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COMMITTEE MEETINGS				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Appropriations	HB 4228	Rep. Ungab	Appropriating funds for the operation of the government of the Republic of the Philippines from January 1 to December 31, 2020	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Isidro Ungab (3 rd District, Davao City), approved the Committee Report on HB 4228 or the FY 2020 General Appropriations Bill.
	Substitute Bill to HBs 305, 343, 815, 1616, 1782, 1908, 2085, 2400, 3358, 3368, 3566 & 3668	Reps. Salceda, Romualdo, Biazon, Deputy Speaker Gonzales (N.), Rep. Salo, Deputy Speaker Villafuerte, Reps. Cua, Suansing (E.), Hofer, Garin (S.), Sarmiento, and Plaza	Instituting reforms in real property valuation and assessment in the Philippines, reorganizing the Bureau of Local Government Finance (BLGF), and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to the 12 bills.</p> <p>The proposed Real Property Valuation and Assessment Reform Act is the Package 3 of the government's Comprehensive Tax Reform Program (CTRP). It aims to introduce vital reforms to promote the development of a just, equitable, and efficient real property valuation system.</p> <p>A bill with similar subject matter was approved on Third Reading by the House during the 17th Congress.</p>
Higher and Technical Education	HB 3744	Rep. Rodriguez (R.)	Declaring May 18 of every year as National Higher Education Day	<p>The Committee, chaired by Baguio City Rep. Mark Go, approved HB 3744.</p> <p>Rep. Rufus Rodriguez (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City), author of HB 3744, said that the proposed measure gives due recognition to higher education's contribution to national progress.</p> <p>Reyen Sabate, head of the Coordination and Governance Division of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), expressed his support for the bill. Sabate said that the bill will highlight the achievements of the higher education sector in the country.</p> <p>Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges (PASUC) President Tirso Ronquillo also expressed support for the bill.</p>
	HBs 1458 & 3054	Reps. Yu and Babasa	Changing the name of J.H. Cerilles State College in the Province of Zamboanga del Sur to Zamboanga del Sur State College, amending for the purpose RA 9159	The Committee approved the bills and the corresponding Committee Report.
	HBs 524, 2021, 2446, 2604 & 2767	Reps. Aglipay, Vargas, Deputy Speaker Villafuerte, Reps. Acop and Rodriguez (R.)	Providing guidelines for the establishment and operation of local colleges and universities (LCUs)	<p>The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to consolidate the bills.</p> <p>Expressing support for the bill, Association of Local Colleges and Universities-Commission on Accreditation (ALCU-COA) President Raymundo Arcega said that the guidelines and standards for the establishment and operation of LCUs will help ensure quality education for students and will make LCUs at</p>

Continuation... Higher and Technical Education				<p>par with state universities and colleges and private schools.</p> <p>The Committee requested Arcega to submit the board examination passing rates of LCUs in the past five years as well as ALCU-COA's position paper on the proposed law.</p> <p>Both the CHED and PASUC representatives interposed no objection to the bill.</p>
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FORUM		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Rural Development	Forum on the Global State of Biotechnology	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Elisa "Olga" Kho (2nd District, Masbate), in partnership with the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), conducted a forum entitled "Global State of Biotechnology" on September 9, 2019 at the House of Representatives.</p> <p>Rep. Kho said that the purpose of the forum is to raise awareness of the benefits of biotechnology particularly to rural farmers as it has been proven to have increased crop yields and farm income.</p> <p>In his welcome remarks, US Embassy Attaché for Agriculture Ryan Bedford said that the Foreign Agriculture Service of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA-FAS) is looking forward to partnering with the Philippines in providing technical and credit assistance to farmers and those in the food sector who are interested in using genetically modified organisms (GMO). He said that the US is a major buyer of coconut oil, sugar and seafood products from the Philippines.</p> <p>Biotechnology Coalition of the Philippines Chair and President Saturnina Halos gave a presentation on what biotechnology is, current trends in the country, and issues and concerns on biotechnology. She said that Biotechnology is a modern technology that uses biological systems, living organisms or derivatives thereof to make, modify or improve products or processes for specific use. Under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), an international treaty to which the Philippines is a signatory, biotechnology has three main goals: conservation of biodiversity; sustainable use of biodiversity; and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.</p> <p>According to Halos, the common modern biotechnology products are the following: human insulin for diabetic therapy; hepatitis B vaccines; interferons for anti-cancer, pest resistant Bt corn; in vitro fertilization (IVF) for infertility solution; and stem cells for medical enhancement or treatment procedures. She said that Bt corn is the only crop approved in the Philippines for biotechnology application. More farmers are planting Bt corn for its proven benefits, primary of which is its resistance to corn borer, the number one destructive pest in corn. Halos added that aside from pest resistance, other benefits of planting Bt corn are the prospects of improved crop yield, better grain quality, lesser production cost, higher income, and availability of financing.</p> <p>Dr. Richard Torno, an award-winning farmer, shared his experience in planting Bt corn in his province which has increased his production and earnings.</p>

<p><i>Continuation...</i> Rural Development</p>		<p>Similarly, Dr. Carl Ramage, Rautaki Solutions' Managing Director for Asia Pacific, shared his experience in supporting the development of novel agricultural biotechnology (agbiotech) products in Australia. He also said that his team at Rautaki Solutions would be willing to extend its support to the country in terms of providing technical and credit assistance to farmers.</p> <p>Rautaki Solutions is a consulting business based in Australia and United Kingdom that provides a range of services across many sectors which include research and development for life science products.</p> <p>During the open forum, Rep. Wilfredo Caminero (2nd District, Cebu) asked how and where the farmers can buy lower-priced Bt corn seeds considering that the cost has now gone up to P12,000 per hectare. Halos replied that the farmers, through their cooperatives or associations, can purchase the seeds in bulk directly from the manufacturers at half the price. Farmers may also avail themselves of loans from Landbank or from the Department of Agriculture (DA) and other agricultural agencies.</p> <p>Several Members suggested the creation of a loan fund under the DA for the purpose of extending interest-free loans to farmers.</p> <p>In her closing remarks, Rep. Kho expressed her gratitude to the resource persons and guests who participated in the forum and assured them that the Committee will continue to support initiatives that promote biotechnology for the benefit of the farmers and the agricultural sector.</p>
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