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ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Energy	Organizational meeting and adoption of the Committee's Rules of Procedure	<p>The Committee, chaired by Marinduque Rep. Lord Allan Jay Velasco, held its organizational meeting during which the Committee's Rules of Procedure for the 18th Congress was adopted.</p> <p>Under the Rules of the House, the Committee has jurisdiction over all matters directly and principally relating to the exploration, development, utilization or conservation of energy resources, including the development and utilization of alternative and renewable energy resources and the entities involved in energy or power generation, transmission, distribution, and supply.</p> <p>Rep. Velasco informed the body that in the previous Congress, the Committee worked hard toward the enactment of the following laws:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RA 11039 - Electric Cooperatives Emergency and Resiliency Fund; • RA 11234 - Energy Virtual One Stop Shop (EVOSS) Act; • RA 11285 - Energy Efficiency and Conservation (EEC) Act; • RA 11361 - Anti-Obstruction of Power Lines; and • RA 11371 - <i>Murang Kuryente</i> Act. <p>He also presented the legislative priorities of the Committee for the 18th Congress, some of which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of an Energy Policy Research Institute; • Strengthening of the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC); • Amendment to the Biofuels Law; • Waste to Energy Bill; • Downstream Natural Gas Policy; and • Retail Competition and Open Access (RCOA).

BUDGET BRIEFINGS

COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Appropriations	<p>Briefing on the proposed FY 2020 budget, plans and programs, and major accomplishments of the following government offices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Science and Technology (DOST) 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Isidro Ungab (3rd District, Davao City), listened to the presentation on the proposed FY 2020 budget, plans and programs, and major accomplishments of the DOST and DILG.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Micaela Violago (2nd District, Nueva Ecija), sat as the presiding officer during the DOST's budget briefing.</p> <p>DOST Secretary Fortunato de la Peña said that under the FY 2020 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the DOST is set to receive a budget of P20.18 billion, which is 0.39% lower than its current budget of P20.26 billion. By expense class, the DOST's budget is distributed as follows: personnel services (PS), P3.86 billion; maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE), P14.09 billion; and capital outlay (CO), P2.23 billion.</p> <p>De la Peña reported that the DOST has achieved technology breakthroughs in disaster risk reduction, namely:</p>

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Appropriations

- Fault finder - determines the location of active faults;
- Hazard hunter - generates indicative hazard assessment reports in specified locations; and
- Earthquake monitoring equipment - detects and records earthquakes (to be installed in bridges and buildings).

Rep. Rufus Rodriguez (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City) inquired on the DOST's compliance with RA 7687 or the Science and Technology Scholarship Act of 1994, which requires the selection of at least two scholars in every municipality nationwide.

DOST Director Josette Biyo said that out of the country's 1,600 municipalities, only 36 were not able to avail themselves of the scholarship program for failure to comply with the requirements of the law.

Several lawmakers inquired if DOST has developed technologies that will address the dengue crisis in the country.

DOST Executive Director Jaime Montoya said that the Department has developed a mosquito surveillance system called the Ovicidal/Larvicidal Trap (OL Trap) to determine the mosquito density in a given area. Should the mosquito density exceed the 10% threshold, Montoya said that the concerned local government unit (LGU) should immediately take steps to bring down the mosquito density like defogging and instituting the Department of Health's 4S Program: "Search and destroy breeding places; Seek early consultation; Self-protection measures; and Say yes to fogging."

Montoya added that the DOST has also introduced the use of Biotek-M Dengue Aqua Kit, a confirmatory test that can detect the presence of dengue infection in an hour or less and can be done even in stand-alone laboratories.

Asked on the use of *tawa-tawa* as a potential cure against dengue, Montoya said that clinical trials still have to be done to prove this. Nonetheless, the use of *tawa-tawa* supplement, as approved by the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD), helps increase the blood platelet count and lower the temperature of a person with fever, Montoya claimed.

- Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)

Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Alfredo Vargas III (5th District, Quezon City), sat as presiding officer during the budget briefing of the DILG and its attached agencies.

DILG Secretary Eduardo Año said that under the FY 2020 NEP, the DILG and its attached agencies are set to receive a total budget of P236.22 billion, which is 3% higher than their current budget of P228.71 billion. By expense class, DILG's 2020 proposed budget will be distributed as follows: PS, P204.16 billion; MOOE, P28.34 billion; and CO, P3.72 billion.

In terms of allocation by office, the bulk of the P236.22 billion budget will go to the Philippine National Police (PNP) in the amount of P184.60 billion. The rest will go to the following offices/agencies: DILG Office of the Secretary (OSEC), P6.79 billion; Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), P22.72 billion; Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), P18.60 billion; National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM), P1.77 billion; National Commission on Muslim Filipino (NCMF), P635.13 million; Philippine Public Safety College (PPSC), P622.83 million; Local Government Academy (LGA), P252.90 million; National Youth Commission (NYC), P120.28 million; and Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), P106.90 million.

Año also mentioned that for FY 2020, the DILG will continue to strengthen its efforts against corruption, criminality, illegal drugs, and

Continuation... Appropriations		<p>local communist insurgency; promote good local governance and LGU preparedness and resiliency; empower the women, youth, and Muslim Filipinos; and promote environmental protection.</p> <p>Replying to the queries of the lawmakers concerning the number of deaths related to the anti-illegal drug campaign of the government, PNP Chief Oscar Albayalde said that the official death toll from July 2016 to March 2019 is estimated at 5,375. He also dismissed claims of the existence of “death squads” operating within the PNP, assuring the Committee that the PNP is operating within the bounds of law and that investigations are being conducted on the involvement of police personnel in crimes.</p> <p>Rep. Jose Christopher Belmonte (6th District, Quezon City) questioned the involvement of the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) in the filing of sedition cases against Vice President Maria Leonor “Leni” Gerona Robredo and 35 others.</p> <p>PNP Crime Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) Director Amador Corpus explained that the CIDG only asks for the assistance of the OSG in high profile cases such as the case involving the Vice President. Corpus added that it is the CIDG Legal Department that determines whether a case is high profile or not. Rep. Belmonte countered that perhaps it would be better to increase the budget of the CIDG Legal Department to enable it to act on its own without the need for OSG’s assistance. Corpus replied that any increase in the budget of his office is acceptable.</p> <p>On the complaint of Rep. Sarah Jane Elago (Party-List, KABATAAN) of alleged disinformation against her being spread through facebook accounts linked to the PNP, the police officials denied the involvement of the PNP in such a wrongdoing and advised the lawmaker to seek the assistance of the PNP Cybercrimes Division.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Mujiv Hataman (Basilan) asked about the reason for the transfer of NCMF’s supervision from the Office of the President (OP) to the DILG. The DILG Secretary explained that the basis for the transfer was Executive Order No. 67 which rationalizes the OP Proper to strengthen its oversight function over the executive department and further streamline the mandates of offices under it.</p> <p>NCMF Secretary Saidamen Pangarungan said he welcomed the transfer as it allowed the NCMF to work closely with the DILG in protecting the rights and welfare of the Muslim Filipinos in the fight against terrorism and insurgency.</p>
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COMMITTEE MEETING				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Higher Education	HBs 123, 289 & 2104	Deputy Speaker Fernandez, Reps. Suansing (E.), and Malapitan	Establishing polytechnic state universities and colleges in the Provinces of Laguna and Nueva Ecija and in the City of Caloocan, respectively, and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee, chaired by Baguio City Rep. Mark Go, approved the three bills subject to style and amendment and compliance with the requirements of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) on the establishment of schools. It also agreed to conduct an ocular evaluation of the schools jointly with CHED.</p> <p>A bill with similar subject matter was approved on third reading during the previous Congress.</p>

Continuation... Higher Education	HBs 1585 & 3224	Reps. Romualdez and Noel	Converting the Dulag Satellite Campus of the Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU) located in the Municipality of Dulag, Province of Leyte into a regular campus, amending for the purpose RA 9311, and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee agreed to consolidate HBs 1585 and 3224 and thereafter approved the consolidated bill subject to style and amendment and compliance with the requirements of the CHED. It also agreed to conduct an ocular evaluation of the school jointly with CHED. A bill with similar subject matter was approved on third reading during the previous Congress.
	HBs 2652 & 3194	Reps. Bernos and Plaza	Converting the Abra State Institute of Sciences and Technology in the Province of Abra and the Agusan del Sur State College of Agriculture and Technology (ASSCAT) in the Province of Agusan del Sur into state universities, respectively, and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee approved the two bills subject to style and amendment and compliance with the requirements of the CHED. It also agreed to conduct an ocular evaluation of the schools jointly with CHED. Abra State Institute of Sciences and Technology President, Dr. Gregorio Turqueza Jr., gave an assurance that the school will be able to comply with the requirements of CHED within three months. A bill with similar subject matter was approved on third reading during the previous Congress.
	HB 878	Rep. Castelo	Providing medical scholarships in state universities and colleges (SUCs) to qualified students	The Committee agreed to consolidate the six bills and thereafter approved the consolidated bill subject to style and amendment.
	HBs 1626 & 3445	Rep. Sy-Alvarado and Deputy Speaker Santos-Recto	Providing medical scholarships to qualified students in all municipalities, establishing for this purpose the One Town: One Doctor Scholarship Program, appropriating funds therefor	Deputy Speaker Vilma Santos-Recto (6 th District, Batangas), Rep. Angelina "Helen" Tan, M.D. (4 th District, Quezon) and Rep. Rufus Rodriguez (2 nd District, Cagayan de Oro City), authors of HBs 3445, 2139, and 3745, respectively, agreed to set the mandatory return service of the scholar upon integration into the public health and medical service system from the proposed eight-year period to a four-year period or one year of service for every year of scholarship. A bill with similar subject matter was approved on third reading during the previous Congress.
	HBs 2139, 2881 & 3745	Reps. Tan (A.), Hofer, and Rodriguez	Establishing medical scholarships and return service programs for deserving students and appropriating funds therefor	
	HBs 209, 2711, 2953, 3118, 3188 & 3226	Deputy Speaker Puno, Reps. Cuaresma, Calderon, Tejada, Chatto, and Acosta	Providing for the establishment of Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) training and accreditation centers in various parts of the country and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee approved the six bills subject to style and amendment and compliance with the requirements of the CHED. A bill with similar subject matter was approved on third reading during the previous Congress.

AGENCY BRIEFINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Agriculture and Food	Briefing by the Department of Agriculture (DA) on the status of implementation of RA 11203, or the law liberalizing the importation, exportation, and trading of rice, lifting for the purpose the quantitative import restriction on rice	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga (1 st District, Quezon), listened to the briefing conducted by the DA on the status of implementation of RA 11203. DA Undersecretary Ariel Cayanan informed the body that RA 11203, which was signed into law last February 14, 2019, eliminated the quantitative restriction (QR) on rice importation,

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Agriculture and Food

adopting instead the imposition of tariffs on rice imports based on rates committed by the Philippines under international trade agreements. He said that the lifting of the QR on rice imports resulted in a much cheaper market price for rice benefitting the Filipino consumers. As for the affected local rice farmers, Cayanan cited key program interventions to make them more competitive and productive.

Cayanan highlighted the creation, under the law, of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), which will have an annual allocation of P10 billion for a period of six years. The Rice Fund shall be allocated and disbursed to rice producing areas for the following programs: rice farm machineries and equipment for eligible farmers associations, registered rice cooperatives and local government units (LGUs); rice seed development, propagation and promotion; expanded rice credit assistance; and rice extension services in the form of agricultural training and technology transfer.

National Food Authority (NFA) Administrator Judy Carol Dansal apprised the Committee that RA 11203 effectively removed the regulatory powers of the NFA and limited its function to buffer stocking.

Based on RA 11203, buffer stock refers to the "optimal level of rice inventory that shall be maintained at any given time to be used for emergency situations and to sustain the disaster relief programs of the government."

Quirino Rep. Junie Cua noted that the law was enacted in response to the serious lack of supply of rice and the resulting high prices in the market which jacked up the country's inflation rate. However, he said, now that the law is in place, there should be an evaluation of its effectiveness in terms of ensuring food security and stable rice prices while protecting the interests of the local farmers.

Lamenting the negative effect of RA 11203 on the farmers from her province, Rep. Estrellita Suansing (1st District, Nueva Ecija) requested the DA and the NFA to immediately address the declining price of palay. She said that the price has now dropped to P7 a kilo outside of harvest season. She could tell that during the harvest season, when there are more palay produce, the price could even become much lower.

Former Anakpawis Party-List Rep. Rafael Mariano, now one of the leaders of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), and Rosendo So, chairperson of the Samahang Industriya ng Magsasaka (SINAG), also expressed their objection to RA 11203 as being detrimental to the welfare of the local farmers. They called on the government to suspend the importation of rice during the harvest season to prevent the spiraling down of the price of palay and local rice.

Representatives from other farmers organizations present in the meeting likewise raised similar concerns about the lifting of the QR on rice imports, adding that the high cost of production in the country makes local rice less competitive in the market.

Undersecretary Cayanan acknowledged the effects brought about by RA 11203 but assured the body that measures that will mitigate these effects are already put in place.

Cabinet Secretary and former Davao City Representative Karlo Alexei Nograles said that issues and concerns raised during the meeting will be reported to the President and that the suggestions made to solve the problems will likewise be carefully studied.

Energy	<p>Briefing by the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) on their mandates, organizational structure, plans and programs, and the overall energy situation in the country</p>	<p>The Committee listened to the presentations of the DOE and ERC on their mandates, organizational structures, plans and programs, and on the overall energy situation in the country.</p> <p>DOE Secretary Alfonso Cusi explained the mandates of the DOE as well as the current position of the country in terms of energy security, energy equity, and environmental sustainability.</p> <p>Afterwards, it was DOE Undersecretary Felix Fuentebella who presented and discussed, among others, the energy supply and consumption; the energy sources post-Malampaya; and the opening of the Philippine Conventional Energy Contracting Program (PCECP).</p> <p>The PCECP is a new and transparent petroleum service contract awarding mechanism that allows the government to develop and utilize indigenous petroleum resources under a service contract with qualified local and international exploration companies. Under the PCECP, awarding of service contracts is conducted either through a competitive selection process or through nomination (<i>Source: DOE website</i>).</p> <p>Meanwhile, ERC Director Floresinda Baldo-Digal discussed the mandate of the ERC under the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA) which is primarily to protect consumers and promote competition in the industry. She likewise presented facts and figures on the power distribution utilities, electric cooperatives, powerplants, retail electricity suppliers, and wholesale electricity spot market (WESM) participants in the country.</p> <p>ERC Commissioner Catherine Maceda, responding to queries on the delay in the approval of capital expenditure (Capex) projects of electric distributors, cited the ERC's limited number of engineers who can hardly cope with the task of evaluating these projects. As for the delay in the approval of net-metering applications of qualified end-users who generate their own power derived from renewable energy sources, Maceda said that the ERC just recently adopted a revised set of rules on the net-metering program which would address problems on the matter.</p>
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