



LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH SERVICE
KEY POINTS OF PLENARY PROCEEDINGS
Second Regular Session, 19th Congress

Session No. 30
Tuesday, 07 November 2023

1. Privilege speech of Senator Estrada

Senator Estrada expressed his dismay over the news leakage on the confidential and intelligence funds of the Office of the Vice President and the Department of Education. He refuted the news report that they voted to reinstate confidential and intelligence funds, saying that they even decided to remove such funds from civilian agencies. He suggested that the media outlet be summoned on the matter. He also urged the Body to send a very strong signal that such shall not happen again.

Manifestation Senator Escudero

Senator Escudero concurred with Senator Estrada that the report was not accurate. He stated that there was no leak to speak of with respect to what transpired in the executive session. Instead, there was an attempt to create a story about it. He revealed that the unanimous position of the Senate was that Senator Angara and the other vice chairpersons would sponsor the 2024 General Appropriations bill.

Manifestation of Senator Pimentel

Senator Pimentel stated that while he was against the restoration of the confidential fund of the Office of the Vice President, he also said that the intelligence fund of the Office of the President should also be removed. He reasoned that the Office of the President is a civilian office, not an armed or uniformed agency.

Manifestation of Senator Dela Rosa

Senator Dela Rosa stated that the incident created distrust among them and tarnished the image of the Senate. He said that he did not mind if his reputation would be damaged; it was the image of the Senate that he was concerned about.

Manifestation of Senator Legarda

While Senator Legarda respected Senator Estrada's right to stand on the floor, she requested that the Body hold a caucus instead of publicly discussing the matter. She reminded the Body that according to Section 129 of the Rules of the Senate, the mere divulging of the minutes of the executive session or any part of it constitutes a violation.

Manifestation of Senator Cayetano (P)

Senator Cayetano stated that the Rules of the Senate made no exemption and were meant to be followed and not violated. She said that should there be violators of the Rules, they should go through due process and have the opportunity to explain before a proper penalty could be meted out.

Manifestation of Senator Gatchalian

Senator Gatchalian stated that the broader implication of the leakage matter was on the trust and confidence in the Senate and its credibility. He said that he would like to associate himself with Senator Dela Rosa's motion to look into the matter.

Motion of Senator Villanueva to refer the privilege speech and the manifestations on the matter of alleged leakage of information to the Committee on Ethics and Privileges

2. House Bill No. 8980 under Committee Report No. 155

An Act Appropriating Funds for the Operation of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines From January One to December Thirty-One, Two Thousand and Twenty-Four

Sponsor : Sen. Sonny Angara
Cosponsor : Sen. Loren Legarda

Sponsorship speech of Senator Angara

In his sponsorship speech, Senator Angara provided the rationale for the 2024 budget amounting to P5.7 trillion. The budget was 20% of the gross domestic product and 9.5% higher than the 2023 budget. The new appropriations shall add up to P4.302 trillion, of which P4.02 trillion are programmed funds, with another P281.9 billion listed as unprogrammed. Automatic appropriations shall amount to P1.748 trillion. The government's flagship programs shall be provided adequate funding— *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* (4Ps), the Build Better More (BBM) program, the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (UAQTEA), and the *Tulong Trabaho* Act.

Senator Angara stated that the general aim of the 2024 budget was still to pursue the agenda for prosperity, framed by the eight-point socioeconomic agenda of the administration. He presented the budget breakdown given the eight-point agenda: food security, improved transportation, affordable and clean energy, health care, education, social services, sound financial management, and bureaucratic efficiency.

On food security, P107 billion (P169.5 billion if the DA's new appropriations would be combined with the budget of attached agencies and agricultural government corporations) will be allocated for the Department of Agriculture's banner programs on rice, corn, livestock, high-value crops development, soil health, fisheries, agricultural research and development, and buffer stocking, among others.

To reduce transportation and logistics costs, Senator Angara said the fuel subsidy program would help the public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers amid the rising oil prices, while in the case of farmers and fishermen, the fuel assistance program of the Department of Agriculture (DA) would help them buy their fuel requirements. Furthermore, service contracting of PUVs shall receive P1.3 billion in funding next year. Funds for the bike share system and the government's safe pathways program would also be increased to encourage the shift from passive to active transport options.

Senator Angara assured that education remained a top budgetary priority as the Department of Education (DepEd), including the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and the state universities and colleges (SUCs) would receive P718.08 billion, an increase of P3.5 billion from the 2023 budget. A portion of the budget would augment the Senior High School Voucher Program, and the National Certifications of Grade 12 students who have chosen to take the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) track and finance the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) Secretariat and *Tulong Trabaho* Fund.

On the health front, P243.36 billion would be channeled to improve healthcare facilities, strengthen specialty care centers, and grow the pool of human resources for health. As for social services, “*ayudas*” would continue through the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Housing and Urban Development (DHUD), and Department of Migrant Workers (DMW). Other than the 4Ps and fuel subsidies, these “*ayudas*” are Social Pensions for Indigent Senior Citizens, P49 billion; Protective Services for Individuals and Families in Difficult Circumstances (AICS), P56.3 billion; Sustainable Livelihood Program; Cash-for-Work under the *Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan*-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Service (KALAHI-CIDSS), P1 billion (Senate version); and Supplementary Feeding Program, P6.1 billion.

Given that the budget also focused on enhancing the country’s capabilities to safeguard national security, maintain territorial integrity, and uphold sovereignty, national defense would receive P232.497 billion. Additional funding would also be provided to the government arsenal for rehabilitating its hospital, new facilities, mobile storage units, and monitoring capabilities.

In light of more quality, higher-paying jobs across the country, necessary funding shall also be provided to the regular programs of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), including the development of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs); the establishment of Negosyo Centers; the Exports and the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM) for the promotion of local products abroad; the One Town, One Product Next Generation (OTOP Next Gen) and the *Pondo Para sa Pagbabago at Pag-Asenso* (P3) program, the microlending project of the Small Business Corporation (SBCorp).

Manifestation of Senator Villanueva that the cosponsorship speeches of Senators Legarda and Cayetano (P) be inserted into the *Record*

3. Senate Bill No. 2439 under Committee Report No. 120

An Act Institutionalizing the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System, Mandating its Use in Policy and Decision-Making, Designating the Agencies Responsible for its Implementation, Providing Institutional Arrangements among Responsible Agencies, and Appropriating Funds Therefor

Sponsor: Sen. Loren Legarda

Amendments of Senator Legarda

- a. On page 2, after line 20, Section 3, add a new paragraph which shall read as follows: (a) ADJUSTED NET SAVINGS REFERS TO THE SUM OF THE NET NATIONAL SAVINGS AND EDUCATION EXPENDITURE, AND DEDUCT NATURAL RESOURCES (E.G., ENERGY, MINERALS, FOREST, WATER, SOIL, INLAND WETLANDS, COASTAL AND MARINE AREAS, AND FISHERIES) DEPLETION, AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND POLLUTION DAMAGE.”
- b. On page 3, line 23, Section 4, replace the word “Environmental”, with “ECOSYSTEM”.
- c. On page 5, line 10, Section 6, delete the word “securing”, and add the phrase: “ENSURING THE INCLUSION OF PROPOSALS, THROUGH PROGRAM CONVERGENCE BUDGETING TO AVOID DUPLICATION OF FUNDING FOR SIMILAR PROGRAM, ACTIVITY, OR PROJECT FOR PENCAS, BY THE IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES FOR”
- d. With an amendment introduced by Senator Joel Villanueva, on page 6, lines 23 to 30, Section 7, delete paragraph “b,” up to page 7, lines 1 to 5, and replace it with the following: “THE DENR SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING NCA DATA TO PSA. THE DENR SHALL ENSURE THE PARTICIPATION OF ITS CONCERNED OFFICES, BUREAUS, AND ATTACHED AGENCIES. IT SHALL SPEARHEAD THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SITE-SPECIFIC ECOSYSTEM ACCOUNTS.

IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) SYSTEM, THE DENR SHALL ENSURE THAT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, ECOSYSTEM SERVICES, AND NATURAL CAPITAL ARE FRAMED AS OPPORTUNITIES, BENEFITS, OR ASSETS THAT MAY BE PUT AT RISK. THE DENR SHALL ENSURE THE WIDE AVAILABILITY OF FRAMEWORKS, TOOLS, METHODS, AND SKILLS, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE (EITI), AND USE OF AVAILABLE TEMPORAL AND SPATIAL NCA DATA IN THE CONDUCT OF EIA.”

- e. On page 9, after Line 11, add a new Section 10, which shall read as follows:
SEC. 10. APPLICABILITY OF OTHER LAWS. FOR PURPOSES OF IMPLEMENTING THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT, PENALTIES PROVIDED IN RA 9485 OR THE “ANTI-RED TAPE ACT OF 2007,” AS AMENDED BY RA 11032 OR THE “EASE OF DOING BUSINESS AND EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY ACT OF 2018,” AND

RA 10625 OR THE “PHILIPPINE STATISTICAL ACT OF 2013”, SHALL APPLY.

Amendments of Senator Hontiveros

- a. On page 9, after line 27, Section 11, add the sentences: THE MAINTENANCE OF NATURE’S VITAL CYCLES, FUNCTIONS, AND PROCESSES ENSURES THE SUSTAINABILITY AND HEALTH OF NATURAL ECO-SYSTEMS. THIS IS IN RECOGNITION OF THE FACT THAT THERE ARE LIMITS TO THE ABILITY OF THESE NATURAL ECO-SYSTEMS TO REGENERATE AND THAT HUMAN DEVELOPMENT THAT ALTERS OR AFFECTS THEM MUST BE SUSTAINABLE AND MUST ALLOW FOR THEIR RENEWAL AND RESTORATION.
- b. On page 9, lines 28 to 29, delete the entire Section 12.

Approved on Second Reading

4. Road conversion bills

a. House Bill No. 1028 under Committee Report No. 77

An Act Converting the Sawang-Macalas Road in the Municipality of Romblon, Province of Romblon, into a National Road and Appropriating Funds Therefor

Sponsor: Sen. Ramon Bong Revilla Jr.

Interpellation of Senator Pimentel

Senator Pimentel sought clarification on the kinds of local roads. In reply, Senator Revilla explained that the road referred to in the bill was a collector road, a local road converted into a national road, which collects and delivers the traffic to and from local streets and arterials. The speed limit usually ranges between 35km/hr. to 50km/hr., pedestrians are allowed to cross only at intersections, and parking can be permitted except at peak times.

As for the funding of the local roads, Senator Revilla stated that a local road was built with local funds, and the reason a local road was being converted into a national road was for the national government to help the municipality maintain the road. When asked about the budgetary impact of a local road being converted into a national road with regard to repair, maintenance, and rehabilitation, Senator Revilla said there was no standard formula but added he would get more information on the matter.

Asked on the criteria for converting a local road into a national road, Senator Revilla enumerated the road conversion guidelines, which include (i) functionality of the road in relation to the national road network and (ii) technical requirements such as road right-of-way, Registry of Deeds and/or Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) certification, and District Engineering Office certification.

Senator Revilla stated that three of the measures under consideration did not conform with the DPWH guidelines, thus requiring legislative approval. As for the Sawang-Macalas Road, Senator Revilla said the conversion would benefit

the locals, tourists, and students of Romblon State University because it would shorten the travel time.

In closing, Senator Pimentel reiterated the need to determine the budget implications as road conversion entails maintenance and repair.

Approved on Second Reading

b. Other Road Conversion Bills Approved on Second Reading

- **House Bill No. 1029 under Committee Report No. 78** An Act Converting the Road from Tuguis, Odiongan to Tugdan, Alcantara, All in the Province of Romblon, into a National Road and Appropriating Funds Therefor
- **House Bill No. 1030 under Committee Report No. 79** An Act Converting the Road Stretching from Sitio Boliganay, Barangay Panique, Municipality of Odiongan to Sitio Kabaliwan, Barangay Bachawan, Municipality of San Agustin, All in the Province of Romblon, into a National Road and Appropriating Funds Therefor
- **House Bill No. 1031 under Committee Report No. 80** An Act Converting the Sablayan-Agpanabat-Bagacay Road, a Section of the Romblon Circumferential Road, into a National Road and Appropriating Funds Therefor

5. District Engineering Offices bills

a. House Bill No. 1043 under Committee Report No. 81

An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the First Legislative District of the Province of Negros Occidental, and Appropriating Funds Therefor

Interpellation of Senator Pimentel

Senator Pimentel asked if there was no existing district engineering office in the first legislative district of Negros Occidental. Senator Revilla clarified that the bill was about creating a sub-district engineering office of the first District Engineering Office. Given that the bill was about creating a district engineering office, Senator Pimentel asked for the deferment of the measure to clarify the particular issue.

b. Other District Engineering Offices bills approved on Second Reading

- **House Bill No. 7234 under Committee Report No. 82**
An Act Re-numbering the Cebu (First, Second, Third, and Fourth District Engineering Offices to Conform and Correspond, Respectively, with the Numbering of the Legislative Districts in the Province of Cebu Thereby Repealing Republic Acts Numbered 9043 and 9218.
- **House Bill No. 7508 under Committee Report No. 83**
An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Second Legislative District of the Province of Southern Leyte, and Appropriating Funds Therefor
- **House Bill No. 7577 under Committee Report No. 84**

An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Zamboanga City,
and Appropriating Funds Therefor

6. Senate Bill No. 2451 under Committee Report No. 139

An Act Establishing Evacuation Centers for Every City and Municipality,
and Appropriating Funds Therefor

Sponsor : Sen. Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada
Cosponsors : Sen. Christopher Lawrence T. Go
Sen. Win Gatchalian
Sen. Ramon Bong Revilla Jr.

Sponsorship speech of Senator Estrada

According to Senator Estrada, the *Ligtas Pinoy* Centers Act aims to establish permanent, disaster-resilient, fully-equipped evacuation centers for every city and municipality in the country. These evacuation centers shall provide decent temporary shelter and be a safe refuge for the displaced population caused by calamities, disasters, or public health crises. The bill takes into consideration the absence of an evacuation center in a given local government unit (LGU) and its susceptibility, exposure, and vulnerability to hazards and readiness in implementing the construction thereof. The LGU shall be in charge of the evacuation center.

Cosponsorship speech of Senator Go

Senator Go stressed the importance of establishing safe, permanent, and dedicated evacuation centers in every city and municipality in the country. The bill provides immediate assistance and basic needs for evacuees displaced due to disasters, calamities, and other emergencies.

Cosponsorship speech of Senator Gatchalian

Senator Gatchalian stated that the establishment of evacuation centers in every city and municipality in the Philippines would ensure the safety of Filipinos during calamities and disasters. According to him, the *Ligtas Pinoy* Centers Act is not just about providing a roof over the citizens' heads; it also sets stringent standards to ensure the safety and dignity of those who seek refuge in these centers.

Cosponsorship speech of Senator Revilla

To emphasize the importance of the *Ligtas Pinoy* Centers Act, Senator Revilla recounted the earthquake in Syria and Turkey, which served as an eye-opener. He reiterated the importance of ensuring the evacuation centers are structurally safe and sound.

Manifestation of Senator Villanueva to create a subcommittee to hear Senate Bill No. 363 or the Enterprise-Based Education and Training to Employment Act with himself as the chairperson

Motion of Senator Villanueva to add, upon the Senate President's designation, three Senate conferees—Robinhood C. Padilla, Sen. Ronald "Bato" Dela Rosa, and Sen. Ramon Bong Revilla Jr. to the Bicameral Conference Committee on the Disagreeing Provisions of Senate Bill No. 2001 and House Bill No. 6510 entitled New Philippine Passport Act.

The session was suspended at 7:32 p.m.