

Committee Daily Bulletin



17th Congress
Third Regular Session

A publication of the Committee Affairs Department

Vol. III No. 30
September 19, 2018

PRE-PLenary CONFERENCES ON THE FY 2019 BUDGET

COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Appropriations	<p>Pre-plenary conferences on the proposed FY 2019 budget, plans and programs, and major accomplishments of the following government agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission on Higher Education (CHED) • State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Karlo Alexei Nograles (1st District, Davao City), held pre-plenary conferences with the CHED and SUCs to thresh out issues and concerns raised by the House Members relative to their proposed FY 2019 budget prior to the deliberations on their budget at the plenary.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Ma. Lourdes Aggabao (4th District, Isabela), presided over these pre-plenary conferences.</p> <p>Under the FY 2019 National Expenditure Program (NEP), CHED is set to receive a budget of P50.44 billion, which is slightly lower (0.18%) than its current budget of P50.53 billion.</p> <p>Replying to the query of Bacolod City Rep. Greg Gasataya, CHED's Officer-in-Charge Prospero de Vera III apprised the Committee that P40 billion was allocated this year for the initial implementation of the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act or RA 10931. Out of the said budget, P16 billion will be utilized for the reimbursement of tuition and miscellaneous fees; another P16 billion for tertiary education subsidy; P1 billion for provision of student loans; and P7 billion for technical-vocational education and training (TVET) under the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). For 2019, CHED was allocated a budget of P43 billion for the implementation of RA 10931.</p> <p>Dr. Tirso Ronquillo, president of the Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges (PASUC), said that under the FY 2019 NEP, the 111 SUCs nationwide will receive a total budget of P61.57 billion, which is 1% lower than the current year's budget of P62.12 billion.</p> <p>Rep. Aggabao asked the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) why the SUCs' original budget proposal of P131 billion for 2019 was drastically reduced by 53%. DBM Region VII Director Imelda Laceras explained that it could mainly be attributed to the 88% slash in the SUCs' capital outlay. Laceras explained further that the DBM could not evaluate, and therefore did not consider, SUCs' proposals for infrastructure projects which only consist of a mere list of projects and the corresponding costs and without the supporting documents.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Rep. Antonio Tinio (Party-List, ACT TEACHERS) and Rep. Manuel "Chiquiting" Sagarbarria (2nd District, Negros Oriental) noted the huge disparities in the amount of government's subsidy for students across SUCs. They pointed out that in some SUCs, the government subsidy per student is almost P200,000, while in other SUCs, the students receive a measly P7,810.</p> <p>Recognizing the need to improve the overall standard of tertiary education in the country, Rep. Sarah Jane Elago (Party-List, KABATAAN) said that she will file a resolution to restore the 2019</p>

Continuation... Appropriations		<p>original budget proposal of SUCs and to include therewith the additional amount of P420 million for the repair of the facilities of SUCs devastated by Typhoon Ompong.</p> <p>The officials of CHED and SUCs were at hand to respond to the concerns specific to the Committee Members' respective districts.</p>
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COMMITTEE MEETINGS				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Good Government and Public Accountability	HR 1551	Rep. Acharon	Investigation into the alleged payments by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) of Road Right-of-Way (RROW) claimants in General Santos City using spurious or fabricated land titles	<p>The Committee, chaired by Camiguin Rep. Xavier Jesus Romualdo, will deliberate further on the issues raised in HR 1551 in its next meeting.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Ferdinand Hernandez (2nd District, South Cotabato) sought for an explanation of the actions taken by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) when it received the court-issued Writ of Mandamus that compelled the Department to release the payments for RROW claims which were allegedly based on spurious or fabricated land titles.</p> <p>DPWH Region XII Director Basir Ibrahim replied that he has no personal knowledge of the issue and can only refer to the records available in his office.</p> <p>DPWH Region XII Legal Division Officer-in-Charge Jahara Ali-Macadato explained that the writ of mandamus was referred to the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) which was supposed to represent the Department in the case. However, the OSG failed to submit a pleading, Ali-Macadato said. She recalled that the OSG legal officer who handled the case was Atty. Faisal Padati, but could not recall who the solicitor general was at the time.</p> <p>Department of Justice (DOJ) Assistant Secretary Sergio Yap II confirmed that although there were signs of irregularities in the said RROW transactions, the DPWH was constrained to release the payments because of the writ of mandamus. He added that the writ was enforced when the OSG failed to file a pleading in behalf of the DPWH.</p> <p>DPWH Central Office Legal Service Director Estrella Decena-Zaldivar denied her involvement in the alleged scam as she only assumed the position in November 2014. Many of the RROW claims were made between the years 2007 and 2009 during which the subsequent payments were also released. A total of P2 billion was already released for the RROW claims before Zaldivar assumed office, Ibrahim added.</p> <p>Land Registration Authority (LRA) Legal Service Director Rhandolfo Amansec informed the Committee that based on LRA's investigation on</p>

<p><i>Continuation...</i> Good Government and Public Accountability</p>				<p>the matter, 108 out of 148 land titles involved in the RROW acquisitions in General Santos City were fake titles. According to Amansec, the LRA has already identified the officials and employees of the Registry of Deeds (RD) in General Santos City who were involved in the downloading of fake titles and will provide the Committee with the said information soon.</p> <p>Several House Members requested the submission of several documents pertinent to the issue, including a list of RROW claims processed by the DPWH, the names of RROW claimants, and the payments received; a copy of the Commission on Audit (COA) audit report on the RROW transactions from 2012 -2017; and a copy of the service records of the officials and employees of the DPWH and the Registry of Deeds who were allegedly involved in the anomalous transactions.</p> <p>The Committee will also issue a show cause order to a certain Nelson Ti and Wilma Mamburam who were among the claimants of the RROW in General Santos City.</p>
	HR 1742	Rep. De Vera	<p>Inquiry into the anomalous supply and delivery agreements entered into by Duty Free Philippines Corporation (DFPC) without undergoing the required public bidding, as well as the highly suspicious and irregular extensions of the terms of these contracts, three years prior to their respective expirations, in an apparent case of midnight deals by the previous officer of DFPC</p>	<p>The Committee assumed jurisdiction over HR 1742.</p> <p>Rep. Eugene Michael de Vera (Party-List, ABS), author of HR 1742, emphasized the need to investigate the DFPC for its failure to follow the procedures prescribed under RA 9184 (Government Procurement Reform Act). According to Rep. De Vera, the DFPC entered into contracts with suppliers of goods without undergoing the required public bidding process, and allegedly renewed the contracts three years ahead of the contracts' expiration. In addition, the alarming drop in the sales of DFPC from P575 million in 2011 to P164 million in 2016, should also be looked into, he said.</p> <p>The DFPC is a government-owned and controlled corporation (GOCC) created under RA 9593 (Tourism Act of 2009).</p>
<p>Small Business and Entrepreneurship Development</p>	<p>Substitute Bill to HBs 5618, 5701, 6227 & 6476</p>	<p>Reps. Yap (V.), Gatchalian, Villafuerte, and Deputy Speaker Yap (A.)</p>	<p>Adopting innovation as vital component of the country's development policies to drive inclusive development, promote the growth and national competitiveness of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), appropriating funds therefor</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Dennis Laogan (Party-List, ANG KABUHAYAN), approved the substitute bill subject to style.</p> <p>The Secretariat was directed to prepare the appropriate communication transmitting the bill to the Committee on Appropriations for its comments on the bill's funding provision; and thereafter, the corresponding Committee Report.</p>