



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

Session No. 28
Wednesday, 27 September 2023

1. Proposed Senate Resolution No. ____

Resolution Expressing the Senate's Sincere Gratitude and Appreciation to the Deputy Secretary for Legislation, Atty. Edwin B. Bellen

Manifestation of Senate President Zubiri

The Senate President wanted to put on record that the Senate never saw such a hardworking, dedicated, and loyal individual to the institution as Deputy Secretary Bellen. As one of the pillars of the institution, Deputy Secretary Bellen had seen many Senate Presidents and senators in his 36 years in the Philippine Senate.

Manifestation of Senator Dela Rosa

Senator Dela Rosa recalled his experience when he was still the PNP Chief and Atty. Bellen was the Deputy Secretary for Legislation. During one of the Senate hearings, the latter approached him and gave him a copy of *The Rules of the Senate*. According to him, Atty. Bellen was the first person in the Senate who told him he would become a senator.

Manifestation of Senator Hontiveros

Senator Hontiveros paid tribute to Atty. Edwin B. Bellen for being the deputy secretary of the legislation. She also expressed her gratitude for the numerous times the deputy secretary gave words of encouragement to her.

Adoption of the Unnumbered Resolution

Manifestation of Senator Pimentel

The Minority Leader paid tribute to Atty. Edwin Bellen, who, according to the Senator, was a remarkable public servant, a true gentleman, and a dedicated colleague.

The Senator said that Atty. Bellen has been known for his kindness, dignity, and unwavering dedication to addressing the Body's legislative concerns. He noted that one of Atty. Bellen's greatest legacies is the establishment of the Senate Legis Quorum, which played a pivotal role in enhancing legislative personnel's skills and professional

development and provided a forum for discussing various matters of national and international importance.

Senator Pimentel stated that Atty. Bellen has been a testament to professionalism for having shown that it was possible to navigate the complexities of governance while upholding the values of respect and decency.

Motion of Senator Villanueva that all members be made coauthors of the Resolution

2. House Bill No. 606 under Committee Report No. 72

An Act Renaming the Bohol Island Circumferential Road, Which Commences in Barangay Poblacion III Towards the North of the City of Tagbilaran, and Returns to Barangay Poblacion III From the Eastern Side of the City of Tagbilaran in the Province of Bohol, as the President Carlos P. Garcia Circumferential Road

Motion of Senator Revilla that Senator Padilla be made a cosponsor of the bill

Approved on Second Reading

3. House Bill No. 6688 under Committee Report No. 73

An Act Renaming the Urdaneta City Bypass Road, Traversing Barangays Nancayasan, Santo Domingo, Santa Lucia, Camantiles, and Anonas in the City of Urdaneta, Province of Pangasinan, to Ambassador Eduardo "Danding" M. Cojuangco Jr. Avenue

Motion of Senator Revilla that Senator Padilla be made a cosponsor of the bill

Approved on Second Reading

4. House Bill No. 6694 under Committee Report No. 74

An Act Renaming the Tambacan Bridge Traversing the Iligan River Located in Barangay Tambacan, City of Iligan in the Northern Mindanao Region, as the Mariano Lluh Badelles Sr. Bridge

Approved on Second Reading

5. House Bill No. 7126 under Committee Report No. 75

An Act Naming the National Highway, Stretching From Barangay San Juan Bautista, Traversing Through Barangays Tagongtong, Abucayan, Hiwacloy, Digdigon, Balaynan and Payatan in the Municipality of Goa, Barangays Lupi, Tierra Nevada, Binalay, Camagong, Salvacion, San Roque, San Ramon, Sagrada, La Medalla, Magsaysay and San Vicente in the Municipality of Tinambac, Up to Barangay Nalayahan in the Municipality of Siruma, All in the Province of Camarines Sur, as Speaker Arnulfo "Noli" Fuentesbella Highway

Motion of Senator Revilla that Senator Padilla be made cosponsor of the bill

Approved on Second Reading

Motion of Senator Villanueva that he be made cosponsor of the bill

Manifestation of Senate President Zubiri that he be made a cosponsor of the Bill

6. Senate Bill No. 2221 under Committee Report No. 69

An Act Providing for the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers

Sponsor : Sen. Raffy T. Tulfo

Amendments of Senator Tulfo

Senator Tulfo proposed, and the Body approved, among others, the following amendments:

- On page 27, lines 10 to 11, under Sec. 49, after the phrase “avail of the”, delete the phrase “voluntary arbitration or compulsory arbitration absent a settlement or agreement under the”.
- On page 27, line 16, after the word “unresolved”, insert the phrase ABSENT A SETTLEMENT OR AGREEMENT.
- On page 30, line 21, under Sec. 56, after the phrase “in cases of”, insert the word INFECTION.
- On page 31, lines 22 to 24, after the word “technology”, delete the rest of the sentence.
- On page 6, after line 18, insert a new item:

PLACE OF DOMICILE – REFERS TO THE HOME ADDRESS OF THE SEAFARER AS DECLARED IN THE STANDARD EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT, and renumber the succeeding sections accordingly.

Amendments of Senator Pimentel

Senator Pimentel proposed, and the Body approved, among others, the following amendments:

- On page 10, line 10, under Section 9, after the word “days,” insert the phrase FROM BEING INFORMED OF THE INCIDENT.
- In the same line, after the word “DMW” delete the phrase “or OWWA.” Then on line 11, after the word “DOLE” delete the phrase “or MARINA”.

- On page 14, line 25, Section 26, after the word “collected”, insert a comma [,] and add the phrase IN WHOLE OR IN PART.

Thereafter, replace the period [.] after the word “families”, with comma [,] and add the phrase INCLUDING THE COSTS OF VISAS; PROVIDED, THAT, ONLY THE COST OF OBTAINING MEDICAL CERTIFICATE, SEAFARER’S RECORD BOOK, AND PASSPORT, OR OTHER SIMILAR TRAVEL DOCUMENTS, MAY BE CHARGED TO THE SEAFARER.

- On page 49, line 21, under Section 91, after “its”, delete “commission” and replace with DISCOVERY.

Amendments of Senator Villanueva

Senator Villanueva proposed, and the Body approved, among others, the following amendments:

- On page 10, lines 24 to 25, under Sec. 12, after the word “gender,” remove the phrase “identity or expression”.
- On page 27, line 28, after the word “(NCMB),” replace the word “shall” with MAY.

Amendments of Senator Tolentino

Senator Tolentino proposed, and the Body approved, among others, the following amendments:

- On page 12, line 9, insert a new Sec. 19, to read:

SEC. 19. *RIGHT TO VOTE IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS.* – SEAFARERS WHO ARE QUALIFIED AND REGISTERED VOTERS MAY VOTE IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS, AS WELL AS IN ALL NATIONAL REFERENDA AND PLEBISCITES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT 10590, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS “THE OVERSEAS VOTING ACT OF 2013.”

- On page 42, line 22, under Section 83, insert a new paragraph which shall read:

THE EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE OF A SEAFARER ON BOARD VESSELS AND PREVIOUS SEA-SERVICE SHALL BE GIVEN DUE CONSIDERATION SHOULD THEY OPT TO JOIN THE PHILIPPINE NAVY RESERVE FORCE.

Motion of Senator Tulfo to authorize the Secretariat to make the necessary formal adjustments, subject to style

Amendment of Senator Legarda

Senator Legarda proposed, and the Body approved the following amendment:

- On page 13, line 20, under Section 21, insert a new sub-item (i) which shall read:

(i) TO PERFORM ONE'S DUTIES IN A RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE MANNER SHOULD ONE ENGAGE IN VARIOUS ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OCEANS, SEAS AND COASTS.

Amendments of Senator Hontiveros

Senator Hontiveros proposed, and the Body approved, among others, the following amendments:

- On page 40, line 25, under Section 78, add a new sentence which shall read as DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF RACE, SEX, GENDER, RELIGION AND POLITICAL OPINION, TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THE INHERENT REQUIREMENTS OF THE JOB OR UNDERTAKING, SHALL BE PROHIBITED.
- In Section 51, page 28, line 13, delete the word "thirty (30)", and replace it with WITHIN A REASONABLE PERIOD.

7. Designation of the Senate Conferees to the Bicameral Conference Committee Report on the Disagreeing Provisions of Senate Bill No. 2233 and House Bill No. 6527

Chairperson: Sen. Joseph Victor "JV" G. Ejercito
Members: Sen. Mark A. Villar
Sen. Sonny Angara
Sen. Francis G. Escudero
Sen. Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III

8. Senate Bill No. 2221 under Committee Report No. 69 (Continuation)

An Act Providing for the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers

Sponsor : Sen. Raffy T. Tulfo

Amendment of Senator Tulfo

Senator Tulfo proposed, and the Body approved, the following amendment:

- On page 8, Section 7, delete “interns, apprentices, and on-the-job trainees” and leave the words “cadets or other persons similarly situated.”

Amendments of Senator Cayetano (P)

Senator Cayetano (P) proposed, and the Body approved, among others, the following amendments:

- On page 13, lines 2 to 14, letter (e), subject to style, add the phrase AT THE EXPENSE OF THE SHIPOWNER.
- In section 23, page 14, delete the phrase “by authorized government medical practitioners and” such that the whole sentence would read:

All PEME of seafarers shall be performed only in DOH-accredited medical facilities following the standards set by DOH.

9. Conference Committee Report on Senate Bill No. 2224/House Bill No. 4125

Report of Senator Gatchalian

Senator Gatchalian informed the Body that with the primary objective of providing ease and convenience to the taxpayers, the reconciled version included significant provisions that provide taxpayer segmentation, file and pay anywhere mechanism, exemption of micro taxpayers from withholding taxes, reduction of penalties for micro and small taxpayers, and exemption of OFWs from filing income tax returns.

The Senator also noted that the bill proposes to make the following additional revisions to the country’s tax system to modernize tax administration, remove antiquated procedures, and improve efficiency in tax compliance:

1. Option to electronically or manually register, transfer, and cancel registration without the need to pay P500 annual registration fee;
2. Adoption of accrual method for sale of goods and services for VAT purposes;
3. Recovery of output VAT paid on uncollected receivables;
4. VAT invoice as the only proof of transaction and removal of the term “prominently” in the phrase “written or printed prominently” found in the current provision;
5. Automatic indexation of VAT threshold;
6. Implementation of audit risk assessment in the processing of VAT claims;

7. Fixing the period of processing of refund of erroneously paid taxes to 180 days from the date of submission of complete documents; and
8. Increase the threshold from P100 to P500 for transactions requiring official receipts to be adjusted every three years using the consumer price index.

Approval Conference Committee Report on S. No. 2224/H. No. 4125

10. Conference Committee Report on Senate Bill No. 2233/House Bill No. 6527

Report of Senator Ejercito

Senator Ejercito informed the Body that the committee adopted the Senate version of the bill as the working draft. The reconciled version calls this landmark legislation the “Public-Private Partnership Code of the Philippines.”

According to Senator Ejercito, the conferees agreed to enhance further the framework for processing PPP projects under the reconciled version. Among others, the reconciled version improved the management of unsolicited proposals by:

- 1) Clarifying the roles of the bodies concerned to ensure that the rules we have set in the law are upheld;
- 2) Enabling the government to come up with more efficient processes without sacrificing the level of due diligence according to each PPP project; and
- 3) Striking a balance between incentivizing private partners to participate in the PPP while protecting public interest every step of the way.

This would include, among others, the following:

- 1) Clarifying the change in the composition of the original proponent being referred to, which is the change that will affect the original proponent’s majority ownership;
- 2) Promoting active private sector participation by:
 - a) Deleting the statement “Decide to bid out the proposal as a Solicited Project, under Section 9 of this Code” to avoid sending mixed signals to the private sector;
 - b) Changing the implication of not acting on an unsolicited proposal within the required period from deemed rejection after three calendar days to deemed approval after 90 calendar days. In both cases, the implementing agency is incentivized to act upon the unsolicited proposal or they shall face liability under this measure;
 - c) Removing the requirement to invite other unsolicited proposals; and

- d) Retaining the original proponent's right to match but extending the comparative challenge phase from the existing 60 calendar days to up to one year to still encourage competition.

In closing, the Senator stated that the committee has addressed these three policy objectives of the bill as set by President Marcos himself:

- 1) to address the ambiguities in the existing law;
- 2) to address the bottlenecks and challenges affecting the implementation of the PPP Program; and
- 3) to foster a more competitive and enabling environment for PPPs.

Explanation of Vote of Senator Pimentel

Senator Pimentel recalled that he voted in the negative during the vote for the Third Reading of the bill. Given what transpired in the bicameral conference committee meetings, he said, it was clear that even the Senate version underwent significant changes. Thus, he added, it would be an additional reason for him to vote in the negative to the bicameral conference committee report.

Approval Conference Committee Report on Senate Bill No. 2233/House Bill No. 6527

Explanation of Vote of Senator Hontiveros

Preliminarily, Senator Hontiveros surmised that there would be a reduction in Philippine borrowings, and fraudulent contracts would also be prevented once the new PPP Law was enforced. She recalled that during the Duterte administration, the government relied heavily on foreign borrowings to finance the Build, Build, Build Program. According to her, approximately P6 trillion was added to the country's debt, not less than half of which was because of the ODA-funded Build, Build, Build projects.

11. Senate Bill No. 2455 under Committee Report No. 153

An Act Revitalizing and Strengthening the Self-Reliant Defense Posture Program and Promoting the Development of a National Defense Industry Pursuant Thereto and Providing Funds Therefor

Sponsor : Sen. Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada
Cosponsor : Sen. Juan Miguel "Migz" F. Zubiri

Sponsorship Speech Senator Estrada

Senator Estrada stated that Senate Bill No. 2455, the proposed Self-Reliant Defense Posture (SRDP) Act, would fortify the country's defenses against present and future security defenses, as well as provide the brave men and women who risk their lives and limbs to protect the country's territory.

He then highlighted the objectives of the proposed measure, to wit:

- To ensure adequate defense assets and hardware for the country through domestic production and manufacturing, the development of a national defense industry, and lessening the country's dependence on foreign and overseas suppliers;
- To provide incentives and government support to local defense industry and, in the process, stimulate job generation, promote the transfer of advanced technology, and expand the export sector;

The Sponsor believed that the country could develop its own national defense industry for it has the necessary resources at its disposal – manpower assets, natural resources, and Filipino ingenuity forged by a long history and tradition of seafaring and craftsmanship. He said the government needs to throw its support and lay down policies that would catalyze its growth and exercise political will and strategic foresight to sustain its development:

- To revitalize the existing SRDP, which was conceived and implemented in the 1970s; and
- To rationalize defense acquisition by providing preferential terms to domestic suppliers and in-country enterprises under the ambit of the Filipino First Policy.

Senator Estrada informed the Body that the early years of the SRDP successfully met the basic requirements of the AFP through joint ventures and partnerships with the private sector. It was mainly due to tightened defense appropriations, lack of prescience, and discontinuity of long-term planning that the program was not able to soar and prosper fully.

The Sponsor explained that the Self-Reliance Defense Program shall be designed to:

- Prioritize local employment and contribute to foreign currency exchange savings;
- Incentivize manufacturers to establish or relocate production or assembly of materiel in the Philippines while ensuring the protection of local counterparts against unfair competition;
- Promote technology transfer;
- Drive proactive research and development efforts and the adoption of innovative technologies; and
- Promote the export of locally-made materials to other countries.

Cosponsorship Speech of Senate President Zubiri

Senate President Zubiri stated that while it is vital to provide the Department of National Defense (DND) with the proper budget for its procurement, it is equally vital to find ways to build a more self-reliant defense posture.

He acknowledged that some of the country's allies have the best cutting-edge defense technology in the world, and while there is that keen desire to learn from them, the country cannot simply depend on them; it must be able to produce for its needs in its own time. He expressed confidence that the country can develop its own equipment that best suit its needs.

The Senate President stated that through this proposed Self-Reliant Defense Posture Revitalization Act, manufacturers would have the added advantage if they manufacture in the country. Consequently, the country would become self-reliant in terms of manufacturing ammunition, firearms, and large equipment.

Manifestation of Senator Villanueva that his cosponsorship speech and that of Senator Dela Rosa be inserted into the *Record*

Motion of Senator Villanueva that Senator Villar (M) be made coauthor

12. Senate Bill No. 2221 under Committee Report No. 69 (Continuation)

Amendments of Senator Cayetano (P)

Senator Cayetano (P) proposed, and the Body approved, among others, the following amendments:

- On page 24, line 11, delete the phrase "Covid-19 or similar".
- In section 56, delete the word "infection".

Amendment of Senator Pimentel

Senator Pimentel proposed, and the Body approved, the following amendment:

- On page 15, after line 2, insert new SEC. 27 before "*Duties and Responsibilities*".

SEC. 27. NATURE OF LIABILITY. – THE MANNING AGENCY SHALL BE JOINTLY AND SEVERALLY LIABLE WITH THE PRINCIPAL OR SHIPOWNER FOR ANY AND ALL CLAIMS ARISING OUT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT INVOLVING FILIPINO SEAFARERS.

Amendment of Senator Tulfo

In response to Senator Hontiveros' proposed amendment, Senator Tulfo proposed, and the Body approved, the following amendment:

- On page 7, after line 12, insert a new paragraph to read as follows:

NOTHING IN THIS ACT SHALL DIMINISH THE PROTECTION GIVEN TO OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11641, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE DEPARTMENT OF MIGRANT WORKERS (DMW) ACT, INCLUDING SEAFARERS WHO ARE STILL TO BE ENGAGED AS SUCH.

Amendment of Senate President Zubiri

The Senate President proposed, and the Body approved, the following amendment:

- On page 14, line 4, after the word “cost”, delete the word “shall”.

Approved on Second Reading

Approved on Third Reading

Manifestation of Senator Tulfo

Senator Tulfo thanked his colleagues, especially Senate President Zubiri, for their support, as well as the DMW and OWWA, his staff for working overtime, and the AMOSUP, the union of seafarers. He also thanked the President for certifying the measure as urgent.

Explanation of Vote of Senator Poe

Senator Poe acknowledged that Filipino seafarers are a vital part of the world maritime industry, noting that in 2022, there were over 489,000 deployed in ships all over the world, their remittances accounting for \$6.71 billion or 1.66% of the country’s gross domestic product, which is proof of their huge contribution to the economy.

The Senator thanked Senator Tulfo for his stewardship of this long overdue measure, as she expressed confidence that Filipino seafarers can now be assured of a safer and modern maritime industry where they are valued, protected, and capacitated to perform their duties.

Motion of Senator Villanueva that the explanations of vote of Senators Villanueva, Revilla, Estrada, Gatchalian, and Go be inserted into the *Record*

Motion of Senator Villanueva that all the members who voted in favor of S. No. 2221 be made coauthors and cosponsors of the bill

Manifestation of Senator Legarda

Senator Legarda congratulated Senator Tulfo for his perseverance, ensuring the passage of the measure despite all the odds and challenges.

The Senator then reminded everyone that in 2012, the Senate unanimously concurred in the ratification of the Maritime Labour Convention of 2006, which was envisioned to spur the modernization of shipping fleets to comply with international standards and to protect the rights of personnel manning the ships.

13. 13 House Bills Creating District Engineering Offices

- **House Bill No. 907, under Committee Report No. 140**

An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Fifth Legislative District of the Province of Batangas and Appropriating Funds Therefor

- **House Bill No. 1147, under Committee Report No. 141**

An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Sixth Legislative District of the Province of Isabela, and Appropriating Funds Therefor

- **House Bill No. 7539, under Committee Report No. 142**

An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Third Legislative District of the Province of Bataan, and Appropriating Funds Therefor

- **House Bill No. 7553, under Committee Report No. 143**

An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Second Legislative District of the Province Of Davao Del Norte, and Appropriating Funds Therefor

- **House Bill No. 7647, under Committee Report No. 144**

An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Lone Legislative District of the City of General Santos, and Appropriating Funds Therefor

- **House Bill No. 7768, under Committee Report No. 145**

An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Third Legislative District of the Province of Bulacan, and Appropriating Funds Therefor

- **House Bill No. 7934, under Committee Report No. 146**

An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Lone Legislative District of the City Of Lapu-Lapu, and Appropriating Funds Therefor

- **House Bill No. 7933, under Committee Report No. 147**

An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the City of Antipolo, Province of Rizal, and Appropriating Funds Therefor

- **House Bill No. 7770, under Committee Report No. 148**

An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Second Legislative District of the Province Of Aklan, and Appropriating Funds Therefor

- **House Bill No. 7769, under Committee Report No. 149**

An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Third Legislative District of The Province of Iloilo, and Appropriating Funds Therefor

- **House Bill No. 7645, under Committee Report No. 150**

An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Fourth Legislative District of the Province of Bukidnon, and Appropriating Funds Therefor

- **House Bill No. 7648, under Committee Report No. 151**

An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Sixth Legislative District of the Province of Batangas, and Appropriating Funds Therefor

- **House Bill No. 8133, under Committee Report No. 152**

An Act Creating a District Engineering Office in the Second Legislative District of Davao City, and Appropriating Funds Therefor

Omnibus Sponsorship Speech of Senator Revilla

Senator Revilla underscored that the importance of district engineering offices lies in making public services, through public works, more accessible to the people.

Moreover, he believed that public infrastructure and road networks, which are the major outputs of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), are the backbone of the economy. Thus, localizing these public works, through the creation of district engineering offices, is a helpful contribution to economic development.

Manifestation of Senator Revilla that Senators Padilla and Tolentino be made cosponsors of the House bills creating district engineering offices

14. Manifestation of Senate President Zubiri

The Senate President apprised everyone of the legislative measures that the Senate has passed in the last 28 session days, which include, among others, eight priority measures, several national measures—LGU Income Classification Act, National Employment Plan or the Trabaho Para sa Bayan Act, Internet Transactions Act, Public-Private Partnership Code of the Philippines, Ease of Paying Taxes Act, Philippine Passport Act, Magna Carta for Seafarers, Salt Industry Act, Expanding the Centenarians Act, Mental Health Act, and Caregivers' Act.

15. Manifestation of Senator Villanueva

The Majority Leader reminded everyone of the standing Senate Resolution, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 21, entitled:

Resolution Authorizing All Regular Standing Committees, Oversight Committees, and Special Committees of the Senate to Conduct Hearings, Meetings, and Consultations During Every Recess of the Senate to Have Continuity in the

Process of Passing Pending Proposed Legislation and to Conduct Investigations on Issues of National Interest to Aid in Crafting Relevant Legislation.

The session was adjourned at 9:44 p.m.