



# Congressional Record

PLENARY PROCEEDINGS OF THE 18<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST REGULAR SESSION

## House of Representatives

Vol. 4

Monday, February 24, 2020

No. 47

### CALL TO ORDER

*At 3:00 p.m., Deputy Speaker Johnny Ty Pimentel called the session to order.*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The session is called to order.

Please rise for the Invocation to be led by Hon. Shirlyn L. Bañas-Nogralles.

*Everybody rose for the Invocation.*

### INVOCATION

REP. BAÑAS-NOGRALES. Let us pause for a while and put ourselves in the presence of the Lord.

Let us pray.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*O Father God in heaven, we thank You for bringing each one of us here today. We thank You for providing us, our families, and our people a land overflowing with Your gifts of sustenance.*

*Thank You, O Lord, for entrusting upon us, Members of this House, the means to help the dawning of change to this nation.*

*Most gracious and heavenly Father, as we begin today's session, we pray that Your grace descend on all the endeavors of this Congress, Your people's House, as we pursue a better quality of life for all Filipinos.*

*Today, O God, this world is threatened by a new sickness. As we face such threat, we pray for Your healing for all the people afflicted by this virus. Please guide the people in the frontlines: our doctors, nurses, and first responders as they work to shield everyone from this disease. May You, O Lord, provide us with focus and resilience to stop the spread of this malady. Bless our medical scientists and researchers with Your wisdom as they strive to understand and find the best cure to this crisis.*

*We pray for Your protection for all Filipinos here and abroad. We also pray that You protect everyone from other nations at risk from this disease. We pray that You*

*bless everyone's heart with serenity and calmness. May You continue to give us hope and courage in all trials that we face each day.*

*Father God, we pray for wisdom in everything that we do here in this House. We pray that we, Your children, reflect Your love in our work for this nation. Endow us with Your wisdom as we pursue a democracy that is kind and compassionate, and truly responsive to the fundamental needs of Filipinos, that we make decisions not based on the fears of any repercussions or becoming unpopular, or on biases for the benefit of the few, but based on what is right and just, and beneficial to our country.*

*We declare once more our faith in You, our God. We manifest our trust in Your plans for this nation, and as You have promised, time and again, that You will prosper us and not harm us, to give us hope and a good future.*

*You are our omnipotent and omniscient God. We know that You are with us anywhere we go. We trust in You.*

*We give back all the praises, glory and honor, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

### NATIONAL ANTHEM

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Please remain standing for the singing of the National Anthem.

*Everybody remained standing for the singing of the Philippine National Anthem.*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that we defer the calling of the roll.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that we defer the approval of the Journal.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that we now proceed with the Reference of Business. For this purpose, may we request that the Secretary General be directed to read the same.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General is hereby directed to read the Reference of Business.

#### REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

*Upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General read the following House Bills and Resolutions on First Reading, Messages from the Senate and Committee Reports which were referred to the appropriate Committees hereunder indicated:*

#### BILLS ON FIRST READING

House Bill No. 6313, entitled:

“AN ACT REGULATING THE PRACTICE OF THE AGRICULTURE PROFESSION IN THE PHILIPPINES, CREATING FOR THE PURPOSE A PROFESSIONAL REGULATORY BOARD FOR AGRICULTURISTS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Cojuangco  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

House Bill No. 6314, entitled:

“AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE PRACTICE OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING IN THE PHILIPPINES AND INSTITUTING HIGHER STANDARDS OF REGULATION IN THE LICENSING AND REGISTRATION OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING PRACTITIONERS”

By Representative Baronda  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

House Bill No. 6315, entitled:

“AN ACT MANDATING THE USE OF BODY CAMERA BY LAW ENFORCEMENT

OFFICERS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Olivarez  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ORDER AND SAFETY

House Bill No. 6316, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR REGULATORY FRAMEWORK, CREATING FOR THE PURPOSE, THE PHILIPPINE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Olivarez  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION AND THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

House Bill No. 6317, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, DEFINING ITS POWERS, FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Robes  
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

House Bill No. 6318, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES (CENR) OFFICE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PRESIDENT ROXAS AND REAPPORTIONING THE CURRENT CENR OFFICES IN THE PROVINCE OF COTABATO AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representatives Tejada, Caoagdan and Sacdalan  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

House Bill No. 6319, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING SECTIONS 443, 454, AND 463 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE 'LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991' ”

By Representative Villa  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 6320, entitled:

“AN ACT DECLARING THE PROVINCE OF SIKUIJOR AS A RESPONSIBLE,

COMMUNITY-BASED CULTURAL  
HERITAGE AND ECOTOURISM ZONE”

By Representative Villa  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM

House Bill No. 6321, entitled:

“AN ACT PROHIBITING THE EXPORTATION  
OF BLACK SAND AND ITS DERIVATIVES  
INTO OTHER COUNTRIES”

By Representative Singson  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL  
RESOURCES

House Bill No. 6322, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING A HEALTH CARE  
PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL  
TEACHERS AND APPROPRIATING  
FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER  
PURPOSES”

By Representative Vargas  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION  
AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 6331, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE MANDATORY  
APPOINTMENT OF A MUNICIPAL  
VETERINARIAN OFFICER, AMENDING  
FOR THE PURPOSE CERTAIN PROVISIONS  
OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160 OTHERWISE  
KNOWN AS ‘AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991’ ”

By Representatives Cullamat, Zarate, Gaité, Brosas,  
Castro (France) and Elago  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 6332, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE ELECTION  
OF SECTORAL REPRESENTATIVES TO  
THE LEGISLATIVE BODIES OF LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT UNITS”

By Representatives Cullamat, Zarate and Gaité  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 6334, entitled:

“AN ACT STRENGTHENING EARLY  
CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT  
SYSTEM, REVISING FOR THE PURPOSE  
REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10410, OTHERWISE  
KNOWN AS THE ‘EARLY YEARS ACT  
OF 2013’, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS  
THEREFOR”

By Representative Tallado  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON WELFARE OF  
CHILDREN

House Bill No. 6335, entitled:

“AN ACT PROHIBITING THE IMPORTATION,  
MANUFACTURE, DISTRIBUTION AND  
SALE OF CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS  
CONTAINING HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS,  
AND PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR  
VIOLATION THEREOF”

By Representative Barba  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON WELFARE OF  
CHILDREN

House Bill No. 6336, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A REVENUE  
DISTRICT OFFICE OF THE BUREAU  
OF INTERNAL REVENUE IN THE  
CITY OF TANAUAN, PROVINCE OF  
BATANGAS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS  
THEREFOR”

By Representative Collantes  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND  
MEANS

House Bill No. 6337, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PAG-IBIG  
FUND FIELD OFFICE IN TANAUAN  
CITY, PROVINCE OF BATANGAS  
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS  
THEREFOR”

By Representative Collantes  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND  
URBAN DEVELOPMENT

House Bill No. 6338, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A CAMPUS OF THE  
CENTRAL BICOL STATE UNIVERSITY  
OF AGRICULTURE (CBSUA) IN THE  
MUNICIPALITY OF DEL GALLEGO,  
PROVINCE OF CAMARINES SUR, TO  
BE KNOWN AS CBSUA-DEL GALLEGO  
CAMPUS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS  
THEREFOR”

By Representative Andaya  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER AND  
TECHNICAL EDUCATION

House Bill No. 6339, entitled:

“AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE FILIPINO  
YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN AGRICULTURE  
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP”

By Representative Tan (Sharee)  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND  
SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Bill No. 6340, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING A COMPREHENSIVE  
POLICY ENABLING YOUTH

PARTICIPATION IN ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY PREVENTION”

By Representative Tan (Sharee)  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Bill No. 6341, entitled:

“AN ACT MAKING THE POSITION OF BARANGAY SECRETARY AND BARANGAY TREASURER PERMANENT AND AS SUCH ENTITLED TO SECURITY OF TENURE, BENEFITS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Chatto  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 6342, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MULTI-SPECIES MARINE HATCHERY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BILIRAN, PROVINCE OF BILIRAN AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Espina  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES RESOURCES

House Bill No. 6343, entitled:

“AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO MATI TELEPHONE CORPORATION UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8675, ENTITLED ‘AN ACT GRANTING THE MATI TELEPHONE CORPORATION, A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN LOCAL EXCHANGE NETWORK IN THE PROVINCE OF DAVAO ORIENTAL AND ALL CITIES THEREIN’ ”

By Representative Almario  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE FRANCHISES

House Bill No. 6344, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING A BARANGAY TO BE KNOWN AS BARANGAY BUTAC IN MUNICIPALITY OF SUYO, PROVINCE OF ILOCOS SUR”

By Representative Singson-Meehan  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 6345, entitled:

“AN ACT REGULATING THE PRACTICE OF AGRICULTURE PROFESSION IN THE PHILIPPINES CREATING FOR

THE PURPOSE A PROFESSIONAL REGULATORY BOARD FOR AGRICULTURISTS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Bordado  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

House Bill No. 6346, entitled:

“AN ACT RENEWING THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES SYSTEM TO CONSTRUCT, ESTABLISH, MAINTAIN, AND OPERATE FOR EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER RELATED PURPOSES, RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES AND IN SUCH OTHER AREAS WITHIN THE SCOPE OF ITS OPERATION, UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8160, TO ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS”

By Representative Go (Mark)  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE FRANCHISES

House Bill No. 6347, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MEDICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RETURN SERVICE PROGRAM FOR DESERVING STUDENTS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Yap (Eric)  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

House Bill No. 6348, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING SURVIVORSHIP BENEFITS TO THE SURVIVING LEGITIMATE SPOUSE AND DEPENDENT CHILDREN OF A DECEASED RETIRED MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL PROSECUTION SERVICE (NPS), APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Flores  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE

House Bill No. 6349, entitled:

“AN ACT TO STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF PRIVATE BASIC EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES BY CREATING FOR THE PURPOSE THE PARTNERSHIP IN PRIVATE EDUCATION BOARD, AND THE PARTNERSHIP FUND FOR PRIVATE EDUCATION, APPROPRIATING

FUNDS THEREOF, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representatives Romualdez (Yedda) and Romualdez (Ferdinand)  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 6350, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING THE CITY GOVERNMENT OF DAVAO, A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO BROADCASTING STATIONS IN DAVAO CITY AND OTHER AREAS IN THE DAVAO REGION”

By Representatives Romualdez (Ferdinand), Duterte, Garcia (Vincent) and Ungab  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE FRANCHISES

House Bill No. 6351, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO PHILIPPINE COLLECTIVE MEDIA CORPORATION UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9773 TO EXPAND THE COVERAGE OF THE FRANCHISE GRANTED AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representatives Romualdez (Yedda) and Romualdez (Ferdinand)  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE FRANCHISES

RESOLUTIONS

House Resolution No. 725, entitled:

“RESOLUTION URGING THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, REGARDING THE DECLINE OF THE LEVEL OF LITERACY IN THE COUNTRY”

By Representative Villa  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Resolution of Both Houses No. 5, entitled:

“RESOLUTION OF BOTH HOUSES PROPOSING AMENDMENTS TO THE 1987 CONSTITUTION”

By Representative Salceda  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

House Joint Resolution No. 28, entitled:

“JOINT RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE FRANCHISE OF ABS-CBN CORPORATION

UNTIL THE END OF THIS 18<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS ON JUNE 30, 2022”

By Representative Del Mar  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE FRANCHISES

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

Message dated February 17, 2020, informing the House of Representatives that the Senate on even date passed Senate Bill No. 1224, entitled:

“AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING COMPREHENSIVE VALUES EDUCATION IN THE K TO 12 CURRICULUM AS A CORE SUBJECT INCLUDING GOOD MANNERS AND RIGHT CONDUCT, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

in which it requests the concurrence of the House of Representatives.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Message dated February 17, 2020, informing the House of Representatives that on even date the Senate designated Senators Win Gatchalian, Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri, Joel Villanueva, Panfilo M. Lacson and Risa Hontiveros as conferees to the Bicameral Conference Committee on the disagreeing provisions of Senate Bill No. 1224, entitled:

“AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING COMPREHENSIVE VALUES EDUCATION IN THE K TO 12 CURRICULUM AS A CORE SUBJECT INCLUDING GOOD MANNERS AND RIGHT CONDUCT, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”;

and House Bill No. 5829, entitled:

“AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING VALUES EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM BY INCORPORATING ‘GOOD MANNERS AND RIGHT CONDUCT’ AS A SUBJECT IN KINDERGARTEN UP TO THE GRADE 3 LEVEL”.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report of the Committee on Local Government (Committee Report No. 242), re H.B. No. 6363, entitled: “AN ACT DECLARING JULY 2 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN PASIG CITY TO BE KNOWN AS THE ‘ANNIVERSARY DAY OF PASIG CITY’ ” recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 3146

Sponsors: Representatives Villanueva (Noel) and Romulo  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Health and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 243), re H.B. No. 6365, entitled:

“AN ACT UPGRADING THE SIARGAO DISTRICT HOSPITAL IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF DAPA, PROVINCE OF SURIGAO DEL NORTE INTO A LEVEL II GENERAL HOSPITAL TO BE KNOWN AS THE SIARGAO ISLAND MEDICAL CENTER, INCREASING ITS BED CAPACITY, UPGRADING ITS PROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND FACILITIES, AUTHORIZING THE INCREASE OF ITS MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 1996

Sponsors: Representatives Tan (Angelina), Ungab and Matugas

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I move for the approval of Journal No. 45, dated February 18, 2020.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

#### PRIVILEGE HOUR

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, today being a Monday and pursuant to our Rules, I move that we open the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Privilege Hour is hereby opened.

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I now move that the Gentleman from the Third District of Camarines Sur, Hon. Gabriel H. Bordado Jr., be recognized to avail of the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Hon. Gabriel Bordado Jr. is hereby recognized.

#### PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. BORDADO

REP. BORDADO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, “70,000 Bicol Pupils Can’t Read”—this was the banner headline of a major national daily the other week, printed in big bold letters, that seemed to convey exactly how alarming and humiliating this bit of news was. According to the article, more than 70,000 elementary students from the Bicol region cannot read in both English and Filipino—18,143 of this number are students from Grades 3 to 6, while the remaining are pupils from Grades 1 to 2. These numbers, Mr. Speaker, were taken from the results of pretests done by the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory or the Phil-IRI, one of the initiatives conducted in support of the Department of Education’s Every Child A Reader Program or ECARP.

The Phil-IRI pretests conducted last July and August 2019 are not sets of standardized tests but a tool used by teachers all over the country to measure and determine their students’ reading capabilities in the classroom. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it is even stated in the 2018 Phil-IRI Manual that it can only provide an approximation on the learners’ abilities and could be used together with other more reliable tools of assessment. This was precisely the point raised by Education Usec. Nepomuceno Malaluan in another article published by the *ABS-CBN News* soon after the release of these Phil-IRI findings. In that article, Mr. Speaker, Undersecretary Malaluan further stated, among other points, that the Phil-IRI pretests were designed for readers in Grades 3 to 6. He noted that the pretests conducted included elementary students from lower Grades 1 and 2 and that these could have contributed to the bulk of nonreaders as seen in the results; therefore, the numbers might not be completely accurate.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, if we were to follow Undersecretary Malaluan’s reasoning, 18,143 elementary pupils who could not read in both Filipino and English still indicate a worrisome number. The number of nonreaders among Bicol elementary students is also reflective of the results of the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment or PISA, an international study conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development that measures 15-year-olds’ ability to use their Reading, Mathematics and Science knowledge and skills to meet real life challenges among its members and partner countries.

Of the 79 countries assessed in the PISA in 2018, the Philippines ranked the lowest in Reading, only faring higher but not exactly better in Math and Science where we ranked second to the lowest, Mr. Speaker. Sadly, we scored only 340 points in Reading, 353 points in Math and 357 points in Science, all below the average points of 487 in Reading and 489 points in both Mathematics and Science. These numbers, Mr. Speaker, indicate the urgent need to reevaluate the quality of education our students are receiving, and that it is not only a problem specific to the Bicol region, but an issue the entire country is now facing.

Mr. Speaker, providing access to quality education has always been the topmost priority of the government. In fact, Education received the biggest budget allocation as has been the case for a few years now in the P4.1 trillion national budget this year. There was a P1.7-billion increase in the total budget given to the Department of Education, the State universities and colleges, and the Commission on Higher Education.

The DepEd received a P1.7-billion increase in its budget to provide for the numerous projects and programs designed to improve the quality of basic education in the country. Mr. Speaker, we currently have different initiatives, programs and laws in place to make quality education available to Filipino students of all ages and background. Yet, concerns and problems in our education system abound. The recent performance of the Philippines in these different studies and assessments emphasized the urgency to ensure that we are not only making education accessible and available but also providing our citizenry with good quality education that would produce competent and globally competitive individuals. We have already started adopting the K to 12 Program in lieu of our 10-year education system in order to enable our graduates to become more capable and open to more learning and employment opportunities. This, in itself, is already a promising step towards achieving our vision of good quality education for all. However, Mr. Speaker, this change cannot completely and ultimately improve the quality of education in the Philippines.

How could a child even begin to want to learn when classrooms are dilapidated and overflowing with students? How could a student begin to improve when facilities like laboratories or libraries are lacking, outdated or even non-existent? How would the teachers be able to keep track of their students' learning progress when they are overworked and underpaid? These and many other related concerns are the ones we need to address promptly, Mr. Speaker, if we are to uplift the quality of education in the country. We need to revitalize and improve the teaching profession to encourage and produce more teachers even as we strive to provide our current pool of educators who are ultimately the foundation of our learning with ample and adequate training to ensure that they are competent and well-equipped to guide the students. More than that, Mr. Speaker, we also need to establish a suitable, comfortable, and accessible learning environment and facilities for our people.

Mr. Speaker, we have been presented with the numbers, facts, and results of various studies and assessments, and they all seem to indicate the dismal situation of education in the Philippines. But in the wake of the importance currently and continuously given to improving not only the access but also the

quality of education we provide the Filipino people, I am confident, Mr. Speaker, that these numbers would soon improve. We already have the funding, the programs, the projects and the right mindset in place. What is needed now to supplement this is for us to give our tireless and unceasing efforts to improve and strengthen the education system in our country.

Mr. Speaker, clawing our way up from the bottom is not bound to happen in just a couple of months or years, but it is also not impossible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker, ...

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to ...

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ATIENZA. Before we proceed, this Representation would move to adjourn simply because we have not mustered enough Members on the floor. We have waited for 25 minutes and we still have only 78 on the floor right now. There is no sense continuing. Although we would want to listen to the important messages of those lined up, hindi po puwede itong ganitong sistema. Wala tayong quorum, hindi tayo nag-roll call, and we will proceed to tackle very important measures.

We move to adjourn, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, I move for a few minutes suspension of the session.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The session is suspended.

*It was 3:26 p.m.*

#### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 3:36 p.m., the session was resumed.*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The session is resumed.

## ROLL CALL

REP. REMULLA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we call the roll.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General will please call the roll.

*The Secretary General called the roll, and the result is reflected in Journal No. 47, dated February 24, 2020.\**

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. Mr. Speaker, the roll call shows that 212 Members responded to the call.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). There being 212 Members present, including those who are deemed present in accordance with Section 71, Rule XI of our Rules, specifically those attending Committee meetings as authorized by the Committee on Rules, 32; those attending the Commission on Appointments meetings, 8; and those on official business, 6; the Chair declares the presence of a quorum.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. REMULLA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Honorable Atienza.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Honorable Atienza is recognized.

REP. ATIENZA. Thank you.

The Secretariat's count is 212, and you counted those outside of the halls now as considered present. What is the total of those outside of the halls, Mr. Speaker? May we be given a total.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Majority Leader is recognized.

## SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. REMULLA. Mr. Speaker, may I ask for a suspension of the session to check on the records.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The session is suspended.

*It was 3:50 p.m.*

## RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 3:51 p.m., the session was resumed.*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The session is resumed.

REP. REMULLA. Mr. Speaker, there are 32 Members attending Committee meetings; eight Members are in the Commission on Appointments meeting; and six Members are on official business, which means that 166 Members are present in the Plenary Hall and those 46 Members outside this Chamber are deemed present.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker, again, we defer to the official count of the Secretariat. They claimed that 163 Members are on the floor; considering that we have counters of our own, there are only 113 on the floor. So, if you add the 40 plus, we still do not have a quorum.

I would like to appeal to the Secretariat as they do not seem to understand all the repercussions of our continuing differences in counting the presence of Members of this Body. You must count accurately; otherwise, we will continue to question the integrity of your count. If I am wrong, as I have mentioned it earlier, I am willing to apologize. But if they are wrong, I think they should all be fired because they are employees of Congress. We are elected by the people. We are here to perform our tasks; they are now employees of this Body.

So, I will reiterate my point, we do not have 163 Members on the floor contrary to the claim of the Majority Leader as submitted by the Secretariat. We move to have a headcount to prove once and for all who is telling a lie, this Representation or the Secretariat?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Chair has already announced the presence of a quorum based on the submission of the Secretary General.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker, we appeal...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Majority Leader is recognized.

## SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. REMULLA. Mr. Speaker, I move for a suspension of the session.

\* See ANNEX (printed separately)



REP. ATIENZA. We appeal the decision of the Chair.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The session is suspended.

*It was 3:53 p.m.*

#### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 3:54 p.m., the session was resumed.*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The session is resumed.

REP. REMULLA. Mr. Speaker, the Honorable Atienza is appealing from the ruling of the Chair on the presence of a quorum, and he seeks the division of the House on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, just to finish this controversy once and for all, and to prevent further the casting of aspersion on the character of the people in the Office of the Secretary General who do their jobs on a daily basis, I move that we divide the House on this matter.

#### DIVISION OF THE HOUSE

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Body will now proceed to a division of the House.

REP. REMULLA. Mr. Speaker, the appeal is, whether there is a quorum as stated by the Secretary General's Office or there is none. Those who will say *Aye* agree that there is a quorum in accordance with the figures so read, and those who will say *Nay* agree with the Honorable Atienza.

#### VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). As many as are in favor of the appeal, please say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). As many as are against, please say *Nay*.

FEW MEMBERS. *Nay*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The *ayes* have it; the appeal is lost. We have a quorum. The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the privilege speech of the Honorable Bordado to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### ELECTION OF REP. YAP (E.) TO THE COMMITTEE ON GOOD GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Majority, I move for the election of Rep. Eric Go Yap as Vice Chairperson of the Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, I move that we acknowledge the presence of the guest in the gallery of the honorable Speaker Alan Peter "Compañero" S. Cayetano, Mr. Manolito "Tolitz" Divina, the 2019 SEA Games gold medalist in obstacle course racing.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). To the guest of Speaker Cayetano, please rise. You are welcome to the House of Representatives. (*Applause*) The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, I move that we also acknowledge the presence of the guests of Honorable Luis Raymund "LRay" F. Villafuerte Jr. from the Second District of Camarines Sur. They are the municipal mayor, vice mayor and councilors of the municipality of Cabusao, Camarines Sur, namely: Mayor Weny Sabalbero, Vice Mayor Jopito Agualada, Councilors Christopher Candelaria, Jose Aguilar Jr., Ronald San Diego, Cherrylou Ong, Rosela Yago, Vicente Aborde Jr., Emmanuel Abejero, Jaime Tolentino, Nemel Santiago, Vanessa Santiago and Juvy Piamonte, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). To the guests of Rep. Lray Villafuerte, please rise. (*Applause*) Welcome to the House of Representatives.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, may we also acknowledge the presence of the guests of the Hon. Anthony Peter "Onyx" D. Crisologo from the First District of Quezon City. They are the employees and students of Saint Vincent School of Quezon City, headed by Coach Visrael Valencia.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). To the guests of Rep. Onyx Crisolago, please rise. Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, finally, may we also acknowledge the presence of the guests of the Hon. Henry S. Oaminal from the Second District of Misamis Occidental. They are from the Misamis University Graduate School on Management, Public Administration and Business Administration, headed by Dr. Virgilio H. Onganiza.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). To the guests of Hon. Henry Oaminal, please rise. Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Eufemia “Ka Femia” C. Cullamat from the Party-List BAYAN MUNA for her privilege speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Hon. Eufemia Cullamat is recognized.

#### PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. CULLAMAT

REP. CULLAMAT. Maraming salamat, G. Ispiker.

G. Ispiker, ilang dekada na ang nakalipas sa mga nagdaang pangulo, wala pa ring pagbabagong tinatamasa ang mga mamamayang Pilipino, kaya ang buong sambayanan na mga mahihirap ay nagtatanong, “Nasaan ang pagbabago?”

G. Ispiker, tatlong dekada na mahigit ang nakalilipas mula nang ibagsak ng sama-samang pagkilos ng mamamayan ang diktadurang Marcos. Kilala ito sa popular, subalit mali na katawagang EDSA Revolution. Ang pag-aalsa ng mamamayan sa EDSA noong 1986 ay idinulot ng lubhang pagkamuhí ng mga mamamayang Pilipino sa diktadura. Ito ang madilim na bahagi ng ating kasaysayan na kinakatangian ng malawakang paglabag sa karapatang pantao, malaganap na pagdukot at pagpaslang sa mga kritiko ng batas militar, walang kahihiyang pagnanakaw sa pera ng bayan o pagtrato sa kabang yaman ng bansa bilang personal na pera ng mga pamilyang Marcos at walang katumbas na pagbulusok o pagbaba ng ekonomiya ng bansa.

Naglulunoy sa kahirapan ang mamamayan at mga katutubong Pilipino habang marami sa kanila ang dinukot, pinaslang at sinusupil sa kanilang pagtatangkang lumaban para sa pagbabago, samantalang masayang umiindak sa kapangyarihan at kasaganaan ang pamilyang Marcos at mga crony nila.

Pati ang cartoons na Voltes V na ipinalabas sa

telebisyon ay tinutulan sa kadahilanang naglalarawan ito ng tunay na kalagayan ng bansa—ang diktadura, ang isang emperador at ang malaganap, sistematiko at institusyonalisadong pagpaslang, pagpanupil sa mamamayang lumalaban.

G. Ispiker, pamilyar sa kuwentong ito ang batas militar na nagbunga ng pag-aalsa ng mamamayan sa EDSA mahigit tatlong dekada na ang nakalilipas. Pamilyar sa kuwento pa ring ito, maging sa pangkasalukuyang panahon, si Marcos noon, si Duterte ngayon. May batas militar noon, may nagtatagong batas militar ngayon. Malaganap ang pagnanakaw sa kabang bayan ng bansa noon, gayundin sa kasalukuyan. May malaganap na kahirapan noon, mas lalo pang lumala ngayon. Malaganap ang pagdukot, pagpaslang at panunupil sa mamamayang nananawagan ng pagbabago noon na nagpapatuloy pa rin hanggang ngayon. Nananatiling pareho ang kuwento mula noon hanggang ngayon. Batas militar noon, Executive Order No. 70 ngayon—pareho lamang.

G. Ispiker, sa Executive Order No. 70, ginawa lamang na mas sistematiko at lubha pang pag-institusyonalisa ang pagdukot, pagpaslang at panunupil ng mamamayang lumalaban at naghahangad sa tunay na pagbabago. Mas malala pa, ang Executive Order No. 70 ay may whole-of-nation approach na ginagamit ang buong organisasyon at rekurso ng pamahalaan upang patuloy na dukutin, paslangin at supilin ang mga mamamayang nananawagan para sa tunay na pagbabago. Ang buong bigat ng pamahalaan at panunupil nito ay kasalukuyan ngayong inihahambalos ng mga karaniwang mamamayan.

G. Ispiker, mas masahol pa ang Executive Order No. 70, pati ang paaralang itinayo naming mga katutubo ay ipinapasara. Pinananatili nilang mangmang ang mga katutubong Pilipino upang sa gayon ay madali nilang maloloko, masusupil at mananakaw ang aming mga lupain at patuloy na dinadambong ng mga dambuhalang minahan. Kung gayon ay mahigit pang dinanas ng mga katutubong Pilipino ang bagsik ng Executive Order No. 70 sapagkat lupain ng mga katutubo ang kinakamkam ng mga dambuhalang minahan at proyektong dam.

G. Ispiker, noong Biyernes lamang, Pebrero 21, sugatan ang isang estudyanteng Lumad at dalawang kaanak nito matapos mag-strafting ang mga tropa ng AFP sa mga sibilyang komunidad sa amin sa Brgy. Diatagon, Lianga, Surigao del Sur. Tinamaan ng granada ang bahay ng magsasakang Lumad na si Naldo Calipay matapos nagpapatok ang 70 sundalo ng 75th IB, 36th IB at 9th Special Forces sa mga kabahayan ng Sitio Simuwao at Sitio Emerald sa nasabing barangay. Dahil dito, natamaan ng shrapnel sa braso ang limang taong gulang na anak ni Naldo na mag-aaral sa paaralang Lumad na TRIFPSS. Tadtad din ng shrapnel sa braso, likuran, paa at balikat ang dalawang babae na kamag-anak, 19 na taon at 55 na taon.

Matagal nang pinalalayas ng mga residente ang mga sundalo ng AFP na pitong buwan nang nagkakampo sa mga komunidad dahil sa mga abuso nito. Ilang beses nakipagdayalogo ang mga lider-Lumad sa kasundaluhan at sa LGU, ngunit patuloy pa rin sila na sapilitang nagkakampo.

G. Ispiker, isa lamang ito sa maraming epekto ng Executive Order No. 70 sa mga katutubong mamamayan. Hindi natatapos ang pandarahas, pagsampa ng gawagawang kaso at pagpaslang sa aming hanay. At hindi pa nagkasya ang Executive Order No. 70. Sa kasalukuyan ngayon, niluluto ang amyenda ng Human Security Act o HSA na nagbibigay ng walang katulad na kapangyarihang awtoritaryan ng pamahalaan, militar, at pulis upang mas higit pang makapandukot, makapatay at makapanupil ng karaniwang mamamayan. Sa amyendang ito ng HSA, tinanggal ang maraming pananagutang ligal ng militar at pulis sa maraming gagawing paglabag sa karapatang pantao. Mas malawak na ngayon ang kapangyarihan nila sa ilalim ng mungkahing amyendang ito: puwede na ang pagkulong ng 30 araw sa sinumang suspect na hinuli nang walang warrant; halos suspendido ang writ of habeas corpus sapagkat notice na lamang ng husgado ang gagawin ng mga pulis o militar sa halip na ipakita sa korte ang taong kanilang dinukot.

G. Ispiker, sa pinagsamang Executive Order No. 70 at amyenda ng HSA, tuluyan nang ginawang marahas na armas ng militar, pulis at Estado ang mga batas na ito upang protektahan ang diktadura at mga magnanakaw sa kabang yaman ng bansa, at patuloy na supilin ang mga mamamayan at katutubong lumalaban para sa tunay na pagbabago.

Lubha ngayong binastos ng kasalukuyang pamahalaan ang diwa ng pag-aalsa ng mamamayan sa EDSA. Itatanong nating muli: Nasaan ang pagbabago? Kung mayroon mang nagbago, ito ay ang mas mahigit pang paglala ng mga kaso ng pagdukot, pagpatay at pagsupil sa mga mamamayan.

G. Ispiker, sinabi ko na rito noong una kong privilege speech na ang kinabukasan ng ating bayan at ng ating mamamayan ay nasa ating kamay. Sana po tayo ay makapaglikha ng batas na umaangkop doon sa buhay ng mamamayang Pilipino na siyang nagtatanggol sa pambansang soberanya.

Maraming salamat, G. Ispiker, maraming salamat din sa aking mga kapwa Mambabatas at magandang hapon sa ating lahat.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. ANDAYA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from BUHAY Party-List, Hon. Jose "Lito" Atienza, for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Hon. Lito Atienza is recognized.

REP. ATIENZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With the indulgence of the Lady before she sits down, this Representation would like to ask clarificatory questions on her message. This is very important and very timely.

REP. CULLAMAT. Yes po.

REP. ATIENZA. Kayo po ay nananawagan ng vigilance. Hindi po ba?

REP. CULLAMAT. Opo.

REP. ATIENZA. Ilang taon na po ba ang nakaraan noong nagkaroon tayo ng People Power Revolution?

REP. CULLAMAT. Kung hindi po ako nagkakamali, tayo po ay mayroon nang 34 na taon.

REP. ATIENZA. Tatlumpu't apat na taon— nagugunita po ba ninyo, Ka Femia, may I call you Ka Femia? Iyon ho yata ang gusto ninyong fond name.

REP. CULLAMAT. Actually, taon-taon nating ginugunita ang tinatawag nating tagumpay ng February 25 taong 1986.

REP. ATIENZA. Nagugunita po ba nila kung bakit nagkaroon ng People Power Revolution noong 1986?

REP. CULLAMAT. Palagi namang ginugunita sa hanay ng mga mahihirap at sa mga progresibong mga grupo ay patuloy pong ginugunita ang February 25.

REP. ATIENZA. Kayo po ba ay lumahok, Mr. Speaker, doon sa panawagang tayong lahat ay mag-alsa noong mga araw ng Pebrero abeynte uno, beynte dos, beynte tres, beynte kuwatro, at natupad noong abeynte singko ng Pebrero, mil nuwebe siyento otsenta y seis. So, my question is: Were you one of those who responded to the call for People Power?

REP. CULLAMAT. Pakiulit po.

REP. ATIENZA. Was the Lady a participant in the People Power Revolution that happened in EDSA on February 25?

REP. CULLAMAT. Opo.

REP. ATIENZA. You were there. Alam po ba ninyo at nagugunita ba ninyo kung ano ang nakapag-isa sa sambayanan where about two million people were

gathered in EDSA on the final day and shouted, “Sobra na, tama na, umalis ka na diyan,” na panawagan kay Mr. Marcos.

REP. CULLAMAT. Mr. Speaker, ito po iyong dahilan kung bakit nagkaroon ng People Power sa EDSA dahil sa laganap na paglabag sa karapatang pantao ng Presidenteng...

REP. ATIENZA. Sapagkat inaapi ang Pilipino, iyon po ang inyong sagot ano, Ka Femia?

REP. CULLAMAT. Iyon po ang totoo. Mula noon hanggang sa kasalukuyan, patuloy pong inaapi ang mamamayang Pilipino.

REP. ATIENZA. Hindi na natin makayanan pang payagan ang pananatili ng gobyerno noon.

REP. CULLAMAT. Yes po.

REP. ATIENZA. I was one of you. I am still with you and I congratulate you for making this call on this very important anniversary of our People Power unity at rebolusyon. Iyon po ay isang bagay na dapat laging talakayin, dapat nating iparinig, at dapat nating isigaw sa lahat ng sulok ng bansa.

Alam ba ninyong marami ngayon ang taong hindi na naaalala at hindi na nagugunita ang ipinaglaban sa EDSA?

REP. CULLAMAT. Patuloy po itong ginugunita. Patuloy pong ginugunita iyong February 25 dahil ito po iyong nakikita na isang tagumpay ng mamamayang Pilipino na ipinaglaban ang karapatan sa sariling pagpapasya bilang mga mamamayang Pilipino.

REP. ATIENZA. Tagumpay ng mamamayan, tumakas ang diktador, hindi po ba, noong gabi ng abeynte singko, lumipad ang helicopter dala-dala ang pamilya ng diktador at kaban-kabang pera ng bayan?

REP. CULLAMAT. Opo, tama po.

REP. ATIENZA. Iyon po ang katotohanan. I am just citing the historical data which we witnessed. Nakita natin lahat ito kaya tama po ang inyong panawagan. Ang nais ko lamang ay gunitain, tingnan natin. Bakit po ba nagkaroon ng batas militar noong 1972? Naalala po ba ninyo iyon? Mawalang-galang po, ilang taon na po ba sila?

REP. CULLAMAT. Ako po ay magsi-60 na ngayong August...

REP. ATIENZA. At that time of the declaration of martial law, how old was the Lady then, in 1972?

REP. CULLAMAT. Ako ay 12 taon na po—noong 1972, 12 taon ako, at kahit bata pa ako noon, 12 years old pa lamang, pero ramdam ko na iyong pagyurak sa aming karapatan bilang mga katutubo. Kaya sa pagtindig bilang lider ng mga katutubo ay isinasabuhay ko na mula sa aking mga ninuno hanggang sa kasalukuyan, narinig ko na ring buhay, na kailangang ipagtanggol ang karapatan sa sariling pagpapasya, lalo na doon sa ating pagdepensa sa ating lupaing ninuno dahil alam natin na tayong lahat ay doon nabubuhay. Kung mawawala ang ating lupang ninuno, sigurado na tayong lahat ay mawawalan din ng buhay. Mula pa noong maliit ako, namulat ako sa aktwal na mga pangyayari, lalo na doon sa mga operation ng mga militar. Doon sa aming mga komunidad ay hindi po nirespeto ang aming karapatan bilang matagal na kaming naninirahan sa aming mga lupaing ninuno. Kaya patuloy din ang pagsali namin at pakikiisa doon sa mga pagkilos ng mga mamamayan dahil alam namin na hindi po magtatagumpay ang aming laban kung humihiwalay kami sa iba’t ibang sektor ng bayan na kung saan dumanas din ng pagsasamantala ng ating pamahalaan at ng mga nakatataas na mga lider ng ating gobyerno.

REP. ATIENZA. Tutulongan ko ang ating Gng. Eufemia Cullamat to refresh our memory. Martial law was declared on September 23 ...

REP. CULLAMAT. Twenty-one po.

REP. ATIENZA. ... although the date of the declaration was September 21, ...

REP. CULLAMAT. September 21, 1972.

REP. ATIENZA. ... on the basis of a “democracy that was not working.” Those were the wordings of the dictator, since democracy is not doing the people any good, so he declared martial law. Palakpakan ang mga tao dahil nakita nila na hindi talaga naging matatag ang mga institusyon ng ating demokrasya, and Judiciary was not effective. Ang Kongreso, deteriorated, was not effective. Therefore, the nation was very ripe, hinog na hinog, para mang-agaw ng kapangyarihan ang nakaupong Pangulo, at iyon si Mr. Marcos. And from 1972 hanggang 1986, 14 na taon siyang namuno on a one-man rule. Diktador ang tawag natin doon.

REP. CULLAMAT. Yes po.

REP. ATIENZA. Naghirap ang bayan. Lahat tayo ay dumaan sa kahirapan sapagkat ang masaya lang noon ay iyong pamilya niya. Ang masaya lang noon ay ang Malacañang, pero sa lahat ng barangay sa buong bansa, naghihirap ang tao.

Ngayon, sabi ninyo maraming pinapatay na katutubo ngayon. Nasabi po ba ninyo iyon?

REP. CULLAMAT. Totoo po iyon.

REP. ATIENZA. Totoo. Sinabi ninyo, marami pa ring nakawan na nangyayari ngayon. Sinabi po ba nila iyon?

REP. CULLAMAT. Yes po.

REP. ATIENZA. Maaari po bang sabihin ninyo, ilang example lang ng mga dambuhalang nakawan at pinagsasamantalahan ang tao ngayon.

REP. CULLAMAT. Actually, sa nakikita kong mga dambuhalang pagnanakaw ay isa talaga iyong mga konsesyonaryo ng mina, ng logging na siyang kumakamkam ng lupaing ninuno namin na kung saan wala po kaming ibang mapupuntahan. Mula noong maliit pa kami, mula pa sa ating mga ninuno ay doon kami nabubuhay at ayaw naming mawasak iyan. Alam din namin na kung ano ang mangyayari sa ating mga kabundukan ay hindi po hiwalay ang mga mamamayan dito sa mga siyudad, sa mga patag dahil sa usapin po ng tubig na ginagamit natin dito sa ating mga munisipyo, sa mga siyudad ay nanggagaling talaga doon sa kabundukan. At kung mawawasak iyong mga kabundukan ay mawawalan ng tubig at magkakaroon ng krisis sa tubig sa atin sa mga mababang bayan.

Kaya taas-noo naming sasabihin na ang pagprotekta namin sa aming lupang ninuno ay hindi lamang para sa amin kundi para sa buong mamamayang Pilipino. At nakikita namin na wala na po tayong ibang mapagkukunan kung masisira pa ang ating kalikasan. Kaya kami ay nagkaroon ng maraming mga problema sa aming mga komunidad sa pamamagitan ng military operations dahil sa pagtutol namin sa pagpasok ng mga dambuhalang kumpanya ng mina na wawasak sa ating Inang Kalikasan. Kami tuloy ang sinasabihan o pinagbibintangan na mga rebelde, kaya doon kami pinapaslang. Ngunit kahit ganito na ang nangyayari sa amin, tangan namin ang katotohanan, patuloy pa rin namin itong paninindigan dahil alam namin na lahat ng buhay ng tao ay nanggagaling talaga sa lupa. Kaya mahigpit natin itong dinedepensahan kahit na kami ay humaharap ng napakaraming problema ng pagpatay, napakaraming problema sa pagsampa ng gawa-gawang kaso at kung ano-ano pang paglabag sa karapatang pantao. Mananatili kaming matatag sa pagtindig dahil alam namin na ang lahat ng buhay natin ay nakaugat sa lupa, hindi lang kami na mga katutubo, kundi ang buong mamamayang Pilipino.

Bagamat nandito kayong tumitira sa siyudad at pera ang inaasahan ninyong maipambili ng pagkain, mahalaga pa rin sa amin ang lupa dahil ang lahat ng binibili natin na mga pagkain ay nagmumula talaga sa lupa. Hindi po tayo maaaring makakain ng mga hanging plant dahil talagang nakaugat sa lupa ang

pagkain. Mahalaga para sa amin ang lupa kaya kahit na pinapatay kami, nilalabag ang aming karapatan sa sariling pagpapasya, ngunit kami ay nagpapatuloy sa pamamagitan ng paghatid ng aming boses maging hanggang dito sa Kongreso.

REP. ATIENZA. Naniniwala po ba kayo na ang Kongreso ay napakahalagang haligi ng isang matatag na demokrasya?

REP. CULLAMAT. Actually, sa karanasan, sa ilang buwan ko na dito, nakikita ko talaga na hindi masyadong makapangyarihan ang Kongreso. Halimbawa, sa aming grupong Makabayan bloc ay anim lang kami. Di kung ano iyong pagbobotohan natin na mga batas para sa kapakanan ng ating bayan ay hindi po iyan mananalo, ngunit kahit ganoon, kahit ganito ang kalagayan, hindi po kami tumitigil sa pagbahagi ng katotohanan dahil alam natin na ang katotohanan lamang ang magbibigay ng liwanag sa ating landas.

REP. ATIENZA. Alam po ninyo, ang laban ay hindi lamang sa bundok, hindi lamang sa parang, hindi lamang sa mga probinsya. Ang laban para sa ating kalayaan at demokrasya ay nandito rin sa loob ng Kongreso. Nasasakyan po ba nila iyon? We are in the midst of struggle to maintain a strong democracy in Congress, and you are a Member thereof, you are a regular Member of the Eighteenth Congress of the Philippines. Tama po ba?

REP. CULLAMAT. Yes po. Kaya nga po ako, Mr. Speaker, ay natutuwa na naging bahagi ng Kongresong ito dahil mahalaga para sa akin na sabihin ang katotohanan, dahil sa katotohanan lamang natin makakamit ang tunay na kapayapaan.

REP. ATIENZA. Hindi po natin makakamtan ang tunay na kalayaan na minimithi ninyo at ng marami sa atin kung hindi natin gagawin ang ating tungkulin. Kung kayo ay Judge, dapat efficient kayo sa Judiciary. Kung kayo ay Executive, dapat magaling ang inyong pagpapatakbo ng gobyerno. Ang Legislative, tayo po iyon, kailangang maayos din ang paggawa ng batas.

Sa tingin po ba ninyo, itong ating ginagawa ngayon, wala namang quorum pero nagdeklara ng quorum. Kapag botohan, pati iyong mga absent pinaboboto. Magpapalakas po ba ng demokrasya ito o magpapahina?

It is not enough that we deliver speeches. It is not enough to criticize the military. It is not enough to criticize the President. We are in a position to help establish a strong democracy today as Members of Congress.

I am very disappointed when I see people cry a tear or two for democracy, remembering EDSA, but when

we have a chance here in Congress, we do not do our task. Kanina, nakita kong bumoto kayo sa quorum when there was no quorum.

I am calling on everyone, and not only our Lady colleague, but everyone. If you would want to remember EDSA and the lessons of EDSA, we must also be performing our duties and responsibilities. Hindi puwede iyong salita o talumpati, subalit hinahayaan natin ang ating Kongreso ay bumaba nang bumaba sa pananaw ng taumbayan.

We are fast approaching the level of Congress noong 1971, 1970, where the people did not respect the Congress of the Philippines anymore. The reason why Marcos was able to declare martial law was because he knew that the people would not defend the institutions of democracy then. At one point in time in our history, in 1986, sumobra na ang ngitngit ng bayan, at doon sa EDSA pumutok ang damdamin.

Kaya binabati ko pa rin kayo na mayroon kayong pagsisikap na ipaalala sa lahat ang kahalagahan nito, but it is not enough to say na ang mga katutubo are being killed, robbery of the worst kind, plunder of our treasury, which continuously happen today. We, as Members of a democratic Congress, restored by a people power revolution—naibalik po ang Kongreso after EDSA of 1986. Nawala po ang Kongreso dahil binura ni Mr. Marcos, pero ibinalik ng people power ang Kongreso kaya pahalagahan natin ito.

Let us take our responsibilities seriously. Pag-aralan ninyo lahat ng tine-take-up dito at bumoto kayo ng ayon sa inyong makabayang layunin. You cannot claim to be makabayan kung hindi naman ninyo ginagawa iyong tama. Sunud-sunod lang tayo sa agos, patungo na tayo sa bangin pero okay pa rin sa atin.

I would hate the day when again, the days of 1972 will be repeated, where this freedom that we have regained, this institution that we have established will again be erased from our midst and the people will not fight for us. If they do not see us performing our tasks, they will not fight for us.

Ngayon pa lang, naririnig na natin iyan. Ayaw naman ninyong magtrabaho. Iyong prangkisa ng ABS-CBN ayaw nating i-take-up. Ano ba iyan, pakapalan na lang ng mukha? Naniniwala ba kayo na hindi dapat i-take-up ang prangkisa?

Mr. Speaker, uulitin ko ang aking katanungan. Naniniwala po ba si Congresswoman Cullamat na hindi dapat pag-usapan iyong prangkisa ng ABS-CBN?

REP. CULLAMAT. Actually, dahil naisapubliko na iyan, kailangang pag-usapan. Kailangan nating bigyan ng pagkakataong ma-renew ang prangkisa ng ABS-CBN dahil sa amin bilang mga katutubo, wala po kaming nakitang nilabag na batas ng ABS-CBN. Kaya sa totoo lang, sumusuporta po kami sa pag-renew ng prangkisa ng ABS-CBN.

REP. ATIENZA. Sinasabi po ba nila na okay lang na ang Senado ay nagtatrabaho, ginagawa iyong trabaho natin? Okay lang po ba iyon? To me, it is deplorable, it is untenable. Hindi natin dapat payagan iyan. Ang Senado, walang pakialam sa prangkisa, subalit kung ayaw nating magtrabaho. Sabi nga ni Senator Go, “Kami na ang gagawa ng trabaho ninyo.”

REP. CULLAMAT. G. Ispiker, ang pagbabahagi ko dito sa kalagayan ng mga mamamayang katutubo ay isa lamang po ito. Ipinapakita ko po ang totoong kalagayan ng mga katutubo, na sa halip na bigyan ito ng mga batayang serbisyo, bagkus, ang mga karapatan namin ay nilalabag. Kung ano man ang usapin natin dito sa ating pamahalaan, tungkulin nating lahat na kailangang pagtulungan kung paano natin maaayos ang lahat, paano natin maaayos ang ating paggawa ng batas, paano natin maaayos ang ating mga relasyon bilang mga mamamayang Pilipino.

G. Ispiker, ito lang po ang aking katanungan, sa usapin ng mga programa ng gobyerno na nakapagbigay ng mga serbisyo para sa lahat, walang pinipili, ito po ang inaasahan ng mamamayang katutubo, lalo na sa usapin ng edukasyon. Ang usaping edukasyon ay matagal na po naming hinahangad, kaya nga kami ay nagsisikap na makipagtulungan sa iba’t ibang sektor ng mamamayan upang makapagtayo kami ng paaralan para kami ay maging katulad ninyo na nakikipag-debate tungkol sa mga batas at kung ano pa man. Kaya sa usapin ng mga batas, napakarami ko pang pag-aaralan sa loob ng Kongresong ito. Kaya po sa inyong mga tanong, malinaw naman na tayong nasa gobyerno, tungkulin natin na kailangang tingnan kung ano ang makabubuti para sa sambayanang Pilipino.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker, we would like to thank the Lady. Nagpapasalamat po kami sa kaniyang pagsisikap na liwanagin ang aking mga katanungan, subalit kailangan kong aminin sa sarili ko at sa lahat, lalo po akong naguluhan.

Maraming salamat po.

REP. CULLAMAT. Maraming salamat, G. Ispiker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ANDAYA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of the Hon. Eufemia Cullamat and its interpellation to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the privilege speech of Hon. Eufemia Cullamat is hereby referred to the Committee on Rules.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ANDAYA. Mr. Speaker, I now move that the Gentleman from the Sixth District of Manila, Hon. Bienvenido M. Abante Jr., be recognized to avail of the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Hon. Bienvenido Abante Jr., our Minority Leader, is hereby recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. We would like to withdraw the motion of recognizing the Honorable Abante for his privilege speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is withdrawn.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, may we now recognize Hon. Edgar Mary S. Sarmiento for his privilege speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Hon. Edgar Mary Sarmiento is recognized.

REP. SARMIENTO. Thank you so much for that kind consideration, Mr. Speaker, Majority Leader.

Before I deliver my privilege speech, Mr. Speaker, Majority Leader, just a very short point of inquiry. I am just wondering, as a Member of the Seventeenth Congress, we start the session with the singing of the Philippine National Anthem before the Invocation. I just want to be consistent, Mr. Speaker, on page 21 to be specific, Section 73 of our Rules, it is stated:

Call to Order. – The Speaker shall call the House to order. After calling the House to order, the National Anthem shall be sung followed by an Invocation by a Member designated by the Speaker or by a silent prayer.

Mr. Speaker, are we going to be consistent with the Rules of the House wherein the National Anthem should be the first order of the day before the Invocation? I just want to be clarified, Mr. Speaker, on Section 73 of our House Rules. Again, I am just wondering, Mr. Speaker, how come it is always the Invocation that is first before the National Anthem? I will not object on the ruling of the Chair on Section 73.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Majority Leader is recognized.

## SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, I move for a few minutes suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The session is suspended.

*It was 4:36 p.m.*

## RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 4:41 p.m., the session was resumed.*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The session is resumed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. REMULLA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Honorable Sarmiento.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Hon. Edgar Mary S. Sarmiento is recognized.

REP. SARMIENTO. Mr. Speaker, on the point of inquiry relevant to Section 73, on which will come first, whether it is the Invocation or the National Anthem, since this Representation was called upon to deliver a privilege speech, and upon discussing thoroughly with the Majority Leader, I withdraw the point of inquiry.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Noted.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. SARMIENTO. I am hoping that if ever the question would be asked again, the proper response would be that it is being sought by this Representation relevant to Section 73.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). At the proper time.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. REMULLA. (Mr. Speaker), I move that we recognize Honorable Sarmiento for his privilege speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Hon. Edgar Mary Sarmiento is recognized for his privilege speech.

## PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. SARMIENTO

REP. SARMIENTO. Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

The privilege speech of this humble Representation from the First District of Samar is relevant to the mandatory drug testing for driver's license applicants.

Mr. Speaker, 31—it is not a date in the calendar, but this is the number of people that die every day because of road crash. Tama po iyan, treynta y uno po ang namamatay sa kalsada. Ibig sabihin, may namamatay po na mahigit sa isang tao bawat oras. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Majority Leader, Members of this House of Representatives, it includes, of course, the vulnerable users of the road which include the pedestrians.

Just last week, an incident occurred in Makati City which resulted in the death of a 14-year-old student and the injuries of seven others. Iyan po, nakikita natin, kawawa po, Mr. Speaker. Sa ibang bansa, kapag tayo po ay gumagamit ng pedestrian lane, humihinto po ang mga sasakyan. Dito po, kaawa-awa, parang bino-bowling ang mga batang ito.

Ulitin natin, isa po ang namatay and seven others were injured. These students were on their way home to their families after class. While crossing the pedestrian lane where they have the feeling of being safe, mali pala, sinagasaan po sila ng jeepney. Sad to say, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Majority Leader, my dear colleagues, the reckless driver was tested positive for methamphetamine use. He confessed that he was using illegal drugs; yet, he was still able to drive a public utility vehicle.

The implication on the use of illegal drugs by our PUV drivers is no laughing matter. We are entrusting this person with the lives of hundreds of passengers, pedestrians, and other road users per day. For each time that the person drives the vehicle while high on drugs, the risk that the ordinary citizens are being subjected to are incalculable.

Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, last Congress, we increased the duration of the validity of the driver's license, but we have not considered that we have to be stricter with giving this out especially to public utility drivers who are responsible for the lives of their passengers.

Nandiyan po sa screen, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Majority Leader, from three to five years, individuals can possess their driver's license, ngayon po, from five to ten years. That is a considerable amount of time. Now, it is the right time to bring back, para po sa akin, Mr. Speaker, ang mandatory drug testing as a requirement for obtaining a driver's license. If we cannot implement this for everyone, the requirement should be at least more stringent to those who earned their living from the transportation sector.

A few years ago, our country has been implementing this requirement but it was removed. Reports of corruption and uselessness have hounded it. We have to ask ourselves, is the abolition of the mandatory drug test the proper remedy for a fraud process? Right now, we have better access to technological innovations.

Our government offices are starting to automate the basic services being offered to the public. Now, we can accredit laboratories and make sure that the results are being sent directly to the LTO with less human intervention. If there is something erroneous with the process, then that is what we must address, Mr. Speaker. We should not let a procedural issue ruin a laudable initiative. The mandatory drug test is not the end, though, of all of these problems of road crashes, Mr. Speaker. However, it is part of the solution we must implement to solve these. Rather than responding late, Mr. Speaker, it provides the government with a proactive and preventive intervention.

Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, nakikiusap po ako, ibalik po natin ang mandatory drug testing na inalis po noong 2013 dahil sa RA 10586 lalo't lalo na ang may hawak ng manibela sa pampublikong sasakyan at sa mga truck na tumatakbo po sa ating mga kalsada.

Iyan lang po, Mr. Speaker. Magandang hapon po. Salamat po sa pagkakataon.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ANDAYA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of Hon. Edgar Mary S. Sarmiento to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The privilege speech of Hon. Edgar Mary Sarmiento is hereby referred to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. LACSON-NOEL. Mr. Speaker, I move to extend the Privilege Hour for one more hour.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. LACSON-NOEL. Mr. Speaker, before we call the next person to avail of the Privilege Hour, I move that we acknowledge the presence of the guests of our honorable Minority Leader. They are from the Sixth District of Manila, the Barangay Chairpersons: Michi R. Castro, Alvin Basig and Ronald Taray; and Barangay SK Chairpersons: Miko Custodio, Miguel Parian, Numark Cutaran, Rhaine Gaglac, Freez Aurelio, Abdullah Lucman, Francis Gabriel, Meuriel Dizon, Jomel Soriano, Rylie Mabulay, Ishaq Rimbang, Jay Villavicencio, Rodol Picorro, Ryoichi Nakane, FB



Nomi Cortez, Jheyel Manango, Jared Santos, Michael Marin, and Rhesty Aguilar, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). To the guests of Hon. Benny Abante, please rise. You are very much welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. LACSON-NOEL. Mr. Speaker, I move that we also acknowledge the presence of the guests of our Speaker Alan Peter “Compañero” Cayetano. They are the local officials of Pateros, namely: Councilors Jose Jonathan Sanchez, Jeric Reyes, Allan Dennis Mangoba; and Barangay Chairpersons Romeo Lodronio, Josie Alejandro, Omar Alcantara, Richard Palican, Ramir Ramirez and Venancio Santidad, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). To the guests of our Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano, welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. LACSON-NOEL. Mr. Speaker, please also acknowledge the presence of the Sanggunian Bayan members, guests of Hon. Xavier Jesus D. Romualdo. They are: Rex Anthony Vivares, Argenito Sabacajan Jr., Lander Jun Cutab, Emmanuel Aranas, Nelpheer Catacutan, Norgene Ceniza, Aileen Grado, Silverio Chan and Earlindo Gamao, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). To the guests of Hon. XJ Romualdo, you are very much welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. LACSON-NOEL. Mr. Speaker, we also have the following who are the guests of the honorable Deputy Speaker Paolo Z. Duterte and the honorable Rep. Elias C. Bulut Jr. They are the members of the municipal council of the municipality of Conner, Apayao, namely: Atty. Jorico Bayaua, Vice Mayor; Artemio Gonayon; Enrique B. Bernardino Jr.; Lloyd Gannaban; Mario L. Dognayon; Eduardo Vergara; Jefferson Tugade; Alexander Aswique; Fernando Seoad; and Rowena Molina, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). To the guests of Deputy Speaker Paolo Duterte and Honorable Bulut, you are welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. LACSON-NOEL. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Minority Leader Bienvenido M. Abante Jr. for his privilege speech.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pimentel). Hon. Benny Abante, our Minority Leader, is recognized.

*At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Pimentel relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Raneo “Ranie” E. Abu.*

#### PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. ABANTE

REP. ABANTE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My esteemed colleagues in the House, magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat.

I rise to share my sentiments on a development that has elicited strong responses, not only in our country, but beyond our shores regarding President Rodrigo Duterte’s decision to end the Visiting Forces Agreement with the United States of America. As with any critical policy decision of the Executive, Mr. Speaker, there are those who have voiced their opposition to the abrogation of the VFA and those who have expressed support for the same.

Mr. Speaker, my friends and colleagues in the House, in such an important national discussion, I believe that it is not just our right but our duty to weigh in and say our piece about a decision that will have huge ramifications on the lives of our constituents and our nation.

In that regard, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues, I wish to state, for the record, that I am in favor of the President’s decision to terminate this agreement and I believe that we stand to benefit, in the long run, from ending an accord that noted constitutionalist, Father Joaquin Bernas, once referred to as “an insult to Filipino intelligence.”

Mga kababayan, mga kaibigan, there is a reason behind that scathing categorization of this treaty, and in my view, it will serve us all to revisit the VFA and its revisions so that we have a better appreciation of the President’s decision, one that is consistent with earlier pronouncements to pursue an independent foreign policy.

Balikan po natin ang pag-ratify ng VFA noong Mayo 1999. Despite mounting opposition to the treaty, the VFA was ratified by the Senate in a *viva voce* vote with only five Senators voting against its ratification. The five Senators were Senator Teofisto Guingona Jr., Senator Sergio Osmeña III, the late Senator Aquilino Pimentel Jr., the late Senator Raul Roco, and then Senator and now Deputy Speaker Loren Legarda.

Mr. Speaker, various issues were raised against the ratification of the treaty: first, is the absence of reciprocity, because while we acted on the VFA as a treaty, the US government treated the same as an Executive agreement; second, were issues regarding jurisdiction of US personnel found to have violated

our laws. Father Bernas said it best when he lamented, and I quote:

The provisions on criminal jurisdiction are so devilishly convoluted that in the end, they take away whatever they pretend to give to Philippine authorities.

The provisions regarding criminal jurisdiction is so one-sided, Mr. Speaker, that the late great Senator Roco referred to the VFA as, as he said, “the special treatment agreement.”

Another issue raised against the VFA was lack of clarity regarding the entry of nuclear vessels and weapons. A valid concern since our very own Constitution, Mr. Speaker, forbids it.

Another point raised was stressed by Deputy Speaker Legarda who scored the agreement for the absence of provisions regarding the environmental protection. The social costs of hosting the US troops in our shores were also brought up and history has borne out the fact that these concerns were valid. Sa madaling salita, Mr. Speaker, lugì po tayo sa agreement na ito. Lugì po ang taumbayan sa VFA. It is true that we must work with other nations to pursue shared interest. But it is also true that we must do so in a manner that does not violate our sovereignty nor make us second-class citizens in our own country.

Mr. Speaker, Your Honors, Article II, Section 7 of the Constitution states that our nation “shall pursue an independent foreign policy” and that in our relations with other states, and I quote further, “the paramount consideration shall be national sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interest, and the right to self-determination.” Sovereignty, national interest, the right to self-determination, it is clear to me, Mr. Speaker, that abrogating the VFA as it is currently worded is not only consistent with our Constitution but it is the right thing to do.

Now, I know there are those concerned with the military aid that we receive from the United States as a result of this treaty. However, Mr. Speaker, if we are to finally pursue a truly independent foreign policy, we must be willing to end our mendicancy.

Nakikita po naman ninyo sa VFA na ang ibinibigay ng mga Amerikano ay mga equipment na hindi na nila puwedeng gamitin. Iyan po ba ay equal, Mr. Speaker? The time to beef up our own military without dependence on super powers or foreign aid is long overdue. It is time to explore other possibilities, other alternatives without compromising our values, our laws and the welfare of our people.

Legitimate concerns have likewise been raised about how this recent development signals a pivot to China. This, Mr. Speaker, does not necessarily follow. We have a long history with the United States, one that

cannot be discarded or discounted with the termination of a single agreement. Our governments are similar. Our Constitution is practically patterned after that of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, pursuing our own path does not mean we are rushing from one partner to another. It simply means we are now charting our own direction, deciding our fate on our terms, not on the terms of powerful nations. Let us embrace the abrogation of the VFA and forge ahead confident in our abilities, our resources, and in our capacity to successfully pursue a genuinely independent foreign policy.

Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, I move for a few minutes suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The session is suspended.

*It was 5:03 p.m.*

#### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 5:03 p.m., the session was resumed.*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The session is resumed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ANDAYA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Lady from the ACT TEACHERS Party-List, Hon. France L. Castro, for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Hon. France L. Castro from ACT TEACHERS Party-List is recognized.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Would the Minority Leader, our speaker on the VFA, yield to some clarificatory questions?

REP. ABANTE. Gladly, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Una po, Mr. Speaker, ako ay bumabati sa ating Minority Leader sa kaniyang privilege speech kaugnay ng kaniyang pananaw at posisyon sa abrogation ng VFA. Ilan po itong mga katanungan at paglilinaw para malaman ng ating mga mamamayan. Bakit po ba ganito ang naging posisyon? Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, ang Kinatawang ito ay ganoon din ang pananaw.

Sinabi po ninyo, Mr. Speaker, na tayo ay nalulugi o sa Visiting Forces Agreement ay talung-talo o luling-lugi ang taumbayan. Supposedly, hindi po ba, Mr. Speaker, dapat kapag nagkaroon ng agreement ang dalawang bansa o dalawang jurisdiction, kailangang mayroon dapat itong pantay na kapakinabangan sa isa't isa. Pero sinabi ninyo na tayo po ay lugi sa VFA. Paano po ninyo nasabi iyon? Puwede po bang ipaliwanag natin in terms of the military point of view, sa ating teritoryo at kung anumang pasilidad ang ginagamit sa atin.

REP. ABANTE. Mr. Speaker, salamat po sa inyong katanungan. Naaalala ko, marami nang taong nakakaraan, noong pinaalis natin ang mga base militar ng Amerika sa ating bansa, noong araw na batang-bata pa po ako, aking tinitingnang mabuti kung makabubuti ito o hindi sa ating bayan.

Nakita po naman natin na noong araw pa, ginamit nila ang Clark Air Force Base na isang napakalaking lupain na nagmula pa sa Angeles City, Pampanga, hanggang Capas, Tarlac, pero magkano po ang ibinabayad sa atin? Naaalala ko na ang ibinabayad lamang sa atin noon ay \$500 million in so many years. Samantalang iyong base militar ng Amerika sa South Korea ay binabayaran po nila ng three times or four times more compared sa atin. Pero hindi lang po iyong Clark, nandiyan din ang Subic at may Sangley Point pa. Hindi lang iyong Sangley Point, mayroon pa silang reservation doon sa Camp John Hay, at mayroon ding Basa Air Base sa La Union. Mr. Speaker, lima na ang base militar ng Amerika kung saan nag-e-enjoy sila sa isang istrategiya na military super power, subalit wala naman po talagang masyadong pakinabang ang ating bansa, Mr. Speaker.

Sa pamamagitan po niyan, wala itong ipinagkaiba sa mga agreement na ginagawa between the United States and the Philippines, kaya dapat na talagang tanggalin iyan.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Nabanggit po ninyo na may limang iba't ibang kampo militar ang US dito sa atin. Tama po ba, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ABANTE. Yes.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Dito po sa iba't ibang kampo ng militar kung saan nakalagay ang mga pagbabase ng US forces dito sa Pilipinas, mayroon ba itong ibinabayad na renta sa kuryente at sa iba pang mga pasilidad?

REP. ABANTE. Well, of course. Kapag pinag-usapan po iyong kanilang mga kinakailangang bayaran na internal, maaaring kanila na iyon, subalit sa aking pananaw, hindi sapat ang pagbabayad ng renta ng Estados Unidos sa ating bayan. Dito po lamang sa

limang base militar kung saan libreng-libre silang mag-landing kahit na mga nuclear warfare nila, pero hindi po naman tama ang compensation na ibinibigay sa atin.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Bukod pa sa compensation, Mr. Speaker, ilang taon na nga po ba ang VFA, almost 20 years?

REP. ABANTE. Around 20 years siguro, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). More than 22 years na ito, Mr. Speaker. Mayroon din tayo ditong mga naging usapin kaugnay ng human rights violations, mga harassment, sexual abuse at iba't iba pang natural resources na pang-aabuso. Puwede po bang mabanggit ito, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ABANTE. Yes, of course, mayroon iyan. Tulad ng kaso sa Olongapo City, nang dahil sa Visiting Forces Agreement, nakita natin na hindi po yata pantay ang nangyayari dito, kasama na ang mga human rights violation na alam ko na ang ating Congresswoman France Castro ang nakakaalam nito. Sama-sama na po ito. Kaya dapat po lamang na talagang i-abrogate na ito, hindi dahil sa reason na ibinigay ng Pangulo, kundi talagang dapat lamang tanggalin natin ito para tunay na magkaroon na tayo ng tinatawag nating "independent foreign policy."

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Isa po dito ay iyong very popular, Mr. Speaker, na tungkol sa discrimination and sexual abuse ng isang US Army na si Pemberton.

REP. ABANTE. Yes, naalala ko iyon.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Laban po ito sa ating mga LGBT o transgender. Isang kaso pa po ito. Tapos, how about the Tubbataha Reef incident, hindi po ba? Mayroong isang barko po ng US na dumaan sa Tubbataha Reef at nasira iyong ating corals. Inamin naman po ng US ang nasira nila at nagbayad sila.

REP. ABANTE. Oo.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Ito po ang ilan lang sa napabalita at mga totoong mga nangyari kung bakit ayaw natin ang VFA. Minsan, iyong agreement ay hindi na rin natutupad. Halimbawa rin po iyong pagpunta sa iba't ibang lugar ng mga US personnel.

Mahalaga po na makita ng taumbayan ang sinabi ninyo kanina na kayo ay sumasang-ayon kay President Duterte sa pag-abrogate ng VFA. Hindi na po ba natin kailangan dito, halimbawa, ang pagsang-ayon ng Senate? Ano po ba ang sinasabi ng Constitution o ng agreement?

REP. ABANTE. Alin po, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Kaugnay po sa position ng Senate.

REP. ABANTE. Kanina po ay nabanggit nga na kinakailangan daw ang concurrence ng Senado. Ang Senado ay nag-file yata ng petition o appeal sa Court of Appeals, pero whatever it might be, Mr. Speaker, palagay ko ay dapat lamang sumang-ayon na ang Senado. Kung talagang kinakailangan po ng concurrence ng Senado, dapat lamang sumang-ayon na ang Senado sa desisyon ng Pangulo na tanggalin na ang VFA.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Siguro, para maging mas maging matibay iyong ating posisyon para sa ating pag-abrogate nitong VFA, maganda ring makatulong ang ating mamamayan, lalung-lalo na iyong mga mamamayang apektado nitong military exercises, na talagang magsalita at magsabi sila kung ano pa iyong nagiging epekto nito sa ating bansa.

Iyon lang po, Mr. Speaker. Ako po ay muling bumabati sa ating Minority Leader sa kaniyang privilege speech.

REP. ABANTE. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ANDAYA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from BAYAN MUNA Party List, Hon. Ferdinand R. Gaité, for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Gentleman from BAYAN MUNA Party-List, Hon. Ferdinand Gaité, is recognized to interpellate the Minority Leader.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker. Pahihintulutan ba ng ating Minority Leader Benny Abante na makapagtanong ang Kinatawang ito hinggil sa napakagandang privilege speech na inilahad ng ating kapita-pitagang Minority Leader, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ABANTE. Opo.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po.

Alam na alam na natin sa mga nakaraang araw o ilang linggo na isinusulong ngayon ng pamahalaan ni Duterte na i-abrogate na ang Visiting Forces Agreement, na sinang-ayunan ng ating Senado noong Mayo 27, 1999.

REP. ABANTE. Opo.

REP. GAITE. Aware po ba kayo na mayroon nang isinampang liham sa US State Department hinggil sa nabanggit na abrogation, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ABANTE. Mayroon na po yatang sulat o liham na ibinigay ang Executive Department o ang Malacañang sa US Embassy kamakailan.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po. Ito nga iyong isa sa mga hakbang na kailangang gawin bagamat may panahon ang effectivity nito, kung hindi po ako nagkakamali, 180 days bago ito maging effective. Bagamat totoo naman sa kaninang katanungan, mangangailangan ba ito—kung ito ay tratado na sinang-ayunan o ni-ratify ng ating Senate, may usapin na kailangan rin ba o necessary ba na ito rin ay kailangan ng Senate action para i-abrogate? Bagamat totoo na ang sinasabi, dahil ang Pangulo ang pinakamataas na Chief Executive Officer ng ating bansa, iyong kaniyang hakbang na ginagawa ay maaaring tingnan na rin bilang bahagi ng kaniyang kapangyarihan bilang Pangulo. Tama po ba, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ABANTE. Sa pagkakaalam ko, sa pagtatanong ko sa ilang mga abogado, may mga nagsasabi na kailangan daw ng concurrence ng Senado upang finally, ma-terminate na itong VFA. Although, kung kailangan po ng concurrence ng Senado, siyempre ang gagawin siguro ng US State Department ay magla-lobby sa mga Senador para pigilang maipatupad ang termination nito. Subalit, sana po, ang panalangin ko, Mr. Speaker, hindi na magbago ang stand ng Malacañang tungkol dito. Talagang sana po ito ay tuluyan na at i-refer sa mahuhusay na mga abogado ng gobyerno, na talagang tayuan at panindigan na po ito ng ating pamahalaan na ma-terminate na ang VFA. Panahon na para ito ay hindi na gumana pa sa ating bansa.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker. Nabanggit po ninyo kanina ang kasunduang ito ay hindi patas.

REP. ABANTE. Opo.

REP. GAITE. Hindi pantay. Ano po ba ang pinakamayor na usapin na masasabi nating hindi patas ito lalo na sa interes ng soberanya ng mamamayang Pilipino? Ang Visiting Forces Agreement ay isang kasunduan. Actually, dalawa nga po ito, VFA 1 at VFA 2. Dito ay sumasaklaw ang mga karapatan ng pagpasok ng mga dayong puwersang armado ng Estados Unidos sa ating bansa, at iyong VFA 2 ay baliktad naman, iyong pagpasok ng mga Pilipinong miyembro ng militar sa Estados Unidos.

Ano po ba iyong pinakabuod kung bakit nasabi nating hindi pantay ang kasunduang ito, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ABANTE. Ilang mga bagay, Mr. Speaker: noong isang gabi, may kausap ako na isang importanteng tao patungkol sa ekonomiya ng ating bansa. Ang sinasabi niya, sapagkat siya po ay laban sa termination ng VFA, binabanggit niya na tinatanggihan daw natin ang \$975 million na ibinibigay ng Estados Unidos sa ating bansa sa pamamagitan ng VFA. With the \$975 million, ganoon lang po ba ang halaga ng Pilipinas? Hindi ba tayo naiinsulto sa ganoong mga pananaw na hanggang ngayon ay parang hindi lang tayo alipin ng Amerika, kung hindi tayo ay pulubi pa ng Amerika.

Hindi lamang iyan, Mr. Speaker. The fact na ang taumbayan ay alam naman na kung nagbibigay man ang Amerika ng mga military equipment sa atin, hindi na po kasi ito kagamit-gamit sa kanila. Kumbaga, kung ang isang bata ay nagbibigay ng laruan sa kaniyang isang kaibigang bata, ang ibinibigay ay iyong laruang sira na at hindi na magamit. Palagay ko po ay hindi pantay ang pananaw ng Estados Unidos sa Pilipinas. Ang sa akin lang po ay equal respect tatal we are both sovereign countries. Eh kung siguro po iyong visiting agreement na iyan ay talagang equal ang treatment sa atin, aba ay mag-iisip pa ako.

Ang sabi nila, at war ay dedepensahan po tayo. Eh nagtatayo na nga po ng military airport ang China doon sa ating isla, eh dumadaan-daan lang po iyong mga barko ng Amerika, wala naman po silang ginagawa. Kahit na statement na ginagawa nila para protektahan tayo, sinasabi lamang na iyan daw po ay international gateway, iyan daw po ay daanan ng lahat ng mga barko ng iba't ibang bansa, eh bakit hindi magbigay ng statement ang Amerika, "O, kayong mga Chinese, huwag kayong magtatayo ng anumang military diyan sapagkat itong Pilipinas na ito, tutulongan namin ito, ipagtatanggol namin ito." Eh wala namang ganoon. You see, aba eh mas mabuti pa na tanggalin na po ito para, you know, hindi na po tayo target ng ibang bansa sapagkat kung tayo ay may kinakampihang isang bansa, target pa rin tayo ng ibang bansa kapag nagkaroon ng digmaan. Mas maganda po iyong tayo ay neutral at nakikisama at kaibigan ng lahat ng bansa, na naniniwala tayo sa tunay na independent foreign policy. Iyan po ang sa akin.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker, sa ating kagalang-galang na Cong. Benny Abante.

Talagang malinaw na doon sa katanungang ano iyong sinasabing onerous o hindi pantay na mga kasunduan tulad ng VFA, malinaw na talagang nabanggit na doon sa may sinasabing kapalit na military assistance o iyong mga economic assistance, hindi kayang bayaran iyong ating soberanya. Alam naman natin na sa matagal na panahon ay naging isang kolonya tayo ng Estados Unidos...

REP. ABANTE. Yes.

REP. GAITE. ... at tila hindi na nawala iyong ganoong uri ng relasyon, na tayo ay nagmistulang kolonya pa rin o iyong tinatawag na neokolonya habang ang ating bansa ay itinuring na parang isang, masasabi na nga, isang malaking military base ng Estados Unidos.

Matanong ko lang, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, sa kasaysayan ng mga kasunduang ito, mayroon pa ho bang ibang mga agreement? By the way, doon pa lamang sa agreements ay makikita na nating hindi patas. Nabanggit ninyo po, Your Honor, na tayo, ang Pilipinas, we treat this as a treaty which requires Senate ratification. On the other hand, iyong US, they treat this as a mere Executive agreement which is why hindi nagre-require ng Senate ratification. Kaya doon pa lamang, makikita na natin kung paano iyong pagbibigay ng pagpapahalaga dito sa tratadong ito.

Liban po doon, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, ano pa ho ba ang ibang mga kasunduan na kasama dito sa iba pang mga kasunduan na masasabi nating hindi patas? Kasi kung maaalala nga po natin, nabanggit ninyo po iyong mga tumutol doon sa pagraratipika ng Vising Forces Agreement, pero naalala ko na may Magnificent 12 noong panahon, noong 1991, na noong pinag-uusapang muli ang pagpasok ng bagong tratado, iyong Military Bases Agreement ay naging usapin din at naging isang medyo divisive na issue sa ating bansa dahil nagkakaroon ng pagtatalo sa pagitan ng Senado, ng Ehekutibo at ng mga mamamayang Pilipino.

Mayroon ding mga iba pang kasunduan tulad noong Mutual Logistics Support Agreement o MLSA, nandiyan din iyong Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement o EDCA, at masasabi po ba ng ating kagalang-galang na Congressman from Manila, masasabi ba natin na itong mga kasunduang ito ay bahagi rin ng mga hindi patas na mga kasunduan, na laging masasabing dehado ang bansang Pilipinas, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. ABANTE. Ako, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, inaamin ko na hindi ko alam ang substance ng mga agreement na iyan. The fact na hindi na patas itong VFA eh lahat po ng agreement ng military, between the US and the Philippines, ay hindi rin patas, whether it be the Mutual Defense Treaty o iyong EDCA, dapat kung talagang paninindigan na ng ating Pangulo na i-abrogate na itong VFA na ito eh i-abrogate na rin lahat ng mga agreement na ating ginawa between the US and the Philippines sapagkat hindi talaga magiging patas iyan. We can never have an equal, fair agreement with any superpower country. Kaya huwag na po nating ituloy iyang mga bagay na iyan. Iyan po ay ibasura na po natin iyang mga agreement na iyan, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po sa paglilinaw,

Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, dahil totoo nga po na ang dami pa hong kasunduan na kaugnay nitong Visiting Forces Agreement na tulad nga sa inyong obserbasyon ay hindi rin patas. Marami na pong documented na instances na kung saan iyong ating soberanya, tulad noong pagpasok ng USS Guardian na maalala ninyo pong sumadsad doon sa Tubтатаha Reef, nag-cause ng napakalaking damage—hindi natin mahabol ayon sa pamahalaan noon dahil hindi naman daw military exercise iyon. Pero the mere fact na pumasok ang isang dayo, at hindi po simpleng dayo, isang military vehicle o barko na pumasok sa ating jurisdiction, ay patunay ito na nilalabag o nilalapastangan iyong ating karapatan.

Iyong maraming mga insidente na ang mga puwersa ng Amerikano ang nasangkot sa mga malulubhang kaso ng panggagahasa, hindi lang po panggagahasa, pamamaslang ng ating kapwa Pilipino, ay trinato na lang na parang ang may jurisdiction pa rin sa mga kaso sa pagdinig nito ay halos kontrolado pa rin ng mga awtoridad ng Estados Unidos. As a matter of fact, noong may mga insidente na na-involve ang ilang mga sundalong Amerikano ay sa halip na ikulong sa mga selda ng ating BJMP o iba pa ay dinala pa sa loob mismo sa Embahada ng Estados Unidos.

REP. ABANTE. Yes.

REP. GAITE. Ang balita natin, sa halip na ilagay sila sa mga kulungan na dapat lamang habang naghihintay sila sa paglilitis ay inilagay sa mga espesyal na mga lugar sa loob mismo ng base, ng mga kampo ng AFP o ng Armed Forces of the Philippines.

REP. ABANTE. Well, sa aking pananaw, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, itong lahat na mga military agreement na ito, kung talagang aaminin po ng United States, it is solely to protect the United States. It is not to protect the Philippines, hindi po iyon eh. I mean, ginagawa lang tayong parang sangkalan, unang sangkalan, pero ang katunayan niyan, it is to protect the United States and not really to equally protect our nation.

REP. GAITE. Maraming, maraming salamat po. Iyon po iyong parang pinaka-very accurate, very succinct na description to whose benefit does the agreement work for. Tama po ang nasabi ng ating kapita-pitagang Minority Leader sapagkat alam natin na dito sa mga ganitong uri ng kasunduan, iyong binabanggit na kakaunting pakinabang daw tulad noong binabanggit na \$900 million na sinasabing gamit panggiyera pero luma, iyong mga helicopter na biglang natatanggal iyong elesi, iyong mga barkong hindi magamit dahil kailangan mo pang i-refurbish at bibili ka rin ng gamit o iyong gastos para i-refurbish lang ito ay parang bumili ka ng bagong barko o bagong barko de giyera—lahat

ng ito ay para sa pabor nila at hindi sa interes ng ating bayan. Alam naman nating hindi natin maaaring iasa ang ating kasarinlan at soberanya sa dayo. Kailangan ang sarili nating bayan ang magtatanggol sa sarili nating kalayaan at kasarinlan. Kaya po, panghuli, sumasang-ayon ba ang ating Minority Leader na kung gayundin lang ang kasunduang VFA na ngayon ay nasa proseso ng abrogation, sang-ayon din ba na ito pang mga iba pang onerous na agreement, nabanggit iyong EDCA, iyong MLSA, among others, napapanahon na rin kaya na ito ay dapat na ring i-abrogate, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ABANTE. Sumasang-ayon po ako, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, dapat lamang.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat. Kung gayon, kaisa natin ang mga Kinatawan dito sa Kongreso na dapat gumawa na ng mga kongkretong hakbang para itong mga hindi pantay na mga kasunduan, bunga na rin ng sinasabing mayroon daw sariling kasarinlan at soberanya ang ating bansa, napapanahon na rin na ito ay i-abrogate.

Maraming salamat. Mabuhay po kayo, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ABANTE. Salamat po, Mr. Speaker. Salamat po, Your Honor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ANDAYA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Lady from KABATAAN Party-List, Hon. Sarah Jane I. Elago, for her interpellation.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Lady from KABATAAN Party-List, Hon. Sarah Elago, is recognized.

REP. ELAGO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the distinguished Minority Leader yield to a few questions from this youth Representation?

REP. ABANTE. With pleasure, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ELAGO. First, Mr. Speaker, what is the position of the distinguished Minority Leader with regard to a possible or potential Visiting Forces Agreement with other countries such as Russia or China, as stated by the PCOO Secretary in an interview?

REP. ABANTE. Well, my position is that if we are going to pursue an independent foreign policy, if we

are going to abrogate any agreement with the United States, let us not anymore try to court another country for any kind of military agreement. Let us now really pursue an independent foreign policy. Iyon po iyong sa akin, sapagkat if we are going to abrogate the VFA with the US and then we will again court another country like Russia or China, what is the use, hindi ba? I mean, kapag talagang ito ay independent foreign policy, huwag na po tayong manligaw pa sa ibang bansa.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, ito po ang dahilan kung bakit pagdating po sa kabataan ay mahalaga na magkaroon tayo ng kumpletong plano kung paano natin palalakasin at pagtitibayin ang isang nagsasariling patakarang panlabas, ang isang independent foreign policy na talagang magsisilbi una't una sa pangunahin, para sa interes ng mamamayang Pilipino at ng bayang Pilipinas.

So, hindi po ito tungkol doon sa kung maka-US man, maka-Russia, maka-China. Tayo po ay mga maka-Pilipino.

REP. ABANTE. Yes.

REP. ELAGO. Tayo ay papasok sa iba't ibang mga kasunduan. Sa bilateral, multilateral agreements, maaari tayong pumasok diyan basta po nakalapat sa isang independent foreign policy at hindi po magsusunod-sunuran na lamang sa dikta ng dayuhan dito sa ating bansa.

Nais ko lang din pong banggitin na sa mga kabataan, isa pong inspirasyon ang diskusyon tungkol sa definition o sa kahulugan ng nasyonalismo na nae-envision po ng framers ng ating Constitution noong kanilang sinabi na ang tipo ng kalidad na edukasyon sa ating bansa ay dapat po nagpapatimo sa bawat isa sa atin sa pagiging makabayan.

Sinabi po doon, and I quote, this is from Commissioner Rene Sarmiento:

Filipino nationalism is more than patriotism. It is more than love of land and people, loyalty to flag and country and readiness to sacrifice personal interest for the common good. It is the firm resolve never to allow our people to be dominated, controlled by foreign powers or domestic tyrants and to oppose totalitarianism, imperialism, and hegemony with all the means at our command.

Hindi po tayo magsusunod-sunuran na lamang kundi dapat kumpleto, buong-buo iyong ating pagtataya, iyong ating commitment sa pagtatanggol sa ating bayan sa anumang panghihimasok sa pulitika, sa ekonomiya, sa affairs ng ating bansa.

Kung kaya tayo po ay makikipagtulungan na ito ay nakabatay doon sa mutual na benefits at may mutual

na respeto doon sa soberanya ng ating bayan. Kaya naman hinihikayat ko rin ang mga kabataan na hindi lang pag-aralan ang isyu na ito kundi kinakailangan ding simulan na natin ang diskusyon tungkol sa pag-aaral pa ng mga posibleng hakbang tungkol doon sa ibang mga agreement pa na nabanggit, mula sa Mutual Defense Treaty hanggang sa Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement at iba pang maaaring mga agreement na planong pasukin ng administrasyong Duterte dahil hindi po natin papayagan na muli na naman tayong papasok sa isang agreement kasi isa rin po iyang posibilidad na maaaring maipalit na bagong VFA. Tayo po ay magiging mas handa na hindi lang magtatalakay sa isyu na ito kundi ang isasaisip natin ay kung ano ba ang nasa interes ng ating bansa. Iyon lamang ho.

Maraming salamat, G. Ispiker. Maraming salamat sa ating distinguished Minority Leader.

REP. ABANTE. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. LACSON-NOEL. Mr. Speaker, before we go on with our next interpellator, may we please acknowledge the presence of the guest of our honorable Speaker Alan Peter “Compañero” S. Cayetano. He is Mr. Manolito “Tolitz” Divina—the 2019 SEA Games gold medalist, Obstacle Course Racing-Mixed; two-time Clark-Miyamit 50 Miles Trail Race champion (*Applause*); first place in the 2015 The North Face Singapore 50K; first place in the 2016 Ultra Trail Hong Kong 156K; first place in the 2015 Pilipinas Mountain Series 32K; and first place in the 2019 Salomon X-Trail Run 50K, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The guest of Speaker Alan Peter “Compañero” Cayetano, Mr. Manolito “Tolitz” Divina, will please rise. Welcome to the House of Representatives. (*Applause*)

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ANDAYA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from APEC Party-List, Hon. Sergio C. Dagooc, for his interpellation.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Hon. Sergio Dagooc of APEC Party-List is recognized to interpellate the Minority Leader.

REP. DAGOOC. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ang kagalang-galang ba na Minority Leader ay sang-ayon sa ilang mga katanungan at paglilinaw?

REP. ABANTE. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DAGOOC. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Minority Leader, sang-ayon po ba kayo na under the Visiting Forces Agreement, during the time when there is an armed conflict, we are vulnerable and we are in danger if there is an armed conflict between the United States and, for example, in our region?

REP. ABANTE. I do not know if you are talking about an armed conflict between the US and the Philippines, pero palagay ko, any domestic armed conflict we have ay tayo na lang dapat ang sumagot niyan. Tayo na lang dapat ang mag-resolve ng ating sariling domestic armed conflict. And I do not even think that when it comes to any armed conflict with any foreign power, palagay ko ay hindi mangyayari iyon sa ating bansa.

REP. DAGOOC. But in case na mangyayari, worst case scenario, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Minority Leader, talagang vulnerable tayo because may naka-station ditong some of their forces.

REP. ABANTE. Well, of course, kung wala na po iyong VFA na iyan ay mawawala na po iyong forces ng Estados Unidos.

REP. DAGOOC. Sasang-ayon din po ba kayo, kagalang-galang na Minority Leader, na dahil diyan ay we are vulnerable in terms of armed conflicts in our region? Iyong Visiting Forces Agreement, ang pangalan ko diyan ay magiging “Vulnerable Friend of America.”

REP. ABANTE. Mukhang hindi ko yata masyadong naintindihan iyong “Vulnerable Friend of America.” Ano po ang ibig sabihin ninyo noon, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. DAGOOC. If some of their forces are stationed in our country, kung hindi siya ma-abrogate, may sinasabi ka kanina na mayroong mga nakabase sa ating bansa na armed forces ng US at bases.

So, in terms of kapag nangyari, worst-case scenario, nangyayari iyong armed conflict in our region, Asia Pacific Region—we are vulnerable na mata-target din tayo doon ng mga kalaban. Iyan po ang ibig kong sabihin.

REP. ABANTE. I would think so. Halimbawa ay mayroon tayong VFA with the US, siyempre, kapag nagkaroon ng digmaan ang US sa ibang bansa, we are very vulnerable because we are siding with the US.

REP. DAGOOC. Kaya palagay ko, kapag hindi na-abrogate iyan, magiging vulnerable friend talaga tayo of America.

REP. ABANTE. In a way, yes, that is true.

REP. DAGOOC. G. Ispiker, distinguished Minority Leader, may mga nagsasabi po na tumututol tayo sa desisyon ng Pangulo dahil may mawawala sa atin kapag na-abrogate iyan. Ano ho ba sa palagay mo iyong mawawala sa atin?

REP. ABANTE. Well, mawawala lang po iyong mga second-hand or third-hand na ibinibigay pong military equipment ng US. Mawawala na po iyong ginagawa tayong mga alipin, ginagawa tayong beggars na para bang iyong mga tira-tira ng US ay ibinibigay sa atin. Nawala po ang limang base militar ng US sa ating bansa na nagbibigay po rin naman ng trabaho sa marami, pero afterwards, nakita po natin na hindi naman tayo bumagsak economically. I mean, today, we find Subic to be a developing area. We find Clark Freeport Zone to be a trading area in the Philippines. Hindi po tayo nasaktan nang husto noong nawala iyong mga base militar.

REP. DAGOOC. So, hindi po kayo sumasang-ayon, Ginoong Minority Leader, na tama po iyong apprehensions noong mga against the abrogation? Mali po ba iyong apprehensions noong mga against the abrogation?

REP. ABANTE. Oh yes, yes, mali po iyan. I mean, I do not believe in that.

REP. DAGOOC. Another clarificatory question po, Mr. Speaker, Ginoong Minority Leader, are you in favor of, during the 180 days na palugit upon receipt of the US doon sa notice of termination, well, we will negotiate for another agreement na with the US?

REP. ABANTE. No, I am not, except perhaps an equally beneficial trade agreement, for example, but not any kind of a military agreement.

REP. DAGOOC. Do you also agree doon sa mga apprehension na magkakaroon tayo ng problema sa intelligence gathering dahil sa pagkawala ng Visiting Forces Agreement?

REP. ABANTE. No, I do not think so. I think that our Armed Forces have enough capacity and intelligence for intelligence gathering without the help of any foreign power.

REP. DAGOOC. Kanina po, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Minority Leader, sinabi mo po doon sa privilege speech mo na mukhang hindi patas iyong agreement na ito dahil sa kanila, this is only an Executive agreement, pero sa atin, we consider it as a



treaty. Ano ho ba ang kaibahan? Kindly educate me. Ano ho ba ang kaibahan ng Executive agreement at treaty?

REP. ABANTE. Well, you know, actually, it is just a decision of the United States leaders, for example, that agreement, rather than a real treaty, a real treaty which involves all of the branches of government, or it might only be an agreement between two leaders without the concurrence of the different leaders of our country. So iyon ang pagkakaiba na tinatawag nating Executive agreement to a real, equal treaty.

REP. DAGOOC. So, finally, Mr. Speaker, Minority Leader, kayo po ba ay pabor na in the future, we will negotiate another treaty with the US?

REP. ABANTE. Not a military treaty, no.

REP. DAGOOC. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Minority Leader.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, I move to recognize Hon. Edcel C. Lagman of Albay for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). From the First District of Albay, Hon. Edcel Lagman is recognized for his interpellation.

REP. LAGMAN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Would the distinguished Gentleman from the Sixth District of Manila yield to an interpellation?

REP. ABANTE. Gladly, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. LAGMAN. At the outset, I would like to stress that I was, and until now am, against the Visiting Forces Agreement because it is basically an intrusion, if not an assault, against Philippine sovereignty. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Gentleman from Manila, would you kindly reiterate the overriding and major reasons cited by those opposed to the VFA?

REP. ABANTE. Well, of course, those who are opposed to the VFA have different reasons, like the human rights violations, and just like what you said, intrusion to our sovereignty. When it comes to my own personal reason, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, I believe if we are going to really go through the course of an independent foreign policy, we should no longer make any military agreements or treaties with any other country, that we will now pursue a foreign policy which is actually good for our nation and good for our people without, you know, this treaty which, to me, it

is not actually equal nor even mutually beneficial to our country and theirs, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, let me just cite the reasons of the oppositors already mentioned by the distinguished Representative. One is, it is offensive to Philippine sovereignty. Is that correct?

REP. ABANTE. That is right, yes.

REP. LAGMAN. Number two, it is an unequal agreement against the interests of the Philippines.

REP. ABANTE. Very true.

REP. LAGMAN. Number three, while the Philippines considers the VFA as a treaty, the United States considers it as a mere Executive agreement?

REP. ABANTE. That is right.

REP. LAGMAN. Okay. Having confirmed these major and overriding reasons, may we know whether the reason of the President for deciding to abrogate the Visiting Forces Agreement was based on any of these any major and overriding reasons?

REP. ABANTE. Well, of course, I said in my privilege speech that I am not one with the reason of the President in abrogating VFA. Of course, a lot of Filipinos, looking at what the President said, only had one reason, and that is, of course, the revoking of the visa of a certain senator. I do not actually share the same reason, but the following reasons that you gave, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, are the same reasons that I espouse when I say that we have to abrogate the VFA.

REP. LAGMAN. In other words, what the distinguished Gentleman is saying is that the decision of the President to abrogate the Visiting Forces Agreement was a retaliatory act in relation to the cancellation of the US visa of Senator Dela Rosa. Is that correct?

REP. ABANTE. Well, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, whatever his personal reason might be, I would not be in any way to judge.

REP. LAGMAN. No, I am not trying to ask the Minority Leader to judge the decision of the President. I am just asking the distinguished Gentleman to confirm that that was the sole reason of the President.

REP. ABANTE. Well, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, perhaps. Perhaps, you know, I could not in any way confirm nor deny, but perhaps, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, ...

REP. LAGMAN. Yes, that “perhaps” would actually document that the President’s reason for the abrogation is ludicrous because it is not based on a major and overriding cause.

Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Gentleman for accommodating my questions.

REP. ABANTE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Your Honor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, I move to refer the privilege speech of Hon. Bienvenido Abante and the succeeding interpellations to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, I move to extend the Privilege Hour for another 30 minutes.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, I move to recognize Hon. Aurelio “Dong” Gonzales of Pampanga for his privilege speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Deputy Speaker Aurelio “Dong” D. Gonzales Jr. is recognized for his privilege speech.

#### PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. GONZALES (A.)

REP. GONZALES (A.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Majority Leader.

Mr. Speaker, fellow Members of this august Chamber, the officers and employees of this honorable institution, my countrymen, guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, my sincere greetings of peace, unity, and solidarity.

Nelson Mandela once said, “Our rich and varied cultural heritage has a profound power to help build our nation.”

Mr. Speaker, today, I stand before this honorable Chamber to express a foremost legislative concern affecting not only our identity as Filipinos but also our vital link to inspirational cultural and patriotic legacies.

Kabahagi po ng ating kasaysayan, ng pagkakakilanlan, ay ang mga cultural heritage na sumisimbolo sa kahusayan, katatagan, at kagalingan ng lahing Pilipino.

Isa po rito ang Philippine Christmas Village o mas kilala bilang “Paskuhan Village.” Ito po ang pinakaunang Christmas Village sa buong Asya. Tinampok dito ang iba’t ibang atraksyon gaya ng museo, ang pamilihan, mga kultural na panlibangan, at tanghalan ng mga likhang sining ng Pampanga. Ang Paskuhan Village ay sumasalamin sa tradisyon ng mga Pilipino tuwing Kapaskuhan, dahil buong taon ay isinasagawa po natin at ipinagdiriwang ang Pasko dito. Naiiba ang Paskuhan Village dahil malahiganteng parol ang disenyo nito at matatagpuan lang po ito sa gitna ng Central Luzon. Noon pong dekada 90, itinampok po dito sa Paskuhan Village ang “Ligligan Parul” o “Giant Lantern Festival” kung saan itinanghal ang mga higanteng parol ng Pampanga. Ang Paskuhan Village ay nagsilbi ring tanghalan ng First International Garden Festival na kilala rin bilang “Florikultura ‘98.”

Mr. Speaker, malaki ang naging bahagi ng Paskuhan Village sa paglago ng ekonomiya ng Pampanga at ng ating bansa dahil nakatulong ito para makabangon mula sa kahirapan ang ating kababayan na naapektuhan sa pagputok ng Bulkang Pinatubo noong 1991. Pero ano na po ba ang nangyari sa Paskuhan Village? Nasaan na po ba ito ngayon? Naaalala pa po ba ito ng mga kababayan natin?

Mr. Speaker, para masagot ang mga katanungang ito, hayaan ninyong ilahad ko ang mga pangyayari patungkol sa Paskuhan Village, kung ano ang pinagmulan ng Paskuhan Village, ang mga nangyari magmula nang itayo ito, at ang kinahahantungan nito: ang pagkawala ng natatanging pambansang pamana ng mga Pilipino.

Noong pong November 27, 1989, ibinenta ng pamilyang Lazatin ang kinatatayang lupa ng Paskuhan Village at ito ay naipangalan sa Philippine Tourism Authority, alinsunod sa isang Memorandum of Understanding.

Nakikita ninyo po, sabi po doon, magtatayo ang PTA ng isang world-class cultural, historical, at commercial center sa Central Luzon. Dito itatanghal ang mga likhang-sining at sikat na parol ng rehiyon. Ito rin po ay para masuportahan ang mga manggagawa ng sining at kultura, pati na ang mga negosyante sa nasabing rehiyon.

Sinunod naman ng Philippine Tourism Authority ang kasunduan nang itatag ang Paskuhan Village at patakbuhan ito, pero makaraan ang isang dekada, nagsimulang humina ang mga negosyo sa Paskuhan Village, kung kaya naman, noong 2012, naglabas ang Commission on Audit ng opinyon na hindi na nakabubuti sa ating gobyerno ang patuloy na pagpapatakbo ng Paskuhan Village dahil sa kalugihan nito.

Para patuloy na mapakinabangan ang Paskuhan Village at mapanatili ang cultural value nito, ang inirekomenda ng COA ay: number one, i-rehabilitate ang mga pasilidad ng Paskuhan Village; pangalawa, i-market ang Paskuhan Village; o hindi kaya naman ay, pangatlo, i-devolve ang operasyon ng Paskuhan Village sa lokal na pamahalaan.

Noong 2014, ang Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority, ang TIEZA, ang government corporation na pumalit sa PTA, ay ibinenta ang Paskuhan Village sa isang public bidding na isinagawa noong December 7, 2014 kung saan apat na korporasyon ang sumali. Ang mga bidders ay: SM Development Corporation, Premier Central Incorporated or PCI, SM Prime Holdings Corporation, at ang SEJ North Premier Holding Corporation. Ang nanalo sa bidding ay ang Premier Central Inc. sa halagang P939,658,840. Sa apat na bidders na ito, tatlo po doon ay pagmamay-ari ng SM Investments Corporation. Kaduda-duda, hindi po ba, itong tatlong bidders?

Mr. Speaker, noon pong Seventeenth Congress, dahil sa mga usapin patungkol sa nasabing bentahan, bilang Mambabatas at Representante ng Ikatlong Distrito ng Pampanga kung saan ang Paskuhan Village ay makikita, minabuti ko pong ihain ang House Resolution No. 654 para ipaimbestiga ang bentahan ng Paskuhan Village, kung bakit ito naibenta, kung bakit ito ay maituturing na isang cultural heritage o pambansang pamana.

Nagsagawa po ng pagsisiyasat ang House Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability na noon ay pinamumunuan ng butihing Deputy Speaker Johnny Ty Pimentel. Apat na mga Committee hearing din po ang isinagawa at marami rin po sa mga kasamahan natin dito sa Kamara ang nakilahok sa imbestigasyon. Matapos ang mga imbestigasyon, napag-alaman ng nasabing Komite na ilegal ang pagkakabenta ng TIEZA sa Paskuhan Village. Nilabag ang Section 54, sabi nga po ng nasabing Komite sa inilabas nitong Committee Report No. 425, kung saan nilabag ang Section 54 ng Tourism Act of 2009 o ang pagbabawal na ibenta ang mga pag-aari ng bansa na maituturing na cultural treasure at heritage site. Napag-alaman din na nilabag ang karapatan ng Panlalawigang Pamahalaan ng Pampanga, pati na ang Panlungsod na Pamahalaan ng San Fernando, Pampanga.

Hindi kailanman inirekomenda ng COA na ibenta ang Paskuhan Village. Hindi rin nasunod ang COA Circular No. 86-264 at 89-296 patungkol sa public auction ng mga pag-aari ng gobyerno. Dahil sa mga nadiskubre ng nasabing Komite, inirerekomenda nito sa Office of the Solicitor General ang pagsasampa ng kaso para ipawalang-bisa ang bentahan ng Paskuhan Village. Sumasang-ayon dito ang OSG at sinabing walang bisa ang bentahan dahil nilabag ang batas.

Pinagdiinan muli ng Office of the Solicitor General na ilegal ang bentahan nang ito ay konsultahin ng Senate

Committee on Education, Arts and Culture kung kaya mula sa rekomendasyon ng Committee Report No. 425, kinasuhan ng Office of the Solicitor General at ng pamahalaan ng city of San Fernando ang PCI at TIEZA sa San Fernando, Pampanga, RTC Branch 42.

Ang annulment of sale o ang pagpapawalang-bisa ng korte sa naging bentahan ang ikinaso sa PCI at TIEZA gaya ng nabanggit sa nasabing report. Ayon sa complaint ng OSG, sinabi nito na “Considering that the subject properties are considered cultural treasures, the sale is void as it is outside the commerce of man.”

Noong nakaraang taon, napag-alaman ko po na mayroon ding namumuong usapan sa pagitan ng pamunuan ng lungsod ng San Fernando, Pampanga at ang mga representante ng PCI patungkol sa aregluhan ng nasabing kaso. Napag-alaman ko rin po na sumulat ang OSG at ang pamahalaang panlungsod ng San Fernando at binanggit doon na hindi raw po ako kumontra sa anumang usapan para magkaaregluhan ang lungsod ng San Fernando at PCI.

Mr. Speaker, sobra po akong nabagabag at nabahala. Hindi po totoo na pumayag ako sa anumang aregluhan patungkol sa Paskuhan Village. Dahil dito, sumulat po ako sa OSG at sa korte para liwanagin na wala akong sinang-ayunan na kahit anong aregluhan na bentahan patungkol sa Paskuhan Village.

Sa katunayan po, naniniwala akong labag sa batas ang bentahan ng Paskuhan Village kaya hindi ako puwedeng sumang-ayon sa anumang bentahan o aregluhan patungkol dito. Iyan po, Mr. Speaker, makikita ninyo po ang sulat ko sa OSG at sa korte. Iyan po, tingnan natin diyan. Nito pong January 14, 2020, nakatanggap muli ako ng sulat mula sa lungsod ng San Fernando, Pampanga. Ayon sa sulat, tuloy na tuloy ang aregluhan ng kaso sa pagitan ng lungsod ng San Fernando at PCI. Nakakadismaya, Mr. Speaker, dahil nito lamang, mayroon akong nabalitaan na halos kaparehong kaso ng Paskuhan Village, ito ay ang ancestral house ni Teodora Alonzo, ang ina ni Dr. Jose Rizal, na matagumpay na nabawi ng lungsod ng Biñan, Laguna mula sa developer na nakabili nito.

Gaya ng Paskuhan Village, Mr. Speaker, ang nasabing bahay ay matagal nang nasa sentro ng kampanya para sa heritage preservation kahit na walang deklarasyon na ito ay heritage site mula sa gobyerno. Sabi nga po, kung ang bahay ni Teodora Alonzo ay nabawi para sa taumbayan, ito pa po kayang Paskuhan Village na kilalang-kilala ng lahat?

Kung kaya naman po, Mr. Speaker, nitong January 16, 2020, bilang isang Miyembro ng Kamara at Representante ng Ikatlong Distrito ng Pampanga, isang taxpayer at isang residente ng lungsod ng San Fernando, Pampanga, naghain ako ng Urgent Motion for Leave to Intervene na pinadidinig ko sa January 20, 2020. Kasabay nito ang nakatakdang hearing ng korte para sa Compromise Agreement at Joint Motion

to Approve Compromise. Pero noong January 20, Mr. Speaker, wala po ni isa sa mga mosyon ang dininig ng Judge sa San Fernando, Pampanga RTC Branch 42. At hindi lang po iyon, Mr. Speaker, laking gulat ko po nang malaman ko na may hatol na pala ang Judge noong January 15, 2020.

Mr. Speaker, hindi po ako abogado, pero parang may mali sa proseso. Tingnan po natin. Tingnan po nating muli iyong mga petsa na nasa projector—makikita po natin diyan. Ngayon naman po, tingnan natin iyong desisyon ng korte. Parang may mali po, Mr. Speaker, sa proseso. Nagtataka nga po ako dahil paanong nakapaglabas ng desisyon ang Judge noong January 15, 2020 kung may nakatakda pa po palang hearing noong January 20? Nalaman ko rin po na naaprubahan na pala ng Judge ang Compromise Agreement sa pagitan ng OSG; pamahalaang lungsod ng San Fernando, Pampanga; at TIEZA sa nasabing araw. Aba, Mr. Speaker, nauna pa po ang judgment ng Judge kaysa sa hearing, Mr. Speaker. Hindi ko po talaga maintindihan ang naging desisyon ng Judge patungkol sa kasong ito.

Tinatanong ko nga po ang sarili ko, kung iligal ang bentahan ng Paskuhan Village gaya ng sabi ng OSG, bakit nagkakaaregluhan ang mga partido sa kaso? Paanong mangyayari iyon kung walang aaregluhin na anumang paglabag sa batas? Bakit sumang-ayon ang OSG sa aregluhan ng lungsod ng San Fernando at PCI samantalang abogado lang siya ng gobyerno at hindi talaga partido ng kaso, Mr. Speaker? Kung ang Kamara mismo ang nagpasampa ng kaso para ipawalang-bisa ang bentahan ng Paskuhan Village, hindi ba ang Kapulungan ding ito ang dapat sumang-ayon sa anumang usapan patungkol sa nasabing kaso?

Sabi sa aregluhan, magdo-donate ng 5,000 square meters ang PCI-SM sa pamahalaang lungsod ng San Fernando mula sa kabuuang sukat na 9.31 hectares. Mr. Speaker at mga kapwa ko Mambabatas, sa tingin ninyo po ba, maganda ang iniaalok na donasyon para sa lungsod ng San Fernando? Tingnan po nating muli iyong mga sukat ng lupain sa monitor. Ayan po, makikita ninyo po ang sukat ng Paskuhan Village. Makikita ninyo naman kung gaano kaliit ang iniaalok ng PCI sa aregluhan. Kayo na po ang humusga dito sa aking salaysay. At isa pa pong malaking tanong, bakit ang lungsod ng San Fernando ang kinakausap ng PCI sa bagay na ito? Hindi po ba dapat ang national government at ang Kapulungang ito ang dapat kausapin ng PCI?

Ito po ang isang depekto ng desisyon ng Judge. Masdan po natin muli itong Acknowledgement Compromise Agreement, makikita ninyo po riyan. Ano pong mapapansin ninyo patungkol dito? Tama po ba, Mr. Speaker, puro blangko po, puro blangko po. Wala pong nabanggit na kahit isa man lang ID ng mga nanumpa para sa harap ng notaryo publiko.

Alam ko po, maraming abogado tayong kasamahan dito. We have many lawyers here in Congress, dito sa House of Representatives. Sa palagay ninyo po ba, tama po ba ang pagnotaryo na wala namang maipakitang mga ID sa notaryo publiko? Hindi po ba kapag walang nakalistang mga ID, ibig sabihin ay walang nagpakita sa notaryo publiko?

Isa pa pong nakapagtataka rito, Mr. Speaker, ang representante ng PCI ay nasa Pasay. Nasa Pasay din po ang representative ng TIEZA, nasa Pampanga ang representante ng Lungsod ng San Fernando, at nasa Makati po naman ang Office of the Solicitor General. Duda po ako diyan, Mr. Speaker. Sa totoo lang po, Mr. Speaker, nabastusan po ako para sa ating institusyon noong malaman ko kung anong nangyari sa kaso ng Paskuhan Village. Pakiramdam ko po, hindi na iginalang ang Kamarang ito.

Isipin ninyo, Miyembro po ako ng Kamara, at kamukha ni Deputy Speaker Abu, kamukha ko rin po ang Deputy Speaker. At gusto ko lang pong ipunto rito ang pinag-ugatan ng kasong ito ay ang imbestigasyon na ginawa ng ating Kapulungan, pero sa kabila po ng lahat ng ito, binabalewala ang ating mosyon sa korte.

Ang masakit po rito, Mr. Speaker, ganoon na lang kadaling inareglo ang kaso at nawala sa ating mga Pilipino ang Paskuhan Village. Tama po ba na sadyang isinasantabi ang Kapulungang ito na para bang ayaw tayong kilalanin ng korte? Tama rin po ba na dinadaan sa aregluhan ang lupang pag-aari ng gobyerno? Sa akin po, Mr. Speaker, hindi po tama iyon, dahil dito ako ay nagsumite ng omnibus motion natin para marekonsidera ang nasabing hatol ng korte. Pina-schedule ko sa korte na dinggin ang ating mosyon sa February 7, 2020. Sa kasamaang palad, hindi na naman dininig ng Judge ang ating mosyon. Sa katunayan nga po, ang pinarating na mensahe ng Clerk of Court ay ayaw dinggin ng Judge ang ating mosyon at hindi na raw niya aaksyunan ito dahil pinal na daw ang desisyon niya.

Mr. Speaker, sobra na po ang pagbabalewala ng Judge sa kasong ito. Ito po ay isang malaking insulto sa ating minamahal na institusyon. Isinumete ko po ang ating mosyon para igiit ang kapangyarihan ng Kongreso. Nakalulungkot lang po dahil labis na niyurakan at binalewala ng korte ang kapangyarihan ng Kongreso. Hindi ko po matanggap na babastusin ang Kamarang ito.

Tayo po rito sa Kamara de Representante ay iniingatan po natin ang mga cultural na yaman at iba pang mga ari-arian ng gobyerno at ang pangangalagang ito ay inaasahan din natin sa ating gobyerno.

Mr. Speaker, at mga kapwa lingkod bayan, hindi po lingid sa kaalaman ng lahat, ang pagkagalit ng ating Presidente noong malaman niya kung paanong nalugi ang sambayanang Pilipino dahil ayaw nilang ibalik ang lupang tinirikan ng Mile Long Property

sa ating gobyerno. Napahanga nga po ako sa ating Presidente, dahil siniguro niyang mababawi ang lupang kinatatayuan nito para ito ay muling mapakinabangan ng taumbayan.

Noong mga nakaraang linggo, nagalit na naman ang ating Presidente dahil naman sa mga irregular na kontrata ng Manila Water, Maynilad, at Chevron. Kaya naman, pinarepaso niya kaagad ang mga nasabing kontrata para sa kapakanan ng taumbayan. Mr. Speaker, at mga kapwa ko Mambabatas, ang punto ko po dito ay kung sa mga kontrata na nadedehado ang Pilipino, nagalit ang ating Presidente, dito pa kaya sa ilegal na pagkabenta ng Paskuhan Village?

My dear colleagues, Mr. Speaker, gusto ko pong liwanagin, wala po akong gustong kalabanin patungkol sa isyu na ito. Ulitin ko po, Mr. Speaker, gusto ko pong liwanagin, wala po akong gustong kalabanin patungkol sa isyu na ito. Isa lang po ang aking layunin kung bakit ako humaharap sa inyo ngayon: ang maibalik ang Paskuhan Village sa ating pamahalaan, para maipamana po ito sa susunod na henerasyon ng Pilipino. Hangad ko po ang muling pagkabuhay ng Paskuhan Village, at nang muli nating maipakita at maipagmalaki sa buong mundo ang naiibang tradisyon ng pagdiriwang ng Kapaskuhan sa ating bansa.

Mr. Speaker, naniniwala po ako sa kahalagahan ng Paskuhan Village para sa ating mga Pilipino, at ang suporta ng ating kababayan ay lalong nagbibigay-lakas sa akin para ipagpatuloy ang labang ito. Kaugnay nito, kinunsulta ko po si Governor Dennis “Delta” Pineda, dalawang araw po kaming nag-uusap, pati na rin ang mga Board Member ng Ikatlong Distrito, Board Member Rosve Henson, Board Member Ferdinand Labung, at Board Member Ananias Jun Canlas Jr. Napag-alaman ko po na maglalabas sila ng isang resolusyon na sumusuporta sa talumpating ito. Nananawagan din po ako sa ating mahal na Presidente Rodrigo Roa Duterte na sana ay masuportahan ako sa laban nating ito para maibalik sa sambayanang Pilipino ang Paskuhan Village.

I therefore move, Mr. Speaker, that this august Chamber direct the Committee on Justice to conduct an investigation in aid of legislation on the circumstances that surround the Paskuhan Village case before the Regional Trial Court Branch 42 of San Fernando, Pampanga, particularly on how the said Court resolved the case, and know what is the Court’s ruling on the Paskuhan Village resulting in the disadvantage of the Filipino people.

Mr. Speaker, I also move that copies of this speech be furnished to the Office of the President, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte; the Supreme Court, through the Office of the Chief Justice Diosdado M. Peralta; the Office of the Court Administrator Jose Midas P. Marquez; the Department of Tourism, through the Office of Secretary Bernadette Fatima T. Romulo-Puyat;

the Commission on Audit, through its Chairperson Michael G. Aguinaldo; and the provincial government of the province of Pampanga, through the Office of the Provincial Governor, Gov. Dennis “Delta” G. Pineda.

I so move, Mr. Speaker. Mayroon po akong nakaresolusyon dito na nakapirma na ang inyong abang lingkod at kasama ko pong pumirma rito as coauthor ang ating isang Deputy Speaker Johnny Ty Pimentel. Salamat, Deputy Speaker, sa pagtulong sa mga Kapampangan.

Dacal pung dacal salamat, Mr. Speaker. Luid ya ing Kapampangan. Pagpalain po tayo ng Diyos, ang Pilipinas. Mabuhay po ang lahing Pilipino. Dacal pung salamat at mayap a bengi pu keko ngan.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the privilege speech of the Hon. Aurelio “Dong” D. Gonzales Jr. to the Committee on Rules for appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, I move that we terminate the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6134

##### *Continuation*

#### PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 6134, under Committee Report No. 210, as reported out by the Committee on Banks and Financial Intermediaries, and for this purpose, may I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General is hereby directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6134, entitled: AN ACT MANDATING BANKING INSTITUTIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE FINANCING SYSTEM FOR AGRICULTURAL, FISHERIES AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary status of the Bill is that it is in the period of sponsorship and debate. I move that we recognize the Chairperson of the Committee on Banks and Financial Intermediaries, Hon. Junie E. Cua of the Lone District of Quirino, to continue his sponsorship of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Chairperson of the Committee on Banks and Financial Intermediaries is recognized to continue his sponsorship of the measure.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, I also move that we recognize Hon. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate to interpellate the Sponsor on the said measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Representative of BAYAN MUNA Party-List, Hon. Carlos Zarate, is recognized for his interpellation of the good Sponsor.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the good Sponsor yield to some clarificatory questions on House Bill No. 6134, under Committee Report No. 210?

REP. CUA. It is my honor and pleasure, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor and Mr. Speaker. The Bill in consideration as I understand aims to set up a financing facility that will redispense private and public bank capital toward agriculture. Is that a correct appreciation of the Bill, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUA. In a sense, that is correct, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, but for clarity, let me explain.

First of all, this Bill intends to address the unfulfilled expectations of Republic Act No. 10000 or the Agri-Agra Reform Credit Act of 2009. In Republic Act No. 10000, a fund was set up to finance agriculture and agrarian reform beneficiary activities. The quota was set at P15,000 for agriculture and P10,000 for agrarian reform beneficiaries. In this sense, this is a fund that the Gentleman is talking about.

The other fund, in this proposed Bill, or in this proposed legislation is a separate fund which we called the "Special Fund," which will be under the management of a council called Agricultural and Fisheries Finance and Capacity-Building Council or AFFCC fund. This Bill is set to organize the farmers in order to train and capacitate them so that they are able to group themselves into viable organizations, cooperatives, or whatever form of grouping so that they can be professionally managed. In other words, it is hoped that through this fund, we will be able to capacitate them to become worthy clients of banks which, at this point, despite a law that compels them to lend, the banking industry refuses some or refuses to pay because of the inherent risks in lending to small farmholders.

In a sense, that is what these funds are all about.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

In effect, this proposed Bill seeks to address the gaps or the weaknesses of R.A. No. 10000 or the failure of R.A. No. 10000 in fulfilling its regional mandate to provide credit to our fisherfolk and farmers, especially the ...

REP. CUA. That is correct, Your Honor.

Over the last 11 years, since 2009 when the law was enacted, the funds which we expected to be lent to small marginalized farming households, whether they are non-agrarian reform beneficiaries or not, continued not to flow to them. The reasons, after a thorough and exhaustive study which was revealed by the banking industry itself, are: 1) the high cost of lending to individual small farmers; and 2) the inherent risk of farming especially for the small farmholders.

It was revealed in the study that monocropping, which is actually the nationwide norm monocropping of rice and corn, yielded only very marginal income, and at the end of the harvest, the farmers, whether agra-beneficiaries or not, could not even have enough of a working capital for the next cycle. We found out that those were the reasons for the failure of the law, and this Bill seeks to address that gap. You correctly mentioned it, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

In effect, this Bill is intended to provide or to encourage farmers to avail of financing, and it will encourage farmers to corporatize their farm operations and hopefully they can link up with the so-called agricultural value chain ...

REP. CUA. Correct, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. ... and possibly improve their

production, as well as their income. Is that what the Sponsor is saying?

REP. CUA. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor. You mentioned that the financing vision of this Bill is of two levels: one is the credit quota for mandatory agriculture and fisheries financing requirement which was set at a minimum of 25 percent of the total loanable funds of both private and public, which is already existing now.

REP. CUA. Correct, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. Second is the setting up of the Special Fund, ...

REP. CUA. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. ... which I think is the new feature of this Bill.

REP. CUA. Exactly, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor. At first glance, I looked at who were the beneficiaries of this Bill. In Section 4, it was mentioned that financing will be accessible to households or individuals.

REP. CUA. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. It appears that the small farmers and fisherfolk are the main beneficiaries of this Bill. But I looked at Section 5, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, and it may help if the Sponsor will make the correction and clarify that this is not so. This is not just exclusive to households or individuals, because Section 5 clarified that the financing facility mentioned in Section 4, actually, is also extended to cooperatives, associations, MSMEs or organizations in good standing, constituting the so-called rural community beneficiaries. In fact, Section 5 says that these so-called rural community beneficiaries, regardless of capitalization, are based on the feasibility of the project.

Is my understanding correct, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, that regardless of capitalization, even big corporations, big cooperatives or other organizations can avail of the financing? Is that a correct appreciation, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUA. Your Honor, you are correct. Let me respond to the first observation that in Section 5, you do not see "individuals" there, which is correct. Thank you for your keen observation. I think this is also the same point that was raised last session by the honorable

Gentleman from BUHAY Party-List, Congressman Atienza.

REP. ZARATE. Yes.

REP. CUA. I stand open to an amendment because that could be a reality that an individual may be so capacitated. Even alone, he can be so capacitated and would be a viable client; he could be included. At the proper time, Mr. Speaker, we will introduce a Committee amendment to address that point.

Now, the second point is with regard to the point whether it means that even big groupings, it may not be a corporation, Your Honor, in fact, it is our aspiration that as we group the farmers together, not exactly as a corporation but a corporate entity, which means, it could be a cooperative, it could be a simple association or whatever form of grouping you may have—small cooperatives may eventually become so successful. Your Honor, they may still need some assistance in capacitation, for example, and may even avail of this Special Fund.

Insofar as accessing the credit quota is concerned, I think big corporations, if they have proven track records of good repayment, would naturally be welcome clients of the banks.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor. Just for clarity, the good Sponsor is now admitting that even big corporations, for as long as their repayment record is good, and for as long as they are engaged in agriculture production or aquaculture production, they can also avail of this particular fund. Is that correct?

REP. CUA. Provided, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, that they fall within the limitations of the Bill that we filed. Agri-business enterprises, and I think, that is what the Gentleman had in mind, an agri-business corporation may be lending to them, may be an alternative compliance to this particular Bill, for as long as they can show that they have supply arrangements to farmers, fishermen, and agrarian reform beneficiaries in the rural areas.

This is the modification that we have made. In addition, to answer your point, in fact, under the present law, which is R.A. No. 10000, the law allows lending to agri-businesses without limitations. In fact, we deemed it necessary to limit them to those agri-business enterprises which would really benefit the farmers, fisherfolk and agra-beneficiaries.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, for clarifying that, and for stating earlier that an individual farmer should also be given the opportunity to avail of this financing, because if this individual farmer, for example, with only a 1.5-hectare farm lot wants to

improve the production of his farm, and he cannot avail of this facility, then, this clearly betrays the ultimate thrust of the Bill, which is to provide financing facility to as many small farmers that we have.

Now, I will go to another point. In the Definition of Terms, specifically the definition of what an Agrarian Reform Beneficiary or ARB is, it appears that it was defined in such a way that holders of stock distribution offers or SDOs, or landowners or landlords who put up their lands to various alternative tenurial arrangements such as production or profit-sharing, labor administration and most probably, also contract growing and agri-business ventures arrangement with agrarian reform beneficiaries, it appears that if that is the definition of what an ARB is, then they can also be the beneficiary of the financing facility for the Special Fund that is aimed to be established under this Bill. Is that a correct appreciation, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, I think the definition that we have adopted here is a definition that you can find in the present law, Republic Act No. 10000, and we feel, as a Committee, that we should not disturb this definition because this has weathered the test of time and this has gone through the collective wisdom of this institution. So, ...

REP. ZARATE. Thank you.

REP. CUA. Yes.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you for that but, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, you mentioned earlier that there are gaps in the present law, R.A. No. 10000 and, in fact, we have been pointing out that one of the gaps is, in effect, the definition, as laid down in this existing law that we want to amend. It appears, as I have mentioned, that if we keep that kind of definition, we are institutionalizing what is happening now in so many agrarian reform areas na nailagay na sila sa ibang mga kaayusan. In fact, it is no longer the farmers who are in control of the land because they entered into some arrangements with the landowners, and that includes agri-business ventures arrangements, leaseback, labor administration, and production or profit sharing. So, my question now is, if an ARB enters into this kind of arrangement, for example, a profit or production-sharing agreement, is the company that enters into an arrangement with that agrarian reform beneficiary allowed also to avail of the financing facility under the Special Fund that we are trying to put up under this Bill?

REP. CUA. Mr. Speaker, with the indulgence of the Gentleman, which particular part of this definition worries the Gentleman?

REP. ZARATE. Well, if I may read, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CUA. Yes, please, please.

REP. ZARATE. In Section 3(a), the definition of Agrarian Reform Beneficiary is very broad:

x x x refers to a farmer who was granted land under Presidential Decree No. 27, under the CARP Law, R.A. No. 9700, or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Extension with Reforms, and a regular farmworker who is landless, irrespective of tenurial arrangement, who benefited from the redistribution of land, regardless of crops or fruits produced, to include the totality of factors and support services designed to lift the economic status of the beneficiary and all other alternative arrangements to the physical distribution of lands, such as production or profit sharing, labor administration, and the distribution of shares of stocks which will allow the beneficiary to receive a just share of the fruits of the lands one works.

So, in many agrarian reform communities now, actually, it is no longer the farmers who are operating the lands that are awarded to them. They entered into some arrangements like this stock distribution arrangement or profit and production arrangement.

REP. CUA. Which is allowed by law.

REP. ZARATE. Yes. So, my question now is, with these kinds of arrangements and because they are also the landowner now that runs the supposedly awarded land to the farmer, can they also avail of the financing under this Special Fund?

REP. CUA. In other words, does the company with whom he has an arrangement under a stockholding arrangement, a sharing arrangement ...

REP. ZARATE. Yes.

REP. CUA. ... be allowed ...

REP. ZARATE. Yes.

REP. CUA. ... to avail of this fund?

REP. ZARATE. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

REP. CUA. I think the provision of the Bill is clear on this in the sense that it provides that an agri-



business venture—in this case, will fall under agri-business venture—for as long as there is a supply chain arrangement that will benefit them, then, they would be allowed because the intention is really to ensure that the money flows to the farmers, fisherfolk and agrabeneficiaries. If we do not allow such an arrangement, meaning we do not allow credit to flow, then we will not be able to address their financing needs. So, I think that would be the answer of this humble Representation.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

Actually, that is what is happening now...

REP. CUA. Yes.

REP. ZARATE. ...under the Agri-Agra Law, and this Bill is not changing the status quo, so to speak. This Representation believes that if we will not recognize that such kind of arrangement—kaya nga napipilitan iyong mga magsasaka to enter into that kind of arrangement is because they have no financing facility to avail of. Kaya instead na sila iyong magpapatakbo doon, they enter into this arrangement. Then, it is the company now who gets the opportunity to avail of this funding. So, instead of the land actually awarded to them, physically transferred to the farmers, hanggang ngayon ay hindi ito naibibigay sa mga farmers.

REP. CUA. Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. So, that is a gap that we think is still not being addressed. If we want our farmers to be truly autonomous or independent, away from the control and influence of their previous landowners—dahil itong mga landowners ay may capacity, ang may access to financing, then this Bill should address that issue, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

REP. CUA. Okay. Thank you, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I get the point very clearly now. I think the question really is a question on the fundamental concept of this particular arrangement allowed under the CARP Law. We do not distribute the land but we make the farmworkers or the farmers become part-owner of the company and share in the benefits of the agri-business venture.

So, this kind of an arrangement is an arrangement under our CARP Law. It would be difficult for us to amend that concept in this law, which is all about mandated credit. I think if we want to change that concept, because that concept is that we should not allow stockholding arrangement for farmers, we should distribute the land and then the landowners will be the one to manage it individually or collectively.

So, we are talking of the basic and fundamental concept and I do not think this is the right Bill to change it.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, though, I disagree, because there is no more CARP; the extension of the CARP has already expired and this Bill could have, at least, in the opinion of this Representation, addressed that gap in the Agri-Agra Law. Until now, in fact, in many instances in Mindanao, this is what is happening. Many agrarian reform beneficiaries, cooperatives in Mindanao that entered into AVA contracts with agri-business companies are now buried in debt. While the agri-business companies that availed of these facilities, nabaon sila sa utang, itong mga ARB companies. So, this is a major gap in the Agri-Agra Law that should have been, as I submit, addressed.

*At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Abu relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Rodante D. Marcoleta.*

REP. CUA. Mr. Speaker, I understand fully well where the Gentleman is coming from. It is really a great frustration that in that sense, the spirit of land distribution, in fact, has not been fulfilled. But as I said, maybe this is not the right Bill to talk about the concept. I am so sorry that this Bill is really focused on a credit and banking issue.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor.

By the way, did the Bill in granting financing, if you avail of either the mandatory or the Special Fund, is there a provision in this particular Bill that sets the limit as to how much interest will the farmer pay, or a corporation, or an association or agri-business pays for that matter?

REP. CUA. Well, the rate of interest, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, is a pricing policy; it is a pricing issue. And pricing is always—in our economy, as it is enshrined in our Constitution that we have an open, free economy, prices are set not by fiat, not by law, but prices are set by the interplay of market forces. So, the rates at which this fund will be lent will be determined eventually by the market forces. I would imagine, however, that under the circumstances that we envisioned when we succeed, and I hope we succeed in the organizing, capacitating, and professionalizing farmers associations and organizations, they will become so viable because they are all hardworking. What we need only is a team to manage them. So, if they are able to show, demonstrate their ability to honor their obligations, their ability to make profit out of an agri-business venture, as I have said, this will be determined by the market and most likely the interest rates will go down as banks compete for clients.

REP. ZARATE. Okay.

REP. CUA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Marcoleta relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Raneo "Ranie" E. Abu.*

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

Well, we can only speculate if that will happen or not, but it is very clear, at least, to this Representation, since the financing programs of the Bill is really meant to corporatize or for corporatizing the farms, as you mentioned here. For setting a ceiling for the interest rates of the financing facility, that is, at least to this Representation, also unfortunate because, exactly, that is the problem that our farmers face, especially the small farmers. That is why the tendency is, because of the lack of financing, they go to financiers who charge usurious rates. And here, by not setting up a ceiling for the interest rate, for example, how much interest will be charged under this facility, it appears na this is no different from going to these financiers who charge usurious rates. It appears kung sino lang iyong maka—because you said “market forces,” so if at present, the market says that the interest is this high, kung sino lang iyong makakakaya noong interest na iyon, sila lang iyong maka-avail. The small farmers will be left behind because paano nga naman sila mag-a-avail noong ganoon facility if ganoon kataas iyong interes, if there is no ceiling to that interest?

I was of the impression that this Bill is, in some way, a social justice Bill by trying to address the gaps under the present R.A. No. 10000, really making these funds available to the farmers doon sa kanilang capacity also to pay, and ensuring the affordability noong interest, for example, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CUA. Mr. Speaker, allow me to explain the differences. There is a huge difference in what we have under R.A. No. 10000 and the scenario under this proposed Bill.

First of all, the Special Fund is a fund where the farmers will not pay any interest because this is a training fund, this is a capacity-building fund. It may even be a grant fund. It may even be used as an equity fund, if necessary. I think the crux of the question is not about this. I think the point of the Gentleman is that under the present condition, under what is happening under the regime of R.A. No. 10000, individual farmers have to pay usurious rates. Even if there is no cap, they have to pay usurious rates because they are at the mercy of traders. This is the reality on the ground because individual small farmers are unable to borrow conveniently from the banks. Only very few

banks are able to lend selectively. In other words, the market is uneven. The farmers are not capacitated and so, therefore, the lender has a great advantage over the borrower.

This is exactly what we are trying to address in this Bill. We want these farmers who are playing currently in an uneven playing field to be so organized and capacitated so that as a group, they will be able to borrow. I am certain that when they borrow from banks, they will be able to borrow at a rate much less than the effective interest rate that they are getting from the traders.

At the end of the day, when we analyze the interest rate shouldered by the small farmholders, it becomes usurious because the price at which the farmer would be selling to the traders is dictated by them, and so, that unfair practice, in fact, costs money. The price at which they pay their inputs, which is oftentimes higher than market value, is also a factor to that usurious rate. In other words, it is an uneven playing field, and that is the reason why they are paying high interest and, precisely, that is what we are trying to correct, to reiterate my point.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I will go to another point, Mr. Sponsor, if you may, on the alternative compliance of the mandatory financing for agri-agra. It appears to this Representation that we did not learn from the lesson of the failure of R.A. No. 10000, where banks, mainly, instead of complying with the provisions of the law that they have to extend financing directly to the farmers and the fisherfolk, they just resorted to the alternative compliance to avoid the mandatory requirement.

In fact, there are instances, to my knowledge, wherein some banks opted just to pay the penalty for not complying because it is easier for them, instead of, you know, you mentioned earlier, because of the so-called risk in lending to small farmers, and the high cost of lending to small farmers. But, then again, we repeated such, I think, I believe that is also a big gap in R.A. No. 10000, we repeated that here and, in fact, we even expanded the coverage of the alternative compliance such that now, it may include activities that are mostly in trading and investment market. So, sa halip na ipakitid natin iyon para direkta talaga silang magbigay ng financing doon sa farmers at hindi sila mag-resort to alternative mode ay mas pinalawak pa natin ngayon.

If I may add, the alternative compliance, in fact, even includes lending for the construction of farm-to-market roads, but we know for a fact that in the last three decades, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, this globalization of agriculture saw an unprecedented buildup of farm-to-market infrastructure. Kahit na sa budget natin, taun-

taon mayroong farm-to-market road sa DA, mayroong farm-to-market road sa DAR, mayroon sa DPWH, et cetera, et cetera. Billions of budgets are poured into that farm-to-market road infrastructure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Majority Leader, I think the extension of Privilege Hour has already expired.

REP. ZARATE. Not yet.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Sorry, sorry, sorry, I am mistaken. You may continue your interpellation.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, may we seek a clarification from the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, as to why we continue such an arrangement by providing these banks an even wider elbow room so that they can escape giving mandatory financing to our small farmers, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, that is a very good point that you raised, but I would like to disabuse the mind of the Gentleman in a very courteous way.

If you read through these provisions on alternative compliance, even the alternative compliance or compliances provided under the present law which, in fact, includes lending for construction and upgrading of infrastructures, I think the present law ends there, and what we added only are the last three. If you look at each of these items, you will note that this alternative compliance somehow benefits the small farmers because if you will look at it, investment into debt securities, for example, of LANDBANK and DBP, can be recognized only as compliance if those proceeds eventually were used to help agricultural activities in the rural areas.

So, you talk of this alternative compliance in terms of investment in securities of these two government banks. Opening of accounts with rural financial institutions provided that they are really for agriculture and fishing activities. Rediscounting, for example, should cover papers of banks that would benefit agriculture, fisheries and agra-beneficiaries. All of these alternative compliances are, in fact, intended to help agriculture and fisheries.

Now, the law, even the present law envisions a situation that the quota could be set very high and even if they are able to lend to everybody, there would still be surplus fund. But the situation has become even worse because banks feel that lending to small farmers, based on empirical studies, really had a very bad repayment rate. And you cannot blame anybody, not only the banks but even us, personally. We really would not lend if we are certain that 50 percent of chances, they would not be able to pay. So, that is actually what is happening,

and they would rather pay the penalty rather than lose the whole amount.

So, on the additional, we did not add the construction or upgrading of infra. It is found in the present law. So, this is not really an addition. The addition starts at (f) lending to agri-business. In fact, lending to agri-business is already part of the present law except that the law says—there are two mentions of agri-business, in the law itself and in a section found in the AFMA—lending to agri-business for as long as they are engaged in activities related to soil and water management, something like that. So, you will note that we even improved the Bill by ensuring that it will be considered as an alternative compliance only when there is a supply chain arrangement with rural communities.

And then value chain, agricultural value chain.

Agricultural value chain is so important, and funding this agricultural value chain would increase the benefit of the poor farmer, if they are able to add value to their commodities, collectively if they are able to do that, or even agri-business engaged in value chain would eventually benefit the small farmers. Investing in the shares of stocks of PCIC, I think, it is needless to say that we need to strengthen PCIC in some ways that we can, and so, this is one of the things that we have added.

So, I hope I satisfied the concerns of the good Gentleman.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

Still, I maintain my apprehension, dahil nga one of the reasons why—at least to this Representation—R.A. No. 10000 is a failure, as far as opening up the financing facility to our small farmers, because of the presence of these alternative modes, where we gave the banks a room so that they can instead of directly going to the farmers, because of the risk, of course, there will always be risks, they can use this alternative mode just to ensure that their capital will be returned to them, probably with interests rather than giving it to the farmers na mayroong kasamang risks o riesgo.

With this present Bill now, we are even giving them more leeway instead of, you know, keeping it probably in a small number of alternative modes. I know that the investments in construction of infrastructures is already in the present law, kaya nga, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, dapat inalis na iyan eh, dahil alam ninyo, napapansin ko sa napakaraming farm-to-market roads na were being financed, either by the GAA or other forms of financing, parang it is a Trojan horse to the farmers, dahil once these farm-to-market roads are already constructed, it is easy for these lands later on to be converted into some other uses. So, instead of being used for agricultural purposes, ang daming agricultural lands now that are

being converted into subdivisions, because of the access to these otherwise non-accessible lands before, just to cite an example. Now on my final note, ...

REP. CUA. But...

REP. ZARATE. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CUA. ...before the last note, may I respond, Mr. Speaker. In response to the point that these funds that were lent out and were put into these alternative compliances are the reasons why the funds did not reach the small farmers, let me respond this way. I think, if we did not include this, had this not be included, the funds still will not reach the small farmers, because the basic reason why that is not happening is fundamental. That is the high cost of lending and because of the high default rate and the risk involved in lending to small farmers.

So, even without these alternative compliances, it will not reach them, and if you have excluded this, then these benefits which actually were received or are being received by the farmers would never happen. And, therefore, without that, the farmers, the fishermen will be at the losing end. So, I hope that explanation disabuses the mind of the Gentleman.

On the matter of farm-to-market roads and public infra, I think, even if you find provisions for farm-to-market roads in many departments of our government, national or local man, there is still a serious lack and shortage of public infra to service the needs of the small famers and fisherfolk. So, building a road should not be a priority because the land ends up being converted, I think that will be a scenario of "damned if you do, damned if you don't." So, there is a benefit for doing it. There is also a disadvantage for doing it. But at the end of the day, I think that by and large, the benefits would outweigh the disadvantage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

Now, on the P10 billion Special ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). You have eight minutes remaining.

REP. ZARATE. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

On the P10 billion Special Fund, may I be clarified whether this is exclusive only to beneficiaries with active financing or loan accounts now or it is for beneficiaries who still wants to apply to access the financing facility.

REP. CUA. This would be available to the beneficiaries of this program, so they can apply once

they meet some criteria. This is a fund that will be managed by a council, a council that we expect will have malasakit in the sense that this, in fact, is co-managed by the private sector. And seeing that the program succeeds will mean capacitating their client, and capacitating their client would mean a customer who can pay them, and from whom interest can be earned, and from whom a financial service can be provided.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CUA. Yes.

REP. ZARATE. You mentioned rightly that this fund will be managed by the council, the AFFCC.

REP. CUA. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. Just for my last point and observation, this council, I observed, is highly dominated by banks and lenders based on the enumeration of who are the members of this council. In fact, the farmers and fisherfolk who are supposedly the beneficiaries have only one representative each in this council. So, they are, in fact, dominated by a ratio of three-to-one. So, how can we expect that this council really will pursue the interest of our fisherfolk and farmers when, in fact, most of them come from the banking and lending sector, and definitely, their interest really is to get the return of their investment, which is to get some profit out of lending this to the farmers, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUA. Well, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, we expect that being a rational businessman, they will make an effort to make this program succeed because through this program, they can create credible, viable clients for their benefits, and if they fail, it means they will continue to pay penalties.

This is actually what they are complaining about. Every year, they pay penalties to the tune of several billions. It is definitely a heavy burden on the banking industry as well. They do not welcome this because it has reached the nature of tax. They would rather be able to lend rather than pay billions of penalties, but because they are mandated by law, they are forced to do it. They have no choice. This is what you call "damned if you do and damned if don't" In other words, "sala sa init, sala sa lamig."

I think they will want this to succeed. We also want them to succeed, because we want the money to flow to the small guys who now are consolidated into a stronger unit, who are able to borrow at a reasonable rate and strong enough to bargain.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

The P10 billion fund, as a final note, will solely come from the penalties paid for by the banks for noncompliance or under compliance.

REP. CUA. Not necessarily, Your Honor. What we did here is something a little more creative because as we hope to improve performance, it is possible that penalties will go down. If that happens, we will come to a point where the funds will dwindle, but we have put in place there is a provision that the council will ensure sufficiency and the banking industry may comply by contributing to it; and so that way, we ensure sufficiency of fund every year. So, it is a win-win for the government, win-win for the small farmers and fisherfolk and agrar-beneficiaries. It is a win-win for everybody.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor. There is no possibility that this P10 billion fund will again come from collection of levies, for example, or from the GAA.

REP. CUA. GAA, no, Your Honor. That will not happen because there is no such provision in this Bill and this is precisely, the innovation of this Bill, because this is really a cooperation that we were able to solicit from the banking industry because they have been so used to pay penalties. This time around, they want to help the government to end that regime. That I think, is the beauty of this concept.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

I am now winding up my interpellation. Thank you for the kind accommodation to this Representation's questions and clarification.

REP. CUA. Thank you, Your Honor. It is my privilege and my pleasure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6134

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 6134.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any

objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The consideration of House Bill No. 6134 is hereby suspended.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6192 ON SECOND READING

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Bill No. 6192, contained in Committee Report 218, as reported out by the Committee on Youth and Sports Development.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none, the motion is approved.

The Secretary General is directed to read only the title of the measure.\*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6192, entitled: AN ACT PRESERVING THE INDIGENOUS GAMES OF THE PHILIPPINES.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of sponsoring the said measure, I move that we open the period of sponsorship and debate. Mr. Speaker, may we recognize the honorable Chairman of the Committee on Youth and Sports Development, the Hon. Eric M. Martinez, to begin the sponsorship of the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). To sponsor the measure, Mr. Speaker, we have the Chairman on the Committee on Youth and Sports Development, our honorable house of Kobe, Hon. Eric Martinez. May we recognize Hon. Martinez for his sponsorship.

#### SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. MARTINEZ

REP. MARTINEZ. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Majority Leader.

An Act Preserving the Indigenous Games of the

\* Copies of the bill were distributed to the members earlier. Section 53, Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that "[a] bill or joint resolution on Second Reading shall be read in full unless copies thereof have been distributed to the Members."

Philippines—Cathy Freeman, a track and field athlete and Australian sports legend was the first Australian aboriginal person to win an individual Olympic Gold in 2000 Sydney Olympics. Nova Peris-Kneebone was the first aboriginal Australian to win an Olympic Gold in a team event, and she was a member of the Australian Women's Hockey Team in 1996 Olympics. Indeed, since the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, Australia has been represented by 51 indigenous athletes. In the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic, Australian Team included seven indigenous athletes, with five making their Olympic debut.

Mr. Speaker, almost five years ago, from October 23 to November 1, 2015, the Philippines' indigenous peoples—the Aetas, Dumagats, Ifugaos, and Mangyans—have proven their athletic prowess in the historic first-ever World Indigenous Games held in Brazil, billed as “The Olympics of Indigenous Sports.” About 2,000 athletes representing 50 ethnic groups participated in a variety of traditional indigenous games such as canoeing, archery, and spear toss. In 2010, 12 members of the RP contingent competed in the First Southeast Asian Games Indigenous Tribal Games held in Sabah, Malaysia.

It is for this reason, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues of this august Chamber and most importantly, our sisters and brothers in the indigenous community that I stand today to sponsor a measure which to my mind is vital in preserving our sociocultural heritage as a people and enrich our identity as a race. I am referring to, Mr. Speaker, House Bill No. 6192, entitled: “An Act Preserving the Indigenous Games of the Philippines.”

Mr. Speaker, I therefore call on our colleagues in this august Chamber to consider, vote and approve House Bill No. 6192, under Committee Report No. 218.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, as there are no colleagues of ours who have registered to interpellate the honorable Sponsor or speak against the measure, I move that we close the period of sponsorship and debate...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection?

REP. BONDOC. ...on House Bill No. 6192.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none, the motion is approved.

The period of sponsorship and debate on House Bill No. 6192 is closed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, I move to open the period of amendments on House Bill No. 6192.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The period of amendments is hereby declared open.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, there being no Committee or individual amendment to House Bill No. 6192, I move that we close the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none, the motion is approved.

The period of amendments on House Bill No. 6192 is hereby closed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6192

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 6192.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The consideration of House Bill No. 6192 on Second Reading is hereby suspended.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### DESIGNATION OF MEMBERS TO THE CONF. CTTEE. ON HOUSE BILL NO. 5829 AND SENATE BILL NO. 1224

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we designate the following as members of the Conference Committee on the disagreeing provisions of House Bill No. 5829 and Senate Bill No. 1224, institutionalizing Values Education in the curriculum by incorporating Good Manners and Right Conduct as a subject in the Kindergarten up to Grade 3 level.

For the Majority: Reps. Roman T. Romulo, Evelina G. Escudero, Jocelyn F. Fortunato, Resurreccion M. Acop; and for the Minority, Rep. Stella Luz A. Quimbo.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Members nominated are so designated.  
The Majority Leader is recognized.

RECONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL  
ON SECOND READING  
OF H.B. NO. 5887

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we reconsider the approval on Second Reading of House Bill No. 5887, for some perfecting amendments.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General is directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No.5887, entitled: AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN CEBU CITY AND CEBU PROVINCE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.”

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of amendments.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that the title of House Bill No. 5887 be amended to read as follows: AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN UNDERSEA TUNNEL OR BRIDGE FROM CEBU CITY TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF CORDOVA AND A COASTAL ROAD-EXPRESSWAY TO THE MACTAN-CEBU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the amendment is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we close the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve House Bill No. 5887, as amended, on Second Reading.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). There is a motion for the approval of House Bill No. 5887, as amended, on Second Reading.

As many as are in favor, please say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). As many as are against, please say *Nay*. (*Silence*)

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 5887  
ON SECOND READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The *ayes* have it; the motion is approved.

House Bill No. 5887, as amended, is hereby approved on Second Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

RECONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL  
OF H.B. NOS. 5855 AND 5945  
ON SECOND READING

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, with leave of the House, I move that we reconsider the approval on Second Reading of House Bill Nos. 5855 and 5945.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. LACSON-NOEL. Mr. Speaker, I move that we proceed to the Additional Reference of Business.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General will please read the Additional Reference of Business.

#### ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

*Upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General read the following Committee Reports which were referred to the appropriate Committees hereunder indicated:*

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report of the Committee on Legislative Franchises (Committee Report No. 244), re H.B. No. 6371, entitled:

“AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION, PRESENTLY KNOWN AS BAYAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS, INC., UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 3259, ENTITLED ‘AN ACT GRANTING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO ESTABLISH RADIO STATIONS FOR DOMESTIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS, RADIOPHONE, BROADCASTING AND TELECASTING’ AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NOS. 4905 AND 7633”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 5797

Sponsors: Representatives Alvarez (Franz) and Tejada

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Legislative Franchises (Committee Report No. 245), re H.B. No. 6373, entitled:

“AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO TANDAG ELECTRIC AND TELEPHONE COMPANY, INC. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8715, ENTITLED ‘AN ACT GRANTING THE TANDAG ELECTRIC AND TELEPHONE COMPANY, INC., A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, ESTABLISH, INSTALL, MAINTAIN AND OPERATE LOCAL EXCHANGE NETWORK IN THE PROVINCE OF SURIGAO DEL SUR’ ”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 906

Sponsors: Representatives Alvarez (Franz) and Pimentel

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Legislative Franchises (Committee Report No. 246), re H.B. No. 6374, entitled:

“AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO CACERES BROADCASTING CORPORATION UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8106 ENTITLED ‘AN ACT GRANTING THE CACERES BROADCASTING CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE ISLAND OF LUZON AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES’ ”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 1737

Sponsors: Representatives Alvarez (Franz) and Villafuerte

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### CHANGE OF REFERRAL OF CERTAIN MEASURES

REP. LACSON-NOEL. Mr. Speaker, I move for the change of referral of the following measures:

1. House Bill No. 11, from the Committees on Economic Affairs and Trade and Industry to the Committees on Local Government and Government Enterprises and Privatization;

2. House Bill Nos. 1287 and 4705, from the Committee on Public Works and Highways to the Committee on Transportation;

3. House Bill No. 5075, from the Committee on Legislative Franchises to the Committee on Transportation;

4. House Bill No. 5281, from the Committee on Justice to the Committee on Youth and Sports Development; and

5. House Bill No. 5976, from the Committee on Trade and Industry to the Committee on Banks and Financial Intermediaries.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any



objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

REP. LACSON-NOEL. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn the session until three o'clock in the afternoon of Wednesday, February 26, 2020.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; session is adjourned until Wednesday, February 26, 2020, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

*It was 7:35 p.m.*