



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES  
**Senate**  
Pasay City

# Journal

**SESSION NO. 22**

Wednesday, September 19, 2018

**SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS  
THIRD REGULAR SESSION**

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**SESSION NO. 22**  
Wednesday, September 19, 2018

**CALL TO ORDER**

At 3:00 p.m., the Senate President, Hon. Vicente C. Sotto III, called the session to order.

**PRAYER**

Sen. Juan Miguel F. Zubiri led the prayer, to wit:

We offer a minute of prayer for the nation, especially for our brethren in our provinces up north who have suffered the worst of Typhoon *Ompong* and are still recovering from its calamitous effects to their lives, homes, properties and livelihoods.

We pray for the souls of those who perished during the onslaught of Typhoon *Ompong*, and we offer our sincerest condolences to their bereaved families. We pray that they find the strength to rebuild their lives in the absence of their loved ones. We pray for those who were in the

typhoon's path of destruction, that they may rebuild their houses and properties. We pray for our missing brothers and sisters, that they may be found and be accorded proper care and attention. We pray for our rescue workers, and volunteer workers, the Red Cross, and all those who are helping in the rescue efforts, that they may be kept safe as they continue with their noble work.

Above all, we pray that the tragedy of this typhoon brings our people together in active compassion. May it especially unite us legislators, that we may conscientiously craft laws for the protection of our people and our land in such times of natural disasters.

With the nation as one, there can be but clearer skies ahead.

Guide us always, O Lord, as stewards of this good nation.

Amen.



**ROLL CALL**

Upon direction of the Senate President, the Secretary of the Senate, Atty. Myra Marie D. Villarica, called the roll, to which the following senators responded:

|                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Angara, S.         | Lacson, P. M.       |
| Binay, M. L. N. S. | Pacquiao, E. M. D.  |
| Drilon, F. M.      | Sotto III, V. C.    |
| Ejercito, J. V. G. | Trillanes IV, A. F. |
| Gatchalian, W.     | Villanueva, J.      |
| Gordon, R. J.      | Villar, C. A.       |
| Honasan, G. B.     | Zubiri, J. M. F.    |
| Hontiveros, R.     |                     |

With 15 senators present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum.

Senators Legarda, Pangilinan, Pimentel, Poe and Recto arrived after the roll call.

Senator Escudero was on official business as indicated in the September 19, 2018 letter of the Senator's chief of staff.

Senator Aquino was absent.

Senator De Lima was unable to attend the session as she was under detention.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS**

At this juncture, Senator Zubiri acknowledged the presence in the gallery of the following guests:

- Punong Barangay Joseph William D. Lee, president of Liga ng mga Barangay, NCR Chapter, together with the Liga ng mga Barangay officers from Valenzuela City;
- Grade 11 Senior High School students from Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila School in Cainta, Rizal, headed by Ms. Pia Evangelista;
- Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello; and
- Deo Macalma and representatives from DZRH.

Senate President Sotto welcomed the guests to the Senate.

**APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body dispensed with the reading of the

Journal of Session No. 21 (September 18, 2018) and considered it approved.

**REFERENCE OF BUSINESS**

The Secretary of the Senate read the following matters and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

**BILLS ON FIRST READING**

Senate Bill No. 2010, entitled

**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A MAGNA CARTA OF THE POOR**

Introduced by Senator Leila M. de Lima

**To the Committees on Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; Ways and Means; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 2011, entitled

**AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE REGULATION OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES**

Introduced by Senator Leila M. de Lima

**To the Committees on Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation; Ways and Means; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 2012, entitled

**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A RURAL EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

Introduced by Senator Leila M. de Lima

**To the Committees on Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; Local Government; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 2013, entitled

**AN ACT ENCOURAGING VOLUNTEERISM DURING EMERGENCIES BY PROTECTING VOLUNTEERS FROM LIABILITY**

Introduced by Senator Leila M. de Lima

**To the Committees on Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; and Justice and Human Rights**

Senate Bill No. 2014, entitled

AN ACT REGULATING PUBLIC SOLICITATIONS AND PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION THEREOF, REPEALING FOR THE PURPOSE ACT NO. 4075, AS AMENDED BY PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 1564, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "SOLICITATION PERMIT LAW"

Introduced by Senator Leila M. de Lima

**To the Committee on Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development**

Senate Bill No. 2015, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE BARANGAY INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT APPROACH FOR NUTRITION IMPROVEMENT (BIDANI) OF THE RURAL POOR AS A LINKAGE PROGRAM FOR ALL STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES (SUCs) AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Sotto III

**To the Committees on Health and Demography; Education, Arts and Culture; and Finance**

**RESOLUTION**

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 898, entitled

RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER THE ADHERENCE TO AND ADOPTION OF THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (OP-ICESCR), AS PROOF AND AFFIRMATION OF OUR

**STRONG COMMITMENT TO THE PRIMACY OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

Introduced by Senator Leila M. de Lima

**To the Committees on Foreign Relations; and Justice and Human Rights**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Committee Report No. 458, submitted jointly by the Committees on Public Services; and Finance, on House Bill No. 4065, introduced by Representative Floirendo, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A REGULAR DISTRICT OFFICE OF THE LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE (LTO) IN THE CITY OF PANABO, PROVINCE OF DAVAO DEL NORTE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,

recommending its approval without amendment .

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 459, submitted jointly by the Committees on Public Services; and Finance, on House Bill No. 5992, introduced by Representative Plaza, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE SATELLITE OFFICE OF THE LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE (LTO) IN THE CITY OF BAYUGAN, PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL SUR, INTO A REGULAR DISTRICT OFFICE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,

recommending its approval without amendment.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 460, submitted jointly by the Committees on Public Services; and Finance, on House Bill No. 4765, introduced by Representative Abueg, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN EXTENSION OFFICE OF THE LAND TRANS-

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PORTATION OFFICE (LTO) IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BROOKE'S POINT, PROVINCE OF PALAWAN AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,

recommending its approval without amendment.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 461, submitted jointly by the Committees on Public Services; and Finance, on House Bill No. 5627, introduced by Representative Roque (R.), *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE (LTO) DISTRICT OFFICE IN THE CITY OF VALENCIA, PROVINCE OF BUKIDNON AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

recommending its approval without amendment, taking into consideration Senate Bill No. 1581.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

**SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, the session was suspended.

*It was 3:08 p.m.*

**RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 3:19 p.m., the session was resumed.

**MOTION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI**

Acting on Senator Gordon's request, Senator Zubiri moved that the Body give its consent to the Committee on Accountability of Public Officers and Investigations to continue with its executive session even while the Senate was holding plenary session.

Senator Pangilinan stated that he was not objecting to the motion, provided it would not serve as a precedent for future committee meetings or hearings.

Otherwise, he said that the other committees would request the same.

Senate President Sotto pointed out that the Committee on Accountability of Public Officers and Investigations is the only committee empowered to convene at any time, and he also noted that an executive session would not hamper the ongoing plenary session.

Senator Zubiri stated that it was the reason why he sought the unanimous consent of the Body.

Acting on the motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body gave its consent to Senator Gordon to continue with the executive session of the Committee on Accountability of Public Officers and Investigations while the plenary session was ongoing.

**ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS**

The Secretary of Senate read the following matters and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

**BILL ON FIRST READING**

Senate Bill No. 2016, entitled

AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE PANTAWID PAMILYANG PILIPINO PROGRAM (4PS) AS A HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION PROGRAM

Introduced by Senator Leila M. de Lima

**To the Committees on Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; and Finance**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Committee Report No. 462, submitted by the Committee on Public Services, on House Bill No. 6708, introduced by Representative Ferrer (L.), *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO ADVANCED MEDIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM, INC., UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8061, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING THE ADVANCED MEDIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM, INC.,

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A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES,"

recommending its approval with amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 463, submitted by the Committee on Public Services, on House Bill No. 6707, introduced by Representative Ferrer (L.), *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO RAVEN BROADCASTING CORPORATION, UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8084, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING RAVEN BROADCASTING CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, MAINTAIN AND OPERATE RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS WITHIN LUZON AND OTHER AREAS IN THE PHILIPPINES WHERE FREQUENCIES AND/OR CHANNELS ARE STILL AVAILABLE FOR RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING,"

recommending its approval with amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 464, submitted by the Committee on Public Services, on House Bill No. 6431, introduced by Representative Yap, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT GRANTING BOHOL CHRONICLE RADIO CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PROVINCE OF BOHOL,

recommending its approval with amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 465, submitted by the Committee on Public Services, on House Bill No. 6316, introduced by Representative Albano, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT GRANTING NORTHEASTERN BROADCASTING SERVICES, INC. A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN ISABELA PROVINCE AND REGION II,

recommending its approval with amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 466, submitted by the Committee on Public Services, on House Bill No. 6315, introduced by Representative Treñas, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT GRANTING THE VOLUNTEER LIFECARE MINISTRIES, INC. A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN NONCOMMERCIAL RADIO BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES,

recommending its approval with amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 467, submitted by the Committee on Public Services, on House Bill No. 6170, introduced by Representative Acosta, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO RMC BROADCASTING CORPORATION UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8159,

ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING THE DXRA-RMC (RIZAL MEMORIAL COLLEGES) BROADCASTING CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN A COMMERCIAL RADIO BROADCASTING STATION IN THE PHILIPPINES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,"

recommending its approval with amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 468, submitted by the Committee on Public Services, on House Bill No. 6169, introduced by Representative Salimbangon, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO PHILIPPINE BROADCASTING CORPORATION UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7962, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING THE PHILIPPINE BROADCASTING CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS WITHIN THE PHILIPPINES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,"

recommending its approval with amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 469, submitted by the Committee on Public Services, on House Bill No. 6168, introduced by Representative Salimbangon, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO PACIFIC BROADCASTING SYSTEM, INC. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7967, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING THE PACIFIC BROADCASTING

SYSTEM, INC., A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS WITHIN THE PHILIPPINES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,"

recommending its approval with amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 470, submitted by the Committee on Public Services, on House Bill No. 6167, introduced by Representative Nograles (K. A.), *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MINDANAO, DOING BUSINESS UNDER THE NAME AND STYLE OF UNIVERSITY OF MINDANAO BROADCASTING NETWORK AND UM BROADCASTING NETWORK, UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8170, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING THE UNIVERSITY OF MINDANAO A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, ESTABLISH, MAINTAIN AND OPERATE RADIO BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,"

recommending its approval with amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 471, submitted by the Committee on Public Services, on House Bill No. 6166, introduced by Representative Lagman, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO FILIPINAS BROADCASTING NETWORK, INC. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8168, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING

THE FILIPINAS BROADCASTING NETWORK, INC., A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES,"

recommending its approval with amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To The Calendar For Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 4722, submitted by the Committee on Public Services, on House Bill No. 5717, introduced by Representative Salceda, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE ASSIGNED TO PBN BROADCASTING NETWORK, INC., UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8158, ENTITLED "AN ACT EXTENDING THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO JORGE D. BAYONA UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NUMBERED FIFTY-SEVEN HUNDRED EIGHTY-NINE, ASSIGNING IT IN FAVOR OF PBN BROADCASTING NETWORK, INC., AND RENEWING THE TERM THEREOF FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS FROM THE DATE OF THE EFFECTIVITY OF THIS ACT,"

recommending its approval with amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 473, submitted by the Committee on Public Services, on House Bill No. 5715, introduced by Representative Salimbangon, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO CEBU BROADCASTING COMPANY UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7963, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING THE CEBU BROADCASTING COMPANY A

FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS WITHIN THE PHILIPPINES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,"

recommending its approval with amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

Committee Report No. 474, submitted by the Committee on Public Services, on House Bill No. 5558, introduced by Representative Lobregat, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT GRANTING THE GOLDEN NATION NETWORK, INC. A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS WITHIN THE PHILIPPINES,

recommending its approval with amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Grace Poe

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

**SPECIAL ORDERS**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of the following House bills from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders:

1. Committee Report No. 458 on House Bill No. 4065;
2. Committee Report No. 459 on House Bill No. 5992;
3. Committee Report No. 460 on House Bill No. 4765; and
4. Committee Report No. 461 on House Bill No. 5627.

**BILLS ESTABLISHING LTO DISTRICT OFFICES**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no

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objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, the following House bills, one after the other:

1. House Bill No. 4065 (Committee Report No. 458), entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A REGULAR DISTRICT OFFICE OF THE LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE (LTO) IN THE CITY OF PANABO, PROVINCE OF DAVAO DEL NORTE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

2. House Bill No. 5992 (Committee Report No. 459), entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE SATELLITE OFFICE OF THE LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE (LTO) IN THE CITY OF BAYUGAN, PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL SUR, INTO A REGULAR DISTRICT OFFICE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

3. House Bill No. 4765 (Committee Report No. 460), entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN EXTENSION OFFICE OF THE LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE (LTO) IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BROOKE'S POINT, PROVINCE OF PALAWAN AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR; and

4. House Bill No. 5627 (Committee Report No. 461), entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE (LTO) IN THE CITY OF VALENCIA, PROVINCE OF BUKIDNON AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, with the permission of the Body, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, only the titles of the bills were read without prejudice to the insertion of their full texts into the Record of the Senate.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Poe, sponsor of the measures.

#### OMNIBUS SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR POE

With the consent of the Body, Senator Poe delivered her omnibus sponsorship speech, submitting for consideration and approval of the Body the following House bills:

1. House Bill No. 4065, which seeks to establish a

regular district office of the LTO in Panabo City, Davao del Norte;

2. House Bill No. 5992, which seeks to convert the satellite office of the LTO in Bayugan City, Agusan del Sur into a regular district office;
3. House Bill No. 4765, which seeks to establish an extension office of the LTO in Brooke's Point, Palawan; and
4. House Bill No. 5627, which seeks to establish a LTO district office in Valencia City, Bukidnon.

*Following is the full text of Senator Poe's speech:*

Sailing into the realm of adulthood is indeed a memorable event for all of us. Different cultures have unique and distinct celebrations to signify the coming of age. The Jews are known for *Bar or Bat Mitzvah*. At age 13, young Jews take part in an event that represents the culmination of years of study of Hebrew and Torah, and signifies their entrance into adulthood. In Latin America, the coming of age celebration is called *Quinceañera*. Girls of age 15 years old go through a semi-religious rite to celebrate their entrance into adulthood.

But perhaps the greatest coming of age that ever happened is written in our Philippine history. Back in 1872, priests Jose Burgos, Mariano Gomes, and Jacinto Zamora were the faces of the movement that aimed to reform the priesthood and the Catholic Church. They were publicly executed by Spanish colonial authorities on the ground of subversion, of inciting the Cavite mutiny. This execution is said to be the awakening of Dr. Jose Rizal, our very own national hero, his luminous coming of age as a Filipino aware of his duties to his nation, and the very person hailed as one of the forefathers of Filipino identity and nationalism.

Fast forward to 2018. Among the popular coming-of-age stories in the Philippines are debut parties in lavish hotels or could be simple get-togethers with loved ones once a girl reached 18 and a boy reached 21. Another popular symbol of entrance to adulthood is obtaining a driver's license.

A driver's license has become a symbol of newfound freedom for people especially young professionals. *Kalayaan ang hatid ng lisensya sa mga nagnanais magkaroon ng sariling buhay at sariling oras. Kapanatagan ng loob ang hatid nito sa mga nagnanais umivas sa siksikan ng pampublikong transportasyon.*

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*Ang nakalulungkot, ang ginhawang inaasam ay laging napapalitan ng inis at yamot sa mahabang pila at mabagal na transaksyon sa pagkuha ng lisensya. The Filipino people do not deserve these cruelties and injustice. At bilang pinuno ng Komite ng Public Services, ayaw na nating makakita pa ng panibagong rant na inaabot ng siyam-siyam o sa pagputi ng mata sa pagkuha ng lisensya.*

That is why the Committee is keen and persistent in overhauling extension offices to usher in a new era of regular LTO offices *para rin naman tumaas din ang suweldo ng mga nagtrabaho doon sa mga LTO offices. Mabilis ang transaksyon at walang mahabang pila, dapat ginhawa at pag-asa ang dala sa ating mga kababayan.*

I thus seek the speedy approval of Committee Report Nos. 458, 459, 460 and 461.

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NOS. 4065, 5992, 4765 AND 5627**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bills.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS**

At this juncture, Senator Zubiri acknowledged the presence in the gallery of former Congressman Martin Romualdez and former Justice Manuel "Lolong" Lazaro.

Senate President Sotto welcomed the guests to the Senate.

#### **SPECIAL ORDERS**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of the following from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders:

1. Committee Report No. 462 on House Bill No. 6708;
2. Committee Report No. 463 on House Bill No. 6707;
3. Committee Report No. 464 on House Bill No. 6431;
4. Committee Report No. 465 on House Bill No. 6316;

5. Committee Report No. 466 on House Bill No. 6315;
6. Committee Report No. 467 on House Bill No. 6170;
7. Committee Report No. 468 on House Bill No. 6169;
8. Committee Report No. 469 on House Bill No. 6168;
9. Committee Report No. 470 on House Bill No. 6167;
10. Committee Report No. 471 on House Bill No. 6166;
11. Committee Report No. 472 on House Bill No. 5717;
12. Committee Report No. 473 on House Bill No. 5715;
13. Committee Report No. 420 on House Bill No. 5665; and
14. Committee Report No. 474 on House Bill No. 5558.

#### **FRANCHISE BILLS**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the following House bills were considered, on Second Reading, one after the other:

1. House Bill No. 6708 (Committee Report No. 462, entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO ADVANCED MEDIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM, INC., UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8061, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING THE ADVANCED MEDIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM, INC. A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES";

2. House Bill No. 6707 (Committee Report No. 463), entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO RAVEN BROADCASTING CORPORATION, UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8084,

- ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING RAVEN BROADCASTING CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, MAINTAIN, AND OPERATE RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS WITHIN LUZON AND OTHER AREAS IN THE PHILIPPINES WHERE FREQUENCIES AND/OR CHANNELS ARE STILL AVAILABLE FOR RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING";
3. House Bill No. 6431 (Committee Report No. 464), entitled  
AN ACT GRANTING BOHOL CHRONICLE RADIO CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PROVINCE OF BOHOL;
  4. House Bill No. 6316 (Committee Report No. 465), entitled  
AN ACT GRANTING NORTHEASTERN BROADCASTING SERVICES, INC. A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE ISABELA PROVINCE AND REGION II;
  5. House Bill No. 6315 (Committee Report No. 466), entitled  
AN ACT GRANTING THE VOLUNTEER LIFECARE MINISTRIES, INC. A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, MAINTAIN AND OPERATE NON-COMMERCIAL RADIO BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES;
  6. House Bill No. 6170 (Committee Report No. 467), entitled  
AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO RMC BROADCASTING CORPORATION, UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8159, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING THE DXRA-RMC (RIZAL MEMORIAL COLLEGES) BROADCASTING CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN A COMMERCIAL RADIO BROADCASTING STATION IN THE PHILIPPINES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES";
  7. House Bill No. 6169 (Committee Report No. 468), entitled  
AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO PHILIPPINE BROADCASTING CORPORATION UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7962 ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING THE PHILIPPINE BROADCASTING CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES";
  8. House Bill No. 6168 (Committee Report No. 469), entitled  
AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO PACIFIC BROADCASTING SYSTEM, INC. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7967, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING THE PACIFIC BROADCASTING SYSTEM, INC. A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES";
  9. House Bill No. 6167 (Committee Report No. 470), entitled  
AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO UNIVERSITY OF MINDANAO, DOING BUSINESS UNDER THE NAME AND STYLE OF UNIVERSITY OF MINDANAO BROADCASTING NETWORK AND UM BROADCASTING NETWORK, UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8170, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING THE UNIVERSITY OF MINDANAO A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, ESTABLISH, MAINTAIN AND OPERATE RADIO BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES";
  10. House Bill No. 6166 (Committee Report No. 471), entitled  
AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO FILIPINAS BROADCASTING NETWORK, INC. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8168, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING THE

FILIPINAS BROADCASTING NETWORK, INC. A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES”;

11. House Bill No. 5717 (Committee Report No. 472), entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE ASSIGNED TO PBN BROADCASTING NETWORK, INC., UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8158, ENTITLED “AN ACT EXTENDING THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO JORGE D. BAYONA UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NUMBERED FIFTY-SEVEN HUNDRED EIGHTY-NINE, ASSIGNING IT IN FAVOR OF PBN BROADCASTING NETWORK, INC., AND RENEWING THE TERM THEREOF FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS FROM THE DATE OF THE EFFECTIVITY OF THIS ACT”;

12. House Bill No. 5715 (Committee Report No. 473), entitled

AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO CEBU BROADCASTING COMPANY UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7963, ENTITLED “AN ACT GRANTING THE CEBU BROADCASTING COMPANY A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS WITHIN THE PHILIPPINES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”;

13. House Bill No. 5665 (Committee Report No. 420), entitled

AN ACT GRANTING THE MALINDANG BROADCASTING NETWORK CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN MINDANAO; and

14. House Bill No. 5558 (Committee Report No. 474), entitled

AN ACT GRANTING THE GOLDEN NATION NETWORK, INC. A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAIN-

TAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS WITHIN THE PHILIPPINES.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, with the permission of the Body, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, only the titles of the bills were read without prejudice to the insertion of their full texts into the Record of the Senate.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Poe, Sponsor of the measures.

### OMNIBUS SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR POE

With the consent of the Body, and on behalf of the Committee on Public Services, Senator Poe delivered the following sponsorship speech recommending the approval of 14 House bills which seek to grant or renew the legislative franchises granted to different organizations and recognized broadcast stations:

Broadcasting has long provided humankind with unique and distant space, whether it be in the social, cultural or political realm. For more than a century, broadcasting has provided crucial lines of communication between and among peoples of societies across nations. It has served as a vital source of information on a range of issues and a strategic tool for informed decision-making of the citizenry.

In the Philippines, broadcasting – television and radio—is a way of life. *Maaaring* may social media *ngayon*, *subalit ang mainstream media ay nananatili at mananatili dahil sila ay pundasyon ng buhay. Sila ay malaking sources at references din at kabalikat ng social media.* In fact, in a study conducted by a Philippine survey entity, a Filipino spends an average of 3.7 hours a day to watch TV. The same study reveals that an average of three in 10 Filipinos listen to the radio daily. *Pahuhuli ba ang Pinoy sa mga napapanahong isyu, sa updates, sa lagay ng panahon, politika at lider ng pamahalaan at ng pribadong sektor, sa mga payo sa buhay, ispiritwal at pag-ibig, hanggang sa kung ano na bang nangyari kay Cardo Dalisay at kay Lola Kap at Victor Magtanggol?*

Mr. President, *kayo po na taga-pangulo ng Senado ay isa ring malaking personalidad sa telebisyon, at alam po natin na batid ninyo ang tunay na malawak at mayaman na kasaysayan ng broadcasting sa Pilipinas. Malaki ang kaukulang impluwensya nito sa mga tao, bata man o matanda, mula Batanes hanggang Jolo.*



That is why for the record, the Committee subjected these franchise bills to intense scrutiny. We sought the assistance of the National Telecommunications Commission, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Department of Finance, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the National Tax Research Center, and even the Philippine Competition Commission at some time, for intense scrutiny. Similarly, we accorded premium to the referral of the Lower House to this Chamber. Because I advocate the fundamental that with great power comes great responsibility, it is our responsibility as senators of the Republic to issue franchises responsively.

For brevity, I will state the numbers of the House bills and provide a brief description of each. They will be enumerated in the order of referral to the Committee from the House of Representatives and the completion of their documents as submitted to our office and the Senate Secretariat and as chronologically filed with the Bills and Index without any preference for one franchise over another.

Let me start:

1. House Bill No. 5665 under Committee Report No. 420 seeks to grant a legislative franchise to Malindang Network Broadcasting Company. *Kapag naipasa ito, ang Malindang ay magiging pinakaunang* broadcasting company sa Oroquieta City, Misamis Occidental, *isang legacy ng Senado*. They plan to provide updates on events in the city, as well as on the national stories which will have local impact.
2. House Bill No. 6708 under Committee Report No. 462, which seeks to extend the franchise of Advance Media Broadcasting System, Inc. (AMBSI). *Kilala naman ang AMBSI bilang DWOW 103.5 K-Lite, na ang tagline ay "All the hits of the 90s, 2K and today."* They cater to a wide demographics of A, B, and Upper C markets, providing content that is not only nostalgic but also appealing to a younger audience.
3. House Bill No. 6707 under Committee Report No. 463 seeks to extend the franchise of Raven Broadcasting Corporation (RBC). *Kilala ang RBC sa Manila bilang Jam 88.3, na may tagline ng "New Music Alternative."* As stated in their tagline, *layunin ng Jam 88.3 na serbisuhan ang mga nakikinig ng independent at alternative na musika*.
4. House Bill No. 6431 under Committee Report No. 464 seeks to grant a legislative franchise to Bohol Chronicle Radio Corporation. Bohol Chronicle operates radio stations in Tagbilaran and Ubay, providing information to the 1.3 million Boholanos in the island, and the thousands of global Boholanos who listen via streaming. Admirably, they also assist indigent patients who come to the radio station, since its location is right beside the biggest hospital in the province.
5. House Bill No. 6316 under Committee Report No. 465 seeks to grant a legislative franchise to Northeastern Broadcasting Services, Inc. (NBS). NBS is located in Cauayan, Isabela and primarily aims to serve the people of Cagayan Valley. Very opportune time, right now especially with what happened with the recent storm.
6. House Bill No. 6315 under Committee Report No. 466 seeks to grant a legislative franchise to Volunteer Lifecare Ministries, Inc. (VMLI). Founded in 2009, VLMI is based in the La Paz District of Iloilo City. They aim to incorporate mass media in their goals of helping communities through "volunteer lifecare services."
7. House Bill No. 6170 under Committee Report No. 467 seeks to extend the franchise of RMC Broadcasting Corporation (RMC). In the golden years of its existence, RMC has operated 13 community radio stations in Mindanao and Visayas on both AM and FM bandwidth.
8. House Bill No. 6169 under Committee Report No. 468 seeks to extend the franchise of Philippine Broadcasting Corporation (PBC.) PBC primarily serves provincial areas, with eight radio stations in Luzon, two in Visayas, and three in Mindanao. Their stations generally follow a news, music and public affairs format.
9. House Bill No. 6168 under Committee Report No. 469 which seeks to extend the franchise of Pacific Broadcasting Systems, Inc. (PBSI). PBSI operates 31 radio stations. *Kilala ang kanilang flagship station sa Metro Manila bilang "Yes-FM."* Recognized as one of the best broadcast stations and followed by all sectors of society, from millennials to senior citizens for its substantial news and beautiful art and music.
10. House Bill No. 6167 under Committee Report No. 470 seeks to extend the franchise of the University of Mindanao Broadcasting Network (UMBN). UMBN has been in operation since 1950. They are currently operating eight (8) FM radio stations in the

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cities of Butuan, Cebu, Davao, Cagayan de Oro, General Santos, Iloilo, Iligan and Valencia and four (4) AM stations in Digos, Kidapawan, Tagum ang Valencia. As a side note, their stations also serve as educational and On-the-Job trainings for Journalism students of the University of Mindanao.

11. House Bill No. 6166 under Committee Report No. 471 seeks to extend the franchise of Filipinas Broadcasting Network, Inc. Their network has been providing programs on news, public service and commentaries in Naga, Nabua, Legazpi, Tuguegarao and Lucena.
12. House Bill No. 5717 under Committee Report No. 472 seeks to extend the franchise granted to PBN Broadcasting Network (PBN). PBN has pioneered broadcasting in the province of Albay. Over the years, they have become the largest Bicolano Network, with five (5) radio and two (2) television stations. They are now planning to expand to Pagadian, Toledo and Calapan City. *Kilala rin po ang PBN para sa kanilang corporate social responsibility initiatives, tulad ng medical-dental and optical missions and feeding programs.*
13. House Bill No. 5715 under Committee Report No. 473 seeks to extend the franchise granted to Cebu Broadcasting Company (CBC). The CBC traces its roots to pre-World War II KZRC, known then as "The Voice of Cebu" which was the first radio station established outside of Metro Manila. The CBC dabbles in radio broadcasting, advertising, and in managing and recording musicians and artists.
14. House Bill No. 5558 under Committee Report No. 474 seeks to grant a legislative franchise to Golden Nation Network (GNN). GNN envisions itself as the leading broadcast station on news and current affairs to educate the public, and thus contribute to nation-building. *At syempre, kasama sa plano nga nila na i-broadcast ang pagdinig ng Senado.*

I say this with pride, *na makakasama po natin ang 14 franchise applicants, hindi lamang sa pamamahagi ng impormasyon kundi maging sa pagbibigay oportunidad, at higit sa lahat, trabaho, tunay at totoong trabaho para sa Pilipino. Katulad po ng huling mga committee reports natin na ngayon ay halos mga batas na, the Committee integrated a new provision mandating the grantees to create decent and productive employment opportunities as well as apprenticeship program or on-the-job trainings*

for students and young Filipinos. The provision is consistent with the labor standards ordained in existing laws and is reflected in the general information sheet (GIS) submitted annually to the Securities and Exchange Commission. *Bago po ito na probisyon sa lahat ng mga ipinasa natin itong 17<sup>th</sup> Congress sa franchise.* This is a homage to the Filipinos – industrious, creative, skilled, and considered among the best in the world – and thus, must be accorded with nothing but excellent opportunities and recognition.

We stand in the most opportune time to help our country and our people. I thus seek the speedy approval of the 14 Committee Reports, *sana ay maging mabubuti silang kumpanya at tagapagbalita ng totoong balita sa ating bayan.*

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NOS. 6708, 6707, 6431, 6316, 6315, 6170, 6169, 6168, 6167, 6166, 5717, 5715, 5665 AND 5558.**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bills.

#### **SPECIAL ORDERS**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of the following from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders:

1. Committee Report No. 428 on House Bill No. 5299;
2. Committee Report No. 429 on House Bill No. 5078;
3. Committee Report No. 430 on House Bill No. 4895;
4. Committee Report No. 431 on House Bill No. 5407; and
5. Committee Report No. 432 on House Bill No. 5438.

#### **PUBLIC WORKS BILLS**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body considered the following House bills, on Second Reading, one after the other:

1. House Bill No. 5299 (Committee Report No. 428), entitled

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AN ACT CONVERTING THE ROAD STRETCHING FROM BARANGAY SAN VICENTE TO BARANGAY ILOCANOS NORTE, ALL IN THE CITY OF SAN FERNANDO, AND THE ROAD STRETCHING FROM BARANGAY SEVILLA, SAN FERNANDO CITY TO BARANGAY ILI SUR, MUNICIPALITY OF SAN JUAN, ALL IN THE PROVINCE OF LA UNION, INTO NATIONAL ROADS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

2. House Bill No. 5078 (Committee Report No. 429), entitled

AN ACT RECONSTITUTING THE LANA DEL NORTE DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE PROVINCE OF LANA DEL NORTE INTO TWO (2) REGULAR DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICES AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

3. House Bill No. 4895 (Committee Report No. 430), entitled

AN ACT TRANSFERRING THE LOCATION OF THE SORSOGON SECOND DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE FROM BULAN, SORSOGON TO GUBAT, SORSOGON, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9689, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE SORSOGON SECOND DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE PROVINCE OF SORSOGON AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

4. House Bill No. 5407 (Committee Report No. 431), entitled

AN ACT RENUMBERING THE THREE (3) DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICES TO CONFORM AND CORRESPOND RESPECTIVELY WITH THE NUMBERING OF THE LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS IN THE PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE; and

5. House Bill No. 432 (Committee Report No. 5438), entitled

AN ACT UPGRADING THE SUB-DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CARMONA, PROVINCE OF CAVITE INTO A REGULAR DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the Rules of the Senate, with the permission of the Body, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, only the titles of the bills were read without prejudice to the insertion of their full texts into the Record of the Senate.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Pacquiao, sponsor of the measures.

### OMNIBUS SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR PACQUIAO

With the consent of the Body, Senator Pacquiao, chair of the Committee on Public Works, delivered the following sponsorship speech:

On behalf of your Committee on Public Works, I humbly rise to present to you, House Bill No. 5299 under Committee Report No. 428, An Act Converting the Road Stretching from Barangay San Vicente to Barangay Ilocanos Norte, all in the City of San Fernando, and the Road Stretching From Barangay Sevilla, San Fernando City, to Barangay Ili Sur, Municipality of San Juan, all in the Province of La Union, into National Roads and Appropriating Funds Therefor.

The City of San Fernando is the first city created in the Province of La Union and was made the primary city of the province. It currently shelters the most number of the national agencies in Region I. It is considered as the center of trade, commerce, education and financial institutions in the region. Its seaport community plays a big role in the international shipping industry. Its tourism industry is also thriving.

With these laudable persistent developments in the City of San Fernando, the conversion of the local roads into national roads warrants improvement of the roads therein and likewise guarantees proper and sustained maintenance of said roads in conformity with the national standards prescribed under the authority of the Public Works. Consequently, this measure will ensure speedier delivery of public service in all sorts of economic transactions in the province.

With this, I urge you, to support this measure.

To continue, I humbly rise to sponsor four bills that were acted upon by your Committee on Public Works.

First is House Bill No. 5078 under Committee Report No. 429, An Act Reconstituting the Lanao del Norte District Engineering Office in the Province of Lanao del Norte into Two (2) Regular District Engineering Offices and Appropriating Funds Therefor.



Second is House Bill No. 4895, under Committee Report No. 430, An Act Transferring the Location of the Sorsogon Second District Engineering Office from Bulan, Sorsogon to Gubat, Sorsogon, amending for the purpose Republic Act No. 9689, otherwise known as An Act Establishing the Sorsogon Second District Engineering Office in the Province of Sorsogon and Appropriating Funds Therefor.

House Bill No. 5407 under Committee Report No. 431, entitled "An Act Renumbering the Three (3) District Engineering Offices to Conform and Correspond Respectively with the Numbering of the Legislative Districts in the Province of Zamboanga Del Norte"; and

House Bill No. 5438 under Committee Report No. 432, entitled "An Act Upgrading the Sub-District Engineering Office Located in the Municipality of Carmona, Province of Cavite into a Regular District Engineering Office and Appropriating Funds Therefor."

It is my privilege to sponsor these worthy measures aimed at improving the services we offer to the public.

Our Committee on Public Works earnestly sought to meet the growing needs of the people by establishing accessible sources of assistance.

The reconstitution of two regular engineering districts in Lanao del Norte secures more efficient and more responsive local authorities mandated to improve public infrastructure and mitigate or fix damages especially brought about by natural calamities.

The upgrading of sub-district engineering into a regular district engineering in Carmona, Cavite expands the capacity of the office to carry out its mandate thereby creating and concluding more projects and benefitting more people.

All these bills solidify our valued contributions towards the realization of our nation's collective aspirations. Today, we affirm our commitment to work in the pursuit of national transformation. May these sustain our momentum in achieving stability and prosperity.

Together, let us continue steering our nation towards the path of inclusive growth and development.

With this, I urge this august Body to support these measures.

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NOS. 5299, 5078, 4895, 5407 AND 5438**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no

objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bills.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 440 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1998 (Continuation)**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of Senate Bill No. 1998 (Committee Report No. 440), entitled

AN ACT REPLACING THE QUANTITATIVE IMPORT RESTRICTIONS ON RICE WITH TARIFFS, LIFTING THE QUANTITATIVE EXPORT RESTRICTIONS ON RICE, AND CREATING THE RICE COMPETITIVENESS ENHANCEMENT FUND, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8178, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9496, AND AS FURTHER AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10848, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Senator Zubiri stated that the parliamentary status was still the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Villar, sponsor of the measure, and Senator Pangilinan for his interpellation.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR PANGILINAN**

At the outset, Senator Pangilinan expressed the view that the country is currently facing a rice price crisis, and that prices of rice have gone up due to the 7% inflation with respect to rice as a commodity. He posited that with 25 million Filipinos living in the poverty line, who spend 60% of their income on food, the rice price hike would eventually translates to hunger for millions of families, hunger in the sense that affected Filipinos would have to resort to having one meal a day or none at all since the bulk of their food expense goes to rice.

Senator Villar affirmed that based on statistics, the poor 20% spend 21% of their income on rice, or as pointed out by Senator Pangilinan, 1/3 of the total food budget is spent on rice.

As to how rice tariffication would bring down rice prices, Senator Villar explained that rice from other countries is cheaper than rice produced in the Philippines, citing Vietnam which produces *palay* at P6 per kilo, while in the Philippines it is P12 per kilo. She stated that the Philippine government asked for a quantitative restriction on the importation of rice in order to protect the local rice farmers. However, she noted that based on the current situation, the government failed to protect the consumers and even if the rice farmers might have gotten their fair share, the money went to the traders because the NFA was not able to control the price of rice. She clarified, though, that the country met 93% of rice demand so that only 7% or about 500,000 metric tons were imported. However, she noted that despite the importation of 1.3 million metric tons, the price of rice remained unstable, as she surmised that the rice supply could have gone into the hands of the traders. She believed that with tariffication, nobody would control the importation of rice because anyone could import rice so long as they pay the tariff.

At this juncture, Senator Pangilinan inquired on the average price of commercial rice in the market and the landed cost of imported rice with rice tariffication. Senator Villar replied that regular milled rice costs P54.50, while well-milled rice costs around P60. As regards the cost of rice from Vietnam, she stated that the regular-milled rice was sold at P27, while the well-milled rice was sold at P32.

Senator Pangilinan pointed out that the NFA actually sold rice at P27 and P32, commercial rice (regular milled) was sold at P54 per kilo, while well-milled commercial rice was sold at P54 per kilo.

Asked for the price computations when rice is tariffied, Senator Villar replied that the exact price could not be predicted. She informed the Body that the landed cost of imported rice is US\$400 per metric ton or P22 per kilo, so that with normal profits, it would be around P30 per kilo.

On whether rice tariffication would cut down the price by half, Senator Villar believed that the cut would be more than one fourth (1/4), or in the range of P30 which is a little more than half the cost if the commercial rice is sold at P54.

Senator Pangilinan stated that it is because the trader would import the rice that they bought at

cheaper price from another country; upon landing, the cost of rice would become P22; the traders would then sell it at P32 to P35 which would still be cheap. He said that at present, NFA sells imported rice at P27 per kilo.

Senator Villar stated that it would still be reasonable because NFA is not supposed to make profit. She said that if the agency buys it at P17, and sell it at P24, it would still make a small profit.

Senator Pangilinan recalled that when he was the chairperson of the NFA Council, they agreed to have separate books for the purchase of rice from abroad so that the Council could determine whether or not the NFA made a profit at P25. He said that the NFA sells the rice to retailers and still makes a profit considering that the price includes the transportation and storage costs.

Senator Villar revealed that in one of the hearings, the NFA informed the Committee that the income it makes on selling rice could cover the agency's overhead costs.

At this juncture, Senator Pangilinan conveyed the concern of the farmers' sector that they would lose their source of income once the bill is passed because their cost of production is higher than the cost of imported rice, and with a higher price, no one would purchase their produce. With that in mind, he feared that the farmers would rather sell their land which could eventually lead to problems in food security.

Adverting to the 93% rice sufficiency of the country, Senator Pangilinan stated that 7% is still a deficiency and if government would not fill the 7% deficiency, the law of supply and demand would come in and push the prices up.

In response, Senator Villar stated that as a signatory to the WTO, the government has no choice because the quantitative restriction on rice that the WTO imposed on the country already expired on July 1, 2017, and that it cannot implement liberalization because it is still waiting for the tariffication measure that would provide protection to the farmers. She stated that since tariffication would not be enough to protect the farmers, the Committee provided in the bill P10 billion budget to finance the Rice Competitive Enhancement Fund. She stressed that the country has no choice but to liberalize the importation, otherwise, the WTO would sanction the Philippines.

Senator Villar stated that the passage of the bill would soften the blow to the farmers, with the farmers selling at P12 and NFA buying it at P17, allowing them a profit of P5 per kilo; in turn, the NFA would then sell it at cost, say, P27 to P32, which would still be competitive with the imported rice. In addition, she pointed out that with the creation of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund, the cost of production could go down after five years which could result in higher earnings for the farmers.

Senator Pangilinan stated that precisely within the five-year period, through the Rice Competitive Enhancement Fund, the local farmers would be provided with the necessary support so that they would be capacitated, their income increased, and they would continue to farm.

Senator Villar explained that through the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), the farmers would be educated on how to grow PhilRice's inbred rice seeds that are natural to the Philippines and which would increase their production from four metric tons per hectare, which is the average production at present, to six metric tons per hectare, which means raising their production by 50% at a lesser cost.

Asked how many Filipino farmers use inbred or hybrid rice seeds, Senator Villar replied that the farmers only use ordinary seeds for planting. She informed the Body that when PhilRice was asked why they do not teach farmers to produce certified inbred seeds, the reply was that they only do research and not teach about crop breeding. Thus, she said that the measure would mandate the agency to teach farmers the technology since it is the secret for increased rice production. She reiterated that farmers only use ordinary seeds which they themselves produce and that only 13% use hybrid seeds.

Senator Pangilinan asked if the 2010 to 2013 data which showed that 70% of rice farmers used ordinary seeds, another 20% used certified seeds whose yields would be 20% more than the ordinary seeds, and less than 10% used hybrid seeds, remained the same. Senator Villar replied in the affirmative. She said that the average rice production of 57 rice-producing provinces in the country is four metric tons per hectare per harvest. She affirmed that hybrid seeds would produce between seven to ten metric tons per hectare.

On whether the RCEF would provide the necessary capacity building support for the farmers to move away from using ordinary rice seeds given the transition that they have to go through, since inbred or hybrid seeds would require different sets of protocols, fertilizers and fertilization procedures, Senator Villar explained that for ordinary farmers, the Committee would just want to promote the certified inbred rice seeds recently discovered by PhilRice which could yield six metric tons per hectare, instead of the hybrid seeds which requires input only the rich farmers could afford to finance.

Senator Pangilinan said that in the period of amendments, he would propose a provision that would benchmark the RCEF interventions to income since the bias has always been the yields. Senator Villar said that the Committee would not only touch on the yield but also on mechanization. As an example, she cited Vietnam's rice production cost at P6.00 with labor cost at P1.20 as against the Philippines' rice production at P12 and labor cost at P4.60, or a difference of P3.40 in production cost which would be lowered by 50% if mechanization is introduced.

To Senator Pangilinan's concern that Vietnam and Thailand benchmarked their interventions in terms of increased income of their farmers, Senator Villar replied that it could also be done in the country as she promised that the 57 rice-producing provinces in the country would benefit from the Fund and that they would be monitored on how they are improving through the years.

However, Senator Pangilinan stressed that his concern ultimately is how to address poverty in the agricultural sector, the local farmers in particular. He said that if the interventions is benchmarked in terms of increased incomes, not only income from rice but also off-farm income, the local farmers would be encouraged to continue farming. He cited the farmers in Nueva Ecija, who are the most successful because they engage in intercropping and multicropping. However, he acknowledged that it would require capacity building or training, hence, the farmers who are left to their own devices need to be supported.

Asked if the NFA would be abolished by the rice tariffication, Senator Villar replied that once the rice tariffication is enacted into law, the Department of Finance would review the role of the NFA because

it would no longer import rice. She noted that the NFA is sometimes confused in trying to balance the supply of rice: whether to buy rice from the local farmers or import rice. She said that with rice tariffication, the NFA would no longer have anything to do with rice importation and that it would only be tasked to buy rice from the farmers for buffer stocking.

On whether there is a timeline to accomplish the objective of the rice tariffication, Senator Villar replied that the tariff has yet to be computed in consultation with the WTO, especially those tariffs aside from the ASEAN's 35%. She said that once the proposed measure is passed into law, the allocation for the RCEF would be included in the General Appropriations Act of the following year until such time that the tariff is enough to replace the appropriation from GAA.

As to the expected income or revenue from rice tariffication, Senator Villar replied that it would be P8.8 billion.

Asked if the NFA would no longer have the power to issue permits for importation once the rice tariffication is implemented, Senator Villar replied in the affirmative, saying that the permits would be issued by the Department of Agriculture. She explained that in importing meat, garlic and onions, for instance, one needs to apply for Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance (SPS IC) from the Department of Agriculture, in order to make sure that the imported goods are free from any disease from the country of origin.

Asked if the same SPS IC for rice importation is also applicable to garlic and onion importations, Senator Villar in the affirmative, adding that pursuant to RA 8800 or The Safeguard Measures Act, which was passed in 2000, the President and the Secretary of Agriculture have a special power to stop importation if it is abused by implementing a special tariff to protect the local producers or industries.

Senator Pangilinan noted that under the current setup, the rice traders or rice importers with import permit from the NFA need not secure from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) an SPS IC; however, the NFA Council is empowered to waive the SPS IC, for instance, by saying that it has already inspectors who will check the quality of the rice. Thus, he said that during the period of amendments,

he would propose a provision to the effect that the SPS IC should not have to go through the BPI in order to safeguard the process.

Senator Villar replied that there is already a tariff imposed and that under the proposed measure, it is provided that the Bureau of Customs will implement within a period of time the national single window system to prevent smuggling.

Apart from issuing import permits, Senator Pangilinan said that NFA also issues licenses for warehouses, rice millers, and anyone engaged in rice retail business, given that no one can sell rice in public markets without an NFA retailer's permit. Senator Villar suggested reviewing the role of the NFA which would do away with importation but would limit itself to buying rice from local farmers for buffer stocking.

Senator Pangilinan expressed concern that if the NFA is not allowed to issue import permit anymore, then anybody could import rice. Senator Villar replied that the importers could sell rice directly to the consumers through retail outlets since the NFA has control over NFA rice only. She said that with the expiration of quantitative restriction on rice, the role of NFA should be reviewed.

Senator Pangilinan suggested that during the period of amendments, the role of the NFA in the issuance licenses to rice retailers before they could enter the rice retail business should be considered.

Senator Villar replied that the NFA, as a government-owned and controlled corporation (GOCC), can be reformed by the GCG to fit the proposed model which is different from the current model being followed. She said that the Department of Finance has given the assurance that the GCG would review the role of the NFA in the period of liberalization. She then asked Senator Pangilinan for suggestions on how the GCG could go about the reform since the DOF wants to restructure the NFA using the power of the GCG.

Asked whether the provision of the law is limited to the importation aspect, Senator Villar answered in the affirmative, clarifying that the regulatory aspect of issuing warehouse or retailers' permits would not be included because the DOF has promised that after the passage of the law, it would review the role of the NFA and do the necessary changes through

the GCG, otherwise, a conflict might ensue because a new and different model would be followed.

Asked whether a trader or an NFA commercial rice retailer still needs to get a license from the NFA in order to enter the rice retail business, Senator Villar explained that the role of the NFA under the new law would be to buy the produce of the farmers and sell it to the consumers at low prices, and it would have nothing to do with importers and where the latter would sell their rice.

Senator Pangilinan stated that buffer stocking is a critical component of governance because during calamities like tropical storm *Ompong*, the government cannot expect the private sector to provide the immediate repositioning of relief goods including rice in calamity-stricken areas.

Senator Villar said that the NFA needs to buy from the local farmers at the price of P17 to make sure the local farmers could make money since they produce it at P12 and, at the same time, the consumers would get rice at competitive prices compared to imported ones.

To the suggestion that local rice farmers be provided the capacity to mill through the Fund, Senator Villar replied that the mechanization aspect of the program includes providing local farmers with milling machines as well as drying equipment. She agreed with Senator Pangilinan that if the farmers sell palay at P17 and, if provided the necessary support like milling machine, they could double their price to P34. She said that the farmers could also sell their products in their localities at cheaper prices, which is favorable to the consumers because there is no transfer cost that the farmers need to charge. She further stated that every town would be given its own milling equipment so that the farmers would simply sell their rice in their town. She said that it would be ironic for farmers to sell all of their rice produce to traders, then purchase rice from the stores at expensive prices. She said that farmers should store some of their produce enough for a year for their own consumption so that they would not go hungry.

Senator Pangilinan noted that the NEDA and House versions of the bill provide that the Department of Agriculture would manage or administer the RCEF. Asked why the Senate version was silent on who should administer the fund, Senator Villar explained that Senate Bill No. 1998 proposes to specifically

give the mechanization aspect to PhilMech, while the seed component would be to PhilRice; thus, it would still be the DA at the helm because both PhilMech and PhilRice are with DA. She said that she wanted the utilization of budget to be specific and not under the discretion of the DA so that it would not be spent for other purposes.

Asked whether the budget would be under a Special Account and to Senator Pangilinan's observation that there is a component for loans through Landbank amounting to 10%, Senator Villar affirmed, saying that P1 billion would go to trainings, P5 billion for machine, and P3 billion for seeds. She explained that if a town is given P10 million a year, and considering that there are 700 rice-producing towns, the amount would be P7 billion; thus, the P5 billion budget for machines would not be enough. She projected that if all towns are given equipment every year, in five years the country would be fully mechanized. She clarified, however, that the five-year projection was not in the bill but it would be introduced as a committee amendment because the DOF wants the program to be reviewed after six years. She said that the bill used the phrase "until they are competitive" instead of giving a time frame of five years because the DOF would want to see if the farmers are competitive before deciding on whether or not to continue the program.

Asked whether the roadmap includes a clear benchmarking of incomes for purposes of determining whether or not the enhancement fund has been effective, Senator Villar answered in the affirmative, saying that if the income of the farmers remains the same after spending P10 billion, then the model might be wrong. She conceded that there is always a danger that programs in government might not be implemented well, thus necessitating the exercise of oversight functions to better implement them. She stressed the need to be very specific in budgetary matters so that government agencies would not use the budget elsewhere.

Asked whether the oversight would be through COCAF, Senator Villar replied in the affirmative.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR GATCHALIAN**

Asked by Senator Gatchalian on the objective of the buffer stock since the NFA would be reduced to just maintaining it, Senator Villar explained that the

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buffer stock is an assurance that the NFA would buy from the local farmers at the price of P17 which would already assure them a profit of P5; in turn, the NFA would mill the rice and sell it to the farmers as well as to other consumers at P27 to P32 per kilo which is already cheap.

Asked whether the NFA would still remain in the trading business, Senator Villar answered in the affirmative. However, she clarified that the NFA would only purchase palay from the local farmers to protect them as well as the consumers.

Asked if it would not be in conflict with the liberalization concept, Senator Villar clarified that the liberalization concept would apply to imported rice which would compete with the local rice, the reason also for tariffication so that the prices of imported rice would go up. However, she stressed that the local farmers also need the help of the locals, the reason for the buffer stock. She said that if the Rice Competitive Enhancement Fund is successful, then the country could be fully liberalized, support would not be needed anymore, and all the farmers need to do is to be competitive. In this regard, she revealed a study by the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization that in 2050 or in 32 years, there will be food shortage around the world. By then, she said that the population of the country would grow from seven billion to nine billion, thus the need to raise food production by 70% so that the people would not go hungry. She emphasized the need to protect the small family farms – not corporate farms — because they are the ones that would feed the world.

Senator Gatchalian believed that liberalization, in effect, would make the farmers competitive by exposing them to the reality that the whole world is producing at a very competitive and very productive manner. He lamented that currently the farmers are shielding themselves from reality, and liberalization would force the whole industry to accept reality and to face the competition.

Asked whether the buffer stock would also be a source of rice during calamities aside from the NFA trading it, Senator Villar replied that the ones buying rice for calamity is not the DA but the DSWD. She believed that it would be much better if it is the DSWD that buys the cheap rice from other sources.

Asked whether one of the roles of the NFA would be relinquished because of tariffication, Senator

Villar admitted that the dual role of the NFA is causing confusion to the agency.

Senator Gatchalian said that he was actually discussing with Senator Pimentel regarding the objective of the buffer stock which, he opined, should be given to the agency responsible for calamity response if the objective is to supply calamity-stricken areas.

Senator Villar reiterated that the buffer stock would be used to stabilize the price of palay for the benefit of farmers and consumers at the local market.

To Senator Gatchalian's statement that buying NFA rice is less than 1% or 2% of the total palay output which only helps 1% or 2% of the consumers, Senator Villar stressed that the bill would stabilize the price so the people would be given the choice to buy cheaper rice, and the farmers would not fall into the hands of the traders. She added that it would protect the farmers and consumers in any way that is necessary.

Asked if the buying of palay should be increased in the future, Senator Villar said that the intention is to reduce the farmers' cost of production which is currently at P12.00.

At this juncture, Senator Gatchalian thanked Senator Villar for enlightening him on the objectives of the bill.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR GORDON**

Asked by Senator Gordon if there was rice shortage in the country, Senator Villar maintained that there was no rice shortage, as the country is producing 93% of the rice demand and 7% of the shortage or 500,000 metric tons, was being supplied through the importation of 1.3 million metric tons of rice. She nevertheless affirmed that there was rice distribution problem in the country.

Asked if the country was also facing hoarding problems, Senator Villar pointed out that rice hoarding has always been a problem and has become part of the country's system, yet no person was ever prosecuted for hoarding or smuggling rice. She said that despite the enactment of the Philippine Competition Act which aims to eliminate cartel in the country, it has not broken agricultural cartel yet and that nobody has been detained under the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act for large-scale agricultural smuggling

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as economic sabotage, which is a non-bailable offense. She also noted that the Senate has been talking about rice cartel and rice smuggling since 2014, yet the government has not done anything about it, the reason she suggested solving the problem in a different way.

To the statement that there is plenty of rice, Senator Gordon asked why in some areas of the country the poor still fall in line to buy rice. He said that even though some people could afford to buy rice, there is no rice available for the poor as it is mostly exploited by the hoarders. He clarified that he was just trying to skim through so that government could do something about the problem and that, in fact, he agrees to the removal of all restrictions to make the agricultural industry market-driven and beneficial.

On another issue, Senator Gordon disclosed that out of 436 rice warehouses in the Philippines, some of which were built during the Marcos era, only 21.7% of them were utilized as of January 2017. Asked if the reason for the non-purchase of a rice buffer stock was due to warehouse shortage, Senator Villar replied in the negative, as she explained that instead of buying the rice buffer stock, the amount of P7 billion allotted to NFA was diverted to pay off loans. Moreover, she disclosed that the NFA did not buy the buffer stock of rice because it could not be sold at P17 per kilo aside from it having a high moisture content thus, nothing was placed in the warehouses. Worse, she said that when the NFA announced that it did not buy the rice buffer stock, there was panic among the public, making them think that there was rice shortage. She reiterated that there was no rice shortage as the stocks are all with the traders.

#### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

With the permission of the Body, the session was suspended.

*It was 5:09 p.m.*

#### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 6:08 p.m., the session was resumed with Senator Ejercito presiding.

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1998**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no

objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 436 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1985**

*(Continuation)*

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of Senate Bill No. 1985 (Committee Report No. 436), entitled

#### **AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 11 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9006, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "FAIR ELECTION ACT."**

Senator Zubiri stated that the parliamentary status was the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Pimentel, sponsor of the measure, and Senator Drilon for his interpellation.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR DRILON**

At the outset, Senator Drilon stated that he has no objection to the measure which intends to reduce the advertisement rates during political campaigns.

Asked to spread into the record the main features of the bill, Senator Pimentel replied that the measure amends existing policies by increasing the amount of discount for political advertisements—for television political ads, from 30% to 40% discount; for radio, from 20% to 30% discount; and for print, the existing 10% discount would be retained. Furthermore, he said that the bill provides that the discount would be based on the average of the published rates in the last three years to ensure that there would be no spike in the published rates the year before the election. He also mentioned that the discount given to one candidate must be the same discount given to others vying for the same position. Senator Drilon agreed that just giving a discount without providing the peg upon which the discount would be based would make the law useless because the television and radio company would just jack up prices and pretend to comply with the law by providing the discounts stipulated therein. He agreed to the provision of having the discount based on the average published rate for the last three years.

As to the difference between political advertisement rate and a commercial advertisement rate, Senator Pimentel replied that commercial rates pertain to the published rates from which the discount would be applied to get the political advertisement rate. He specifically cited the proviso which reads: "In no case shall rates charged to registered political parties and bona fide candidates be higher than rates charged to non-political advertisers." He explained that if a commercial advertiser would get a lower rate than the published rate, the political advertiser must be given a rate not higher than the rate given to the commercial advertiser.

Senator Drilon hoped that the bill, when enacted into the law and eventually implemented, would succeed because the ability of a candidate to make voters know his/her platforms and advocacies would be defeated by very prohibitive rates particularly on television. He also hoped that the measure would be able to provide relief to those who seek public office. He lamented that these days, seeking public office has become very expensive precisely because of the very prohibitive rates of political advertising.

In closing, Senator Drilon expressed his support for the measure, and urged the Body to act on its passage.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PACQUIAO**

At this juncture, Senator Pacquiao thanked his colleagues for entrusting him with the chairmanship of the Committee on Ethics and Privileges, and he promised to uphold the proper conduct, rights, privileges, safety, dignity, integrity and reputation of the Senate and each Member.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR GORDON**

At the outset, Senator Gordon expressed his support for the bill as it has been his lifelong crusade to promote clean elections and try to minimize expenses since it promotes corruption, among other things. He believed that it would be prudent to set a base amount on ad rates since an increase would render the discount irrelevant. Senator Pimentel stated that the bill introduces the concept of pegging the discount from the average of the published rates of the past three years so that a sudden increase in the price would not affect the base amount from which the discount would be applied.

As regards the concern that setting a boundary figure for the total amount that a candidate could spend might defeat the purpose of the bill, Senator Pimentel stressed that the measure is very specific as it only covers discount to be given to the political advertisements. He stated that the other topics which should really be addressed would be the aggregate time for TV ads and radio ads, the space for print ads, as well as the ceiling amount which would confine the expenditure of a candidate for public office. He reiterated that the bill at hand is just about the political advertisements discount, and there are separate measures for the aforementioned issues. Senator Gordon agreed that there should be a limit to advertising expenses, as he lamented that the Commission on Elections has allowed the aggregate amount spent by a candidate to be spread out in all stations which really defeated the purpose of campaign finance reform.

Senator Pimentel replied that the rates for TV should have 40% discount, 30% for radio, and retain 10% for print. Senator Gordon stated that he supports in principle anything for campaign finance reform.

Senator Gordon believed that content of the ads should also be considered, that they should be substantive instead of being silly and repetitive. Senator Pimentel agreed, but he pointed out that the ad content ought to be left to the determination of the candidate himself. He pointed out that even though they could take advantage of the Comelec time for substantive topics, they would not be able to control the approach or content of a candidate's advertisement. Senator Gordon agreed that while it might be construed by some as a limitation to a candidate's freedom of expression, elections must be treated as a serious exercise and not a frivolous activity where winning would be a matter of popularity or humor. Senator Pimentel noted that giving a discount to such frivolity would be a waste of campaign money, air time and people's time in general.

Senator Gordon stated that candidates must show character and lay out their plans and programs for the people to consider. He suggested that the ads could be utilized in the first and last week of campaign, and in between, the government would pay for televised fora where people can freely interact with the candidates. Senator Pimentel stated that the ideas mentioned by Senator Gordon are embodied in Senate Bill No. 1995 which the Committee on Electoral Reform and People's Participation would hear on

September 27<sup>th</sup>. He said that Senate Bill Nos. 1985 and 1995 can coexist and be harmonized because the former is very specific on discounts for political advertisements and the latter is more comprehensive as it would reform the electoral campaign.

Senator Gordon stated that in the same way that documentation of plenary debates in Congress would be used by the Supreme Court to settle questions on certain cases, political debates can be used as barometer for electing people. Senator Pimentel noted that Senate Bill No. 1995 proposes a minimum of two rounds of election per region to reduce the number of candidates. Since that bill also allows political ads, he noted that Senate Bill No. 1985 would still apply to the limited time period when political ads can be allowed.

Senator Gordon stated that people do not get the government that they really want; thus, the measure for campaign reform and campaign finance reform has long been overdue. He said that regardless of educational attainment, the candidate should prove his capability by his ability to express himself and by the cogency of his ideas and positions on various issues. He disagreed with the view of some parties who believe that political candidate surveys cannot be limited because it forces the candidates to spend for more advertisements and utilize major stations to bring their ratings up. He warned that businessmen behind TV stations could take advantage of the campaign season to circumvent the rules, such as moving the base rate to increase their profit. He hoped that such circumvention could be obviated.

Senator Gordon also recalled his proposal to limit the campaign period. At present, he said that a presidential or senatorial campaign has ninety (90) days, while local candidates, including congressmen and mayors, have forty-five (45) days. He said that some people in the Comelec managed to circumvent the Automated Election Law by making all candidates file their certificate of candidacy in October, effectively ensuring long campaign period and defeating the whole purpose of campaign finance reform. He said that he was trying to obviate the practice through another bill which he asked his colleagues to take a look at.

Senator Pimentel said that he understood the Comelec's decision for allowing an early declaration of candidacies since it needs to print about 54 million automated ballots. He admitted that he was impressed by the Direct Recording Entry (DRE) system which

was brought by Senator Gordon to the hearing of the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on the Automated Election especially since it was made with Filipino technology.

Senator Gordon believed that the Comelec was playing games by extending and violating the 90-day rule by making candidates file early certificates of candidacy (COCs), invoking that same excuse of needing more paper which is an avenue for corruption. He hoped that the Body could look at ways to find how to make democracy more accessible to the poor.

Senator Pimentel said that the election laws are scattered and separate even though there is an Omnibus Election Code. He agreed with Senator Gordon's observation that it was time for Congress to move towards enacting a new Omnibus Election Code because the old law was written with manual elections in mind. However, he said that the bill was only concerned with discounts on political ad rates but that there would be separate measures for regulating the number of minutes allotted for each candidate in TV or radio spots, as well as limiting the spending and expenditures of candidates per election. He said that his Committee sought to provide specific solutions or improvements for each problem.

Senator Gordon believed that the circumvention being done by the Comelec is just too scandalous and that it was necessary to act speedily by making hard decision and introducing legislation that would narrow the divide. He said that he was glad to work with Senator Pimentel on a new system of voting which requires a source code that still has to be inspected within the timing for the elections.

Senator Gordon said that he was advocating that the candidate pay for advertising in the opening and the closing weeks of the campaign period, while the rest of the time would be used for holding debates in the provinces. He noted that there have been other ways election laws are circumvented; thus, there is a need to look into the loopholes because the purveyors of pernicious tactics are more industrious than those who follow the law.

In a related matter, he said that other candidates try to reduce the campaign expenses by going into vote buying by paying poll watchers instead of putting out ads. He said that there are many ways of stealing an election because of money and the poor candidates could not match the money of the greedy.

On the matter of the campaign period, Senator Gordon said that Comelec could arbitrarily move the deadline for the 90-day campaign period. Senator Pimentel said that Comelec originally set October 1 to 5, 2018, as the period for filing of COCs but Congress adopted a concurrent resolution asking the Comelec to move it to October 11 to 17, 2018, because the session would still be ongoing during the original dates.

In a related matter, Senator Pimentel hoped that there could be a remedy against cheating in the automated elections which was done through vote buying.

Senator Gordon said that he has a remedy for vote buying which he won in a case in the Supreme Court. He recalled that in that case, the voter verified paper trail was allowed, but he lamented that no one was ever arrested for vote buying. He said that the law could specify that anybody who holds a vote verified copy of a ballot other than the person who voted is presumed to have been engaged in vote-buying since it would be *mala prohibita* to be in possession of a ballot that belongs to another person. He said that in that way, there could be proof that somebody bought the votes. Another evidence, he said, would be through a CCTV.

Senator Pimentel said that the Committee would make of record some ideas on how to improve voters receipt issued by the voting machine. He said that he would urge the Comelec to indicate the precinct number, the municipality of the precinct which issued the receipt.

At this point, Senator Gordon said that he would be suspending his interpellation on the bill.

In closing, Senator Pimentel thanked Senator Gordon for his interpellation as he assured him that it was not the end of the debates on the election system. He said that the Committee would approach the problems on a case-to-case basis. He reiterated that Senate Bill No. 1985 was a simple measure that seeks to give advertising discounts to political advertisements. He said that the matter of aggregate time, total budget of the candidates, vote buying and TV debates are all subjects of different and separate measures.

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1985**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no

objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR GORDON**

Senator Gordon manifested that if no senator has signified interest to interpellate on the proposed RICH law, the bill could be approved on Second Reading on Monday, September 24.

#### **RECONSIDERATION OF THE APPROVAL ON SECOND READING OF SENATE BILL NO. 1976**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body reconsidered the approval, on Second Reading, of Senate Bill No. 1976, entitled

#### **AN ACT TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN THE PHILIPPINE COCONUT AUTHORITY (PCA), REPEALING PD NO. 1468, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE REVISED COCONUT INDUSTRY CODE OF 1978, AS AMENDED.**

As a consequence, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body reopened the period of individual amendments.

#### **ZUBIRI AMENDMENTS**

As proposed by Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved the following amendments:

1. On page 3, line 22, delete the phrase "pursuant to Republic Act\_\_\_," and thereafter capitalize the letter "t" in the article "the"; and
2. On page 4, lines 24 to 25, delete the words "Republic Act" and the comma (,) thereafter.

#### **TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS**

There being no other individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of individual amendments.

#### **APPROVAL OF SENATE BILL NO. 1976 ON SECOND READING**

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection,



Senate Bill No. 1976 was approved on Second Reading.

**SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION  
OF SENATE BILL NO. 1976**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

**ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION**

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Chair declared the session adjourned

until three o'clock in the afternoon of Monday, September 24, 2018.

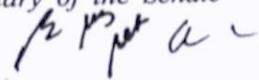
*It was 6:54 p.m.*

I hereby certify to the correctness of the foregoing.



**ATTY. MYRA MARIE D. VILLARICA**

*Secretary of the Senate*



Approved on September 24, 2018