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ORGANIZATIONAL MEETINGS

COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Justice	Organizational meeting and adoption of the Committee's Rules of Procedure	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Vicente "Ching" Veloso III (3rd District, Leyte), held its organizational meeting during which the Committee's Rules of Procedure for the 18th Congress was adopted.</p> <p>The Committee, which is composed of 55 Members, has jurisdiction over "all matters directly and principally relating to the administration of justice, the Judiciary, the practice of law and integration of the Bar, legal aid, penitentiaries and reform schools, adult probation, impeachment proceedings, registration of land titles, immigration, deportation, naturalization, and the definition of crimes and other offenses punishable by law and their penalties."</p> <p>Rep. Veloso informed the body that 168 bills have been referred to the Committee thus far.</p>
Poverty Alleviation	Organizational meeting and adoption of the Committee's Internal Rules of Procedure	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Dale "Along" Malapitan (1st District, Caloocan City), held its organizational meeting during which the Committee's Internal Rules of Procedure for the 18th Congress was adopted.</p> <p>Rep. Raymond Democrito Mendoza (Party-List, TUCP), former Chairperson of the Committee during the 17th Congress, had the privilege of presenting the Committee's accomplishments during the 17th Congress. Considered a major accomplishment of the Committee in the previous Congress was the enactment of the following landmark legislations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RA 11310 - Institutionalizing the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps); • RA 11291 - Providing for a Magna Carta of the Poor; and • RA 11315 - Establishing a community-based monitoring system. <p>Afterwards, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Undersecretary Luzviminda Ilagan gave a presentation on the Department's priority programs for the poor, which include the following: 4Ps; Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP); Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan – Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (Kalahi-CIDSS) Program; Supplementary Feeding Program; Social Pension for Indigent Senior Citizens Program; and the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation Program.</p> <p>The Committee requested the DSWD to submit a report providing the complete details on the coverage of each major program and the challenges and problems it encounters relative to their implementation with the corresponding proposed legislative measures to address the same. The DSWD will be invited again in the next meeting to report on the status of the crafting of the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of RA 11310.</p>
Public Order and Safety	Organizational meeting and adoption of the Committee's Rules of Procedure	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Narciso Bravo Jr. (1st District, Masbate), held its organizational meeting during which the Committee's Rules of Procedure for the 18th Congress was adopted, subject to amendment.</p> <p>Under the Rules of the House, the Committee has jurisdiction "over matters relating to suppression of criminality including those on illegal gambling, private armies, terrorism, organized crime and illegal drugs,</p>

<p>Continuation... Public Order and Safety</p>		<p>regulation of firearms, firecrackers and pyrotechnics, civil defense, private security agencies, and the Philippine National Police.”</p> <p>Rep. Bravo recommended the inclusion of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) under the Committee’s jurisdiction for purposes of clarity and in conformity with the jurisdiction of its counterpart in the Senate.</p> <p>With this proposed amendment, the Committee will submit its Rules of Procedure to the Committee on Rules for approval.</p> <p>Rep. Bravo said there are already 102 legislative measures referred to the Committee to date. He cited in particular the modernization of the BFP as a priority bill in line with the pronouncement of President Rodrigo Duterte in his recent State of the Nation Address (SONA). The Committee is expected to pass this bill before the end of this year, Rep. Bravo added.</p> <p>The Committee created six subcommittees, designating, so far, the chairpersons of the following subcommittees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcommittee on Police Administration – Rep. Samier Tan (1st District, Sulu); • Subcommittee on Police Operations – Rep. Eddiebong Plaza (2nd District, Agusan del Sur); and • Subcommittee on Terrorism/Organized Crime Groups – Rep. Jorge Antonio Bustos (Party-List, PATROL). <p>The chairpersons of the other three subcommittees – Subcommittee on Allied Services, Subcommittee on Fire Protection Service, and Subcommittee on Jail Management Service – will be designated at a later date.</p>
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BUDGET BRIEFINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
<p>Appropriations</p>	<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 Education (DepEd) 	<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 DepEd, DICT and DSWD.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Corazon Nuñez-Malanyaon (1st District, Davao Oriental), sat as the presiding officer during the budget briefing of DepEd and its attached agencies.</p> <p>DepEd Undersecretary Annalyn Sevilla said that under the FY 2020 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the DepEd and its attached agencies are set to receive a total budget of P550.9 billion, which is 3.90% higher than their current budget of P530.23 billion.</p> <p>According to Sevilla, there are various programs being implemented by DepEd but the following programs are considered to be its major programs for next year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Education Facilities (BEF) – pertains to the provision, improvement, and maintenance of school facilities such classrooms and workshop buildings; • Flexible Learning Options (FLOs) – provides a menu of possible learning interventions including the Alternative Learning System (ALS); • Madrasah Education – provides Muslim learners with appropriate and relevant educational opportunities within the context of their cultures; • Government Assistance and Subsidies (GAS) – makes private education a viable option for learners by providing them assistance and subsidies;

<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP) – a health intervention meant to address undernutrition among public school children; and • The Last Mile Schools (LMS) – provides or replaces classrooms particularly in far flung areas. <p>The LMS Program is a new program which requires the amount of P1.5 Billion for its pilot implementation in 2020, Sevilla said.</p> <p>DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones cited recent major improvements in the education sector such as improved access to quality education through the Department’s various programs. She also said that the curriculum for kindergarten to junior high school levels has been completely changed and a separate curriculum for senior high school was created in line with the full implementation of the K-12 Program.</p> <p>In relation to the low proficiency ratings in both the National Achievement Test (NAT) for Grades 6 and 10 and the Exit Assessment for Grade 12, Briones explained that such ratings have been anticipated due to the shift from content-based to critical or analysis-based assessment of learners, which is the current direction of the K-12 Program. Adjusting to this type of learning is a challenge for the education sector for the next three years, Briones added.</p> <p>In reply to the query of Reps. Gabriel Bordado Jr. (3rd District, Camarines Sur) and Jesus "Bong" Suntay (4th District, Quezon City) pertaining to the alleged error-ridden textbooks which have been the subject of a Commission on Audit (COA) observation report, Briones asserted that the alleged “errors” were matters of editing style and not factual errors. She also claimed that COA admitted that its report was based on the “errors” previously cited by Antonio Calipjo Go, a known critique of textbooks issued by DepEd and who, according to Briones, has “questionable credentials.”</p> <p>The Members also discussed with the DepEd regional directors concerns specific to their respective districts during the meeting.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Jose Antonio “Kuya Jonathan” Sy-Alvarado (1st District, Bulacan), sat as the presiding officer during the deliberations on the budget of the DICT.</p> <p>Under the FY 2020 NEP, the DICT and its attached agencies are set to receive a budget of P5.15 billion, which is slightly higher than their current year’s budget of P5.03 billion. The proposed 2020 budget will be distributed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DICT (Office of the Secretary) – P4.31 billion; • National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) – P592.58 million; • National Privacy Commission (NPC) – P234.69 million; and • Cybercrime Investigation and Coordination Center (CICC) – P11.26 million. <p>DICT Secretary Gregorio Honasan II said that the Department aligns its programs and initiatives with its vision of “an innovative, safe, and peaceful nation that is enabled by information and communications technology through Digital Philippines.”</p> <p>According to Honasan, “Digital Philippines” is built on three core foundations: enhanced national connectivity; trustworthy cybersecurity systems; and comprehensive policies on information and communications technology.</p> <p>Honasan admitted that the vision of a Digital Philippines is an arduous task that needs a long-term commitment to provide interconnectivity in a faster, cheaper, and more secure manner.</p>
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<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) 	<p>Rep. Sy-Alvarado inquired on the expected internet speed in the envisioned Digital Philippines. DICT Assistant Secretary Felino Castro said that the target is to provide at least 10 Megabits per second (Mbps) of internet speed for the Free Public Wi-Fi Program of the government. Currently, Castro said, an internet speed of 4Mbps is available in accessible areas and 2 Mbps in underserved areas.</p> <p>NTC Commissioner Gamaliel Cordoba informed the Committee that the Philippines ranks 25th using fixed broadband and 33rd using mobile broadband among 50 countries in Asia, according to Ookla, the global leader in internet testing and analysis.</p> <p>Asked on the DICT's plan to improve internet speed, DICT Undersecretary Eliseo Rio Jr. said that one of the initiatives of the Department is the establishment of "common towers" which allows the sharing of telecommunications infrastructure, thus facilitating the deployment of additional cell sites.</p> <p>What hampers the construction of telecommunication towers, Rio lamented, is the resistance of the people in areas where these towers are supposed to be built due to perceived health risks from the radiation emitted by the towers.</p> <p>Rep. Jose Atienza Jr. (Party-List, BUHAY) suggested that the Department should conduct an information campaign to educate the community on the matter noting the statement of the DICT that such fears of health risks are unfounded.</p> <p>Several House Members inquired on the status of the third major telecommunications player. Cordoba said that Dito Telecommunity Corporation (formerly Mislatel) is expected to operate by the end of 2019 or by the first quarter of 2020.</p> <p>With regard to the unfilled positions in the Department, DICT Undersecretary Jose Arturo De Castro explained that the Department needs to finish its placement process before the Department can hire and promote employees.</p> <p>Rep. Bernadette Herrera-Dy (Party-List, BAGONG HENERASYON) asked why the budget for the implementation of RA 10929 or the Free Internet Access in Public Places Act was lodged in the Department's maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE). De Castro explained that because there is no infrastructure yet, the DITC opted to subscribe internet services from private telecommunications companies (telcos) in the meantime, adding that subscription expense falls under MOOE.</p> <p>Several Members expressed dismay upon knowing that a huge chunk of the Department's budget is allotted for subscribing internet services from private telcos. They suggested instead that the DICT should expedite the implementation of the National Broadband Program (NBP) which will result in cheaper and reliable connectivity. (The NBP aims to improve internet speed by accelerating the deployment of fiber optic cables and wireless technologies in the country.)</p> <p>The DICT was requested to submit the documents requested by the Members of the Committee before its budget deliberation in the plenary.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Jocelyn Limkaichong (1st District, Negros Oriental), sat as the presiding officer during the budget briefing of the DSWD and its attached agencies.</p> <p>DSWD Secretary Rolando Joselito Bautista said that under the FY 2020 NEP, the DSWD and its attached agencies are set to receive a total budget of P158.56 billion, which is 12.16% higher than its current budget of P141.37 billion.</p>
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Continuation... Appropriations		<p>In terms of allocation by office, the bulk of the P158.56 billion will go to the DSWD Proper in the amount of P156.69 billion. The rest of the budget will be allocated to the other offices/agencies under the DSWD, namely: National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), P1.17 billion; National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), P236.18 million; Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP), P186.30 million; Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (JJWC), P95.22 million; Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), P64.81 million; Inter-Country Adoption Board (ICAB), P61.11 million; and National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), P54.96 million.</p> <p>Bautista explained that the significant increase in the DSWD's capital outlay, from P37.46 million for 2019 to P217.81 million for FY 2020, is primarily due to the planned computerization of its office and its centers around the country.</p> <p>Bautista also presented the top priority programs of the Department for FY 2020, which include: the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps); Social Pension for Indigent Senior Citizens (SPISC); Supplementary Feeding Program; Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan - Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services - National Community Driven Development Program (KALAHI-CIDSS NCDDP); Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA Program); and the Implementation of RA 10868 or the Centenarian Act of 2016.</p> <p>On the query of Quirino Rep. Junie Cua and Rep. Edcel Lagman (1st District, Albay) on the effectiveness of the 4Ps program, DSWD Undersecretary Aimee Torrefanca-Neri said that the program's success may be gleaned from the reduced number of families living below the poverty line, from 26.6% in 2006 to 21.6% in 2015.</p> <p>With regard to the delayed payouts to beneficiaries under the 4Ps and the SPISC, Torrefanca-Neri attributed this to the delayed approval of the 2019 General Appropriations Act (GAA) as well as the limitations faced by the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) as the only bank authorized to conduct payouts. However, Torrefanca-Neri assured the Members that obligations for 2019 have already been programmed for completion by the first quarter of 2020; and conduits have been authorized to supplement Land Bank's systems especially in areas where there are no ATM facilities.</p> <p>Replying to the query of Deputy Speaker Mujiv Hataman (Basilan) on the transfer of the NCIP from the supervision of the Office of the President (OP) to the DSWD, NCIP Chairperson Allen Capuyan 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 its offices.</p> <p>Several Members present agreed to increase the proposed FY 2020 budget of the DSWD in order for it to pursue its mandate more effectively and to create additional permanent positions particularly for employees involved in the implementation of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Program most of whom are employed on a contractual basis.</p> <p>The DSWD officials assured the Members that concerns affecting their respective districts will be looked into and addressed.</p>
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AGENCY BRIEFING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Justice	Briefing of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) on the implementation of the good conduct time allowance (GCTA) under RA 10592 or the law	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Vicente "Ching" Veloso III (3 rd District, Leyte), listened to the briefing of the DOJ and BuCor on the manner of implementation of the GCTA provided for under RA 10592.

<p>Continuation... Justice</p>	<p>amending Articles 29, 94, 97, 98 and 99 of Act 3815, as amended, otherwise known as the Revised Penal Code (RPC)</p>	<p>Under the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of RA 10592, GCTA is defined as “a privilege granted to a prisoner, whether detained or convicted by final judgment, entitling him to a reduction of his jail or prison term for every month of actual detention or service of sentence as a reward for good conduct and exemplary behavior.”</p> <p>DOJ Undersecretary Deo Marco presented the timeline pertaining to the crafting and implementation of the law. He said RA 10592 was enacted into law in 2013, which essentially amended the provisions on time allowances prescribed under the Revised Penal Code. In 2014, the DOJ and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) promulgated the IRR of the law, which included a provision that the application of the law shall be prospective.</p> <p>This prompted several groups and individuals including the families of jailed/detained persons to question the legality of the IRR. The petitioners told the Supreme Court (SC) that the prospective application of the law, as contained in the IRR, violates Article 22 of the RPC, which provides for retroactive effect of penal laws.</p> <p>The DOJ Undersecretary added that in June 2019, the Supreme Court issued a ruling nullifying the said portion of the IRR, reverting it to a retroactive application, which thus allows all prisoners serving their sentence or undergoing preventive imprisonment prior to the enactment of the law to qualify for the time allowances under RA 10592.</p> <p>Since the SC’s decision, Marco said, the BuCor started processing applications for good conduct time allowance of prisoners including those accused of heinous crimes. He made it clear, however, that the DOJ’s position regarding the implementation of GCTA is that four types of convicts cannot qualify under it, as mentioned in Section 1 of the law, namely: the recidivists, habitual delinquents, escapees, and persons charged with heinous crimes.</p> <p>In the case of former Calauan, Laguna Mayor Antonio Sanchez, a rape and murder convict, Marco informed the body that DOJ Secretary Menardo Guevarra already suspended the implementation of the GCTA until after the completion of the task of the technical working group (TWG) created to study the law to address its ambiguities and prevent further misinterpretation by the implementing agencies.</p> <p>Meanwhile, BuCor Public Information Office chief Eusebio del Rosario presented to the Committee data on the number of persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) who were released based on GCTA: From 2013 to August 2019, 18,285 PDLs were released, of whom 2,160 were charged with heinous crimes.</p> <p>Committee Members chided BuCor for allowing the early release of persons convicted with heinous crimes based on GCTA. BuCor Directorate for Security and Operations Director Melencio Faustino explained that the BuCor only carried out the provisions of the law and its IRR, as well as the Uniform Manual on Time Allowances and Service of Sentence being observed by the BuCor, the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, and the local jail authorities.</p> <p>Several Members were not convinced that the BuCor interpreted and implemented the law according to its true intent.</p> <p>Rep. Veloso requested the DOJ and the BuCor to submit the documents that were requested of them in its next meeting.</p>
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