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COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Appropriations	Substitute Bill to HBs 1622, 478, 507, 1939, 2538, 2661, 3088, 3513, 3533, 3703, 3902, 3911, 4040, 4242, 4782, 4971, 5059, 5497, 5708, 5819 & 6051	Reps. Fortun, Brosas, Barbers, Pineda, Deputy Speaker Gonzales (A.), Reps. Sy-Alvarado, Villaraza-Suarez, Aragones, Castelo, Deputy Speakers Fernandez, Legarda, and Hernandez, Reps. Abaya, Guico, Nieto, Agabas, Delos Santos, Pacquiao (A.), Vargas, and Deputy Speaker Villafuerte	Granting additional benefits to solo parents, amending for the purpose RA 8972, otherwise known as the Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2000	<p>The Committee, presided by its Vice Chair, Quirino Rep. Junie Cua, approved with amendment the substitute bill to the 21 measures, subject to style.</p> <p>Rep. Cheryl Deloso-Montalla (2nd District, Zambales), Chair of the Committee on Revision of Laws from where the bill originated, said that the proposed Solo Parent Welfare Act seeks to grant additional benefits to solo parents to aid them in raising their children to become responsible and productive members of the society. She added that the bill is one of the President's priority measures.</p> <p>The Committee adopted the language of the funding provision proposed by Committee Vice Chair Rep. Ruwel Peter Gonzaga (2nd District, Compostela Valley).</p>
	Substitute Bill to HBs 6122 and 6958	Reps. Gatchalian and Garbin	Providing protection to consumers and merchants engaged in internet transactions, creating for the purpose the Electronic Commerce Bureau, and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee approved with amendment the Substitute Bill to HBs 6122 and 6958, subject to style.</p> <p>Rep. Wes Gatchalian (1st District, Valenzuela City), author of HB 6122 and Chair of the Committee on Trade and Industry from where the Substitute Bill originated, said that in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a growing dependence on online transactions. To protect both online merchants and consumers, the proposed law seeks to create the Electronic Commerce Bureau which will be under the Department of Trade and Industry and shall serve as a virtual one-stop shop for consumer complaints on internet transactions. The proposed Bureau shall take measures to build the trust between consumers and sellers to promote eCommerce growth. The proposed law is likewise a priority bill of the President.</p> <p>The Committee adopted the language of the funding provision proposed by Rep. Gonzaga.</p>
	Substitute Bill to HB 6795	Rep. Cua	Providing for Government Financial Institutions Unified Initiatives to Distressed Enterprises for Economic Recovery (GUIDE)	<p>The Committee approved with amendment the Substitute Bill to HB 6795 subject to style.</p> <p>The proposed law seeks to capacitate the Land Bank of the Philippines, Development Bank of the Philippines, and the Philippine Guarantee Corporation by increasing their</p>

Continuation... Appropriations				paid-up capital in order for them to expand the support to the credit needs of the micro, small and medium enterprises and other strategically important enterprises during the time of pandemic.
Health	HBs 2880, 3879, 3880 & 7146	Reps. Hofer, Bautista-Bandigan, and Singson-Meehan	Establishing general, tertiary, and community hospitals in certain parts of the country and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Angelina "Helen" Tan, M.D. (4 th District, Quezon), approved the five bills subject to style and amendment and compliance with the requirements set by the Department of Health (DOH).
	HB 2883	Rep. Malapitan	Renaming the Dr. Jose N. Rodriguez Memorial Hospital in the City of Caloocan into Dr. Jose N. Rodriguez Medical Center, and appropriating funds therefor, amending for the purpose Batas Pambansa Blg. 94, or the law renaming the Central Luzon Sanitarium at Tala, City of Caloocan, as Dr. Jose N. Rodriguez Memorial Hospital	The Committee approved HB 2883 subject to style and amendment and compliance with the requirements set by the DOH.
	HBs 3066, 3067, 3076 & 4477	Reps. Umali, Espino, and Tan (S.A.)	Converting/increasing the bed capacity of hospitals in certain parts of the country and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee approved the four bills subject to style and amendment and compliance with the requirements set by the DOH.
	HB 6859	Speaker Cayetano	Establishing a level 2 hospital in the Municipality of Bocaue, Province of Bulacan, to be known as the Joni Villanueva General Hospital, and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee approved HB 6859 subject to style and amendment and compliance with the requirements set by the DOH.</p> <p>Rep. Estrellita Suansing (1st District, Nueva Ecija), sponsored HB 6859 in behalf of Speaker Alan Peter "Compañero" Cayetano (1st District, Taguig City-Pateros). She conveyed to the body the Speaker's request to change the name of the proposed hospital to Joni Villanueva General Hospital in honor of the late Bocaue, Bulacan Mayor Eleanor "Joni" Villanueva-Tugna, who succumbed to bacterial pneumonia on May 28, 2020. She was the sister of Senator Joel Villanueva and daughter of Deputy Speaker Eduardo "Bro. Eddie" Villanueva (Party-List, CIBAC).</p> <p>Originally, HB 6859 seeks to establish a level 2 hospital in the Municipality of Bocaue, Province of Bulacan, to be known as the Joaquin Villanueva Hospital.</p>
HBs 6809, 6821, 7007, 7157, 7267, 7274, 7331, 7361, 7365 & 7383	Reps. Tambunting, Suarez (D.), Deputy Speaker Villafuerte, Reps. Vargas, Rodriguez, Daza, Tan (A.), Yu, Suansing (E.), and Chipeco	Instituting the medical reserve corps (MRC), appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to study further the ten bills.</p> <p>Rep. Tan, author of HB 7331, said that her bill seeks to create and develop the MRC under the Health Emergency Management Bureau (HEMB) of the DOH to address the weaknesses of the country's healthcare system, one of which is its inability to cope with the surge of patients needing medical care due to lack of medically-trained personnel. The bill also aims to strengthen the national preparedness and response of the government to public health emergencies.</p>	

Continuation... Health				<p>According to Rep. Tan, the need for medical reservists was highlighted by the recent distress call of dozens of medical groups to revert the National Capital Region to enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) because of the surge in COVID-19 cases. The medical groups said that the shift to ECQ will give the government the time to recalibrate its COVID-19 strategies and will give the already overwhelmed medical frontliners a little time to rest. (The government responded by declaring the NCR and nearby provinces back to modified ECQ from August 4-18.)</p> <p>Rep. Suansing, author of HB 7365, informed the body that the proposed law is among the priority legislations that the President mentioned during his State of the Nation Address last month, and urged its immediate passage into law.</p> <p>Expressing their support for the bills were the DOH, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Philippine Medical Association (PMA), and the Philippine Nurses Association (PNA).</p> <p>The DOH recommended that the proposed MRC should not be limited to licensed medical professionals but should also include graduates with degrees in medicine, nursing, medical technology, and other related fields.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the PMA encouraged the recruitment of doctors in the military with lenient requirements and suggested that paramedical studies or trainings be included in the general education curriculum in college so that more students will be enticed to pursue medical courses.</p> <p>The Department of National Defense and the Office of Civil Defense committed to submit their official position papers.</p>
Food Security (Special Committee)	Substitute Bill to HBs 2031, 2186, 2189, 3342, 3370, 3849, 3973, 4450, 4465, 4524, 4616, 4903, 5467, 5974, 6468 & 6474	Rep. Sy-Alvarado, Deputy Speaker Legarda, Reps. Castelo, Herrera-Dy, Garin (S.), Agabas, Deputy Speaker Villafuerte, Reps. Salo, Crisologo, Nieto, Peña, Deputy Speaker Villanueva, Reps. Suntay, Dy (F.), and Villar	Reducing food surplus through food donations and food waste recycling	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Wilfredo "Willy" Caminero (2nd District, Cebu), approved the substitute bill to the 16 bills.</p> <p>World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines representative Vittina Valenzuela presented its proposed food sharing model which the Committee can consider in drafting the bill.</p> <p>WWF-Philippines works to improve Filipino lives by crafting solutions to climate change, providing sustainable livelihood programs, and conserving the country's richest marine and land habitats. (<i>Source: wwf.org.ph</i>)</p> <p>Resource persons from Rise Against Hunger, Simply Share Foundation, and the University of the Philippines College of Public Health expressed their support to the bill.</p>

Continuation... Food Security (Special Committee)				On designating the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) as the lead implementing agency, Rep. Jesus "Bong" Suntay (4 th District, Quezon City), author of HB 5974, recalled that the DSWD has previously expressed its concern that it may not be able to effectively implement the program due to lack of personnel and their vulnerability to infection while rendering services amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.
Local Government	HB 1803	Deputy Speaker Savellano,	Declaring March 19 of every year a special nonworking holiday in the province of Ilocos Sur to commemorate the birth anniversary of the great Ilocano revolutionary Gabriela Silang to be known as the Gabriela Silang Day	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Noel Villanueva (3rd District, Tarlac), approved the HB 1803 with amendment. The Secretariat was directed to prepare the corresponding Committee Report.</p> <p>Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Undersecretary Ricojudge Janvier Echiverri interposed no objection to the proposed measure. He suggested that Section 1 be amended to reflect that March 19 is the birth date of Gabriela Silang and not February 2 as originally stated in the bill.</p> <p>National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) OIC-Deputy Executive Director for Programs and Projects Alvin Alcoid revealed that the NHCP has no primary and credible source to validate the birthdate of Gabriela Silang.</p> <p>Nueva Vizcaya Rep. Luisa Lloren Cuaresma, who sponsored the measure in behalf of Deputy Speaker Deogracias Victor "DV" Savellano (1st District, Ilocos Sur), said that records from the archives of Ilocos Sur show that March 19 is indeed Silang's birthdate. She assured that the Office of the Deputy Speaker will provide NHCP a copy of these records.</p>
	HBs 4058, 4604, 5024, 6084, 6552, 6794, 7069, 7252 & 7253	Reps. Fariñas (R.C.), Collantes, Tan (S.A.), Gorriceta, Velasco, Cuaresma, Yap (V.) and Deputy Speaker Oaminal	Declaring special nonworking holidays in certain parts of the country to commemorate special events	The Committee approved the nine bills. The Secretariat was directed to prepare the corresponding Committee Reports.
	HB 5956	Rep. Co (A. N.)	Declaring April 7 of every year as a Barangay Health Workers' Day	<p>The Committee approved HB 5956. The Secretariat was directed to prepare the corresponding Committee Report.</p> <p>The DILG and the NHCP expressed support for the proposed law.</p>
	HB 6150	Rep. Umali (A.)	Declaring November 15 of every year as a special-nonworking holiday in the province of Oriental Mindoro to be known as "Araw ng Oriental Mindoro"	<p>The Committee approved HB 6150 with amendment. The Secretariat was directed to prepare the Committee Report.</p> <p>The DILG and the NHCP expressed support for the measure.</p>

Continuation... Local Government				The Committee agreed to amend Section 1 to reflect that November 15 will be known as the "Araw ng Oriental Mindoro" instead of "Fiesta MAHAL TANA," which was originally stated in the bill.
	HBs 3122, 3964, 3965, 3966, 3967, 3968, 3969 & 4630	Reps. Tejada, Siao, and Fortun	Creating barangays in certain parts of the country	<p>The Committee approved the eight bills. The Secretariat was directed to prepare the corresponding Committee Reports.</p> <p>Rep. Villanueva pointed out that creating barangays through legislation will entitle them a fair share of the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) from the national government. Under RA 7160 or the Local Government Code, the financial requirements of barangays created by virtue of a local ordinance shall be shouldered by the local government units (LGUs) which created them.</p> <p>Agreeing to the statement of Rep. Villanueva, Echiverri proposed to the Committee to revive the bill filed in the previous Congress that seeks to amend the pertinent provision in the Local Government Code to avoid cases wherein barangays, created by virtue of a local ordinance, operate without getting their just share of the IRA. Echiverri added that there is a long list of barangays that are seeking to be created through an act of Congress.</p> <p>In this light, Deputy Speaker Henry Oaminal (2nd District, Misamis Occidental) committed to re-file the bill as proposed by Echiverri to address the issue and give justice to the other barangays that were created through an ordinance.</p>
	HB 5961	Rep. Malapitan	Reapportioning the First Legislative District of the City Caloocan	<p>The Committee approved HB 5961. The Secretariat was directed to prepare the corresponding Committee Report.</p> <p>Rep. Dale "Along" Malapitan (1st District, Caloocan City), author of HB 5961, said that his bill seeks to reapportion the First Legislative District of Caloocan City to provide the constituents of Caloocan proportionate representation in the House of Representatives. Rep. Malapitan said that with its current population, the City of Caloocan is largely underrepresented and the interest of the people is not fully promoted and protected. He said that consultations with the concerned LGU down to the barangay level have been conducted prior to the filing of the proposed law. He went on to say that the necessary documentary requirements for the reapportioning have been complied with.</p> <p>Rep. Edgar Erice (2nd District, Caloocan City) said that he is not opposed to the intent of the bill but noted that the proposed reapportionment of the first district is grossly disproportional. He explained that while the First Legislative District covers 59 barangays with a total of around 893,000 population, the</p>

Continuation... Local Government				<p>proposed new district (third district) will only have 11 barangays with around 300,000 population. Rep. Erice suggested that in reapportioning the legislative districts, the barangays should be distributed proportionately.</p> <p>Reps. Faustino "Inno" Dy V (6th District, Isabela) and Anthony Peter "Onyx" Crisologo (1st District, Quezon City) expressed support for the bill.</p> <p>Echiverri said that the DILG will support the reapportionment of the districts of Caloocan City considering that it has the second highest population in Metro Manila.</p>
	HB 5930	Rep. Tolentino	Delineating the territorial boundaries of Tagaytay City, amending for the purpose RA 1418 (transferring to the Municipality of Talisay, Province of Batangas, its former barrios of Caloocan and Birinayan which were annexed to the City of Tagaytay), and RA 9024 or the Charter of the City of Calamba	<p>The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to thresh out issues pertaining to the territorial boundaries of the affected LGUs.</p> <p>Upon the suggestion of Calamba City Rep. Joaquin Chipeco Jr., the Secretariat was directed to invite the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Land Management Bureau (DENR-LMB), the National Mapping Resources Information Authority (NAMRIA), and officials of concerned LGUs to attend the next TWG meeting to know their position regarding the proposed law.</p>
Public Accounts jt. w/ Good Government and Public Accountability	HRs 1066, 1068, 1069, 1073 & 1074	Reps. Tambunting, Barbers, Defensor (M.), Vargas, and Zarate	Investigation into the alleged corruption in the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth)	<p>The Joint Committee, chaired by Rep. Michael Defensor (Party-List, ANAKALUSUGAN), Chair of the Committee on Public Accounts, and Rep. "Kuya" Jose Antonio Sy-Alvarado (1st District, Bulacan), Chair of the Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability, will continue its inquiry pursuant to the five resolutions in its next meeting.</p> <p>In today's meeting, the Joint Committee focused its discussion on the cases of erring PhilHealth employees filed with the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and the various schemes that were allegedly used by PhilHealth employees in collusion with private individuals or entities to defraud the state-run health insurance corporation.</p> <p>Rep. Defensor asked about the number of cases filed against PhilHealth officials that are still pending with the CSC.</p> <p>CSC Assistant Commissioner Ariel Ronquillo – whom CSC Chairperson Alicia dela Rosa-Bala deputized to represent her in today's meeting – failed to provide the information.</p> <p>This prompted Rep. Defensor to directly ask CSC Commissioner Aileen Lourdes Lizada if there is an internal directive to CSC employees to suppress information relative to the Joint Committee's PhilHealth investigation.</p>

<p>Continuation... Public Accounts jt. w/ Good Government and Public Accountability</p>				<p>Lizada disclosed that during a CSC meeting, there was a “verbal guidance” from Dela Rosa-Bala not to disclose to anyone who would be asking either for investigation or in aid of legislation, the details of the pending administrative cases against PhilHealth officials. The meeting, she said, happened after President Rodrigo Roa Duterte issued a memorandum on August 7 ordering the Department of Justice (DOJ) to form a task force to investigate the anomalies in PhilHealth. Lizada added that there are at least 74 cases filed from 2010 to 2020 against PhilHealth officials that are still pending with the CSC.</p> <p>Ronquillo denied Lizada’s statements and clarified that Dela Rosa-Bala’s “guidance” was made in order not to prematurely reveal to the public any information about the pending administrative cases against PhilHealth officials so that the matter “will not go out of hand.”</p> <p>Upon the motion of Rep. Lawrence "Law" Fortun (1st District, Agusan del Norte), the Joint Committee agreed to issue subpoena <i>duces tecum</i> on the recording, transcript, and minutes of the CSC meeting mentioned by Lizada.</p> <p>Rep. Elpidio Barzaga Jr. (4th District, Cavite) informed the body that the PhilHealth provided him the data he requested regarding claims on pneumonia and dialysis, as well as the claims of overseas Filipino workers. However, he was asked to sign a mutual non-disclosure agreement indicating that the information will not be shared to anyone. This, he said, is contrary to the exemption under RA 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012 which provides that the prohibition in the processing of sensitive personal information and privileged information shall not apply when such information is needed by government or public authority in the performance of its function.</p> <p>PhilHealth President and CEO Ricardo Morales clarified that his instruction to PhilHealth officials is to accommodate the government’s requests for information with regard to investigations into accusations of corruption against PhilHealth.</p> <p>Rep. Robert Ace Barbers (2nd District, Surigao del Norte) cited two instances wherein PhilHealth was defrauded by unscrupulous employees of the agency. He mentioned the Accenture case wherein the premium payments of the employees of Accenture in 2010 amounting to P114 million were not remitted to PhilHealth.</p> <p>National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Anti-Fraud Division Executive Officer Minerva Retanal said that PhilHealth requested NBI to</p>
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<p>Continuation... Public Accounts jt. w/ Good Government and Public Accountability</p>				<p>assist in investigating the non-remittance of Accenture's PhilHealth premiums. Retanal said that instead of remitting the checks issued by Accenture Inc. to PhilHealth, they were diverted to various bank accounts in two Metrobank branches in Batangas. The NBI faced a blank wall in its investigation because of RA 1405 or the Bank Secrecy Law and the absence of complainants from PhilHealth, Accenture, and Metrobank. What happened was that PhilHealth and Accenture just arrived at an amicable settlement allowing the latter to pay only 95% of the premiums due and demandable.</p> <p>Retanal also confirms the statement of Rep. Barbers that the killings of two former Metrobank employees were in connection with the Accenture case.</p> <p>PhilHealth Corporate Secretary Atty. Jonathan Mangaoang confirmed that PhilHealth did not pursue any criminal case against the persons involved in the Accenture case. He added that in the July 2012 PhilHealth Board Resolution with regard to the settlement, there was no mention who paid the 95% of the unremitted P114 million.</p> <p>PhilHealth Senior Vice President of Legal Sector Rodolfo del Rosario, on the other hand, said that the case on the non-remittance of Accenture premium contributions was not turned over to him when he became the head of the Legal Sector of PhilHealth.</p> <p>The Joint Committee then agreed to issue subpoena <i>duces tecum</i> on all documents pertaining to Accenture case.</p> <p>Another case that was raised by Rep. Barbers was the erroneous crediting of PhilHealth funds amounting to P9.7 million to Balanga Rural Bank in Bataan. The amount was supposed to be deposited to the account of B. Braun Avitum Dialysis Center as part of PhilHealth's Interim Reimbursement Mechanism (IRM).</p> <p>Based on PhilHealth Circular No. 2020-0007, the IRM is a "special privilege for the provision of substantial aid to an eligible Health Care Institution directly hit by fortuitous event with clear and apparent intent to continuously operate and/or rebuild the HCI in order to provide continuous health care services to adversely affected Filipinos."</p> <p>PhilHealth Internal Legal Department Senior Manager Rogelio Pocallan said that it was Morales, not Del Rosario, who instructed him to meet with the officers of the Balanga Rural Bank to recover the P9.7million which was erroneously credited to the bank. He added that there is an ongoing investigation on the matter.</p>
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Continuation... Public Accounts jt. w/ Good Government and Public Accountability				<p>Deputy Speaker Rodante Marcoleta (Party-List, SAGIP) revealed that Cardinal Santos Medical Center (CSMC) owes PhilHealth P240 million in overpayments of insurance claims. However, he continued, PhilHealth's legal team led by former PhilHealth Senior Vice President for Legal Sector Edgardo Julio Asuncion agreed with Hospital Managers Inc.'s (HMI) offer to just pay P70 million. The HMI was the previous manager of the CSMC.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Marcoleta, together with Rep. Defensor and Rep. Jesus Crispin Remulla (7th District, Cavite) directed the NBI to see whether the filing of plunder charges is warranted against Asuncion, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila, the owner of the CSMC, and the HMI.</p>
Suffrage and Electoral Reforms	HB 69	Rep. Barbers	Amending Sections 9 and 27 of RA 8189, otherwise known as the Voter's Registration Act of 1996 (by requiring the presentation of proof of residence for the purpose of voter registration and by removing the provision disenfranchising registered voters who failed to vote in two succeeding regular elections)	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Juliet Marie Ferrer (4th District, Negros Occidental), agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to draft a substitute bill to the three bills.</p> <p>The TWG will be chaired by Rep. Cyrille "Beng" Abueg-Zaldivar (2nd District, Palawan).</p> <p>Rep. Domingo Rivera (Party-List, CIBAC) proposes that the following provisions be incorporated in the bill:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To obligate anyone who will transfer registration to submit an affidavit from three persons, not his or her relatives, registered in the same precinct where his new residence is to confirm his or her residency; and • To empower the COMELEC to conduct <i>motu proprio</i> investigations in order to ascertain the veracity of transfer applications. <p>Rep. Rivera averred that the residency requirement under the Constitution is often circumvented, especially during barangay elections when rampant transfer of registration occurs to help a particular candidate win. He cited the Constitution which provides that all Filipino citizens, not otherwise disqualified by law, who shall have resided in the country for at least one year and in the barangay where they propose to vote for at least six months, may apply for registration.</p> <p>Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA) lauded the intent of the proposed law, but noted that the stringent requirements on registration may result in disenfranchisement of voters. He expressed confidence that the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) can effectively address the problem and may not necessitate the passing of a new law.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Aurelio "Dong" Gonzales Jr. (3rd District, Pampanga) favors the proposed repeal of the provision on automatic</p>
	HB 578	Deputy Speaker Villanueva	Strengthening the procedure for registration of voters during barangay elections, amending for the purpose RA 8189	
	HB 7063	Majority Leader Romualdez	Adopting a system of online registration of voters, amending for this purpose Sections 8 and 10 of RA 8189	

<p>Continuation... Suffrage and Electoral Reforms</p>				<p>deactivation of a voter's registration for failing to vote in consecutive regular elections.</p> <p>COMELEC Legal Counsel Rozanne Dela Cruz-Reyes proposed to add "such other proofs of residence acceptable to the Commission" in the enumeration on proof of residence to allow the COMELEC some flexibility.</p> <p>Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) Board Member Arwin Serrano manifested that the Election Registration Board (ERB) should meet monthly or bi-monthly to speed up the validation of a huge number of applications for registration. Serrano further proposed that the PPCRV be allowed to file a petition for inclusion or exclusion of voters from the voter registration "free of charge."</p> <p>Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) legal officer Omar Sana expressed his support for the bills and suggested that reference to the Data Privacy Act be included in the bill to safeguard the data or information gathered during voters' registration.</p> <p>Meanwhile, National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) Secretary General Eric Jude Alvia questioned the inclusion of tax declaration as proof of residence, arguing that such is a proof of ownership of a property and not of the actual residency.</p> <p>Atty. Helen Graido, special operations head of LENTE Philippines, expressed her objection to HB 69, claiming that the country's electoral system has enough safeguards to thwart any fraud, and that the COMELEC is capable of detecting double or multiple registration of voters because of the biometrics capturing requirement. LENTE or Legal Network for Truthful Elections is the first nationwide network of volunteer lawyers, law students, and paralegals working for truthful elections in the Philippines. (Source: lente_ph)</p> <p>In reply to the query of Rep. Virgilio Lacson (Party-List, MANILA TEACHERS), COMELEC Director of the Election and Barangay Affairs Department Teopisto Elnas Jr. posited that a law allowing voting by mail and advance voting during local elections has to be passed to address the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Elnas said that the online registration of voters as espoused in HB 7063 is a welcome development, since applicants no longer need to personally visit COMELEC offices to register and undergo biometrics.</p>
<p>Veterans Affairs and Welfare</p>	<p>HB 2603</p>	<p>Rep. Acop</p>	<p>Declaring the Board of Trustees of the Veterans of World War II (BTVWWII) as a public office and the funds entrusted to it</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Geraldine Roman (1st District, Bataan), approved HB 2603 subject to style and amendment.</p>

Continuation... Veterans Affairs and Welfare			as public funds, amending for the purpose RA 3518 or the law creating the Philippine Veterans Bank (PVB)	<p>Rep. Resurreccion Acop (2nd District, Antipolo City), author of HB 2603, said that her bill seeks to declare the BTVWWII as a public office and the funds entrusted to it as public funds to finally clear all doubts on the character of the BTVWWII and the nature of the trust fund under the Board's administration. She added that declaring the trust fund as a public fund would allow the Commission on Audit (COA) to conduct the necessary audit of the fund and its disbursements for the sake of transparency and public accountability.</p> <p>Several Members expressed their support for the bill, especially the conduct of an audit that would determine whether the funds are distributed to the intended beneficiaries who are the WWII veterans and their families.</p> <p>Also expressing their support for the bill were the COA and the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO).</p> <p>On the other hand, BTVWWII Executive Trustee and Chief Operating Officer Joel Joseph Cabides objected to the bill, emphasizing that the BTVWWII trust fund is a private fund that is sourced from the individual contributions of the WWII veterans. However, he said that the BTVWWII may be audited as long as it is within the bounds of the law.</p> <p>Likewise, Cabides opposed the declaration of the BTVWWII as a public office to be placed under the Department of National Defense (DND) or the PVAO. He reiterated that for years, the BTVWWII has functioned without support from the national government.</p> <p>Under RA 1789 or the Reparations Act, the cash reparations from Japan were set aside into a special trust fund for the use of WWII veterans and their families. The trust fund was then invested in a bank to better service the needs of the veterans and their families, thus the Philippine Veterans Bank (PVB) was created by virtue of RA 3518.</p> <p>PVB Director Federico Manalo concurred with Cabides that the trust fund is a private commercial fund, but he also admitted that the PVB is a government depository bank.</p> <p>The Veterans Federation of the Philippines said that it will abide by the position of the DND Secretary.</p>
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AGENCY BRIEFING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Mindanao Affairs	Briefing by the following government agencies on the status of the Mindanao power grid and the implementation of RA 9136, otherwise known as the	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Mohamad Khalid Dimaporo (1 st District, Lanao del Norte), listened to the briefing conducted by government agencies involved in the energy sector and in

<p>Continuation... Mindanao Affairs</p>		<p>from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) amounting to P145.84 million for the recovery of these ailing ECs.</p> <p>According to Masongsong, NEA was also able to secure a grant amounting to 4.5 million Euros from the European Union-Philippines to Sustainable Energy Programme (EU-ASEP), which will cover electrification, renewable energy development, and livelihood projects in Mindanao. (The EU-ASEP assists the DOE and stakeholders in the energy sector to resolve regulatory and administrative issues that hinder the government from attaining its electrification targets and from establishing a sustainable electricity market.)</p> <p>Rep. Dimaporo inquired if the operation of the MVIP will cause a spike in the electricity rates in Mindanao. Marasigan said that the power rates will in fact go down rather than increase since the project will produce more electricity and will even have extra supply that can be sold to the Visayas.</p> <p>Rep. Rosanna "Ria" Vergara (3rd District, Nueva Ecija) asked whether the Solar Para Sa Bayan Corporation has already implemented energy projects in the remote areas in Mindanao pursuant to RA 11357. This law, enacted in 2018, grants Solar Para Sa Bayan Corporation a franchise to construct, install, establish, operate, and maintain distributed energy resources and micro grids in the remote and unviable, or unserved or underserved areas in selected provinces of the Philippines to improve access to sustainable energy.</p> <p>What Montenegro said instead was that preparations are underway for the MinDA and EU-funded solar power electrification project which involves the installation of solar electricity facilities in isolated and off grid areas in Mindanao.</p> <p>Rep. Sergio Dagooc (Party-List, APEC) stressed the need to implement more power projects in the BARMM where mostly off-grid areas rely only on generators provided by the NPC. Rep. Dagooc added that a stable electric supply will greatly improve the socio-economic condition of the BARMM and its people.</p>
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