INTITUTIONALIZE REWARDS FOR

COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 32 OF RA 9003, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ECOLOGICAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREOF”

By Representative Sy-Alvarado
TO THE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY

House Bill No. 7971, entitled:

“AN ACT APPROPRIATING TWO HUNDRED MILLION PESOS (P200MILLION) FOR THE REPAIR AND RENOVATION OF THE HALL OF JUSTICE IN THE CITY OF VIGAN”

By Representative Savellano
TO THE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE

House Bill No. 7972, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE CREATION/FORMATION OF BARANGAY TOURISM AND INVESTMENTS COUNCILS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Savellano
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 7974, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10708, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘TAX INCENTIVES MANAGEMENT AND TRANSPARENCY ACT’, EXPANDING ITS COVERAGE TO ENHANCE FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Umali
TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

House Bill No. 7975, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING SECTIONS 1 AND 2 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10555 TO INCLUDE AREVALO PLAZA AND FOR ANY OTHER PURPOSE”

By Representative Treñas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM

House Bill No. 7976, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC RESTROOMS ALONG NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL HIGHWAYS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representatives Nieto, Maceda, Martinez, Sandoval, Malapitan, Olivarez, Salo, Montoro and Calixto-Rubiano
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

House Bill No. 7977, entitled:

“AN ACT REQUIRING THE PHILIPPINE CHARITY SWEEPSTAKES OFFICE (PCSO) TO PRINT THE LOTTO TICKETS ON NON-THERMAL PAPER OR ANY KIND OF RECYCLABLE PAPER WHICH ENSURES THAT THE PRINTINGS THEREON CANNOT BE EASILY ERASED OR OBSCURED BY SIMPLE SCRATCHES AND CRUMPLES, AND CAN WITHSTAND REASONABLE HEAT, THEREBY REDUCING THE POSSIBILITY OF TICKET SPOILAGE”

By Representatives Nieto, Maceda, Martinez, Sandoval and Malapitan
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GAMES AND AMUSEMENTS

RESOLUTIONS

House Resolution No. 2031, entitled:

“RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE PRESIDENT'S EFFORT TO COMBAT RICE SMUGGLING”

By Representative Cua
TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

House Resolution No. 2032, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING THE INTER-AGENCY WORKING GROUP FOR THE SUCCESSFUL STAGING OF THE 2018 PALARONG PAMBANSA”

By Representative Savellano
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Resolution No. 2033, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION URGING THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GAMES AND AMUSEMENTS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, REGARDING THE PROLIFERATION OF ILLEGAL GAMING, CASINOS, COCKPITS AND SIMILAR ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE CITY OF MANILA”

By Representative Lopez (M.L.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 2034, entitled:

“RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEES ON JUSTICE AND OVERSEAS WORKERS AFFAIRS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED HUMAN TRAFFICKING INCIDENTS AT THE NINOY AQUINO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (NAIA)”

By Representative Bertiz
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 2035, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEES ON OVERSEAS WORKERS AFFAIRS AND GOOD GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY TO INQUIRE IN AID OF LEGISLATION INTO THE STATUS AND UTILIZATION OF THE OWWA FUND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE MANDATE, POLICY AND OBJECTIVES OF THE OVERSEAS WORKERS WELFARE ADMINISTRATION UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10801, AN ACT GOVERNING THE OPERATIONS AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE OVERSEAS WORKERS WELFARE ADMINISTRATION”

By Representative Bertiz
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 2036, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING DEEPEST CONDOLENCES FOR THE PASSING OF FORMER JUSTICE RICARDO C. PUNO, SR., ON JULY 25, 2018”

By Representatives Nieto, Maceda, Martinez, Sandoval, Malapitan, Olivarez, Salo and Montoro
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 2037, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING DEEPEST CONDOLENCES FOR THE PASSING OF CARMEN GUERRERO-NAKPIL ON JULY 30, 2018”

By Representatives Nieto, Maceda, Martinez, Sandoval, Malapitan and Olivarez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

Message dated July 30, 2018, informing the House of Representatives that the Senate on July 24, 2018 passed the following Senate Bills:

Senate Bill No. 1749, entitled:

“AN ACT TO IMPROVE LAND TRANSPORTATION TERMINALS, STATIONS, STOPS, REST AREAS AND ROLL-ON/ROLL-OFF TERMINALS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”;

Senate Bill No. 1586, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE SOCCSKSARGEN GENERAL HOSPITAL IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SURALLAH, PROVINCE OF THE SOUTH COTABATO, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”;

Senate Bill No. 1649, entitled:

“AN ACT UPGRADING THE BATAAN PROVINCIAL HOSPITAL IN THE PROVINCE OF BATAAN INTO A LEVEL III TEACHING AND TRAINING HOSPITAL TO BE NOW KNOWN AS THE BATAAN GENERAL HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL CENTER AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”; and

Senate Bill No. 1654, entitled:

“AN ACT EXPANDING THE MANDATE AND SERVICE CAPABILITY OF THE BICOL SANITARIUM IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CABUSAO, PROVINCE OF CAMARINES SUR, TO BE KNOWN AS THE BICOL REGION GENERAL HOSPITAL AND GERIATRIC MEDICAL CENTER, UPGRADING ITS SERVICE FACILITIES, AUTHORIZING THE INCREASE OF ITS MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

in which it requests the concurrence of the House of Representatives.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Message dated July 30, 2018, informing the House of Representatives that the Senate on even date passed Senate Bill No. 1391, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE MANDATORY PHILHEALTH COVERAGE FOR ALL PERSONS WITH DISABILITY (PWDs), AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7277, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘MAGNA CARTA FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITY’, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

in which it requests the concurrence of the House of Representatives.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Message dated August 1, 2018, informing the House of Representatives that on July 31, 2018 the Senate

designated Senators Joseph Victor G. Ejercito, Maria Lourdes Nancy S. Binay, Grace Poe, Joel Villanueva and Risa Hontiveros as conferees to the Bicameral Conference Committee on the disagreeing provisions of Senate Bill No. 1390, entitled:

“AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE PHILIPPINE COMPREHENSIVE POLICY OF HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV) AND ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS) PREVENTION, TREATMENT, CARE, AND SUPPORT, AND ESTABLISHING THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL AIDS COUNCIL (PNAC), REPEALING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8504, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘PHILIPPINE AIDS PREVENTION AND CONTROL ACT OF 1998,’ AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

and House Bill No. 6617, entitled:

“AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE PHILIPPINE COMPREHENSIVE POLICY ON HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV) AND ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS) PREVENTION, TREATMENT, CARE AND SUPPORT, AND ESTABLISHING THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL HIV AND AIDS PLAN AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, REPEALING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8504, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘PHILIPPINE AIDS PREVENTION AND CONTROL ACT OF 1998’ ”

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

COMMUNICATIONS

Letter dated March 14, 2018 of Delfin N. Lorenzana, Secretary, Department of National Defense, submitting to the House of Representatives the monthly report on the implementation of Martial Law in Mindanao covering the period February 1 to 28, 2018, together with the letter dated March 8, 2018 of Salvador Melchor B. Mison Jr., Acting Chief of Staff.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY

Letter dated May 28, 2018 of Jose A. Fabia, Commissioner Officer-in-Charge, Commission on Audit, furnishing the House of Representatives with copies of the 2017 Annual Audit Reports and Management Letter on the following government agencies:

- A. Annual Audit Reports for CY 2017
 1. Bureau of Communications Services;

2. Climate Change Commission;
 3. Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority;
 4. Foreign Service Institute;
 5. Games and Amusements Board;
 6. Governance Commission for GOCCs;
 7. Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council;
 8. Movie and Television Review and Classification Board;
 9. National Anti-Poverty Commission;
 10. National Youth Commission;
 11. Office of the Vice President;
 12. Optical Media Board;
 13. Philippine Competition Commission;
 14. Philippine Racing Commission;
 15. Presidential Broadcast Staff-RTVM;
 16. Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor;
 17. Presidential Legislative Liaison Office;
 18. Presidential Management Staff; and
 19. UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines.
- B. Management Letter
1. Technical Cooperation Council of the Philippines for CY 2017.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated 14 June 2018 of Nestor A. Espenilla Jr., Governor, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), submitting to the House of Representatives the BSP Report on Philippine External Debt as of 31 March 2018 which were noted by the Monetary Board on 14 June 2018.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

Letter dated 18 June 2018 of Michael G. Aguinaldo, Chairperson, Commission on Audit, providing the House of Representatives with copies of the CY 2017 Annual Audit Reports on twelve (12) Government-Owned or -Controlled Corporations in the National Capital Region enumerated below and a copy of the management letter:

- A. CY 2017 Annual Audit Reports
1. Al-Amanah Islamic Investment Bank of the Philippines (AAIIBP) (CYs 2016 and 2017);
 2. AFP Retirement and Separation Benefits System (AFP-RSBS) (CYs 2016 and 2017);
 3. Corregidor Foundation, Inc. (CFI);
 4. PNOC Shipping & Transport Corporation (PNOC-STC);
 5. PNOC Alternative Fuels Corporation (PNOC-AFC);
 6. PNOC Development & Management Corporation (PNOC-DMC);
 7. PNOC Renewables Corporation (PNOC-RC);

8. Food Terminal, Inc. (FTI);
 9. Philippine Sugar Corporation (PHILSUCOR);
 10. Philippine Children's Medical Center (PCMC);
 11. Philippine Center for Economic Development (PCED); and
 12. Social Housing Finance Corporation (SHFC) (CYs 2016 and 2017).
- B. CY 2017 Management Letter
1. Quedan and Rural Credit Guarantee Corporation (QUEDANCOR).

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated June 18, 2018 of Pelilia C. Veloso, Regional Director, Regional Office No. II, Commission on Audit, furnishing the House of Representatives with copies of the CY 2017 Annual Audit Reports on the following water districts:

- A. Province of Cagayan
1. Abulug Water District
 2. Amulung Water District
 3. Aparri Water District
 4. Gattaran Water District
 5. Lal-lo Water District
 6. Metropolitan Tuguegarao Water District
 7. Peñablanca Water District
 8. Sto. Niño Water District
- B. Province of Isabela
9. Angadanan Water District
 10. Aurora Water District
 11. Benito Soliven Water District
 12. Cabagan Water District
 13. City of Ilagan Water District
 14. Cordon Water District
 15. Reina Mercedes Water District
 16. Roxas Water District
 17. Santiago Water District
- C. Province of Quirino
18. Diffun Water District
 19. Maddela Water District

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated June 20, 2018 of Michael G. Aguinaldo, Chairperson, Commission on Audit, transmitting to the House of Representatives the 2017 Annual Audit Reports on the following government agencies:

1. Bureau of Broadcast Services;
2. Commission on the Filipino Language;
3. Commission on Filipinos Overseas;
4. Film Development Council of the Philippines;
5. Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board;
6. National Archives of the Philippines;
7. National Historical Commission of the Philippines;

8. National Library of the Philippines;
9. National Commission on Indigenous Peoples;
10. National Printing Office;
11. News and Information Bureau;
12. Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency; and
13. Philippine Commission on Women.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated June 22, 2018 of Michael G. Aguinaldo, Chairperson, Commission on Audit, furnishing the House of Representatives with copies of the CY 2017 Annual Audit Reports on the following government agencies:

1. Department of Energy;
2. Energy Regulatory Commission;
3. Intramuros Administration;
4. National Parks Development Committee;
5. Toll Regulatory Board;
6. Civil Aeronautics Board;
7. Office of Transportation Cooperatives; and
8. Office for Transportation Security.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated 22 June 2018 of Ramon L. Abiera, Executive Director III, Construction Industry Authority of the Philippines, submitting the Agency Action Plan and Status of Implementation (AAPSI) on the audit observations and recommendations.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated June 25, 2018 of Michael R. Bacani, OIC – Regional Director, Regional Office No. 1, Commission on Audit, furnishing the House of Representatives with a copy of the CY 2017 Annual Audit Reports on six (6) state universities and colleges in Region I, to wit:

1. Mariano Marcos State University, Batac City, Ilocos Norte;
2. University of Northern Philippines, Vigan City, Ilocos Sur;
3. Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College, Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur;
4. North Luzon Philippines State College, Candon City, Ilocos Sur;
5. Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University, Bacnotan, La Union; and
6. Pangasinan State University, Lingayen, Pangasinan.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated June 25, 2018 of Ernesto M. Pernia, Secretary, National Economic and Development Authority, submitting the NEDA Secretariat's Report on the CY 2017 ODA Portfolio Review.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Letter dated June 26, 2018 of Gina Perpetua R. Baul, State Auditor IV, Audit Team Leader, Team R10-01, CGS Water Districts and Other CGS Stand Alone Agencies, Regional Office No. 10, Commission on Audit, submitting copies of the CY 2017 Annual Audit Reports on the following water districts:

1. Cagayan de Oro City Water District, Cagayan de Oro City;
2. Gingoog City Water District, Gingoog City;
3. Mambajao Water District, Mambajao, Camiguin; and
4. Talisayan Water District, Talisayan, Misamis Oriental.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated June 26, 2018 of Edgardo R. Masongsong, Administrator, National Electrification Administration, submitting the comprehensive financial and narrative report on the budgetary adjustments from Capital Outlay (CO) to Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) for FY 2018.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated June 27, 2018 of Michael G. Aguinaldo, Chairperson, Commission on Audit, transmitting to the House of Representatives the 2017 Annual Audit Reports on the following government agencies:

1. Department of the Interior and Local Government;
2. National Police Commission;
3. Bureau of Fire Protection;
4. Local Government Academy;
5. Bureau of Jail Management and Penology;
6. Philippine Public Safety College;
7. Philippine National Police;
8. Department of National Defense;
9. National Defense College of the Philippines
10. Office of Civil Defense;
11. Veterans Memorial Medical Center (VMMC);
12. Philippine Veterans Affairs Office;
13. General Headquarters Armed Forces of the Philippines;
14. Armed Forces of the Philippines Commissary and Exchange Service (AFPACES);
15. Philippine Army;
16. Philippine Air Force;
17. Philippine Navy;
18. Department of Justice;
19. Bureau of Immigration;
20. National Bureau of Investigation;
21. Bureau of Corrections;
22. Parole and Probation Administration;
23. Land Registration Authority;
24. Public Attorney's Office;

25. Office of the Solicitor General;
 26. Office of the Government Corporate Counsel;
and
 27. Presidential Commission on Good Government.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated June 27, 2018 of Michael G. Aguinaldo, Chairperson, Commission on Audit, transmitting to the House of Representatives the 2017 Annual Audit Reports on the following government agencies:

1. Agricultural Credit Policy Council;
2. Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries;
3. National Meat Inspection Service;
4. National Mapping and Resource Information Authority;
5. National Water Resources Board;
6. Board of Investments;
7. Philippine Trade Training Center;
8. Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines;
9. Design Center of the Philippines; and
10. Construction Industry Authority of the Philippines.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated June 27, 2018 of Ma. Corazon S. Gomez, Regional Director, Regional Office No. IV-B, Commission on Audit, submitting to the House of Representatives the 2017 Annual Audit Reports for the following State Universities and Colleges, Other Stand-Alone Agencies and Water Districts:

- A. State Universities and Colleges and Other Stand-Alone Agencies
 1. Occidental Mindoro State College;
 2. Marinduque State College, Boac, Marinduque;
 3. Mindoro State College of Agriculture and Technology;
 4. Palawan State University, Puerto Princesa City;
 5. Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Staff, Puerto Princesa City;
 6. Romblon State University, Odiongan, Romblon; and
 7. Western Philippines University, Aborlan, Palawan.
- B. Water Districts:
 1. Naujan Water District, Province of Oriental Mindoro;
 2. Pinamalayan Water District, Province of Oriental Mindoro;
 3. Pola Water District, Province of Oriental Mindoro;

4. Roxas Water District, Province of Oriental Mindoro;
 5. Sablayan Water District, Province of Occidental Mindoro;
 6. San Jose Water District, Province of Occidental Mindoro;
 7. Culion Palawan Water District, Province of Palawan;
 8. Roxas Palawan Water District, Province of Palawan;
 9. Taytay Palawan Water District, Province of Palawan;
 10. Puerto Princesa City Water District, Province of Palawan;
 11. Odiongan Water District, Province of Romblon; and
 12. Romblon Water District, Province of Romblon.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letters dated June 28, 2018 of Delfin N. Lorenzana, Secretary, Department of National Defense and June 10, 2018 of General Carlito G. Galvez Jr., Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines, submitting their monthly report on the implementation of Martial Law in Mindanao covering the period from 01 to 31 May 2018.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY

Letter dated June 28, 2018 of Orlando R. Ravanera, Chairman, Cooperative Development Authority, submitting the 2017 Annual Report of the Cooperative Development Authority.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON COOPERATIVES DEVELOPMENT

Letter dated June 29, 2018 of Amado Peter A. Garbanzos, State Auditor III, Acting Audit Team Leader, R10-05, CGS-Water Districts and Other CGS-SAA, Region 10, Commission on Audit, furnishing the House of Representatives a copy of the CY 2017 Annual Audit Report on the following water districts:

1. Bacolod Water District, Bacolod, Lanao del Norte;
2. Linamon Water District, Linamon, Lanao del Norte;
3. Kapatagan Water District, Kapatagan, Lanao del Norte;
4. Kauswagan Water District, Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte;
5. Kolambugan Water District, Kolambugan, Lanao del Norte; and
6. Tubod-Baroy Water District, Tubod, Lanao del Norte.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated 29 June 2018 of Lynn S.F. Sicangco, Regional Director, Regional Office No. III, Commission on Audit, furnishing the House of Representatives with copies of the Financial Audit Reports on the following fifty-seven (57) water districts for CY 2016 and 2017 in Region III:

1. Concepcion Water District, Concepcion, Tarlac (CY 2017);
2. Subic Water District, Subic, Zambales (CY 2017);
3. Bongabon Water District, Bongabon, Nueva Ecija (CYs 2016 and 2017);
4. Gen. Natividad Water District, Gen. Natividad, Nueva Ecija (CYs 2016 and 2017);
5. Baliwag Water District, Baliwag, Bulacan (CY 2017);
6. Angeles City Water District, Angeles City, Pampanga (CY 2017);
7. Marilao Water District, Marilao, Bulacan (CY 2017);
8. Mariveles Water District, Mariveles, Bataan (CY 2017);
9. Cabanatuan City Water District, Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija (CY 2017);
10. Santa Rosa Water District, Santa Rosa, Nueva Ecija (CY 2017);
11. Bulacan Water District, Bulakan, Bulacan (CY 2017);
12. Hagonoy Water District, Hagonoy, Bulacan (CY 2017);
13. Tarlac City Water District, Tarlac City, Tarlac (CY 2017);
14. Mabalacat City Water District, Mabalacat City, Pampanga (CY 2017);
15. Dinalupihan Water District, Dinalupihan, Bataan (CY 2017);
16. Lubao Water District, Lubao, Pampanga (CY 2017);
17. Balanga Water District, City of Balanga, Bataan (CY 2017);
18. City of San Fernando Water District, City of San Fernando, Pampanga (CY 2017);
19. Guagua Water District, Guagua, Pampanga (CY 2017);
20. Calumpit Water District, Calumpit, Bulacan (CY 2017);
21. Bustos Water District, Bustos, Bulacan (CY 2017);
22. San Jose Del Monte City Water District, City of San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan (CY 2017);
23. Norzagaray Water District, Norzagaray, Bulacan (CY 2017);
24. Floridablanca Water District, Floridablanca, Pampanga (CY 2017);
25. Orani Water District, Orani, Bataan (CY 2017);
26. Meycauayan Water District, Meycauayan City, Bulacan (CY 2017);
27. Bocaue Water District, Bocaue, Bulacan (CY 2017);
28. San Rafael Water District, San Rafael, Bulacan (CYs 2016 and 2017);
29. Santa Maria Water District, Santa Maria, Bulacan (CY 2017);
30. Dipaculao Water District, Dipaculao, Aurora (CY 2017);
31. Baler Water District, Baler, Aurora (CYs 2016 and 2017);
32. Bacolor Water District, Bacolor, Pampanga (Management Letter - CYs 2016 and 2017);
33. Sasmuan Water District, Sasmuan, Pampanga (CYs 2016 and 2017);
34. Muñoz Water District, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija (CYs 2016 and 2017);
35. Talugtug Water District, Talugtug, Nueva Ecija (CYs 2016 and 2017);
36. Gerona Water District, Gerona, Tarlac (CYs 2016 and 2017);
37. Castillejos Water District, Castillejos, Zambales (CYs 2016 and 2017);
38. Hermosa Water District, Hermosa, Bataan (CYs 2016 and 2017);
39. City of Malolos Water District, City of Malolos, Bulacan (CY 2017);
40. Plaridel Water District, Plaridel, Bulacan (CY 2017);
41. Masantol Water District, Masantol, Pampanga (CYs 2016 and 2017);
42. Macabebe Water District, Macabebe, Pampanga (CYs 2016 and 2017);
43. Cabangan Water District, Cabangan, Zambales (CYs 2016 and 2017);
44. Moncada Water District, Moncada, Tarlac (CYs 2016 and 2017);
45. Porac Water District, Porac, Pampanga (CYs 2016 and 2017);
46. Sta. Rita Water District, Sta. Rita, Pampanga (CYs 2016 and 2017);
47. Talavera Water District, Talavera, Nueva Ecija (CYs 2016 and 2017);
48. Licab Water District, Licab, Nueva Ecija (CY 2017);
49. Orion Water District, Orion, Bataan (CYs 2016 and 2017);
50. San Miguel Water District, San Miguel, Bulacan, (CYs 2016 and 2017);
51. Paniqui Water District, Paniqui, Tarlac, (CYs 2016 and 2017);
52. San Ildefonso Water District, San Ildefonso, Bulacan (CYs 2016 and 2017);
53. Sta. Cruz Water District, Sta. Cruz, Zambales (CYs 2016 and 2017);

54. Limay Water District, Limay, Bataan (CYs 2016 and 2017);
55. San Jose City Water District, San Jose City, Nueva Ecija (CYs 2016 and 2017);
56. Lupao Water District, Lupao, Nueva Ecija (CYs 2016 and 2017); and
57. Ramos Water District, Ramos, Tarlac (CYs 2016 and 2017).
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
- Annual Audit Report on the Culasi Water District, Culasi, Antique for the year ended December 31, 2017.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
- Annual Audit Report on the Jordan Water District, Jordan, Guimaras for the year ended December 31, 2017.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
- Annual Audit Report on the Zarraga Water District, Zarraga, Iloilo for the year ended December 31, 2017.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
- Annual Audit Report on the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority for the year ended December 31, 2017.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
- Annual Audit Report on the Ramon Magsaysay Technological University, Iba, Zambales for the year ended December 31, 2017.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
- Annual Audit Report on the Mindanao Development Authority, Davao City for the year ended December 31, 2017.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
- Annual Audit Report on the Davao Integrated Development Program, Project Management Office, Davao City for the year ended December 31, 2017.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
- Annual Audit Report on the Dr. Emilio B. Espinosa, Sr. Memorial State College of Agriculture and Technology (DEBESMSCAT), Cabitan, Mandaon, Masbate for the year ended December 31, 2017.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
- Consolidated Audit Report on the Official Development Assistance (ODA) Programs and Projects for Calendar Year 2017.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
- NTRC Tax Research Journal, Volume XXX.2, March-April 2018, A Review of Excise Taxation of Sin Products and Discussions on the Features of Various Tax Amnesty Proposals.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
- Report of Atty. Cesar Strait Pareja, Secretary General, House of Representatives, on enrolled bill, submitted to the Office of the President, for His Excellency's consideration and signature, pursuant
- Letter dated 4 July 2018 of Azucena M. Dayanghirang, Deputy Executive Director, National Nutrition Council, furnishing the House of Representatives a copy of the ASIN Progress Report for the period 2013-2016.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
- Letters dated 5 July 2018 of Jose R. Fajardo, Acting Deputy General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel and Legal Services, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), furnishing the House of Representatives with duly certified and authenticated BSP issuances, to wit:
1. Memorandum No. M-2018-019 dated 11 June 2018;
 2. Memorandum No. M-2018-020 dated 22 June 2018;
 3. Circular Letter No. CL-2018-045 dated 25 June 2018; and
 4. Circular Letter No. CL-2018-046 dated 22 June 2018.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES
- Letter dated 17 July 2018 of Jose R. Fajardo, Acting Deputy General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel and Legal Services, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, furnishing the House of Representatives with a duly certified and authenticated copy of Circular Letter No. CL-2018-047 dated 10 July 2018.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES
- Report on Fund Utilization and Status of Program/ Project Implementation for the 4th Quarter of 2017 of the Local Government Support Fund of the Municipality of Minglanilla, Province of Cebu, attested by Elanito A. Peña, Municipal Mayor.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
- Annual Audit Report on the Barbaza Water District, Barbaza, Antique for the years ended December 31, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

to the provision of Rule VI, Section 18, Par. (h) of the Rules of the House of Representatives:

Consolidated House Bill No. 6475 and Senate Bill No. 1717, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE ORGANIC LAW FOR THE BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO, REPEALING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6734, ENTITLED 'AN ACT PROVIDING FOR AN ORGANIC ACT FOR THE AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO,' AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9054, ENTITLED 'AN ACT TO STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND THE ORGANIC ACT FOR THE AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO' ”

(Now Republic Act No. 11054)

TO THE ARCHIVES

2017 Annual Audit Reports on the following water districts:

1. Tukuran Water District, Tukuran, Zamboanga del Sur;
2. Sindangan Water District, Sindangan, Zamboanga del Norte;
3. Kumalarang Water District, Kumalarang, Zamboanga del Sur;
4. Liloy Water District, Liloy, Zamboanga del Norte;
5. Rizal Water District, Rizal, Zamboanga del Norte; and
6. Polanco Water District, Polanco, Zamboanga del Norte.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

2017 Annual Audit Reports on the following water districts:

1. Claveria Water District, Claveria, Misamis Oriental;
2. Tagoloan Water District, Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental;
3. Balingasag Water District, Balingasag, Misamis Oriental;
4. Malaybalay City Water District, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon;
5. Manolo Fortich Water District, Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon;
6. Maramag Water District, Maramag, Bukidnon;
7. Quezon Water District, Quezon, Bukidnon;
8. Valencia City Water District, Valencia City, Bukidnon;
9. Damulog Water District, Damulog, Bukidnon;
10. Don Carlos Water District, Don Carlos, Bukidnon; and

11. Kibawe Water District, Kibawe, Bukidnon.
TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

2017 Annual Audit Reports and 2016-2017 Biennial Audit Report on the following State Universities/Colleges and water districts:

1. Don Honorio Ventura Technological State University (CY 2017);
2. Butuan City Water District, Butuan City (CY 2017);
3. Surigao Metropolitan Water District, Surigao City, Surigao del Norte (CY 2017); and
4. Sibulan Water District, Sibulan, Negros Oriental (CYs 2016-2017).

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report by the Committee on Higher and Technical Education, the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Ways and Means (Committee Report No. 807), re H.B. No. 8006, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE OROQUIETA AGRO-INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL (OAS) IN THE CITY OF OROQUIETA, PROVINCE OF MISAMIS OCCIDENTAL, INTO A STATE COLLEGE TO BE KNOWN AS THE MISAMIS OCCIDENTAL STATE COLLEGE (MOSC), REPEALING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 4941, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 241

Sponsors: Representatives Hofer, Nograles (K.A.), Cua and Almonte

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). The Chair now recognizes Congressman Daza. Congressman Daza, you are recognized.

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, the commencement of the session today was at three o'clock in the afternoon. I understand that sometime on Wednesday last week, the rules were amended, specifically, Rule 11, Section 10, where the commencement of the session would be at three o'clock this afternoon. Now, it does not personally affect me because I came at three, and the roll call will ensure that I am present.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak on behalf of the 63 who were marked absent today. Some of them may not have been informed of the amendment of the Rules, much more if they are coming from the provinces, they would not be able to answer the roll call this afternoon. So, I would like to appeal in the interest of fairness to those Members who were not able to come at three

o'clock that a second call be made at four o'clock. That is the reason I have been trying to seek recognition from the Chair. I am just appealing, not for myself, but for the sake of those Members, in fairness to them, who were not here at the time of the amendment on the Rules last Wednesday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). The Majority Leader will please respond to the manifestation of Congressman Daza.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, as far as I can recall, this was moved by the Majority Leader last Wednesday to the Body, and the Body approved it without any objection. Unfortunately, the Honorable Daza was unable to see that processing of that motion. But as far as the Majority Leader is concerned, Your Honor, it was already officially moved and was approved by the Body because there was no objection.

REP. DAZA. No. I knew about it, Mr. Speaker, I knew about the motion. That is why I was here today at three o'clock sharp. I am speaking on behalf of those who were not here that evening, and who were not able to come on time for the roll call at three o'clock this afternoon. I am appealing to the discretion of the Chair and the Majority Leader to have a second roll call at four o'clock. That is all, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. Thank you very much for the concern, Mr. Speaker, but as shown by the number who appeared today, there were 231 who answered and responded to the call, because there was a notice subsequently dispensed by the Secretariat office to notify all Members, that is why we have a majority today. That is the fact, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, I am appealing for the 63 who have just been marked "absent," especially those who are coming from the provinces.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). If the Chair may comment.

REP. DAZA. If the Majority Leader does not want to accede to my request, then let it be put on record that my request, not on my behalf, but on behalf of the other Members, especially those coming from the provinces, has been turned down by the Majority.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). If the Chair may comment. Those who came late, as soon as they approach the Secretariat, their attendance will be

checked as "present." They will not be marked "absent" the moment they arrive.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE OF REP. MARCOLETA

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, may I rise on a question of privilege.

On July 30, 2018, the Majority Leader recognized the Hon. Danilo E. Suarez as the Minority Leader. That action of the Majority Leader was questioned on the floor, and it gave rise to what appeared to be a three-cornered fight for the position of Minority Leader.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this internal squabble was picked up by and feasted on by the media. The way it is being hyped today, it is directly affecting the integrity and reputation of this House, including its Members, neither individually nor collectively, but the action taken by the Majority Leader, Mr. Speaker, is legally tenable; however, it must be explained.

There are two instances why the House votes for a Speaker. This is clearly provided under Rule III, in the first paragraph of Section 11, where it states that, first, "at the commencement of every Congress ..."; and second, "whenever there is a vacancy, ..."

Mr. Speaker, may I stress that two years ago, during our inaugural session, there can be no dispute that those who voted for the winning Speaker, the Honorable Alvarez, constituted the Majority. At that time, Mr. Speaker, it was necessary to draw the line because the House had to be organized. But two weeks ago, may I emphasize that again, Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, what happened was a different matter altogether. It was when we needed to vote again for another Speaker because the office of the incumbent was declared vacant.

The House voted again for a Speaker, not because it needed to organize, but because there is a need to fill up a vacancy. Rule II, Section 11, the last paragraph states in part, Rule 3 of our Rules provides, "... whenever there is a vacancy, the Speaker shall be elected by a majority of all the Members..."

Mr. Speaker, the rule simply provided that the prospective Speaker must get a majority vote of all the Members in order to be elected. It did not say that those who voted to elect a new Speaker has formed a new set of Majority. The argument of the Honorable Quimbo and the Honorable De Vera that Members who vote for the winning candidate for Speaker shall constitute the Majority. Invoking Section 8 of our Rules cannot be applied when Members vote in order to fill up a vacancy. If we do that and if we interpret it that way, I am afraid, Mr. Speaker, that such an argument may require the widest stretch of our imagination.

May I explain further. The Majority Leader maintains and so holds that the reasoning advanced by

the Honorable Quimbo and De Vera strictly applies only during the commencement of each Congress, at which time, the Body has to actively or actually organize. The change in leadership that took place two weeks ago, on the other hand, did not require the House to organize again. The House may organize when a vacancy occurs. If we follow the Section 8 argument, Mr. Speaker, it will lead us to many absurd situations. First, ...

REP. ERICE. Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. There will never be an instance...

REP. ERICE. Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. ... where a Minority Leader can participate in ousting an incumbent Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). What is the point of order?

REP. ERICE. Mr. Speaker, is the Majority Leader talking as a Congressman or a Majority Leader because his personal privilege has not yet been recognized by the honorable Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). The Chair now recognizes Congressman Marcoleta.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

As I was saying, if we follow the Section 8 argument of the Honorable Quimbo and the Honorable De Vera, we will lead to many absurd situations. First, there will never be an instance where a Minority Leader can participate in ousting an incumbent Speaker without losing his position. I asked the Honorable Quimbo the following question: "Is there any other way for Mr. Suarez to formally manifest his desire to change the House Members' leadership without voting for the candidate who eventually wins?" His reply: "He should have abstained."

Mr. Speaker, if Mr. Suarez abstained from voting, does that mean that he has conveyed his wish to change the Speaker? Obviously, the answer is "no," because if he abstained, he did nothing—practically nothing. I also had a chance of asking the Honorable De Vera this question, "What could have happened if Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo did not get the majority vote required to be elected?" His reply, "Nominate another candidate."

With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, I think this answer is inaccurate. It is the position of the Majority Leader that if Mr. Suarez, together with his team in

the Minority, chose to abstain from voting like what the group of the Honorable Quimbo did, and Speaker GMA failed to get the majority vote, the motion to vacate would have been defeated, and the Honorable Alvarez would have stayed as the Speaker. If Mr. Alvarez retained his position under such scenario, the Honorable De Vera and the Honorable Quimbo will perhaps admit that the group of the Honorable Suarez indirectly supported the Majority.

Following the argument, that misplaced argument based on Section 8, will not Mr. Suarez still lose his Minority post for virtually supporting the incumbent to retain the Speakership?

It was respectfully submitted, Mr. Speaker, that this "damned if you do, damned if you don't" dilemma was never intended by our Rules insofar as the post of Minority Leader is concerned. It is our humble view that our Rules never contemplated a situation that the Minority Leader will stay a lame duck or be relegated to a disinterested bystander at a time so crucial, that a major shift in the House leadership may be taking place.

Mr. Speaker, Section 8 should not be interpreted in a way that could lead us not only in absurdity but also in serious inconvenience. *Argumentum ab inconvenienti pluremum valet in lege*. A variant of this legal maxim is much simpler. It says this way, "The inconvenience that a proposed interpretation may cause is a serious reason to discard it."

The truth is, when the Honorable Suarez opted to support and vote for Speaker GMA, all that he wanted was a change in leadership. This is a right that he can exercise as a Member of this House when vacancy arises in the House Speakership. After all, the rule says, "all Members," without any distinction as to Majority or Minority. Mr. Suarez did not have to change his color because such political exercise is color blind.

Mr. Speaker, it is as clear as a midday sun, there is no blue corner, there is no red corner, neither is there a yellow corner. The truth is, the Minority belt was never disputed, the champion is still the Honorable Suarez on record.

I therefore move, Mr. Speaker, that the Body vote to confirm the act of the Majority Leader, of recognizing Mr. Suarez as the Minority Leader.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). Is there any objection?

REP. DAZA. Objection, Mr. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Objection.

REP. ERICE. Objection, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DAZA. Objection, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.).
Congressman Quimbo ...

REP. ERICE. There is no business for the Majority Leader to determine who is the Minority Leader. It will bring such suspicion that the Minority is the Majority's favorite.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.).
Congressman Erice has not been recognized.
The Chair recognizes Congressman Quimbo.

REP. QUIMBO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, we object. What we had before, the legislative status is that the question of privilege delivered by the Minority Leader—I am sorry, by the Majority Leader, such speech cannot ripen into a motion. The action is whether he is open to interpellation or are we going to refer it to the appropriate committee?

So, I object to the motion as being out of order, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). Is the Majority Leader open to interpellation?

REP. MARCOLETA. I am always open to interpellation, Mr. Speaker. However, there is a motion. The parliamentary status is that there is a motion to confirm the action taken by the Majority Leader in recognizing the Honorable Suarez as the Minority Leader. I think we should have to divide the House because the Body has to vote.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, if I may, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.).
Congressman Quimbo, you are recognized.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, this is not, in any way, to obviate or prevent that motion from being presented at the appropriate time and for us to raise the appropriate objection, but let us proceed according to our rules.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). The Chair sustains Congressman Quimbo. We will first go to interpellation. Anyone who is interested to interpellate the Majority Leader?

REP. DAZA. I am interested to interpellate the Majority Leader, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.).
Cong. Raul A. Daza, you are recognized.

REP. DAZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let me preface my interpellation by putting on record my astonishment if not my consternation to the fact that it is the Majority Leader, who now stands on the floor to defend the position of the group of Cong. Danny Suarez. I hope it does not imply that there is truth to the rumor or the innuendos that this is now a proof that the so-called minority group of Congressman Suarez is essentially and veritably, if not a part, very submissive and dependent on the Majority.

Let me just ask these questions now of the learned Majority Leader. Is it not a fact that Section 8, insofar as the question of the Minority and the Minority Leader is concerned, has already been the subject of a decision by the Supreme Court?

Yes, I have a question and I ...

REP. MARCOLETA. May I have the question again, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DAZA. ... I would like the distinguished Majority Leader to answer the question.

REP. MARCOLETA. May I have the question again, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DAZA. I will repeat the question.

My question is: Is it not a fact that Section 8 of the Rules adverted to by the Gentleman has already been the subject of interpretation by the Supreme Court through a decision?

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, if you are referring to a case which was filed by the group of the Honorable Lagman, to which you are a member, that particular case, Mr. Speaker, related itself to the inaugural session of this Congress. It did not, in any way, point to another opportunity where this Body has to vote again for a Speaker because there was a vacancy. So, if the question is whether if I know that Section 8 was passed upon by the Supreme Court, in one case—yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor—it was, but that was precisely during an inaugural session when this Body had to organize.

REP. DAZA. Does the Gentleman recall that this is the case of *Baguilat et al. vs. Alvarez et al.*, from GR No. 227757, ...

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DAZA. ... promulgated on July 25, 2017?

REP. MARCOLETA. That is the one ...

REP. DAZA. Alright.

REP. MARCOLETA. ... we are referring to, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DAZA. Does not the Gentleman recall that the gist of the decision was that the Supreme Court upheld the position taken on the floor by then Majority Leader Fariñas in regard to the interpretation of Section 8. Does he recall that?

REP. MARCOLETA. I know that, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. That is precisely why I am trying to make a distinction. During the inaugural session of this House, you will note that there were at least two candidates, the Honorable Alvarez, and the Honorable Suarez as well as the Honorable Baguilat. So, there were three candidates at that time.

REP. DAZA. Not two.

REP. MARCOLETA. Not two.

REP. DAZA. Yes.

REP. MARCOLETA. And so, it happened that the honorable Speaker Alvarez won and he was elected Speaker of this House, and by virtue of that rule, all those who voted for the winning candidate shall constitute themselves as members of the Majority.

As a matter of fact, I know because we were in one group then, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. The thing that complicated the issue was the clarification made on the floor, as I recall, by my friend, the former Majority Leader, when Honorable Atienza took the floor by way of a parliamentary inquiry asking precisely what will happen to the Members who will not vote or will abstain from voting. And the Honorable Fariñas, as I can recall, qualified that all those who will abstain from voting and those who will not vote will automatically become members of the Minority.

You and I questioned that, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, because that was not provided for in the Rules.

I know, because I remember when I stood on the floor and questioned that, the Honorable Fariñas said, "Oh, nobody objected anyway, including you. You did not object." I said, "I did not object because I thought that was only an opinion because an opinion, whether articulated wrongly or rightly, nobody has to object. Everybody else is entitled to his own opinion. I thought it was an opinion. But, you know, the Supreme Court ruled because there was a clarification.

Two weeks ago, we did not have that situation, Mr. Speaker. There was no such clarification. Why? Because, we are not supposed to organize. We were organized when the Office of the Speaker was declared vacant. That is a different matter altogether, Mr. Speaker. This is what I am trying to explain.

When I stood on the floor, I said, "I rise on a question of privilege," because I do not want this Body—the hype now going on in the media is that it is directly affecting the reputation and integrity of this House, not to mention the Members, you and I, and the Members now seated in this august Hall. We have to intervene. Our position only is to confirm the recognition made by the Hon. Rolando G. Andaya Jr., our Majority Leader, recognizing the Honorable Suarez. We are not disputing here who the best Minority Leader is, maybe, the red corner or the blue corner or the yellow corner. Maybe they have better ideas, but that is not the issue. The only issue is, we are trying to confirm a position taken by a Majority Leader because this House, whatever comes, needs to buckle down to work, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DAZA. Now, in relation to the answer of the Gentleman, Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Gentleman whether he recalls that the very body of the decision of the Supreme Court quoted the statement of then Majority Leader Fariñas in regard to the interpretation of Section 8, and the Supreme Court, quoted verbatim is as follows. Representative Fariñas then articulated that:

(a) All those who vote for the winning Speaker shall belong to the Majority and those who vote for other candidates shall belong to the Minority;

(b) Those who abstain from voting shall, likewise, be considered part of the Minority; and

(c) The Minority Leader shall be elected by the members of the Minority."

These were the words of Congressman Fariñas quoted by approval of the Supreme Court and contained in the body of the decision. Does the Gentleman remember that?

REP. MARCOLETA. I remember that by heart, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, because I said, there is a distinction.

We were organizing at that time, and it is proper that we should identify who are the members of the Minority and the members of the Majority so we have to start with Section 8.

REP. DAZA. Would ...

REP. MARCOLETA. We were there two years ago, but what we are trying to process now is the situation two weeks ago, not two years ago. When there is no clarification needed, we do not have to clarify who is going to vote. The rule simply says, the prospective Speaker on account of a vacancy must get the majority vote.

It does not say that those who will vote will be siding—will again be the members of the Majority, no. It is precisely the fact that the majority vote must be obtained to get elected. Otherwise, as I have said, the motion to vacate will be defeated. And by operation of law, the incumbent will retake the position. That is a fact, Mr. Speaker.

So, we were only trying to explain that it is not correct that if the honorable Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo failed to get, we will again vote, we will again nominate and then vote. That is not the Rule, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. This is very simple.

REP. DAZA. Would the Gentleman please point to me any part of the decision of the Supreme Court in the case of *Baguilat* that makes a distinction between the election of the Speaker at the commencement of the Congress when the House convenes to organize and whenever a vacancy occurs? Would the Gentleman point to me from the decision itself whether that distinction was made by the Supreme Court or not?

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, that decision was made because it pointed to the very time when we organized two years ago. It cannot be applied to what happened two weeks ago because it was not the factual issue. The factual issue was that we were organizing two years ago that is why we had a case that was filed by the independents, including yourself, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DAZA. Yes, ...

REP. MARCOLETA. So, it is the case itself that distinguishes the facts between what happened two years ago and what happened two weeks ago.

So, what happened two years ago cannot be made to apply in the scenario that came in two weeks ago because two weeks ago, we were just filling up a vacancy. Two years ago, we were supposed to organize. So, there was the problem of being able to identify who are the Majority and the members of the Minority. It was only complicated by the opinion that those who abstained from voting or those who did not vote are automatically members of the Minority.

You know the rules, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. That particular statement cannot be found and cannot be supported by the rules.

REP. DAZA. Is ...

REP. MARCOLETA. Our rule is very silent on that aspect. It does not follow that if you abstain from voting or you did not vote at all, you are automatically member of the Minority. That is not in the rule.

REP. DAZA. That is not in the rules that is why the case went up to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court interpreted the rules. Well, in other words, from the answer of the Gentleman, the Supreme Court did not make any distinction. It is the learned Gentleman who is making the distinction. But in his statement on a question of privilege, he quoted Rule III, Section 11 of the Rules, and I would like to read it before I ask the question. Section 11, Election of Officers, the pertinent portions only provides:

At the commencement of each Congress, the Speaker shall be elected by a majority vote of all the Members and the Secretary General shall record the vote of each Member which shall be cast without explanation.

Then, in a later paragraph, ...

Likewise, whenever there is a vacancy, the Speaker shall be elected by a majority vote of all the Members and the Secretary General shall record the vote of each Member which shall be cast without explanation.

It must be stressed that Section 11 does not make any distinction between the election and the results of the election for Speaker at the commencement of Congress and whenever there is a vacancy. In fact, the rules says likewise, and the very similarity of how the votes will be cast and that the vote should be without explanation is identical.

So, from Section 11 of Rule III, there is no distinction. In other words, the Supreme Court, in that case of *Baguilat*, did not make any distinction, our own Rules which I have read verbatim, Section 11, “does not make any distinction”; therefore, we should not make any distinction. As the Latin maxim says: “*Ubi lex non distinguit, nec nos distinguere debemus.*” Translated into English, it says: “Where the law does not distinguish, neither should we distinguish.” And, therefore, I see no basis or reason for the distinguished Gentleman, no matter how learned he is, to make any distinction.

The Supreme Court does not make any distinction, Rule III, Section 11, neither makes any distinction, but it is only the Gentleman who, however, I believe is learned, who makes the distinction. But between the opinion of the distinguished Gentleman, Mr. Speaker, the opinion, and the ruling of the Supreme Court, and the traditional Latin maxim to which I adverted, and the very language of our Rules, I would at this moment give more weight to not distinguishing even if I highly treasure the erudition of the distinguished Gentleman on the floor who makes a distinction. That is the reason,

Mr. Speaker, I am constrained to stand on the floor to vigorously object to the motion now before the House for the House to render its formal recognition to the so-called Minority group of my friend, the distinguished Gentleman from Quezon, the Hon. Danilo Suarez and his group.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much, distinguished Majority Leader.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. FARIÑAS. Mr. Speaker.

REP. SALO. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). The Gentleman from Ilocos Norte is hereby recognized.

REP. FARIÑAS. Will the Gentleman yield to a few questions, Mr. Speaker, because my name was dragged several times in his speech.

REP. MARCOLETA. How can I refuse my friend, Mr. Speaker?

REP. FARIÑAS. May I proceed, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). You may proceed, Congressman Fariñas.

REP. FARIÑAS. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the first place, the Gentleman is saying that it was the Majority Leader who recognized the Minority Leader. Is that correct, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes, Mr. Speaker. That was done last July 30, 2018.

REP. FARIÑAS. Where did that power of the Majority Leader come from, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. The plenary power comes from the Body, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. When that recognition was laid down by the Speaker, that was carried by the Body. Nobody objected, Your Honor.

REP. FARIÑAS. Because, Mr. Speaker, there was no positive motion or statement on that matter. In fact, is the Gentleman aware of the jurisdiction of the Committee on Rules, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. I am not saying I know all the provisions of the Rules, Mr. Speaker, but I will try to answer him.

REP. FARIÑAS. Because the first jurisdiction of the Committee on Rules is on all matters relating to the Rules of the House. So it has to be the Committee on Rules that should determine such matter in case it needs an interpretation, and not the Majority Leader. Is that correct, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. I am not sure about that, Mr. Speaker, but I have always thought that because it was a pronouncement coming from the Majority Leader, and that because he is the Chairman of the Committee on Rules, the presumption of regularity is always there, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. FARIÑAS. Now, since we are talking about the Committee on Rules, has the Committee on Rules convened already, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, that was my understanding because I think it was the Honorable Castro who was appointed as the Acting Majority Leader at that time, and they were able to process that issue.

REP. FARIÑAS. Mr. Speaker, under our Rules, each committee must have a proportional representation between the Majority and the Minority. So, how could the Committee on Rules convene and conduct its business without first deciding as to who is the duly constituted Minority?

REP. MARCOLETA. As far as I know, Mr. Speaker, there was a meeting last week and this was Tuesday last week, Mr. Speaker.

REP. FARIÑAS. And who was part of the Minority in that meeting of the Committee on Rules, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. I am not sure about the Members of the Minority who were there, Mr. Speaker, but I think the record will bear that fact.

REP. FARIÑAS. This Representation would want to know because that is jurisdictional for the Committee on Rules to meet, and any committee for that matter. There must be a representation from the Minority because it is our practice here. We cannot hold even a plenary session without the presence of the Minority, more so in the committees. Precisely, I have been told that the committees were told to continue functioning, but there is a pending issue regarding the Minority, Mr. Speaker. And so, I would want to know who was the Minority recognized during the meeting of the Committee on Rules last Tuesday.

REP. MARCOLETA. The members of the Minority that were present in that Committee meeting—I remember, the Honorable Atienza was there, Mr. Speaker, the Honorable Garbin was there, and several others. I am sorry; I cannot remember their names.

REP. FARIÑAS. I was informed, Mr. Speaker, that it was not an all-member meeting. In fact, it was only a per-invitation meeting. Is that correct, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. That is not correct, Mr. Speaker, because that was a regular meeting held last Tuesday, last week.

REP. FARIÑAS. Well, Mr. Speaker, regular meeting, but before we settle the matter of the issue on the Minority—in fact, at the start of this Congress, we could not meet as the Committee on Rules until we finally decided who should be the Minority. It was only then that the Committee on Rules was duly constituted, with the Minority naming the members of the different committees. Until such time that they nominated and made the manifestation on the floor, no committee was able to perform. Our present status, Mr. Speaker, is that there was a change of Speaker in the middle of the session. In fact, it happened on the first day of the Third Regular Session. But as we all know now, pursuant to Resolution No. 2025, the Minority Leader participated in the election of the new Speaker. And the Gentleman was talking earlier about Section 8. Section 8 is very clear, Mr. Speaker, and I will read it; even a non-lawyer can understand it. I wrote these Rules. Section 8 defines who constitutes the Majority and the Minority. It says:

Members who vote for the winning candidate for Speaker shall constitute the Majority in the House and they shall elect from among themselves the Majority Leader.

Ang liwanag po niyan. I-Tagalog ko po: Iyong mga Miyembro na boboto sa nanalong Speaker, sila ang bubuo ng Mayorya dito sa Kamara at sila ngayon ang pipili mula sa kanila kung sino ang magiging pangulo nila sa Mayorya.

So, the Gentleman says, it does not talk of who will become the Minority. It is a basic rule in statutory construction, Mr. Speaker, that what is not included is excluded, or who is not included is excluded since it defines who the Members of the Majority are. The definition and sole criterion is, anybody who votes for the winning candidate for the Speaker shall belong to the Majority. So, anybody who did not vote for the winning candidate, whether he voted for another candidate, whether he abstained, whether he did not want to vote,

will be Minority because they are not included in the definition of Majority.

Mr. Speaker, the learned Sr. Dep. Majority Leader is arguing on behalf of the Minority Leader, which is very strange because it should be the person claiming to be the Minority Leader who should advance and support this case because, as clearly stated by the Gentleman from Northern Samar, we have existing jurisprudence on the matter, Mr. Speaker. In the case of *Baguilat, et al. vs. Alvarez et al.*, the Supreme Court categorically stated that the group of Suarez was the duly constituted Minority in the House of Representatives. Precisely, petitioners Baguilat and his Group of Seven opted to become independent by not aligning themselves with the Majority or the Minority. That is our status here, Mr. Speaker. But then, last Monday, they were arguing, Mr. Speaker, that the Minority can participate in the election of a Speaker. That would be an anomaly, Mr. Speaker because the definition of the Minority is “those who do not vote for the winning candidate.”

Since they were validly constituted, precisely because they did not vote for Alvarez, there is an existing Minority and whatever changes happened in the leadership of the Speakership, that is a concern of the Majority; it does not involve the Minority. But when the former Minority Leader decided to join a new group and elect a new Speaker, that is the new Majority in the House. As the learned Gentleman from Northern Samar stated Mr. Speaker, Section 11 talks of declaration of vacancy in the seat of the Speaker. Naturally, if you want to declare the position of the Speaker vacant there should be a roll call voting to be able to determine if there is a new Majority because barring any new Majority, there will be no change of leadership. But indeed, there was a new Majority where the Minority Leader and 13 members of the Minority joined to form this new Majority.

That is what is happening in here, Mr. Speaker, but to cut things short, we wish to inform the honorable Speaker that pursuant to the Rules, pursuant to the decision of the Supreme Court, we who did not vote for the new Speaker, the honorable Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, are part of the Minority already because we did not vote. In fact, we were ousted by the new Majority from our positions. The former Speaker was replaced and this Representation, who was Majority Leader, was replaced by the new Majority Leader. We accepted that upon the adoption of House Resolution No. 2025. The reason for which, the following morning, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to our Rules, we applied to the duly constituted Minority headed by Rep. Eugene De Vera and we have been accepted already. Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform them that we had an organizational meeting last Friday and we elected Rep. Eugene De Vera as the Minority

Leader because the election of the Minority Leader, I will read again, in Section 8 is very clear. It says:

The Minority Leader shall be elected by the Members of the Minority and can be changed, at any time, by a majority vote of all the Minority members.

Who the Minority Leader is is the business of the Minority, and it would be an anomaly for the Majority Leader to be asking the Body to vote as to who will be the Minority Leader. By this, we are already stating that the choice of the Minority Leader is up to the Majority, which is a clear violation of the rule, Mr. Speaker. Will the Gentleman agree with that, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, I cannot agree with that embracing statement. Number one, because we made the statement here trying to confirm the action taken by the Majority Leader. It is not an act of supporting the Minority Leader, Your Honor. We qualify that. We needed to confirm the recognition made by the Majority Leader on July 30, 2018. And in relation to that, we have to explain why the Majority Leader took that position. If it sounded like we are supporting the Minority Leader, we are quite sorry for that inconvenience, but the truth of the matter is that, whichever position we take, in the end and in the final analysis, this Body must be able to resolve this issue. There are contending parties to the Minority leadership, Mr. Speaker. It should not continue that way. While it is the sole business of the Minority to thresh it out among themselves, I think it is the position of the Majority Leader, Your Honor, that the work of the House of Representatives should not be compromised. As I have said, the seeming squabble by the protagonists is directly affecting the integrity, the reputation, and probably even the duties of the individual Members of this House.

If our interpretation of the Rules, Mr. Speaker, is not acceptable to a certain group, that is understandable. But as I have said, it is within the power of this Body to resolve every dispute by dividing the House, Mr. Speaker.

REP. FARIÑAS. Mr. Speaker, is it my understanding that the Floor Leader, Majority Leader, will proceed with a motion, will pursue his motion to make the Body, the Plenary, meaning the Majority of the House of Representatives, affirm or vote on the recognition of the honorable Majority Leader of Danilo Suarez as the Minority Leader?

REP. MARCOLETA. We are not doing that yet, Mr. Speaker, because it was decided that this Representation should yield to several interpellations.

REP. FARIÑAS. Precisely, I am asking so that I will know whether to sit down and just watch it because we would welcome a definitive action on the matter, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, I was the Majority Leader in the First and Second Regular Sessions and the success of the Seventeenth Congress is my success, its failure will be, likewise, my failure. I want that we do things properly because last week, we approved on Third Reading more than 20 measures, and there was still a cloud of doubt as to who the Minority is. So, indeed, I would recommend that the leadership take a definitive action. We will respect whatever decision the leadership will make, and I hope that they will also respect our prerogative to also bring this matter to the proper forum, as we respected also the group of Congressman Baguilat, Manong Edcel, Congressman Villarín, Cong. Tawi Billones, and Cong. Gary Alejano, who went to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court gave due course to the case and made a ruling, not necessarily, perhaps, only for the remaining months of our term or tenure, Mr. Speaker, but as a guide for future Congresses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Eugene Michael B. De Vera confided to me that he is also wanting to interpellate, if he can be recognized, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VERA. May I be recognized.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). Congressman De Vera is recognized.

REP. DE VERA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Majority Leader.

Will the Majority Leader, Congressman Marcoleta, yield to some questions, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VERA. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, is Congressman Marcoleta aware that Article VI, Section 16, paragraph 3 of the Constitution allows both Houses of Congress to promulgate its own rules as to how to conduct its proceedings?

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VERA. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now, in our Rules, Mr. Speaker, are you aware that in the Preamble, which I ask to be allowed to read, it is stated there how we should conduct our rules, Mr.

Speaker. And may I be allowed to read the Preamble of our Rules, Mr. Speaker? Our Preamble:

We, the Members of the House of Representatives of the Republic of the Philippines, in order to fulfill our constitutional duty to make laws that effectively respond to the needs of our people and fulfill their aspirations for a just and humane society where every Filipino can enjoy the blessings of freedom and democracy under a Government strengthened by the rule of law, social justice and people empowerment, hereby promulgate and pledge faithful obedience to these Rules.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Majority Leader, are you aware of this statement in our Preamble, that we promulgate and pledge faithful obedience to these Rules?

REP. MARCOLETA. I was following you, Mr. Speaker, in reading this Preamble. You read it correctly, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VERA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A while ago, you mentioned my name, that we had a talk as far as the Minority issue in this House of Representatives is concerned, Mr. Speaker. Would you agree, Mr. Speaker, that during our talk, I have already told you that I am the Minority Leader of this House of Representatives?

REP. MARCOLETA. I remember you telling me, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, that you are the Minority Leader.

REP. DE VERA. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I even told you that I have accepted some members coming from the Majority who applied to me to be members of the Minority. Do you recall that, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. Can you repeat that, please, I am sorry.

REP. DE VERA. In fact, I even told you that I have already accepted the application of some members of the former Majority to members of the Minority.

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I remember you told me that.

REP. DE VERA. And these personalities are the former Speaker Bebot Alvarez, Cong. Rodolfo Fariñas, Cong. Rodito Albano, Cong. Lucy Torres-Gomez, Cong. Arnel Ty, Cong. Rimpay Bondoc, Cong. Aileen Radaza, Cong. Rey Umali, Cong. Roger Mercado, Cong. Monsour Del Rosario, Cong. Jun Papandayan, and Cong. Ruwel Gonzaga. Do you remember that, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DE VERA. A while ago, you also mentioned that you had a meeting at the Committee on Rules last Tuesday. Have you made some invitations, Mr. Speaker? Was I included in that meeting?

REP. MARCOLETA. I cannot recall that you were there, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DE VERA. Did you send an invitation to me to attend that Rules Committee meeting?

REP. MARCOLETA. I cannot remember that also, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VERA. Are you aware Mr. Speaker that I was also designated then as the Deputy Minority Leader and, as such, I am an ex-officio member of the Committee on Rules?

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, the reason there seems to be some lapses in mechanisms and in procedures—you have to understand that a vacancy was declared and there was a semblance of trying to organize the House because it is not normal when you oust an incumbent Speaker and then a new Speaker emerges. I think that can be completely understood that the normal process might have taken this way or that way but that does not mean that there is no regularity in the process. All we can say is, it was unfortunate that sometimes, even in the best of families, you know, problems can occur, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DE VERA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, being aware that I am an ex-officio Chairman of the Committee on Rules, do you admit that you committed some lapses when you did not invite me to that meeting?

REP. MARCOLETA. No, it is not really committing some lapses, Your Honor, because it was dictated by the circumstances and there is a need to confirm and reconfirm some positions because at that time, of course, even the Senior Majority Leader was replaced, the former Majority Leader was also ousted and he was replaced by a new one. I think this is understandable, Mr. Speaker, but not to connote a meaning that some lapses have been committed.

REP. DE VERA. So, Mr. Speaker why was I not invited during that meeting last Tuesday, being an ex-officio Chairman—being the ex-officio member of the Committee on Rules?

REP. MARCOLETA. There might have been problems as regards the notice, Mr. Speaker, but I could not confirm why you were not invited.

REP. DE VERA. But some other ex-officio members were invited there. Is it not, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. Because, Mr. Speaker, at that time, maybe I can only make my own opinion now because you were claiming to be the Minority Leader. The Minority Leader, on record, is still Mr. Suarez, and another group is claiming for a Minority Leader. This probably would explain why somebody was not invited or even notified. You have to understand the situation, Mr. Speaker, under which the present dispensation is operating.

REP. DE VERA. So, Mr. Speaker, you are not really aware of the real reason as to why I was not invited, is it not?

REP. MARCOLETA. It is not about a reason, Mr. Speaker. It is about the system that is undergoing some adjustments which is completely understood, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DE VERA. So, Mr. Speaker, since there is an issue here on the Minority Leader, would you agree with me as far as Rule II is concerned that what will apply here is Section 8, Section 11 and Section 13 of our Rules?

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, at some point, a certain rule will apply. At some other points it could not be applied. Section 8 cannot be applied to all situations when you elect a Speaker. That was the position taken by the Majority Leader in consultation with the present leadership.

REP. DE VERA. Let us focus on Section 8, and I ask you, Mr. Speaker, how does a Member of the House of Representatives apply to be a member of the Majority?

REP. MARCOLETA. He should write formally ...

REP. DE VERA. No, Your Honor, please. What are the conditions wherein a Member of the House of Representatives is included as member of the Majority? What are the conditions set in Section 8?

REP. MARCOLETA. During the organizational stage, like when we start or commence a session, the rule says, Members who will vote for the winning candidate for Speaker shall constitute the Majority. That is very clear.

REP. DE VERA. And, Mr. Speaker, what is another scenario or case wherein a Member may be included in the Majority?

REP. MARCOLETA. When somebody in the Minority chooses to join the Majority by writing formally that he be accepted, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VERA. Do you recall any incident when this rule that you have just stated happened, that a Member from the Majority or Minority transferred to either the Majority or the Minority by writing a letter to the Majority or the Minority, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. It happens all the time, Mr. Speaker. It happened to me too.

REP. DE VERA. During the voting for Speaker, Your Honor, if you could still remember, way back 2016, were you aware of an instance wherein a Member coming from the Majority wrote to the Minority to be included in the Minority and won as Minority Leader during that time, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. I could not confirm that, Your Honor, but to my knowledge, there is a group from the Minority who wrote to the Minority Leader and they were accepted as members of the Minority.

REP. DE VERA. During the voting for the Speaker then, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. No, in subsequent days, Mr. Speaker, because that was the complicated situation that I was trying to explain, because if you will read Section 8, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, while there is a very clear ruling for the members of the Majority who have voted for the winning Speaker, the rest of the provision of Section 8 is silent on whether a Member who abstained from voting or did not vote at all becomes an automatic member of the Minority. That one was not contemplated in the rule. By implication, however, those who voted for another candidate as supported by the precedents in the last Congresses, they are the members of the Minority. But as to those who abstained, and those who did not care to vote, that was not covered clearly under the Rules, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VERA. Mr. Speaker, are you aware of the facts in the *Baguilat vs. Alvarez, Fariñas, Suarez* case, on what transpired during that time, that the Suarez group was recognized as the Minority group in the House of Representatives?

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, although I

can tell you that I am not one of the petitioners in that case because ...

REP. DE VERA. Are you aware of the fact that Congressman Suarez then voted for Speaker Alvarez during the voting for the Speaker, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes, I am aware of that.

REP. DE VERA. Are you aware that during that time, Congressman Suarez applied to the Minority in order that he could be part of the Minority, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DE VERA. Are you aware of that time during the voting for the Minority Leader, that time when Congressman Suarez won as the Minority Leader, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes, because there was a subsequent voting that happened. I was informed that those who abstained from voting was quite a sizable group; they joined the Minority and they chose to side and vote for Honorable Suarez, that is why he became the Minority Leader and this removed any contest from the other claimant, by that time the Honorable Baguilat.

REP. DE VERA. Are you aware, Mr. Speaker, that the very reason the Supreme Court in *Baguilat vs. Suarez* case, denied the petition of Congressman Baguilat is the fact that Congressman Suarez followed the provisions of Section 8, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, but with the qualification that I have previously explained that the application of Section 8 is strictly within the inaugural session. It cannot be applied outside of the inaugural session of Congress because those particular provisions relate themselves to the need of the House to organize.

REP. DE VERA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. Wala pang Minority, wala pang Majority, kaya kailangan nating magkaroon ng rules na ganoon. But, iyong nangyari sa atin two weeks ago, as I was explaining, was not to organize. We were fully organized when a vacancy was declared. That is the peculiarity of that scenario. It cannot be compared to the one that we did two years ago. We cannot use Section 8 which is purposely written there in order for the House to organize. When the House is fully organized and there is a vacancy, you cannot apply that

and that is very obvious and quite simple, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DE VERA. Mr. Speaker, I cannot find those arguments of you in the rules. Well, anyway, Mr. Speaker, we could see in Section 11 and Section 13, which speaks here of vacancy in the office of—particularly, the Office of the Speaker. It laid down the procedure on how the Office of the Speaker could be declared vacant, and it also laid down the procedure on how the voting will be conducted as far as the selection of the new Speaker, Your Honor is concerned.

Clearly, it refers to a nominal voting, when we declare the Office of the Speaker vacant but the voting should require a majority of all Members of the House of Representatives. Meaning, Your Honor, it only prescribes the number of votes needed whenever the post of the Speaker is declared vacant.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Castro (F.H.) relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Mercedes K. Alvarez.

REP. MARCOLETA. But, Mr. Speaker, ...

REP. DE VERA. And also—may I continue, Mr. Speaker. Your Honor, it also prescribes the manner on how the Speaker should be elected, and if the rule says a majority votes of all Members of the House of Representatives, what does it mean, Your Honor? We are only trying to determine the number of votes needed to install a new Speaker. Your Honor, you can see that we are now 292 Members. Just correct me if I am wrong, Mr. Speaker, but 292, what is a majority vote of 292? That is 147 Members, Your Honor. It would be the number of minimum votes required to oust a sitting Speaker. At the same time, the minimum votes of 147 are also needed to elect a new Speaker. This is the procedure laid down in Section 11 and Section 13, Your Honor, of these Rules.

REP. MARCOLETA. May I know the question, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DE VERA. Now my question Your Honor is this, when we read the Rules, Mr. Speaker, we do not read only one Section; we have to read the entirety of the Rules. Do you agree with me, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes, Your Honor. And by reading all the rules, you know which one is applicable at the right time.

REP. DE VERA. Yes, Your Honor. Section 11 or Section 13 never spoke of the automatic

inclusion of anyone who voted for the Speaker to be part of the Majority. Is it not, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. It would depend on the situation, Mr. Speaker. As already laid down in Section 11 of Rule III, vacancy and the filling up of vacancy are poles apart, very different from electing a Speaker at a time that we need to organize, but this is something. This is where we should understand each other well.

REP. DE VERA. But, Mr. Speaker, Section 11 and Section 13 do not speak of membership at all. It only spoke of how we will declare the seat of the Speaker vacant and how the new Speaker will be voted upon. And when we speak of the effect of how the Speaker—those who voted for the Speaker will be considered, as far as membership is concerned, we refer, Mr. Speaker, to Section 8, Rule II of our Rules. Is that correct, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. The premise is wrong, Mr. Speaker. May I repeat myself, we cannot compare two scenarios and apply one remedy. A remedy applies only to a specific time. Let me make a very simple example, one time you get sick, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the doctor will diagnose and prescribe to you a medicine. The next time you get sick again, it may not be entirely the same sickness, and he will prescribe different medicine.

Mr. Speaker, when the rules contemplated on a vacancy, it really happens; and it happened two weeks ago. As I have said, it happened at a time when we were organized. You know the Majority members, you also know the Minority members. The only problem that we have to process is how to fill up the vacancy.

You will note the differing characteristics between two years ago and two weeks ago. Two years ago, there were three contending aspirants for the Speakership and for which, the Members should choose from among the three protagonists. In filling up the vacancy, there was only one nominated candidate. That is why, when I hypothesized earlier, if Speaker GMA was unable to get the required majority, that motion to vacate could have been defeated and the incumbent Speaker would have stayed in power. That is the peculiarity of the situation.

That was not the case two years ago when we were talking only about organization. So, if you continuously apply Section 8—puro ocho, ocho-ocho, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, baka mangyari rito eh spaghettiing pababa. I am sorry to be able to use such levity, but levity aside, Mr. Speaker, I am only trying to dramatize the distinction between the two periods.

How is a vacancy created? It is in Section 13 of our Rules, when a vacancy is declared, and it is the duty of this House to elect a new Speaker. It happened that there

was only one candidate. In an inaugural session, you can clearly define those, the members of the Majority and the Minority.

In the case of the Honorable Suarez, I was informed that when a manifesto of support was laid out, he was the first one who signed the manifesto. I do not think at that point, Mr. Suarez knew that there would be numbers. What I am trying to say is that at that time, he did not even know that the Speaker, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, will be able to get the Majority because he was the first to sign the manifesto. So, it was only the Minority Leader who can explain the motivation of his act—not you, not me, not everybody else. If he wanted to side with the Majority, he could write to the Majority.

As I explained earlier, there was no need to change color because what was needed was only to find a replacement and to vote for a new Speaker. I already explained the absurdity of several situations, Mme. Speaker. So, if we continue to invoke Section 8 even under a circumstance of changing guards, I do not think that will be supported legally, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DE VERA. Mme. Speaker, look at Section 11 and Section 13, it is clear there that there are no statements or even provisions as far as membership is concerned. Would you agree with me, Mme. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. I did not get that, Mme. Speaker. May I hear the question again.

REP. DE VERA. Look at Sections 11 and 13, Mme. Speaker. It never mention; or the provisions therein did not in any way classify that membership of our Members here, either the Majority or the Minority, as to the effect of the vacancy. Is that right, Mme. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. Precisely, Mme. Speaker, because there is no need to explain it.

When there is a voting for the replacement of a new Speaker, it does not distinguish between a Minority or a Majority. Everybody can participate. There is no distinction there. If the objective of our Rules is to make Section 8 appear to be applicable in all situations, why did they not replicate Section 8 so that it can apply even to a situation where you will have to elect a new Speaker.

REP. DE VERA. Mme. Speaker, why is it that the membership has never been touched in Sections 11 or 13? The answer is because it is already written in Section 8 of the Rules.

We have to read Section 11 and Section 13 as far as membership is concerned. Section 8 really prescribes how to determine whether a Member belongs to the Minority or whether a Member belongs to the Independent bloc. Do you agree, Mme. Speaker?

REP. MARCOLETA. I would disagree, Mme. Speaker, sorry. The correct interpretation, or the reason there is no distinction between the Majority and the Minority in Section 11 of Rule III, is that it is not necessary to segregate. What is needed is only to vote. Whether you are in the Majority or the Minority, you have to vote.

The application of logic dictates that Section 8 can only be applied in a situation where it is really required. That is when we commence the first session of every Congress, Mme. Speaker.

REP. DE VERA. Mme. Speaker, may I continue? With the indulgence of the Majority Leader, I am not yet finished. Mme. Speaker, I am trying to convince my colleagues here that I am indeed the Minority Leader. So, may I be allowed to speak for a while, Mme. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mme. Speaker, I would like to ...

REP. DE VERA. Just two questions, Mme. Speaker, just to distinguish Rule II from Rule III.

REP. MARCOLETA. Under that condition, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DE VERA. Thank you, Majority Leader. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

As far as membership is concerned, Mme. Speaker, look at Rule II. Rule II applies when we speak of membership. But as far as the officers are concerned, we have the Speaker, Deputy Speakers, Secretary General, Sergeant-at-Arms; therefore, Rule III applies. You have to distinguish Rule II from Rule III, Mme. Speaker, because Rule II governs the membership of this Chamber, while Rule III governs as far as the officers are concerned, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. Huwag tayong malilito on what rule to apply. As far as the membership is concerned, it is Rule II. As far as the officers are concerned, if there are vacancies, if we have to change the Speaker, then we have to apply Rule III.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Alvarez (M.) relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Fredenil "Fred" H. Castro.

That is, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the application of the rules. That is why I read the Preamble a while ago and in the last sentence it states, "hereby promulgate and pledge faithful obedience to these Rules."

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, I do not think anybody is confused between the utility of Rule III and Rule II. Unfortunately, it is the Gentleman who appears to be confused. We are not processing the problem about the Sergeant-at-Arms. We are not talking about the issue of the Secretary General. The only issue here is the vacancy and there is the replacement by a new Speaker. This is where we are supposed to concentrate because it is very simple, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, it is not complicated. When you have a vacancy, you need to vote for a new Speaker. If you vote for a Speaker, you do not have to distinguish between the Majority and the Minority. It is the business of the entire House. It is a right granted to every Member of the House, be it in the Majority or the Minority. That is why this particular Rule does not speak about membership in the Majority or the Minority. What is only at stake is the vacancy to be filled up.

I am not sure why the Gentleman is insisting that we go back to Section 8. Section 8 is very clear, it is for organization more than anything else. Rule III particularizes a situation when a vacancy occurred. It is not so in Rule II. So, how do you fill up a vacancy? The Members will vote. That is the only point here. If you vote, the issue is, do you require to change membership either in the Minority or the Majority? It is not in the Rules. Otherwise, if that is the case and that is the argument of the Gentleman, Mr. Speaker, it should have been written there. Unfortunately, it is not there. Why? Because logic should be applied that Section 8 is only for organization.

REP. DE VERA. Precisely, Mr. Speaker, that is why Rule II is entitled "Membership." I do not have to read to you the whole Rule II as far as membership is concerned. Rule III refers to officers and even to vacancy, but it does not in any way settle the issue of membership. So, when the issue of membership is in question, we go back to Rule II, Mr. Speaker. It is very clear.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VERA. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I made my point complete already. I think I have already articulated my position and I may not agree with the Majority Leader on how he applies the Rules. To my mind, we really have to differentiate Rule II on Membership and Rule III as far as the treatment of officers, and particularly on Vacancy, which would affect the membership of each Member, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

Mr. Speaker, to wind up, I just want to manifest again before this august Body that as per our rules, I am the Minority Leader, and I want to assert that. My group is part of the Minority.

Magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat.

REP. MARCOLETA. May I just put on record, Mr. Speaker, that the opinion of Honorable De Vera is as good as the opinion of everybody else, including this Representation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.) Congressman Quimbo is recognized.

REP. QUIMBO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the honorable Sr. Dep. Majority Leader yield to just a few questions?

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Pabalik-balik na po tayong, Section 8, Section 11, Section 13. Nakakalimutan natin iyong pinaka-basic na usapin doon sa Section 8. Nakalagay po dito, on Membership, “Members who vote for the winning candidate for Speaker, shall constitute the Majority.” Nakalagay din po diyan how they will elect from among themselves and so forth.

Puwede ba Sr. Dep. Majority Leader, paliwanagan mo nga kami bakit ba mayroong Majority, bakit ba mayroong Minority? Ano ba ang esensiya ng distinction na iyan? Bakit ba ginagawa iyan at the point of commencement when we convene for the first time during the fourth Monday of July, immediately succeeding the elections, bakit po?

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, the Majority is needed, as well as the Minority, because this is the parliamentary requirement of a legislative assembly like ours.

REP. QUIMBO. What is the rationale for that requirement, much like we have a Secretary General, we have a Sergeant-at-Arms. They are also required by the Rules, they are required by the parliament, but obviously, there is a ratio. What is the rationale as to why we need a Majority and a Minority.

REP. MARCOLETA. As to the administrative staff, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, I could only say that we need to be efficient in discharging the duties of the whole House, and we are supported by these officials and their staff. In relation to the question as to why the Majority and the Minority have to be defined. This is the very nature of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Legislation can only mature into good measures of law or good measures or pieces of legislation if they are deliberated upon completely. In deliberating on every measure that should be passed by this Body, we need the voice of the Minority, because sometimes the voice of the Majority may be deafening and the Minority should at least be able to insist on a certain part that may have

been, although, not obviously overlooked. But in most cases the Minority is needed, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, because we need to see every side of the coin.

REP. QUIMBO. I totally agree. Do I take it to mean, Mr. Speaker, Sr. Dep. Majority Leader, that therefore, that as a democracy, as a Congress, importante iyong nagkakaroon ng debate tulad ng sinabi po ninyo para may ibang mata na maaaring hindi nakita ng mas nakararami na mayroong pangalawang mata na tumitingin para kilatisin ito—checks and balances, parati po nating nadidinig ito, Mr. Speaker. Tama po ba?

REP. MARCOLETA. I could not agree more, Mr. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Okay. Tingnan natin ang Section 8, and I will assume in the meantime—assuming without admitting and obviously *in arguendo* with deepest *ex abundantia cautela*, we accept your philosophy. That under Section 8, paano po dine-determine ang Majority; ano po ang Majority?

REP. MARCOLETA. Nakalagay po sa ating alituntunin na lahat ng bumoto sa panig ng nagwaging Speaker, sila po ay nagko-constitute ng Majority.

REP. QUIMBO. Opo. Papaano naman po iyong sa Minority?

REP. MARCOLETA. Iyong po sa Minority, kung babasahin natin ang alituntunin, by implication, Iyong bumoto sa natalong kandidato for Speaker ay naililinya doon sa panig ng Minority.

REP. QUIMBO. By implication and by practice, tulad po ng sinabi ninyo ang nagiging kabahagi sa Minority ay ang mga taong hindi bumoto sa Speaker. Tama po ba?

REP. MARCOLETA. Ganoon nga po ang implication noon, Mr. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Ano pong dahilan doon?

REP. MARCOLETA. Marami po sigurong mailalahad na dahilan, pero para hindi na po siguro magtalu-talo, kinakailangan ma-classify na iyong Majority at iyong Minority. Kaya po inilagay sa alituntunin kung sino iyong bumoto sa nagwaging Speaker, Majority kayo. By implication, iyon naman pong bumoto doon sa ibang kandidato na hindi naman nagwagi, doon kayo sa Minority. Ibig lamang sabihin, iyong panig po siguro ng Speaker, maaaring hindi sila ...

REP. QUIMBO. Magkasundo.

REP. MARCOLETA. ... magkasundo doon sa panukala...

REP. QUIMBO. Tama.

REP. MARCOLETA. ... o doon sa mga plano nung nagwaging Speaker. Mas mabuti sa kanila kung doon sila sa kabila nang sa ganoon mabantayan nila iyong Majority at doon sila siguro magiging mas mabisa.

REP. QUIMBO. So nakaka-perform ng kanilang basic function of checks and balances dahil noong nagkalabanan hindi mo kakampi ang nanalo, logically and based on the rational function ng checks and balances, ibinibigay ito sa mga tao na hindi bumoto sa nanalong Speaker.

Ito ang dahilan at ina-argue po ninyo na kung bakit pag-ino-organize natin on the fourth Monday of July of every succeeding election as contained in Section 1, bakit po pagdating kay Congressman Suarez, bumoto ba siya para kay Speaker Arroyo?

REP. MARCOLETA. Alam ninyo naman po iyon, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. Hindi, pero for the record lang po, bumoto po ba siya o hindi?

REP. MARCOLETA. Hindi po. Makikita lang po natin sa record na bumoto siya.

REP. QUIMBO. So, bumoto po siya para sa nanalong Speaker. Kung titingnan po natin base sa inyong dahilan, base sa pagpapaliwanag kung paanong naka-create ang Minority para ma-perform ang checks and balance, ang linaw sa Section 8 na nakasulat ay dapat hindi ka bumoto, taga-suporta at higit sa lahat hindi ka nag-cast ng vote mo in favor of the winning Speaker.

Sinabi nga po natin kanina, for you to be able to perform the checks and balance functions which are essential to democracy, tulad ng sinabi ninyo, kailangang may kumilatis na iba. Kaya sinasabi sa Section 8, hindi ka puwede kung ikaw ay bumoto sa nanalo, hindi ka puwedeng maging bahagi ng Minority, worse maging Minority Leader.

Ang itinatanong ko po ngayon, base sa inyong teyorya na kakaiba, sabi po ninyo ang Rule na iyan ay nag-a-apply lang at point of organization or for the first time we convene.

Papaano po na ang dahilan, the very reasons why a Minority is created is:

No. 1, you must not have voted for the winning Speaker; and

No. 2, that allows you to perform your checks and balance functions.

Papaano nasususpende o hindi na nagpe-prevail kung nagkaroon ng pagbabago ng pamumuno sa kalagitnaan? Paliwanagan nga po ninyo kami kung tatanggapin namin ang inyong paliwanag. The Minority serves as a check and balance; therefore, they cannot be a voter in favor of the winning candidate. Iyan ang esensya.

Sa sinasabi po ninyo sa amin ngayon, ang function na iyan, ang Rule na iyan ay nagpe-prevail lang at point of organization?

Pero kung six weeks later, nagpalit ng Speaker, one year later, two years later, ay hindi na. Ang Minority ay hindi na kailangang hindi bumoto sa Speaker, dahil hindi na niya function ang check and balance. Ganoon ang implication ng inyong sinasabi because I cannot imagine why the most basic Rule in Section 8 that says, if you voted for winning Speaker, you cannot be a part of the Minority.

Why? Because you cannot perform the checks and balances function, which is essential in a democracy. Papaanong sasabihin ninyo: "Ah, sa simula lang iyong kailangan ang checks and balances. Sa kalagitnaan, hindi na." That is why a Minority Leader can actually vote for the winning Speaker. Paano ipapaliwanag po iyon?

REP. MARCOLETA. Dalawa po iyong balangkas ng tanong niya, Mr. Speaker. Kailangang unahin po iyong isa. Iyong nakabatay doon sa Section 8, sapagkat ang sabi niya, kailangan po pala na lahat ng bumoto sa Speaker, sa lahat ng pagkakataon ay palaging nandoon sa panig ng Majority. Pero kung kinakailangan pong linawin ulit, Mr. Speaker, sa Rule I po kasi, ito po iyong Convening and Organizing the House, kaya ko po sinasabi kanina, na iyong ginawa nating pag-elect sa Speaker two years ago is about organization, inaugural session po iyon. Makikita po iyong batayan dito, Mr. Speaker, sa Rule I. Ang title po ng Rule I, "Convening and Organizing the House." Mapapansin po natin sa third paragraph, kapag binasa po natin doon, simulan natin sa pangalawang pangungusap, "The Speaker shall be elected by a majority vote of all Members through a roll call vote." Dito po binabanggit na sa inaugural session, talagang mayroong pagbobotohan. Doon ngayon nadi-distinguish po kung sino iyong Majority at saka iyong Minority. Ang totoo po ay kaya nagkaroon po ng complication sapagkat kung babalikan po ninyo iyong Section 8 na pinagbabasehan ng ating iginagalang na Mambabatas, iyon pong kapag nag-abstain ka o hindi ka bumoto, wala namang categorical na deklarasyon dito na member ka na ng Minority. Kahit na po pagbali-baligtarin po natin ang Section 8, wala pong binabanggit doon. Kapag nag-abstain ka from voting o hindi ka bumoto, member ka na ng Minority.

Pangalawa po, ang binabanggit kasi natin sa organizational session natin, palagi pong may magkakalaban sa Speaker. Ang nangyari po, noong nakaraang dalawang linggo, ito po ay filling up of a vacancy, na nagkataon naman po na iisa lang ang kumandidato. Sinasabi po namin na hindi nasasakripisyo dito iyong pagiging Minority mo at saka iyong pagiging Majority mo sapagkat walang binabanggit doon ang Rule III, Section 11. Kung saka-sakali po na sa tuwing boboto tayo, o anumang pagkakataon, ke may bakante o wala, ke inaugural session, eh dapat ilagay natin sa anumang pagkakataon kapag bumoto ka sa Speaker, vacancy man o hindi. Palaging nagkakaroon ng bagong pormasyon ang Majority at saka ang Minority. Hindi po ganoon sapagkat sa Section 11, ang importante lamang po ay makaboto ang bawat Miyembro, sapagkat ang nakalagay doon “all Members.” Sa Section 11 po, hindi po idinistinggi kung Minority ka o Majority ka kasi kailangang bumoto ka.

Ngayon, sa pangalawa naman pong tanong, eh kung bumoto si Ginoong Suarez sa ating bagong Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, papaano natin masisiguro na magiging effective siya na fiscalizer in the principle of our republicanism on checks and balances?

Mr. Speaker, hindi po ako pwedeng mag-speculate. Hindi ko pwedeng hatulan si Ginoong Suarez na komo siya ay bumoto sa bagong Speaker ay ineffective na siya at mawawalan na siya ng tatag ng kalooban para gampanin niya iyong kanyang tungkuling bilang Minority Leader. Speculation na iyon po sa parte ng Representasyong ito, Mr. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, lilinawin ko na lang. Hindi natin pinag-uusapan lahat, pero sa Rule II, Section 8 lang po, napakalinaw at sinabi na rin po ng ating distinguished Majority Leader ang dahilan kung bakit ang Majority ay iyong mga sumuporta, kaya’t ang Minority ay ang mga hindi sumuporta ay dahil kailangan ng checks and balances. Hindi ipinapaliwanag kung bakit iyong ganoong klaseng sistema ay hindi natin pwedeng ipagpatuloy pa sa iba’t ibang shake-up o pagpapalit ng Speaker. Hindi talaga maipapaliwanag kasi walang paliwanag, because Rule II, Section 8, covers all forms of reconstitution or changing of the Speaker. Bakit? Because malinaw at inamin na po ng Majority Leader that kapag ikaw ay bumoto sa nanalong Speaker, hindi ka pwedeng mag-Minority. Kumbaga sa basketball, sinabi mo, ang referee ay dapat nakaitim, nasa gitna sya. Pero sinasabi ninyo, hindi, sa first quarter lang iyan kapag nagsimula. Sabi ko, bakit? Eh, ang referee, ano ba ang gamit? Kaya ang referee nandiyan para i-check at i-balance, siguraduhin na tapat ang nagiging laro; otherwise, wala nang manonood sa atin, wala nang magtitiwala sa liga natin kung walang maayos na referee. Kaya sa simula pa lang hinahati natin—Team A, Team B, tayong dalawa—referee.

Ngayon, kapag nagkakaroon ng pagbabago sa second quarter, biglang sasabihin, ay, hindi. Iyong referee, puwede na rin iyang mag-uniporme o kumampi doon sa iba. Teka muna, eh di ba checks and balance nga iyong Minority kaya nga hindi siya puwedeng maging bahagi ng Majority eh? Ang basic eh, sinabi doon na—kapag bumoto ka sa Speaker, hindi ka puwedeng maging Minority. Bakit natin papalitan iyong rule? Ibig bang sabihin, ang checks and balances, sa simula lang pala? Hindi talaga maipapaliwanag because it is so clear what supports it.

Look at our Rules, at least in three sections, dito lang, there is no other section when you talk about Third Reading, when you talk about nominal voting. Nakasulat dito, ordinary “Nominal Voting” on Third Reading. Section 116 states: “Upon motion of a Member, x x x duly approved x x x Members, x x x there being a quorum, nominal voting, et cetera,” nakalagay po dito, tinatawag, “Roll Call on Third Reading” ng bawat isa ha. Hindi po nakasaad, hindi katulad sa pag-e-elect ng Speaker, nakalagay po doon, “x x x the Secretary General shall record the votes cast of each Member.” Pag tiningnan po ninyo in the event of a vacancy uli, nakasulat na naman, kakaiba. Hindi sinasabing “x x x will record the number of votes x x x.” But no, ang nakasulat doon is that the Secretary General is required to record the exact vote of each Member. Why? It is different from Third Reading voting. Why? Because dine-determine at that point when you vote for a Speaker—saan ka ba? Ikaw ba ay sa Majority o sa Minority? Why? Because it is important to know who is now going to do the checks and balances. It simply cannot be acceptable that a Minority Leader is not only somebody who voted, but campaigned for the winning Speaker. Hindi talaga iyan magiging katanggap-tanggap. Kung kami man po ay nagiging mapilit, makulit, at paulit-ulit, humihingi ako ng dispensa at paumanhin, lalung-lalo sa ating Speaker. Ngunit hindi kami mapapagod sa pagpapaalala na kung ano ang tama ay siyang dapat nating gawin dahil ito ang ikabubuti ng buong House of Representatives.

Panghuli, Mr. Speaker, tingnan ninyo kung gaano ka-ridiculous kung ia-apply natin ang rule. If you talk about absurdity, everyone else outside of Congress is telling us already how absurd it is that we have a Minority Leader who voted for the winning Speaker. Tayo na lang po ang hindi nakakakita nito.

Tingnan po ninyo. Let us see we have a divided House. Halimbawa, 100 lang po ang ating mga Kongresista—100 divided by the middle, 51 sa Majority, 49 sa Minority. Nakaupo si Speaker A, representing the 51 in the Majority. Biglang in the middle of their term, nag-challenge ang Minority, 49 sila, ang lapit lang, nanligaw lang ng dalawa sa Majority, pinalipat nila, at sinabi nila, “Hoy, Congressman, lipat ka dito sa amin sa Minority. Itutulak natin si Speaker B. Kapag

lumipat kayong dalawa, tayong 51, maipapanalo natin ang Speaker na bago.” At nangyari nga. Lumipat ang dalawa, napunta sa Minority iyong dalawa, so, iyong Minority now elect with the help of the two members of the Majority, naihalal si Speaker B, nanalo, 51 sila. Tanggapin natin ang depinisyon ng Majority Leader. Walang nagbabago, guys. Walang nagbabago sa estado. Kung sino iyong Minority dati, ganoon pa rin. Kung sino ang nasa Majority, ganoon pa rin. Paano magbabago based on their theory? Uy, kailangan mag-apply. A-apply ka uli, pupunta ka doon, si-seek ng approval, bibigyan. Tingnan ninyo ang sitwasyon. You now have a new Majority composed of the 49 Minority na may dalawang lumipat galing sa Majority, but the Majority Leader and the rest of the Majority are now 49 less than the Majority. The Speaker is now beholden to a permanent Majority. Kung sino ang Majority leader niya, 49 na lang sila pero hindi puwedeng palitan. Bakit? Puwede mo lang palitan ang Majority Leader by a vote of all members of the Majority. Eh di silang 49 ang magde-decide.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, I prefer...

REP. QUIMBO. Wait.

REP. MARCOLETA. ... to hear questions.

REP. QUIMBO. No.

REP. MARCOLETA. ... than statements.

REP. QUIMBO. I am winding up, Mr. Speaker, if I may. If I may have a minute and a half, 90 seconds. If I may proceed, please.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). Proceed.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, you will have—if the theory is that people remain permanent in their seats at the point of constitution, kapag unang tayô natin, táyo ay iyong Majority, Majority ka forever. In that exact situation, in a deeply split Congress, you will have a Speaker who will now have a Majority Leader who does not represent the Majority and who will be obstinate and can block the agenda of the new Speaker. No, that cannot be. The 51 now composed of the 49 Minority and the plus two coming from Majority is now the new Majority. They will now elect their own Majority Leader. Why? Because they voted and supported that new Speaker; otherwise, we will have the most absurd of situations where people, when they make a choice from Day 1, are stuck to that choice. How can you be stuck to your choice? You cannot even transfer. Remember when you want to transfer, you chose to be part of the

Minority. When we came here on July, 23, 2016, you want to transfer to the Majority, you cannot, because it was not as easy as that. They will just stop you, they will block you. So, what is the best way? The best way is when you elect a new Speaker, when you declare that seat vacant, it is practically a new Congress as far as we are concerned.

Mr. Speaker, Majority Leader, I thank you for your time. Like I said, the purpose is not at all to badger. The purpose is not at all to prevent this House from working. We want Congress to succeed but we want Congress to see what the entire world is already seeing today.

Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, just a few statements.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. Just a few statements to address the arguments advanced by the Honorable Quimbo.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). Proceed, Congressman Marcoleta.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, the bone of contention is the fact that the Honorable Suarez voted for the new Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and according to him, to the Honorable Quimbo, that act of voting for the new Speaker already affected his ability to fiscalize. That is the main point. I am not quite in agreement with that kind of argument, Mr. Speaker, because it seems that we are supposed to vote only on a particular issue because we wanted to retain our position, not being able to hear a statement, a position that you would like to cut across before this Body.

If we accept the argument that a Minority Leader will be affected in deciding to favor the winning Speaker in the time of vacancy, why do we have rules? That at one time, even the members of the Majority write to the Minority, like what happened in several instances. So, from Majority to Minority, and from Minority to Majority, if that compromises your position, why do we have these rules in the first place, Mr. Speaker?

We can always conclude that if a Member chooses to switch side and write to the Minority Leader and apply for a membership in the Minority, he is already a suspect that his position is already compromised because

he was part of the Majority. This is not the intention of the rules, Mr. Speaker. Those rules were provided in order to give freedom to all Members to put themselves in situations where they are comfortable. But as I have explained earlier, Your Honor, in defending the position of the Majority Leader in voting for the new Speaker, the Honorable Suarez does not sacrifice his position. That was the argument of the Majority Leader, Your Honor, because it does not need a change and switching positions to take part in the voting and to realize and fulfill a change in leadership.

That is the only point, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.
Thank you.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.).
Congressman Atienza is recognized.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Majority Floor Leader, with your permission, ...

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. ... we would like to also be given the opportunity to pose some questions.

Una ay binabati namin kayo sa inyong pagbubukas nitong paksang ito dito sa Kongreso, where the debate should really be done and not on media, not on radio, not on television, na nakikita po natin for the past two weeks. Sa media po ito tinatalakay, at wala po namang magagawa ang media dito sa isyung ito.

The issue before us is one simple question. It is a question of interpretation, accurate interpretation of the rules. As stated by the Majority Leader, agreed upon by those who interpellated him. Rules are made to be followed. So, the rules are there, glaring before our very own eyes. There should be no room to misinterpret it, to distort it, and to mangle it in any form other than what it was intended for, and that is to put order in the deliberations of this Chamber and to have an efficient procedure to be followed in our making of laws. Kaya mayroong Majority at mayroong Minority, kaya ito ay itinatakda sa simula ng anumang Kongreso. This was done on July 25, 2016.

Iyong rules na sinasabi, at paulit-ulit nating naririnig, are rules that apply in the organizational stage of this Chamber. But we have been organized, we have been functioning for the past two years efficiently, because precisely, the Majority is properly defined and the Minority is properly defined.

Ang hindi po maintindihan nitong inyong lingkod ay bakit po natin binabago ang nakatakda na sa ating libro?

Why are we misinterpreting what is already written in our rules? The Minority is defined. In fact, it is stated that they shall serve until this Congress expires on June 30, 2019, then we will have a new Minority Leader as we will have a new—probably, a new Speaker and a new Majority Leader, pero that will happen in 2019 after the elections of the new Members of Congress.

So today, we are hearing and we would like to listen—marami po tayong naririnig, marami rin tayong narinig na mga Latin *dictums*, *argumentum*, ang tawag ko po rito *argumentum ad absurdum*, because ipinipilit po iyong hindi naman katanggap-tanggap. Ang sabi po noong aking kaibigang Congressman De Vera, siya lang daw ang naiwang Minority member sapagkat siya raw ay nag-abstain, he sat on the fence when there was a call for duty to make a decision on that day. He sat on the fence like Humpty Dumpty and, thereafter, he says “I am the new leader.” Katanggap-tanggap po ba iyon?

Just to set the record straight, hindi po naman siya lang ang hindi bumoto. Hindi rin po bumoto ang dalawa sa aming mga miyembro, Cong. Delphine Lee and Congressman Eusebio of Pasig. Therefore, the claim that he is the only one who can claim leadership with the Minority is wrong, erroneous, distorted, self-serving, if at all.

Eh ganoon din po naman ang ating kaibigang si Congressman Quimbo. Pinipilit ko pong maintindihan iyong kaniyang argumento, baka naman puwede tayong magtulungan na. Pero hindi ko po matanggap sapagkat iyong ipinipilit niya, na iyong mga nag-abstain at iyong mga hindi bumoto sa tawag ng pagkakataon at hamon ng ating tungkulin ay automatically belonging to the Minority. Hindi ko po puwedeng tanggapin iyon because I am happy with my role in the Minority. I am effectively fiscalizing in every manner in the committee, in the plenary and anywhere as a Minority member. So, my fate in this Congress cannot be decided by a misinterpretation of the rules.

Mr. Speaker, buti na lang ang ating Deputy Majority Leader took up this issue on the floor, and therefore, we are to decide on this issue at hindi po madedesisyonan ito sa ANC, sa CNN at sa mga iba pang mga television channels. Nakakahiya lamang aminin na tayo ay hindi magkasundo-sundo rito. Ito po ay kailangang talakayin dito sa loob ng Kongreso, katulad po ng ating ginagawa, at sa takdang panahon ay bigyan natin ng desisyon.

Nagkaroon ba ng bakante? Is there any vacancy? The question is very simple—is there any vacancy in the Minority leadership? And, the answer is no. In the eyes of some, there is, but show me your basis for saying there is a vacancy. Hindi puwedeng magsigawan tayo rito. Mas malakas ang boses ko sa inyo dahil may mikropono ako. Ipakita ninyo ang rule na nagsasabing mayroon tayong bakante at doon kayo mag-apply kung mayroon vacancy.

Sections 11 and 13 are very clear. If we want to

declare a vacancy, a majority of all Members of this Chamber should vote for that the same way we removed the Speaker. You cannot stand up and claim, “We are the leaders,” or simply because you are claiming, “We would like to replace Congressman Suarez because we would like to take his position.”

Kung may vacancy, pag-usapan natin at desisyonan natin, pagbotohan natin. Pero kung wala pong vacancy, why are we arguing that? We are assuming that there is a vacancy when there is no vacancy in the Minority ranks.

Congressman Suarez is effective as a Minority Leader. Yours truly, I have been trying my best to be a very effective fiscalizer for the past two Congresses. I could have opted to be a Majority member during the time of Speaker Belmonte because he is my compadre, he is my good friend—long time relation at matagal na po kaming magkasama, magkasama po kami sa rebolusyon, magkasama po kami sa EDSA, magkasama po kami sa lahat ng mga yugto ng aming politika. I could have opted to be one of his key Majority members; I did not because I chose to be with the Minority, and I think no one can impute any allegation that I failed in my role. For example, we prevented the passage of the BBL. Minamarkahan ko po iyan. The BBL that was constituted under the former administration was fraudulent and unconstitutional, and in fact, bordering on being treasonous, katrayduran sa bansa. Kami po ay pumunta sa korte, idinemanda nga namin for treason iyong mga gumawa ng panukalang batas na iyon. Akalain ninyong ibibigay na halos lahat sa mga gusto nating tunglang Muslim ang kapangyarihang bumuo ng kanilang militar, kanilang sariling pulis, kanilang sariling bandila, kanilang sariling national anthem, sarili nilang constitutional bodies. Lahat po ay ibinigay. And that is the reason that compelled us to go to court, accusing them of treason. Mayroon bang nakagawa sa inyo niyan? Mayroon bang nakagawa dito sa mga matatayang nating mga kasamahan ngayon to defend the sovereignty of our nation? And I am proud to be one of those who went to court to sue them for treason.

Pero ngayon, because hindi lumusot iyan, because of effective fiscalizing, nabuo natin ang bagong BOL, na mayroon ng mga reporma at katanggap-tanggap na probisyon. Wala na silang militar, wala na silang pulis, wala na silang national anthem, wala na silang bandila, at wala na silang constitutional bodies, which would have been declared unconstitutional at any point, if that was passed by the Sixteenth Congress.

So, therefore, relations of our Members, all of us, with the Speaker, should not be the basis of our decision on whom to recognize as the Minority Leader.

I am close to the Speaker now but I will still fiscalize. Kung siya po ay mali, gagawin ko po ang aking tungkulin. Katulad po ng ginawa ko noong

nakaraang Kongreso, kapag mali si Speaker Belmonte ay katulong po ako noong mga kumokontra sa lahat ng hakbanging pinagsisikapan niya. I never gave up my principles simply because of my relations with Speaker Belmonte.

So, I think it is unfair for us to judge the relationship of Minority Leader Suarez with the present Speaker and say that he will not be an effective Minority Leader. It is unfair. If you impute that on my person and character, nagkakamali kayo. It is unfair to even impute that to any member of the Minority now, as we would like to consider each and every one of us to be imbued with nothing but patriotism and love for the country, and one thing—our common desire to give our people a better life.

Hindi itong Minority Leader, hindi itong mga pinagtatalunan nating ito. Ang pag-usapan na natin ngayon, how do we solve the rising prices of rice, the runaway inflation and all the other economic problems that are now making life difficult for our people. The sooner we are able to resolve this, the earlier we will be able to work, and we will work together as long as the decision is made on the interpretation of the Rules. The Majority is taking up the issue on the floor, again, as I said, we welcome that because who else will interpret the rules except the Majority of this Body? You will not allow us to interpret the rules as we will not allow any singular figure like Congressman De Vera to interpret the rules by himself. The Majority must decide on the interpretation of the rules, and the rules are very clear if there is a vacancy; you cannot create one with your imagination and with your ambition. Having said that, I will cite now another foreign but appropriate saying: El fallo del juez es inapelable, the decision of the referee is final. And, I hope, when the Majority decides on the fate of this issue, we will all buckle down to work as one Body, Majority and Minority, towards the improvement of life of the suffering Filipinos.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Majority Leader.

REP. MARCOLETA. Ipagpaumanhin po ninyo na hindi na ako magko-comment sa inyong talumpati. Iginagalang ko po ang inyong opinyon, ganoon din po iyong paggalang ko sa opinyon ng ating mga kasama, Honorable De Vera and Honorable Quimbo.

Sana po ay maayos na ninyo ito, kagaya po ng inyong nilulungati, para makapagpatuloy na po tayo sa ating trabaho.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. HERRERA-DY. I move that we recognize Rep. Tomasito “Tom” S. Villarín from the AKBAYAN Party-List for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). Congressman Villarín is recognized.

REP. VILLARÍN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Floor Leader.

Would the Senior Deputy Majority Leader be open to some questions?

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARÍN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, is the theme of the Sponsor when delivering his privilege speech is all about defending who the Minority is? Is that the point of your privilege speech, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. MARCOLETA. No, Mr. Speaker. This Representation was very clear because on July 30, 2018, the Majority Leader recognized the Honorable Suarez. So, it was our position that we should explain why the Majority Leader took that position of recognizing Mr. Suarez. It is not and it will never be the position of the Majority Leader, Mr. Speaker, to meddle into the affairs of the Minority. The problem is for themselves to settle.

REP. VILLARÍN. Precisely, Mr. Speaker, good Sponsor, because if you said that last week—the Majority Leader recognized the Minority without benefit of a process even at that time we were still interpellating on the privilege speech given by Representative Quimbo, then it is the Majority now who decided who should be Minority.

REP. MARCOLETA. Because, Mr. Speaker, that will not preempt the Minority or those who claim the position of the Minority Leader to take any other course of action in order to ventilate their claims. But for the Majority, Your Honor, and specifically this august Chamber, the Majority in this House need to protect its reputation and its integrity, including the duty to buckle down to work, Mr. Speaker, especially at this time when the 2019 National Budget is already in full swing, as well as other equally important legislation that we need to tackle, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARÍN. Mr. Speaker, I raised that point because last week, on that date, July 30, I raised a parliamentary question. When I asked then Majority Leader who voted for the Speaker, the new Speaker, and it was put on record that there were 184 who voted for the new Speaker, Speaker Gloria Arroyo, and in the enumeration contained in that House Resolution that was also affirmed by the Plenary, the 184 included the 14 Members led by Rep. Danny Suarez. Would that

be a correct interpretation of what transpired in that Journal?

REP. MARCOLETA. That is not a matter of interpretation, Mr. Speaker; it is a matter of fact.

REP. VILLARÍN. So, that is on record, Mr. Speaker, that the 184 ...

REP. MARCOLETA. The fact remains that 184 voted for Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and their names ...

REP. VILLARÍN. Include ...

REP. MARCOLETA. ... are listed ...

REP. VILLARÍN. Yes.

REP. MARCOLETA. ... in that document.

REP. VILLARÍN. Yes.

REP. MARCOLETA. That is a fact. There is no need to interpret, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARÍN. And included are the names of Representative Suarez and the 13 others who supposedly “constituted” the Minority.

REP. MARCOLETA. That is borne out by the facts, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARÍN. So, it is factual. Meaning, it is now in the records of the House.

REP. MARCOLETA. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARÍN. Okay. Now, when you say there were 184 who voted for the new Speaker, and with your contention about who constitutes the Minority and the Majority, you are saying that it was only the Speaker that was voted upon. There was no reorganization of both the Majority and Minority. Am I correct that that is your contention in this issue?

REP. MARCOLETA. I am not sure about the premise of your question, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VILLARÍN. No, because what you are pointing out is that Representative Suarez still retains the Minority because there was no vacancy, as you have stated.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, that is in line with the act of the Majority Leader in recognizing the

Hon. Danilo Suarez as the Minority Leader because that is the fact that appears on record.

REP. VILLARIN. Yes, Mr. Speaker, and I am quite surprised why Representative Suarez is not standing up but rather, it is the Senior Deputy Majority Leader who is defending who the Minority should be.

REP. MARCOLETA. That is not correct, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. But anyway, Mr. Speaker, ...

REP. MARCOLETA. The implication is a speculation, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. No, it is borne out of the facts.

REP. MARCOLETA. I made a qualification that we need to explain the position made by the Majority Leader. If it sounded like siding with the Minority Leader, Danilo Suarez, that is quite unfortunate but that was not intended, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. Now, let me again cite facts, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

In the 2016 constitution of the House, there were 252 House Members who voted for then Speaker Alvarez. Am I correct?

REP. MARCOLETA. If the record shows so, Mr. Speaker, that may be correct.

REP. VILLARIN. So, if we have 292 Members of the House, then there were 40 who did not vote for Speaker Alvarez then. Am I correct?

REP. MARCOLETA. That is logical enough, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. Now, two weeks ago as I have cited, 184 out of the 292 House Members voted for Speaker GMA. How many did not vote for Speaker GMA?

REP. MARCOLETA. That can be computed, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. Can you compute it?

REP. MARCOLETA. It is only a matter of subtraction, Mr. Speaker. The operation is subtraction. We have 292 minus 184, then you will get the number.

REP. VILLARIN. The number is 108.

REP. MARCOLETA. It may be so, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. No, numbers are exact, Mr. Speaker. I mean, we learn it from kindergarten.

REP. MARCOLETA. What is the point, Mr. Speaker?

REP. VILLARIN. My point is, there were 108 House Members who did not vote for the Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. It does not make any difference, Mr. Speaker, because the rules say that the new Speaker, to be able to fill up the vacancy, would need only a majority of votes of all the Members.

REP. VILLARIN. Precisely, Mr. Speaker. What I am pointing out now is—again, I am referring the good Sponsor to Section 8.

REP. MARCOLETA. I am not the sponsor, Mr. Speaker. It looks like I am sponsoring the Minority Leader. I need to correct that, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. Thank you for that correction, Mr. Speaker, because as I understand, in 2016, we were together then.

REP. MARCOLETA. I know, I cannot forget that.

REP. VILLARIN. Yes, okay.

REP. MARCOLETA. That is why we became friends.

REP. VILLARIN. Yes, because we were the Legitimate Eight then.

REP. MARCOLETA. You are now the Magnificent Seven. You have a better name.

REP. VILLARIN. Okay, Mr. Speaker.

Now, pursuing my line of questioning, in Section 8, we have three characterization of House Members: the Majority or those who voted for the Speaker, the Minority who did not vote for the Speaker, and we have these so-called Independents. Am I correct?

REP. MARCOLETA. That is correct, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. Then, can you define who belongs to the Independents?

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, if you refer to Section 8 of our Rules, during organizational session

states: "Members who vote for the winning Speaker shall constitute the Majority x x x." By implication, those who voted for the losing candidates become Members of the Minority. The rule, as you will read it, is silent on whether or not there is an automatic membership in the Minority in the cases of those who abstained from voting or did not vote at all.

REP. VILLARIN. So, that question of who constitutes the Independent ...

REP. MARCOLETA. The Independents are the ones who decided not to go to the Majority or the Minority.

REP. VILLARIN. So, in that fateful day, two weeks ago, 184 voted for the Speaker, 12 abstained, 4 voted no. So, the rest presumably belong to the Independents.

REP. MARCOLETA. Let us wait for the complete process, Mr. Speaker, because our rules also provide that Members may decide to shift to the Majority or vice-versa. And on the assumption that the Majority will accept them or the Minority will accept them, that is the process of switching from one position to another. Meaning, if you are from the Majority, and for one reason or another, you decided to go to Minority, the rules provide that you have to write the Majority Leader or the Minority Leader, whichever is the case. And if you are accepted, then you become a Majority or a Minority, whichever is the case.

REP. VILLARIN. So, precisely, ...

REP. MARCOLETA. But those Members who decide not to go either way, they remain to be Independent. That is what the rules say.

REP. VILLARIN. So, precisely, Mr. Speaker, at that time there were more than, I think, 50 who could be considered Independents because they belong neither to the Majority or the Minority, so they decided to write to the Majority.

REP. MARCOLETA. That is the process, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VILLARIN. So, that is the process. Because Representative Suarez voted for the Speaker, then he should have resigned in the Majority and written to the Minority because that is the process.

REP. MARCOLETA. That is your opinion because I have explained earlier that the rule applies only when you vote for the Speaker during the inaugural session.

REP. VILLARIN. Yeah, precisely, because right now, you stated earlier that the process for the Independents which is around more than 50 during that fateful day of replacing the Speaker, you said that they have to apply.

REP. MARCOLETA. We could not just say that, Mr. Speaker, because ...

REP. VILLARIN. You have to apply with the Majority.

REP. MARCOLETA. ... I do not know the numbers who switched, if there are, from either side. I think we need records to be able to explain better the correct numbers. We cannot speculate as to how many, if ever, switched position because I get the information that some of those who did not vote decided to go to one side.

REP. VILLARIN. Precisely, 184 voted for the Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. And there are others—on the other side switching to the other. So, until and unless we are able to get all the names, we will not be in a position to determine the correct number as to who are the Independents because we need to know the result. Until this is done, we would not know how to determine which Members decided to stay as Independent.

REP. VILLARIN. I think this is a relevant issue, the numbers, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. I know your point because if you get a lot of those who remained to be Independent, chances are, your name today as Magnificent Seven could probably become Magnificent 77.

REP. VILLARIN. No, my point, Mr. Speaker, is that there was a significant and relevant reorganization of who the Majority, Minority, and Independents in the installation of a new Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. But that speaks also, Mr. Speaker, the decision of the individual Members. So, there is no automatic membership like what the other Members who interpellated this Representation, that there is an automatic membership to the Majority whenever you voted to the winning Speaker in times of vacancy.

So, the best argument is your own analysis that it is not automatic. We need to give time for the process and for all the Members to decide where they want to go or whether or not they want to go either side. After that, we will be able to determine finally who the Independents are.

REP. VILLARIN. But again, you said earlier that the Independents have to apply with the Minority or the Majority. Then, if you are with the Minority, if you want to go to the Majority, you would also apply with the Majority and ...

REP. MARCOLETA. Let me clear that, Mr. Speaker. I am not talking about the Independents writing to the Majority or to the Minority. I said these Members decided to remain as is, neither with the Majority nor with the Minority. We are talking of those who abstained from voting or those who did not vote, so the chances are, of them choosing either the Majority side or the Minority side.

REP. VILLARIN. So by now, the House leadership already knows who are the Majority and the Minority, I presume.

REP. MARCOLETA. Not with finality. I think the process is going on, Mr. Speaker. Let me get back to you later if we are able to determine the correct number.

REP. VILLARIN. No, no, but you are already acknowledging and saying that the Majority Leader...

REP. MARCOLETA. I am acknowledging a process because you cited Section 8. We cannot discount the possibility that Members would go this side or the other side. I am only trying to respond...

REP. VILLARIN. And again ...

REP. MARCOLETA. ... to the scenarios...

REP. VILLARIN. Yeah.

REP. MARCOLETA. ... you are creating.

REP. VILLARIN. Again, let me go to the Journal, to the Record, Mr. Speaker. The Majority Leader last week said that based on your record, there were already 260 who constituted the Majority and now you are saying that it is still without finality, without anything, that you do not know who is Majority and who is Minority. So, I am confused, Mr. Speaker because ...

REP. MARCOLETA. No, no, do not be confused, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. No, because, it is in the Journal. It is recorded in the Journal, Mr. Speaker, and if the kind Senior Majority Leader would just look into the Journals of Wednesday last week, it was stated by the Majority Leader who constitute the Majority and the Minority.

REP. MARCOLETA. That was the count, Mr. Speaker, but that number does not remain static because, as I have said, our rules provide situations where Members can switch sides.

REP. VILLARIN. So, even until now, Members can still switch sides like Representative De Vera has claimed that they had 14 with him and what you are saying that even the 14, you still do not know if they are with the Minority or with the Majority in the same way that Representative Quimbo has 26 confirmed Members in his group and you still cannot decide whether the 26 are with the Minority or the Majority. And it is also clear that the 14 that belongs to the Suarez Group and voted for Speaker GMA belongs to the Majority.

REP. MARCOLETA. I cannot see the point, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. No, the point here, Mr. Speaker is, we have to look at the numbers. We have to deal with identifying because your premise is that, it was only the position of Speaker that was changed and consequently of course, the Majority Leader; and there were no changes in the Majority and the Minority. Now, you are stating that you do not have the numbers to back up who belong to the Minority and the Majority. So, it means now that we are floating on air.

REP. MARCOLETA. I am not—I did not say ...

REP. VILLARIN. I mean who compose the Majority and the Minority ...

REP. MARCOLETA. I did not say ...

REP. VILLARIN. ... and only name that you could identify is Rep. Danny Suarez as the Minority.

REP. MARCOLETA. I did not say anything like that, Mr. Speaker. What I am saying is, you were asking for the numbers of the Majority today. I said, I am not in a position to tell you because I think there is still a process that we should wait for. This is provided by our rules anyway. If you have 260, you have 200, you have 194, what is your problem, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. VILLARIN. Well, again ...

REP. MARCOLETA. I do not see any problem.

REP. VILLARIN. Well, again, as I have said, and it is—even your admission, Mr. Speaker, that the Minority was not changed, so the impression or the interpretation of that is, when you say the Minority of Rep. Danny Suarez, this would refer to the 14 Representatives who

are with Representative Suarez and voted for GMA because that is your interpretation, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, I think the questions are being mixed up. I did not say that the group of Mr. Suarez switched positions or not. In my speech earlier, what I said, the color or the positions are not sacrificed or not compromised whenever a Member votes for a Speaker with the intention of filling up a vacancy. That was my statement. It should not be taken out of context, Mr. Speaker. I did not side with Mr. Suarez or the Members of his team. All I am trying to say is that every Member has an equal right to exercise. In case of vacancy, they can vote for a Speaker, without necessarily taking sides or getting into other side. The only reason why I said that there is a process to accommodate situations that even if we are already organized, there are instances where Members from one side, would go to the other and vice versa. That was my statement.

REP. VILLARIN. Mr. Speaker, let me read Journal No. 4 dated July 30, 2018. In page five, "Remarks of Majority Leader Andaya," with regard to my parliamentary inquiry regarding who comprise the Majority and the Minority. Okay. "In response to Representative Villarín's inquiry, Majority Leader Andaya informed the Body that the Majority Bloc recognizes 260 Members as part of the Majority, 17 Members as part of the Minority, seven from the Independent Bloc, seven from independent Makabayan Bloc, and one independent in the name of Rep. Tobias "Toby" M. Tiangco or a total of 292 Members."

So, in our Journal, Mr. Speaker, there is already these numbers, but the Deputy Majority Leader is saying that there is still a process. And well, if that is his interpretation that we are still undergoing a process, then, by all means, the Majority should not recognize a Minority Leader in the person of Representative Suarez, precisely, because we have a process.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, I do not dispute the records as written in the Journal. I stated that there is a process because you referred to the Rules, particularly, Section 8. You asked me to define who the Members of the Majority are, and the Members of the Minority, including the Members of the Independent, who chose not to take sides. And so, in replying to you, Mr. Speaker, I talked about a process. Because while these numbers are already in the Journal, it does not mean that they will not change, because, as you know, there are instances when Members switch sides. That is the only point, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. So, there was switching of sides when there was an election of a new Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, it was already decided and ruled, and the Majority Leader said that these are the numbers. Let us take it at that, Mr. Speaker. That was borne out by the Journal. There is no need to debate on that. They might change later on subject to the process of maybe one or two switching sides. I do not see any problem there, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. So, you are now admitting that, indeed, there is a reconstitution of who the Majority and Minority if we look at the numbers, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, if only one Member switched to the Minority, and the Majority number is 147, as you said, so kung halimbawa, 260 na iyong Majority, dalawa pumunta sa Minority, that does not change the fact that the Majority still holds the number, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VILLARIN. And there would be a hypothetical situation again that, if indeed, there is one or two difference between Majority and Minority ...

REP. MARCOLETA. But that does not settle the issue of Minority, Mr. Speaker. That is why from the beginning, I made a statement that it was the position of the Majority Leader to recognize the Honorable Suarez based on record, and based on the numbers as you cited as written in the Journal. That does not make any difference now.

REP. VILLARIN. So, again, going back to your statement that there is still an ongoing process of constituting the Majority and Minority, can you elucidate, explain to us how that process will happen?

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, I am not sure where the Gentleman is getting at because we just talked about this process, because it is in the rules. We can give flesh to this process if we can say that there are Members going from one side to another, and that is still part of democracy, but that does not relate to the issue of the position taken by the Majority on July 30, 2018. This is the only point that we have stressed from the beginning, and this Representation explained that position in that earlier speech.

REP. VILLARIN. Well, again, I'm raising this issue because, it is, again, important, because again, the election of the new Speaker, in the person of Speaker GMA, garnered 184 votes. In the previous, 2016, when we constituted the House, the Speaker got 252 votes, then, eight more joined the Majority, so it's 260. Now, I am, precisely, pointing this out because there is a big difference between the 184 and the 252. And if we look deeper into these numbers; we could say that there,

indeed, has been a reorganization of who belongs to the Minority and to the Majority.

That is why this Representation is asking for the specifics, and when you mentioned that there is still an ongoing process, then let us respect that process because right now, there are two groups who are vying for the Minority post and it is on record that 26 House Members have signified and elected Representative Quimbo as their Minority Leader; then there were 14 who decided to elect Representative De Vera as their Minority Leader. Given these factual issues, we cannot dismiss these numbers and just point out that it is the group of Representative Suarez who is the Minority because indeed, there is this manifestation and it is based on submitted records with the Speaker of the House. Again, when you are telling us about a process, the question is, what is the process that the Sr. Dep. Majority Leader is referring to? How will these groups resolve the issue of the Minority?

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that what this Representation explained was only in relation to the matter of, or the act done by the Majority Leader in recognizing the Honorable Suarez as the Minority Leader. It does not matter, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, if there is a wide discrepancy between the election two years ago and the election that transpired two weeks ago. They are not connected, Mr. Speaker. The process, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, if the contending parties would refer kindly to the rules, if you wanted to go the Minority, somebody should write to the Minority Leader. That is the process where you can be identified with the Minority. By the rules, it says that if you want to be identified with the Majority, you write to the Majority Leader, that is the process. One cannot be identified with the Minority until and unless you write a formal letter, and on the assumption that you were accepted, you become a Minority Leader. Why do you not write, for example, to the Minority Leader, in your case, and you probably can be accepted?

If there are a lot of members in the Minority, as a matter of fact, you can change the Minority Leader based on the rules. The Minority Leader can be changed anytime like the Majority Leader, so you will no longer have a problem. If you want to change—of course this is a matter that can be threshed among yourselves in the Minority and the Independents, and it is the position of the Majority not to meddle into the intramurals and dynamics of the Minority. But you cannot begin a process until and unless you are formally identified with one side, and the process we are talking about is under Section 8.

So, how can this issue be settled if the Minority issue is not resolved? We cannot resolve it outside this august Hall because we are compromising the

reputation, the integrity, even the duties of the individual Members.

REP. VILLARIN. As I have stated, Mr. Speaker, we are not compromising the integrity but rather respecting the process. That is why this Representation, when I did not participate in the voting of that fateful night during the election of the new Speaker, I applied to the Minority of Representative Quimbo. In the same way that those who identified themselves then as the Majority led by Speaker Alvarez and former Majority Leader Fariñas, they also applied to be with the Minority under Representative De Vera. In effect, we complied with the process. We complied with the interpretation of how the Minority should be constituted, although the two groups have different interpretations and recognition of who the Minority Leader is.

On one hand, those who are the retentionists, meaning the 17 previously identified or recognized as the Minority, only one remained with the Minority, and that is Sr. Dep. Minority Leader De Vera, so they applied to him. But given that of the 17, only one remained with the Minority, our position then was that, with the 16 going to the Majority and 14 even voted for the Speaker, then that Minority has been obliterated, therefore, the need for a reconstitution of the Minority in the House. When you talk about the Minority, this is again about numbers who did not vote nor have the intention to join the Majority. There were at least 40 Representatives that decided not to be with the Majority, albeit on different arguments or positions. But it is very clear that you have a significant number of House Members that have declared their intentions that they have decided to be the Minority, and explicitly, is not part of the Majority because they did not vote for the winning Speaker. That is very clear in Section 8 of our Rules, Mr. Speaker, and that is the point of really looking at the numbers.

When you say that there should be a process, I think both groups have complied with that process, and I do not see why the Sr. Dep. Majority Leader would say otherwise, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. I am not saying otherwise, Mr. Speaker. The problem of the Gentleman is that he wrote the person who claims that he is the Minority Leader. Like the Honorable De Vera who is my friend, he also claims to be the Minority Leader. That is not the way to process the problem, Mr. Speaker. You have to write to the Minority Leader—the Minority Leader on record. On record, it is still the Hon. Danilo Suarez. That was the position taken by the Majority Leader. It does not matter, Mr. Speaker, if you officially wrote the person whom you thought deserving to be the Minority Leader. That will also put into question the claim of Honorable De Vera because to him, he is the legitimate Minority Leader.

Therefore, if this is the process, we are not resolving the issue, and that is unfortunate for the Minority. That is why I am suggesting, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, that if you really wanted to participate in the process, and if you do not want the present Minority Leader because you want to elect another, you can change the Minority Leader, but first, you should become a member of the Minority. This is the process that is recognized by the House, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. We are already begging the question, Mr. Speaker, but again, as I have pointed out, we have at least 40 House Members who have expressly signified that they do not belong to the Majority. The House should not just dismiss these numbers because these are Representatives of their corresponding legislative districts, and also Representatives of party-list groups that have a national constituency. By that, Mr. Speaker, I implore the House that we should not be just interpreting the rules based on the literal interpretation of that section, or even the issue of just relating this as a vacancy in the seat of the Speaker; rather, you have at least a specific number, a significant number in the House of Representatives that have, indeed, said that they do not want to belong to the Majority.

If the group of Representative Suarez will decide to resign from the Majority because they voted for the Speaker, and apply with the Minority group regardless if it is Representative De Vera or Representative Quimbo, then by all means they can start that process of resigning from the Majority and then apply to whichever group, either the group of Representative De Vera or the group of Representative Quimbo. After applying, all of us would settle who should be the Minority Leader in a collective manner that would befit the tradition of this august Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. That is precisely the point, Mr. Speaker. The point being raised by the Gentleman is a matter of deciding among themselves who the Minority Leader is. But unfortunately, the Majority Leader already recognized Mr. Danny Suarez as the Minority Leader.

The correct procedure, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, is what the rule states: that if they want to be identified with the Minority, they will simply write a letter formally asking to be accepted in the Minority. That is on the assumption that the Minority Leader will accept them, so they become members of the Minority. If there is a change in the Minority leadership, it can be effected that way but not in a manner of claiming it. There are two other claimants to the position, this is something that cannot be resolved using the same process, Mr. Speaker. That is why in my speech, we are compromising the integrity and the reputation of

the House, including its works and the very duties that the Members have sworn to. This is the dilemma of the Minority, Mr. Speaker. I think they can process it within the realms of our rules, and they know the rules that the rules are very clear, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. Again, that is the interpretation of the Majority Leader, but I recognize that he did not refute me on my points, on the factual points, that indeed, there are 40 House Members, at least 40 House Members who have expressly and publicly manifested to be with the Minority, whether they belong to one group or two groups. The relevant point here is that 40 Members have signified not to be with the Majority. If and when the group of Representative Suarez would decide, then I think it is open for them to join the 40 Members in a discussion to resolve who should be the Minority.

Be that as it may, my next question, again, because you earlier said that the House should tackle important issues, legislation and, of course, these are issues in which there should be a clear distinction as to who would position for the Majority and who would position for the Minority. I am saying this because in our parliamentary tradition, the Minority is always regarded as the Opposition. It is not because you oppose for the sake of it, but there are very specific policies, either you want these policies to be improved, you want it blocked, you want it amended. This is the role of a fiscalizing opposition.

It is very clear that even in the tradition of parliaments, when the Majority and the Minority were first determined, it was very clear that there was the left and the right. Those who belong to the right are with the Majority; those who want to go to the left are with the Minority. That has been the tradition in parliaments. Meaning, when you talk about the Minority position, it is a collective position. I am just saying, for the sake of democracy and for the sake of our people, then by all means, let us have a working, critical and independent Minority. I would say that, it is high time that the Majority recognize that. Indeed it is timely, it is relevant that a working Minority, a critical and independent Minority, would be given a chance to discuss matters of policy that, in a way, would reflect thinking the opposite or, let me say, issues that have a bearing, but in a way are not aligned with the position of the Majority.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, I hope I can answer that. But the question points to the very credibility, reliability, or even the competence of a Minority Leader. We cannot process that, Mr. Speaker. What we are trying to resolve here is the recognition of Mr. Danny Suarez as the Minority Leader. Whether or not the Gentleman does not believe that Mr. Suarez

is not competent enough, or whether or not he believes that the other claimants are better Minority Leaders, that is not for this Representation to make a statement, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. Last week there was an allusion by the Majority Leader that this fight for the Minority was all about, he likened this to the various claimants of the West Philippine Sea. By likening it to the claimants, it might have a ring of truth to it, as one of the claimants or rather interloper is China. I do believe that China here is the Majority's Minority. In your case, Mr. Speaker, I would also say that it is very clear in our rules, in jurisprudence and in tradition, that the one declared by the UN Arbitral Tribunal, in this case, would be the group of Representative Quimbo, if that is the allusion being made by the Majority Leader. Likewise, he likened this as a fight with the blue, the red and the yellow. But again, it was cleared by the good Sr. Dep. Majority Leader that, indeed, hindi ito away ng dilawan at ng pulahan. Dahil nga, I like to remind this august Body, there is this song by Buklod entitled, "Tatsulok":

Hindi pula't dilaw ang tunay na magkalaban
Ang kulay at tatak ay hindi siyang dahilan
Hangga't marami ang lugmok sa kahirapan
At ang hustisya ay para lang sa mayaman
Habang may tatsulok at sila ang nasa tuktok
'Di matatapos itong gulo.

With that, Mr. Speaker, the good Sr. Dep. Majority Leader, I end my interpellation.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. MARCOLETA. I move that we suspend the session, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). The session is suspended.

It was 6:19 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 6:20 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). The session is resumed.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the interpellation of this Representation in order that we acknowledge the presence of the guest of the Hon. Vincent "Bingbong" P. Crisologo.

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

REP. MARCOLETA. Mr. Speaker, may we acknowledge the presence of the guest of the Hon. Bingbong Crisologo in the person of Ms. Dhyanna Althea Quiaman from Barangay Bagong Silangan, Quezon City. (*Applause*)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Castro, F.H.). Please rise. Welcome to the House of Representatives. (*Applause*)

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

REP. MARCOLETA. With that, Mr. Speaker, we move to adjourn until tomorrow, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

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

The session is adjourned until tomorrow, August 7, 2018, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

It was 6:21 p.m.