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BICAMERAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEETING

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Bicameral Conference Committee	HB 5670 & SB 1465	Rep. Panganiban and Sen. Lacson	Providing free irrigation service, amending for the purpose RA 3601, as amended, appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Bicameral Conference Committee, co-chaired by Rep. Jose Panganiban Jr. (Party-List, ANAC-IP), Chair of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food, and Senator Cynthia Villar, Chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, approved the reconciled version of HB 5670 and SB 1465 subject to style and amendment.</p> <p>Other conferees who were present during the bicameral conference committee meeting were the following: On the part of the House, Deputy Speaker Sharon Garin (Party-list, AAMBIS-OWA), Reps. Arthur Yap (3rd District, Bohol), Noel Villanueva (3rd District, Tarlac), and Henry Oaminal (2nd District, Misamis Occidental), and Party-List Reps. Jericho Jonas Nograles (PBA), Cecilia Leonila Chavez (BUTIL) and Ariel "Ka Ayik" Casilao (ANAKPAWIS); on the part of the Senate, Senators Juan Miguel "Migz" Zubiri, Joseph Victor Ejercito, and Sherwin "Win" Gatchalian.</p>

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Energy	HR 415	Rep. Zarate	Inquiry into the alleged predatory pricing of oil products in Mindanao	The Committee, chaired by Marinduque Rep. Lord Allan Jay Velasco, will deliberate further on HRs 415 and 853 in its next meeting.
	HR 853	Rep. Go (M.)	Inquiry into the alleged disparity and overpricing of fuel prices in Northern Luzon	<p>BAYAN MUNA Party-List Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate, author of HR 415, underscored the need to revisit RA 8479 or the Downstream Oil Industry Deregulation Act of 1998 and come up with policy recommendations to address the disparity in oil prices in the country. This following a series of oil price hikes in Luzon and Visayas, while pump prices stayed at low levels in Mindanao.</p> <p>In the same vein, Baguio City Rep. Mark Go, author of HR 853, questions the prevailing disparities in the pump prices of fuel in the Province of La Union and in Baguio City despite being both located in Northern Luzon.</p> <p>SAGIP Party-List Rep. Rodante Marcoleta</p>

Continuation... Energy				<p>stressed that the DOE should create a healthy competition between and among oil industry players that will result in lower prices.</p> <p>1-CARE Party-List Rep. Carlos Roman Uybarreta said that he can see a situation wherein gas stations increase their prices in some areas to recover the losses incurred due to a decrease in oil price in other areas.</p> <p>Petron Corporation Assistant Vice President for Corporate Affairs Charmaine Canillas and Total Philippines Corporate Affairs Manager Malou Espina both explained that variation in prices of petroleum products are driven by various factors, such as stiff competition in the market, added production or selling costs, and other market dynamics.</p> <p>Laban Konsyumer Inc. President Victorio Mario Dimagiba agrees to the proposal to revisit the Oil Deregulation Law and even the Philippine Competition Act (RA 10667) in order to ensure and promote fair competition.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to subpoena Ramon del Rosario of Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corporation for his failure to heed the Committee's invitation. It also agreed to invite concerned government agencies and business entities to shed light on the issues raised, namely, Philippine Competition Commission (PCC), Bureau of Customs (BOC), Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), Chevron Philippines, and Flying V.</p> <p>The resource persons were requested to submit the reports and data required by the Members of the Committee.</p>
Energy jt. w/ Trade and Industry	HBs 646, 670 & 1221	Reps. Ty, Yap (V.) and Umali	Establishing the regulatory framework for the safe operations of the liquified petroleum gas (LPG) industry, delineating the powers and functions of various government agencies defining and penalizing certain acts	<p>The Joint Committee, co-chaired by Marinduque Rep. Lord Allan Jay Velasco, Chair of the Committee on Energy, and Rep. Ferjanel Biron M.D. (4th District, Iloilo), Chair of the Committee on Trade and Industry, agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to harmonize the three bills.</p> <p>The TWG will be chaired by 1-CARE Party-List Rep. Carlos Roman Uybarreta and co-chaired by Rep. Rosanna "Ria" Vergara (3rd District, Nueva Ecija).</p> <p>LPGMA Party-List Rep. Amel Ty, author of HB 646, said that the bill seeks to establish a monitoring and supervisory framework for the LPG industry in order to strengthen and enhance existing standards and mechanisms against deceptive and harmful practices and other hazards to public health and safety arising from a deregulated downstream oil industry regime.</p> <p>PBA Party-List Rep. Mark Aeron Sambar sponsored HBs 670 and 1221 in behalf of the authors, Reps. Victor Yap (2nd District, Tarlac)</p>

Continuation... Energy jt. w/ Trade and Industry				<p>and Reynaldo Umali (2nd District, Oriental Mindoro), respectively. Rep Sambar stated that the explanatory note to the bills be registered as his sponsorship speech.</p> <p>Representatives from the government side, namely, Departments of Energy (DOE), Trade and Industry (DTI), and Labor and Employment (DOLE), and from the industry side, namely, Laban Konsyumer, Inc., LPG Industry Association, Inc. (LPGIA), and Isla LPG Corporation (ILC), manifested their support for the bills.</p>
Dangerous Drugs	HR 585	Rep. Sarmiento (C.)	Directing the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), Office of Transport Security (OTS), Land Transportation Office (LTO), and other government agencies to intensify and coordinate their efforts to suppress the trafficking of illegal drugs in the country	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Robert "Ace" Barbers (2nd District, Surigao del Norte), will deliberate further on the issues raised in HR 585 in another meeting.</p> <p>Catanduanes Rep. Cesar Sarmiento, author of HR 585, highlighted the importance of an honest and competent police investigation, adding that efforts to expedite police operations and investigations should not compromise the integrity of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and its processes.</p> <p>His sentiments were supported by Reps. Romeo Acop (2nd District, Antipolo City) and Rodel Batocabe (Party-List, AKO BICOL) who also suggested that the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) should be the one leading anti-illegal drug operations or crimes punishable under RA 9165 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.</p> <p>Former PDEA Director General and now Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) Chairman Dionisio Santiago explained that the PDEA does not have the required manpower to pursue all drug-related cases. During his stint at PDEA, Santiago said that his office relied heavily on the PNP and that the role of PDEA was practically limited to assisting the PNP in handling various drug-related cases.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Rep. Barbers asked the incumbent and former local chief executives from the Province of Catanduanes to share their views regarding the illegal drug trade in the province during their respective terms.</p> <p>It can be recalled that a mega shabu laboratory that sits on a 1,000-square meter lot in Virac, Catanduanes was raided by the police in November 2016.</p> <p>Former Virac Mayor Florida Alberto and former Catanduanes Governor Araceli Wong recounted the prevalence of the illegal drug trade during their respective terms. Alberto said, however, that these were mostly confined to street-level peddlers and that she was unaware that a "shabu" laboratory had been operating in their area until it was raided in November 2016.</p>

Continuation... Dangerous Drugs				<p>Virac Mayor Samuel Laynes reported that the municipal government has been able to control the proliferation of illegal drugs in the City of Virac following the yearly increase in the budget of the Virac police from P300,000 to P5 million since he assumed office.</p> <p>Meanwhile, several House Members pointed out the glaring inconsistencies between the two affidavits that witness Ernesto Tabor Jr. executed with the Catanduanes police. Tabor has implicated various political personalities such as Jardin Wong, Catanduanes Provincial Board Member Joseph "Tip-tip" Wong, and former Mayor Constantino Cordial Jr. of Caramoan, Camarines Sur.</p> <p>The House Members said that PNP's reliance on Tabor's uncorroborated statements is questionable. They chided the police for failing to get the statements of other persons involved.</p> <p>Another issue raised during the meeting was the apparent weak rules on the grant of building permits in the Province of Catanduanes which allowed the construction of the mega "shabu" laboratory undetected. Rep. Barbers sees the need to look into the pertinent laws, rules and regulations on the grant of building permits, including the administrative fines against violators which do not seem to serve as a deterrence.</p> <p>The PNP was asked to submit a progress report on the investigation being conducted in relation to the Virac shabu laboratory.</p> <p>When asked by Rep. Arnulfo Fuentesbella (4th District, Camarines Sur) if the Department of Justice (DOJ) can consider Tabor as a state witness, DOJ State Prosecutor Alexander Alvarez answered in the affirmative as long as Tabor meets all the qualifications.</p>
Food Security (Special Committee)	Substitute Bill to HBs 2818, 4337, 4354, 4422, 4805 & 5190	Reps. Suansing (E.), Salon, Romero, Abayon, Aglipay-Villar, and Alejano	Promoting integrated urban agricultural development in all metropolitan areas nationwide to address food security concerns, establishing for the purpose the Office of Urban Agriculture and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Leo Rafael Cueva (2nd District, Negros Occidental), approved the substitute bill and the corresponding Committee Report.
	Substitute Bill to HBs 247, 767, 3419 & 3937	Reps. Bordado, Aglipay-Villar, Banal, and Bag- ao	Creating a National Feeding Program to address the nutritional needs of the people, strengthening the National Nutrition Council and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee approved the substitute bill and the corresponding Committee Report.
	HBs 2496 & 5746	Reps. Estrella and Calixto- Rubiano	Providing for a system of redistributing and recycling food surplus to promote food security	The Committee directed the Secretariat to draft a substitute bill to the five measures, incorporating therein the amendments made by the authors.
	HB 4263	Rep. Escudero	Banning supermarkets, food establishments and other similar businesses from throwing away and spoiling unsold food	

Continuation... Food Security (Special Committee)	HB 4675	Rep. Nieto	Mandating the donation of all surplus or left over but still edible foods to charitable institutions and foundations by all restaurants, hotels, supermarkets, fast food chains, and other similar food establishments and providing penalties for violations thereof	
Good Government and Public Accountability jt. w/ Housing and Urban Development	HR 599	Rep. Evardone	Inquiry into the perceived snail-paced implementation of housing relocation and resettlement projects for those affected by Typhoon Yolanda and for those living in dangerous zones, and to recommend appropriate legislation	<p>The Joint Committee, co-chaired by Rep. Johnny Ty Pimentel (2nd District, Surigao del Sur), Chair of the Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability, and Rep. Alfredo "Albee" Benitez (3rd District, Negros Occidental), Chair of the Committee on Housing and Urban Development, will deliberate further on HR 599 in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Benitez manifested the need to investigate and prosecute government officials and private individuals responsible for the use of substandard housing materials and the delay in the implementation of housing relocation and resettlement projects for those affected by Typhoon Yolanda. He also underscored the need to expedite the delivery of the housing projects in Yolanda-affected communities in Eastern Visayas.</p> <p>National Housing Authority (NHA) Region VIII Director Rizaldy Mediavillo said that the factors causing the delay in the construction of the housing units are: scarcity of construction materials; bad weather conditions; lack of certificate of land title for properties that will be expropriated; and the erroneous cadastral survey of the lands' boundaries.</p> <p>The Committee Members were alarmed by the high percentage of slippage of the housing projects which according to Engr. Grace Guevara, officer-in-charge of NHA's Visayas Area Management Office (VAMO), has reached more than 50%. They then asked about NHA's action against contractors who failed to meet the timeframe for the construction of the housing units.</p> <p>NHA Assistant General Manager Froilan Kampitan replied that NHA issues a notice to terminate and a show cause order to the contractors with more than 15% negative slippage. He said that once the contract is formally terminated, the project is rebid. Nevertheless, he reported that 47% of the housing units intended for Yolanda victims have already been completed and occupied.</p> <p>On the alleged poor supervision of the housing projects, Kampitan said that the NHA monitors the government projects weekly and scrutinizes the contractors' request for extension of the project's deadline.</p>
HB 6235	Deputy Speaker Garin	Reducing food waste through food donation and food waste recycling		

<p>Continuation... Good Government and Public Accountability jt. w/ Housing and Urban Development</p>				<p>Sought to comment on the alleged substandard materials used for the Yolanda housing projects, Juanito Tayag, owner of J.C. Tayag Builders Inc., maintained that he has no knowledge that substandard materials were used in the construction of the housing units which he contracted.</p> <p>Rep. Benitez, however, reiterated that during the ocular inspection in Eastern Samar, the inspection team observed that instead of using 10-millimeter steel rods, J.C. Tayag used 8-millimeter steel rods for the construction of the housing units.</p> <p>Mediavillo disclosed that upon learning of the contractor's transgression, the NHA issued a site memo to J.C. Tayag in December 2016.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Assistant Secretary Evelyn Cruzada of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Unified Implementation and Monitoring of Rehabilitation and Recovery Programs in the Yolanda Corridor (IATF-Yolanda) reported that the inter-agency, with the assistance of state universities and colleges (SUCs) in the affected localities, is already conducting research and survey to know how best to respond to the needs of the typhoon-stricken communities.</p> <p>IATF-Yolanda was created by virtue of Administrative Order 5 series of 2017 to serve as the overall and central coordination committee of all government agencies in relation to the various aspects of implementation and monitoring of the rehabilitation and recovery programs in Yolanda-affected areas.</p> <p>Rep. Benitez requested the Commission on Audit (COA) to conduct a thorough review of the NHA's contracts related to the Yolanda housing projects.</p> <p>The NHA was requested to submit various documents pertaining to its housing projects in Yolanda-affected areas.</p> <p>The Joint Committee will invite Manuel Aurelio Jr., former head of NHA's Yolanda Permanent Housing Program, and the contractors involved in the housing projects which incurred high slippages to attend its next meeting.</p> <p>An executive session was also held to discuss confidential issues with Tayag.</p>
<p>Government Reorganization jt. with Science and Technology</p>	<p>Substitute Bill to HBs 3637,4275, 4367 & 4623</p>	<p>Reps. Aumentado, Nieto, Salceda, and Rodriguez (M.)</p>	<p>Establishing the Philippine space development and utilization policy and creating the Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA) and defining the purpose and scope of its activities</p>	<p>The Joint Committee, co-chaired by PBA Party-List Rep. Mark Aeron Sambar for the Committee on Government Reorganization, and Rep. Maximo Rodriguez Jr. (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City) for the Committee on Science and Technology, approved the substitute bill.</p>

Continuation... Government Reorganization jt. with Science and Technology				<p>Rep. Christopher V.P. de Venecia (4th District, Pangasinan), who heads the technical working group (TWG) that deliberated on the bills and crafted the substitute bill, presented the salient features of the proposed law.</p> <p>Rep. De Venecia informed the Joint Committee that the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) will allocate a 30-hectare lot for the PhilSA under a usufruct agreement.</p> <p>On the suggestion of Rep. Alberto Ungab (3rd District, Davao City) to donate instead the lot to PhilSA, BCDA Manager Jon Policarpio said that the BCDA will look into the legality of donating the said land and promised to submit a report on the matter to the Joint Committee.</p> <p>The BCDA was also requested to submit to the Committee the appraisal value of the 30-hectare lot which it intends to donate to PhilSA.</p>
Metro Manila Development	Substitute Bill to HBs 4642 & 5057	Reps. Castelo and Fernando	Enhancing the effectiveness of the Metropolitan Manila Council (MMC) in formulating policies, rules, regulations and laws for Metro Manila, amending for the purpose RA 7924, creating the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), defining its powers and powers and functions , providing funds therefor and for other purposes	<p>The Committee, presided by Malabon City Rep. Federico "Ricky" Sandoval II, approved the Substitute Bill to HBs 4642 and 5057.</p> <p>Rep. Sandoval informed the Committee that the substitute bill had been deliberated on extensively by the technical working group (TWG) created for the purpose and which he chaired.</p>
Overseas Workers Affairs	Substitute Bill to HBs 1072 & 1330	Reps. Lanete and Gatchalian	Strengthening further the pre-departure orientation program (PDOP) for departing overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to include financial and entrepreneurial education, amending for the purpose RA 8042, as amended, otherwise known as the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipino Act of 1995	The Committee, chaired by ANGKLA Party-List Rep. Jesulito Manalo, approved the Committee Report on the Substitute Bill to HBs 1072 and 1330.
	HB 6138	Speaker Alvarez	Granting travel tax exemption to dependents of married or solo parent OFWs, amending for the purpose Secs. 3 and 35 of RA 8042, as amended	<p>The Committee approved HB 6138.</p> <p>The bill will be referred to the Committee on Ways and Means for review of its tax provision.</p>
	HB 6519	Rep. Manalo	Creating the OFW sovereign funds	<p>The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to fine-tune HB 6519.</p> <p>Being the author of HB 6519, Rep. Manalo relinquished his chairmanship to Rep. Micaela Violago (2nd District, Nueva Ecija) to allow him to sponsor his bill.</p> <p>The stakeholders present manifested their support for the bill. They were requested to submit their position papers within ten days for the consideration of the TWG.</p>
Public Order and Safety	HR 763	Rep. Acop	Inquiry into the manifest breakdown of discipline in the Philippine National Police (PNP) in the light of the recent high-profile criminal incidents allegedly involving officers and members of the organization	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Romeo Acop (2nd District, Antipolo City), continued its inquiry pursuant to HR 763.</p> <p>Rep. Edgar Erice (2nd District, Caloocan City)</p>

<p>Continuation... Public Order and Safety</p>				<p>criticized the PNP's inaction or delay in responding to crimes in Caloocan City. In particular, Rep. Erice cited the alleged extra-judicial killings (EJKs) in his city perpetrated by unidentified assailants or even by the police and the raid of a private residence conducted by the Caloocan City police without a search warrant.</p> <p>Rep. Erice also questioned PNP's decision to relieve the entire police force of Caloocan City, replacing them with 300 unarmed policemen, which to him cannot possibly protect the people of Caloocan City from lawless elements.</p> <p>Police Regional Director Oscar Albayalde, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO), explained that the relief of the entire Caloocan City police force was to allow an impartial investigation on how deep the problem is and the magnitude of police involvement in the high-profile cases in the City. He added that the relieved police personnel will undergo re-orientation and re-training before returning to their posts.</p> <p>Rep. Acop requested the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) and the PNP to cite the basis of PNP's action of relieving an entire police force. He also pointed out that a policeman must at least have a short firearm which is one of the basic equipment of a police officer.</p> <p>Rep. Erice also spoke of reports reaching him that under the present administration's war on drugs, the PNP adopts a "quota and reward system," wherein policemen were paid some amount for every drug suspect killed. Albayalde firmly denied Rep. Erice's statement.</p> <p>Senior Inspector Warren Peralta, team leader of the Caloocan police that conducted the raid in a private residence, refused to answer queries from the House Members, invoking his right to remain silent pointing out that cases have already been filed against him and his group.</p> <p>Albayalde disclosed that the police personnel involved in the raid are currently under restrictive custody. They are also facing charges of grave misconduct and violation of domicile, according to Deputy Inspector General Leo Angelo Leuterio of the PNP Internal Affairs Service.</p> <p>Reps. Acop and Leopoldo Bataoil (2nd District, Pangasinan) took the Caloocan police to task for using a minor in the raid of a private residence whose owner was believed to be involved in illegal drug trade based on a tip. They stressed that Peralta and his group should also be charged with violation of RA</p>
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Continuation... Public Order and Safety				7610 or the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act, among other charges. The Committee requested Albayalde to submit a report on all drug-related killings that have been cleared and solved.
Revision of Laws	HB 5262	Rep. Nava	Declaring May 22 of every year as a special non-working holiday in the Province of Guimaras in commemoration of its anniversary as a province	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Marlyn Primicias-Agabas (6th District, Pangasinan), approved HB 5262 subject to style.
	HB 6252	Rep. Marquez	Declaring the 31 st day of July of every year as a special non-working public holiday of the Municipality of Tangalan, Province of Aklan to be known as Tangalan Day in celebration of its separation from the Municipality of Makato, Aklan and in commemoration of the heroes of Vivo Revolt	The Committee approved HB 6252 subject to style.
	HBs 5866, 5869, 5875, 6038, 6124, 6219, 6362, 6363, 6364 & 6437	Reps. Relampagos, Plaza, Gasataya, Velasco, Mariño, Robes, Oaminal, and Radaza	Declaring special non-working holidays in various parts of the country to commemorate special events	The Committee approved the ten bills subject to style and submission of documents required by the Committee.
	HBs 6171 & 6365	Reps. Garcia (J.E.) and Oaminal	Declaring special non-working holidays in the Provinces of Bataan and Misamis Occidental to commemorate special events	The Committee deferred consideration of HBs 6171 and 6365 pending the submission of the comments of the authors to the objection raised by the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP).
	HB 377	Rep. Escudero	Providing stiffer penalties for the crime of theft and robbery of portable communication devices and portable computers	The Committee agreed to table the nine bills until after a study is conducted to determine the implications of the proposed measures to RA 10951. RA 10951 which was signed by President Rodrigo Duterte in August 2017, already amended the Revised Penal Code (Act No. 3815), including provisions relevant to the crimes of theft and robbery.
	HBs 1493, 3107 & 4137	Reps. Abayon, Aglipay-Villar, and Tambunting	Providing stiffer penalties for theft, robbery and destruction of public school property	
	HB 428	Rep. Macapagal-Arroyo	Amending Act No. 3815 or the Revised Penal Code, penalizing the robbery of cemetery articles	
	HB 5855	Rep. Roque (H.)	Amending Act No. 3815, by penalizing robbery of public transportation vehicle and related things	
	HB 3271	Rep. Roque (H.)	Punishing the pilferage or theft of any material, product, merchandise, article, equipment or by-product manufactured, produced, owned or belonging to information technology enterprises located in special economic zones	
	HBs 468 & 1822	Deputy Speaker Abu and Rep. Vargas	Imposing stiffer penalties on the offense of stealing or vandalizing government road signs and other warning devices, accessories, and other facilities	
Rural Development	HRs 1144, 1147 & 1149	Reps. Kho, Mangaoang,	Inquiry into the positive effects of agricultural biotechnology on the lives of	

<p>Continuation... Rural Development</p>		<p>and Batocabe</p>	<p>the rural folks and its potential as an alternative tool for rural development and agricultural competitiveness</p>	<p>deliberate further on the resolutions.</p> <p>Reps. Rodel Batocabe (Party-List, AKO BICOL) and Elisa Kho (2nd District, Masbate) explained that this inquiry was called in order for experts to share their knowledge and understanding of biotechnology so that the stakeholders and ultimately the farmers will become aware of its positive effects.</p> <p>Dr. Mabel Zaporteza, deputy director of the Philippine Genome Center (PGC) at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) discussed the following: meaning and brief history of biotechnology; the use of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) in agriculture; and the modern biotechnology discoveries.</p> <p>Zaporteza averred that biotechnology provides more benefits than the conventional method of agriculture because it requires a shorter period of time to achieve the desired results.</p> <p>Dr. Ermelea Cao, director at the UP Institute of Biology, College of Science, explained that biotechnology food products go through a stringent process including passing the food safety assessment being conducted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) before they can be introduced in the market.</p> <p>The CAC was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop harmonized international food standards which protect consumer health and promote fair practices in food trade.</p> <p>Dr. Rhodora Aldemita, senior program officer at the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), presented the socio-economic impact of biotechnology in rural development. She said that as the population increases, the area of farm lands decreases which can affect the country's food self-sufficiency. Through the use of biotechnology, crop production increases with lesser use of land, water, labor, nutrients and energy.</p> <p>Likewise, Liam Nathan Boncodin, representative of UP League of Agricultural and Biotechnology Students, said that biotechnology is a promising tool in fighting poverty and addressing food security.</p> <p>Farmer representatives Rosalie Ellasus and Edwin Paraluman shared their success stories in using biotechnology in the production of corn (BT Corn).</p> <p>On the other hand, Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Alparce expressed the objection of the Catholic Church to biotechnology on moral and ethical grounds.</p>
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Continuation... Rural Development				Upon hearing the views of the resource persons, the Committee sees the need to craft a bill institutionalizing the biotechnology program.
Suffrage and Electoral Reforms	HB 313	Deputy Speaker Garcia	Providing for the conduct of hybrid national, local, and Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) elections, through manual voting and counting at the precinct level, and automated transmission and canvassing	The Committee, chaired by CIBAC Party-List Rep. Sherwin Tugna, will deliberate further on HB 313 in another meeting. Deputy Speaker Gwendolyn Garcia (3rd District, Cebu) requested that her explanatory note be entered into the record as her sponsorship speech.

SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Subcommittee on Immigration, Naturalization and Deportation (Justice)	HB 4405	Rep. Lazatin	Granting Philippine citizenship to Bruce Donald McTavish	The Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Arnulfo Fuentesbella (4th District, Camarines Sur), approved HBs 4405 and 6262.
	HB 6262	Deputy Speaker Garcia	Granting Philippine citizenship to Kwok Hing Carlos Yeung	<p>National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) lawyer Manuel Dimaano said that Kwok Hing Carlos Yeung has no derogatory record on file. However, Dimaano disclosed that Bruce Donald McTavish has a pending case filed by a certain Herman Shiesterman on March 14, 1978 for violation of the retail trade law.</p> <p>Noting that the case against McTavish has been pending for 39 years now, Rep. Fuentesbella recommended to the NBI to set a time limit within which pending cases can be considered as derogatory to the person seeking clearance from the NBI to avoid cases similar to that of McTavish wherein he would continue to be hounded by an unprosecuted case all throughout his life.</p> <p>Appearing before the Committee to vouch for McTavish's character, former House Member and presently the chair of the Games and Amusement Board (GAB) Abraham Kahlil Mitra stated that McTavish may have already been cleared from his case, citing the NBI clearances issued to him for several years now, including a recent clearance which will expire next year.</p> <p>Likewise, Angeles City Mayor Ed Pamintuan attested to the good community standing of McTavish, who was feted as an Honorary Citizen of Angeles City by the local city council for his various contributions and achievements in sports and business, and his civic and philanthropic programs.</p>

AGENCY BRIEFINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Bicol Recovery and Economic Development (Special Committee)	<p>Presentation by the following government agencies on their programs and projects in Region 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) National Irrigation Administration (NIA) Office of the Civil Defense (OCD) 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Renato “Kuya Jojo” Unico Jr. (1st District, Camarines Norte), listened to the presentation of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the National Irrigation Administration (NIA), and the Office of the Civil Defense (OCD) on their respective programs and projects in Region 5.</p> <p>DTI Region 5 Assistant Regional Director Rodrigo Aguilar informed the Committee of the programs of DTI that are currently being implemented in Bicol Region, among which are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared Service Facility (SSF) – a tie-up among the local government units (LGUs), private sectors, and the DTI. The program provides machineries and equipment to deserving micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to help improve their business productivity and at the same time uplift the economic condition in the countryside. Since 2013, a total of 121 facilities have been established or distributed across Region 5. <i>Orgullo Kan Bicol</i> (OKB)-Gayon Bicol (Regional Trade and Travel Fair) – an annual marketing event that showcases Bicol-made products and features the Region’s top tourist destinations. A total of 141 MSME exhibitors from all over the Region participated in this year’s fair. <i>Angat Lahat</i> Program – a tie-up between the DTI and the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship (PCE), which provides help to micro and small enterprises (MSEs) through three key components: Mentor ME (micro entrepreneurs) program, Adopt-an-SSF program, and Inclusive Business (IB) model where MSEs are linked into large companies’ value chains. A total of 90 entrepreneurs in Bicol graduated from a 12-week mentoring program this year. <p>NIA Assistant Regional Director for Region 5 Romeo Lopez reported on the status of NIA’s irrigation projects as well as its proposed projects for 2018. As of December 31, 2016, Lopez said that 138,723 hectares of land in the Bicol Region have already been irrigated, representing 57.88% of the 239,660 hectares of potential area for irrigation development.</p> <p>For 2017, a total of P1.09 billion has been allocated for the implementation of 136 irrigation projects in Bicol Region. Of these projects, 15 are already completed, 88 are on-going, and 33 have not yet started.</p> <p>NIA’s proposed projects for 2018 include the repair and rehabilitation of 81 canal structures, construction/rehabilitation of four dams, and installation of 70 units of steel gates in some irrigation systems.</p> <p>OCD Region 5 officer-in-charge Eugene Cabrera reported on the status of its rehabilitation efforts in three provinces in the Bicol Region severely affected by Typhoon Nina when it hit the Region in December 2016. He presented the timeline of OCD’s activities starting from January to October 2017.</p> <p>Cabrera reported that the OCD-funded repair and rehabilitation of four school buildings in the provinces of Albay, Catanduanes, and Camarines Sur have already been completed. He also said that with the issuance of a new guideline for the release of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Fund (NDRRMF), funds for some projects which have not yet complied with the documentary requirements have not yet been released.</p>

<p>Continuation... Bicol Recovery and Economic Development (Special Committee)</p>		<p>Rep. Gabriel Bordado (3rd District, Camarines Sur) questioned the removal of the quick response fund (QRF) of the Department of Education (DepEd), stressing that readily available funds are needed to immediately repair school buildings and other school facilities destroyed by typhoons and other calamities. OCD's Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DRRM) Fund Division Chief Julius Hontiveros said that the DepEd will again receive its QRF for 2018.</p> <p>The QRF is a built-in budgetary allocation that represents pre-disaster or standby funds for certain agencies in order to immediately assist areas stricken by catastrophes and crises. The following agencies have QRFs: Departments of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), National Defense (DND)-Office of the Secretary/OCD, Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and Agriculture (DA). (Source: DBM website)</p> <p>Rep. Fernando Gonzalez (3rd District, Albay) asked if the responsibility for providing agricultural services and facilities such as the communal irrigation system (CIS) has already been devolved to the local government units (LGUs), to which Lopez answered in the affirmative. Lopez, however, explained that because of the LGUs' inadequate funds and technical capability, farmers still approach NIA for the construction of irrigation projects and repair of communal irrigation systems.</p>
<p>Metro Manila Development</p>	<p>Briefing by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) on the status of funds intended for medical and other assistance to beneficiaries in Metro Manila</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Winston "Winnie" Castelo (2nd District, Quezon City), listened to the briefing conducted by the DSWD on the status of funds intended for medical and other assistance to beneficiaries in Metro Manila.</p> <p>DSWD Undersecretary for Operations and Programs Hope Hervilla focused her presentation on the Protective Services Program (PSP) of the DSWD which provides interventions to individuals, families and communities in disaster, difficult, and vulnerable situations. The PSP has two components: the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) and the <i>LinGap sa Masa</i> (LinGap sa Masa).</p> <p>Hervilla said that the AICS serves as a social safety net or a stop-gap mechanism to support the recovery of individual and families from an unexpected crisis, such as illness or death of a family member, natural and human induced disasters, and other crisis situations. On the other hand, the <i>LinGap sa Masa</i> provides free medicines to indigents and needy government workers through the issuance of guarantee letters for the purchase of medicines from hospital pharmacies or from partner drug stores.</p> <p>As of September 30, 2017, Hervilla reported that under the DSWD's AICS, some 49,075 beneficiaries in Metro Manila received medical assistance for an aggregate amount of P158.73 million. On the other hand, the <i>LinGap sa Masa</i> has provided free medicines amounting to P22.79 million to 3,587 beneficiaries in Metro Manila.</p> <p>Hervilla said that the amount of P1 billion has been allocated for the <i>LinGap sa Masa</i> nationwide to be sourced from funds intended for the President's socio-civic projects. Of this amount, P473 million will be channeled to the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) as the program's pilot hospital in Metro Manila.</p> <p>In response to the query of Rep. Luis Jose Angel Campos Jr. (2nd District, Makati), Hervilla said that the DSWD intends to involve other government hospitals as conduit for the <i>LinGap sa Masa</i>.</p> <p>The DSWD was requested to submit a report on the allocation of funds for the two programs per congressional district.</p>

<p>Suffrage and Electoral Reforms</p>	<p>Briefing by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) on the timeline for the 2019 national and local elections</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by CIBAC Party-List Rep. Sherwin Tugna, listened to the briefing by the COMELEC on the timeline for the 2019 national and local elections.</p> <p>COMELEC Commissioner Luie Tito Guia reported that the COMELEC is inclined to accept the recommendation of the COMELEC Advisory Council (CAC) to again use the Optical Mark Reader (OMR) technology for the 2019 midterm elections.</p> <p>The CAC, chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), is composed of nine members from the academe, non-government electoral reform organizations, and select government agencies. Under the Automated Election Law, CAC is mandated to recommend the most appropriate, secure, applicable and cost-effective technology to be used in the automated election system.</p> <p>COMELEC Deputy Executive Director for Administration Bartolome Sinocruz Jr. presented the COMELEC's implementation calendar for the 2019 national and local elections, from the setting up of COMELEC's project management office on September 19 up to the submission of post election reports on October 31, 2019.</p> <p>On the query of Deputy Speaker Fredenil "Fred" Castro (2nd District, Capiz), DICT Undersecretary Eliseo Rio Jr., who is also the acting chair of CAC, replied that it is more economical to purchase the 97,517 vote-counting machines (VCMs) that were previously leased and utilized by COMELEC for the 2016 elections than to refurbish the 72,000 precinct count optical scanner (PCOS) machines used in the 2010 and 2013 elections.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Gwendolyn Garcia (3rd District, Cebu) inquired about the cost of purchasing the VCMs. Guia said that the total cost would be P1.85 billion or P19,000 per unit. He also mentioned that COMELEC needs 32,001 more VCMs for the 2019 elections, which will entail an additional cost of P2.13 billion.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Garcia urged the Committee to study further which technology to adopt for the 2019 elections to spare the government from spending more. She then suggested to consider the possibility of switching to a hybrid type of elections, employing both manual voting and counting as well as automated transmission and canvassing schemes.</p>
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OTHER MATTERS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
<p>Subcommittee on Immigration, Naturalization and Deportation (Justice)</p>	<p>Amending the Internal Rules of the Committee on Justice to clarify the rules on the processing of naturalization bills</p>	<p>The Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Arnulfo Fuentesbella (4th District, Camarines Sur), agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to craft specific rules and procedures governing the acceptance, processing and approval of bills seeking to grant Filipino citizenship to aliens through legislation.</p>