

Committee Daily Bulletin

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| BUDGET BRIEFINGS | | |
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| COMMITTEE | SUBJECT MATTER | DISCUSSIONS |
| Appropriations | <p>Briefing on the proposed FY 2017 budget, plans and programs, and major accomplishments of the following government agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judiciary | <p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Karlo Alexei Nograles (1st District, Davao City), listened to the presentations on the proposed FY 2017 budget, plans and programs, and major accomplishments of the Judiciary, Commission on Audit (COA), and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST).</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Raul Del Mar (1st District, Cebu City) sat as the presiding officer during the Judiciary's budget briefing.</p> <p>Supreme Court Deputy Administrator Raul Villanueva said that under the FY 2017 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the Judiciary and its attached agencies are set to receive P32.5 billion, which is 21% higher than their 2016 budget of P26.05 billion.</p> <p>The Judiciary's proposed budget for 2017 is distributed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supreme Court of the Philippines and Lower Courts - P29.8 billion; Court of Appeals - P1.81 billion; Sandiganbayan - P500.57 million; Court of Tax Appeals - P319.52 million; and Presidential Electoral Tribunal - P112.60 million. <p>Among the major programs initiated by the Judiciary to improve its performance are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launching of the "Hustisyeah" – initially launched in Quezon City in 2013 and later rolled out to other cities identified with heavily burdened courts; Continuing trial of criminal cases for speedy resolution; Launching of the Enterprise Information Systems Plan (EISP) – an automated case management system that allows courts to increase efficiency in case processing and monitoring and to enhance transparency in court operations and integrity of records; Rehabilitation/construction of 37 courthouses, two new Halls of Justice, and other facilities; and Establishment of additional 240 regional trial courts (RTCs) to hear and decide on drug-related cases. <p>Rep. Harry Roque Jr. (Party-List, KABAYAN) inquired on what the Judiciary is doing about the case backlogs which have been there since seven to ten years.</p> <p>Associate Justice Presbitero Velasco said that one way to expedite case processing and adjudication is to give each judge a manageable case load, from a minimum of 300 to a maximum of 500 cases. He also emphasized the need for additional trial court judges, decent court rooms, and adequate equipment to help improve the performance of judges and court employees.</p> <p>In response to the query of Rep. Henry Oaminal (2nd District, Misamis Occidental) relative to the P2 billion budget for FY 2015 that remains unutilized, Villanueva explained that the underspending is attributed to failure of bidding for some of its projects.</p> <p>In the same vein, Rep. Antonio Tinio (Party-List, ACT TEACHERS) inquired on the P5.3 million savings made by the Judiciary out of unfilled positions. Villanueva cited the high turnover of personnel in the Judiciary, aside from the number of retiring personnel.</p> |

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| <p>Continuation... Appropriations</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission on Audit (COA) | <p>Majority of the Members of the Committee support the proposal to increase the budget of the Judiciary in order to address the slow resolution of cases in the country.</p> <p>Committee Members also asked the Judiciary to consider the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the hazard pay of judges given their exposure to threats from lawless elements; • Address the gross discrepancy in the salaries of RTC and SC judges; • Shift from an adversarial system to an inquisitorial system which is the best solution to expedite case processing and adjudication (An inquisitorial system is a legal system where the court or a part of the court is actively involved in investigating the facts of the case, as opposed to an adversarial system where the role of the court is primarily that of an impartial referee between the prosecution and the defense.); • Modify the policy on bar examination which should allow students who failed in certain subjects to retake only the subjects they failed in; and • Conduct a second summit on extralegal killings in view of the escalating number of deaths as a result of the government's war against illegal drugs. <p>The Judiciary was requested to submit the following data: number of drug-related cases filed in court; additional manpower requirement for judges; number of Halls of Justice that still need to be constructed; and courts that have heavy caseloads.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Doy Leachon (1st District, Oriental Mindoro) sat as the presiding officer during the COA's budget briefing.</p> <p>COA Chair Michael Aguinardo said that under the NEP, the COA is set to receive P10.85 billion, which is 16.29% higher than its current budget of P9.33 billion.</p> <p>By expense class, COA's 2017 proposed budget will be distributed as follows: personnel services (PS), P9.49 billion; maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE), P359.42 million; capital outlay (CO), P163.78 million; and retirement and life insurance premiums (RLIP), P842.25 million.</p> <p>The 14.11% budget increase in the PS for next year compared to the current year is intended to provide for the compensation adjustment for the second tranche of the salary increase in the government sector. On the other hand, the 40.21% budget decrease in the CO for next year compared to the current year is due to the disapproval of several infrastructure projects by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).</p> <p>Aguinaldo appealed to the Committee to restore the budget intended for these infrastructure projects. He mentioned that these projects include the construction of regional and provincial auditing offices, and the planned repair of existing facilities.</p> <p>Aguinaldo also presented the major accomplishments of the COA in 2015 based on the following services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government auditing and records custodial services – conducted several kinds of audit, including audit of barangays; and issued notices of disallowances, suspensions and charges against erring government officials/employees and private parties involved; • Government accountancy services – actively participated in the Public Financial Management (PFM) Reform Program by implementing accounting and auditing reforms; • Government accounting and auditing regulations and adjudicatory and other legal services - acted on several audit cases; implemented the Integrated Financial Management Information System and the Strategic Performance Management System, among others. |
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| <p>Continuation... Appropriations</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Science and Technology (DOST) | <p>For 2017 and onwards, COA will continue to pursue programs aimed at improving the conduct of high quality, fair, and timely audits; empowering and enabling agencies; and strengthening its capacity and capability.</p> <p>In response to Rep. Rodante Marcoleta's (Party-List, I-SAGIP) query, Aguinaldo explained that COA conducts several kinds of audit on government agencies and recommends measures to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government operations in order to prevent the misuse of public funds.</p> <p>Rep. Edcel Lagman (1st District, Albay) asked why Members of Congress who were subjected to special audits by COA were not notified of this action, which prevented them from explaining their side relative to the audit findings.</p> <p>Aguinaldo said that as part of the audit process, Members of Congress are allowed to respond to any findings based on the audit.</p> <p>COA was asked to submit the documents requested by the members of the Committee before the plenary deliberation on the budget of the COA on September 20, 2016.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Seth Frederick Jalosjos (1st District, Zamboanga del Norte) sat as the presiding officer during the DOST's budget briefing.</p> <p>DOST Secretary Fortunato de la Peña) presented the Department's 2017 proposed budget of P20.80 billion, which is 14% higher than its current budget of P18.22 billion.</p> <p>The largest portion of DOST's proposed budget goes to maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE) at P11.5 billion; the rest will go to personnel services (PS), P3.18 billion; and capital outlay (CO), P6.12 billion.</p> <p>For 2017, the DOST's major programs and projects are geared towards optimizing research and development (R&D) to address pressing concerns in agriculture, natural resources, industries, transportation, energy, and health and nutrition.</p> <p>De la Peña stressed that science and technology (S&T) innovations lead to economic empowerment, especially in the countryside. Some of the DOST's countryside development programs are: Community Empowerment Through S&T (CEST); One-stop Laboratory Services for Global Competitiveness (ONE LAB); and operation of food innovation centers and food production plants in the regions.</p> <p>He further apprised the Committee of the significant developments in weather detection and forecasts, disaster risk management, and climate adaptation. Through improved monitoring systems and equipment, the DOST was able to provide science-based information on weather, climate change and geological hazards.</p> <p>At present, De la Peña said the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) is upgrading the Doppler radars it installed around the country. Likewise, the DOST, in collaboration with the University of the Philippines (UP) and Japan's Hokkaido University, is currently developing the second Philippine scientific earth observation microsatellite, called DIWATA-2, which will be launched in 2017. The microsatellite will provide photos and images of the Philippines that can be used to assess the extent of damage during disasters, monitor bodies of water and vegetation, and observe large-scale weather patterns.</p> <p>De la Peña also informed the Committee that there are already 16 science high schools established nationwide, in compliance with RA 9036 or the law strengthening the governance and defining the scope of the Philippine Science High School (PSHS) system. The DOST is also continuously providing scholarship grants to deserving students to study science courses in order to develop and increase the pool of Filipino scientists whose skills are at par with those in neighboring countries.</p> |
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| Continuation... Appropriations | | <p>Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA) was concerned about the “brain drain” in the country or the emigration of highly-skilled professionals and S&T workers for better pay abroad. Rep. Zarate and Rep. Manuel Jose “Mannix” Dalipe (2nd District, Zamboanga City) called on the DOST to train more scientists in the country and encourage them to stay to counter the exodus of S&T professionals.</p> <p>De la Peña welcomed the legislators’ suggestions, adding that the DOST will further strengthen the <i>Balik-Scientist</i> Program (BSP) which encourages highly-trained overseas Filipino scientists and technologists, experts, and professionals to return to the Philippines and share their expertise for the acceleration of the scientific, agro-industrial and economic development of the country.</p> |
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| ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING | | |
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| COMMITTEE | SUBJECT MATTER | DISCUSSIONS |
| Transportation | Approval of the Committee’s Rules of Procedure; Discussion on the status of issuance of driver’s license cards and license plates by the Land Transportation Office (LTO) | <p>The Committee, chaired by Catanduanes Rep. Cesar Sarmiento, adopted its Rules of Procedure for the 17th Congress.</p> <p>The Committee deferred the designation of the chairpersons of subcommittees and asked the Members to identify which subcommittees they want to be a member of.</p> <p>Rep. Sarmiento said the Committee will schedule next week the deliberation of several bills granting emergency powers to President Rodrigo Duterte to be able to address the traffic crisis in Metro Manila.</p> <p>The Committee then listened to the LTO chief, Assistant Secretary Edgar Galvante, on the status of issuance of driver’s license cards and license plates.</p> <p>Galvante reported that the release of new license plates was suspended due to the temporary restraining order (TRO) issued by the Supreme Court and the Notice of Disallowance issued by the Commission on Audit (COA) against the supplier for violating the procedures prescribed under Republic Act 9184 or the Government Procurement Reform Act.</p> <p>Galvante said the LTO is waiting for the resolution of the motion for reconsideration it filed with COA for the lifting of the notice of disallowance.</p> <p>As regards the driver’s license card, Galvante said that with the lifting of the TRO issued by the Manila Regional Trial Court, the LTO already started the bidding process for the driver’s license card project, inviting both foreign and local suppliers.</p> <p>Rep. Edgar Erice (2nd District, Caloocan City) requested the LTO to submit a study on the technical and financial feasibility of manufacturing the license plates locally. The LTO was likewise asked to provide the Committee with a copy of documents pertaining to COA’s disallowance of disbursements relative to the procurement of license plates.</p> |