



Congressional Record

PLENARY PROCEEDINGS OF THE 18th CONGRESS, FIRST REGULAR SESSION

House of Representatives

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No. 51

CALL TO ORDER

At 3:00 p.m., Deputy Speaker Evelina G. Escudero called the session to order.

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

PRAYER

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Please rise for a minute of silent prayer.

Everybody rose for the silent prayer.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

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

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

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

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we defer the calling of the roll.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the calling of the roll is deferred.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker, I also move that we defer the approval of the Journal of the previous session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the approval of the Journal is also deferred.

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we proceed with the Reference of Business, and may we

request that the Secretary General be directed to read the same.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the Secretary General is 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, Communication and Committee Reports which were referred to the appropriate Committees hereunder indicated:

BILLS ON FIRST READING

House Bill No. 6414, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE BICOL STATE COLLEGE OF APPLIED SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY INTO A STATE UNIVERSITY TO BE KNOWN AS THE PHILIPPINE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Villafuerte

TO THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

House Bill No. 6415, entitled:

“AN ACT MANDATING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO INTRODUCE STRUCTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENTS INTO THE K TO 12 CURRICULUM TO ACHIEVE GREATER EFFICIENCY AND SUCCESS ACROSS ALL KEY STAGES OF THE PROGRAM”

By Representative Marcoleta

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 6416, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE PROTECTION

OF FINANCIAL CONSUMERS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Villafuerte
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

House Bill No. 6417, entitled:

“AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING DEPLOYMENT OF TEACHERS TO THE BARRIOS”

By Representative Abunda
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 6418, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING AN EXTENSION OFFICE OF THE MARINE INDUSTRY AUTHORITY (MARINA) IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF LILOY, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Amatong
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

House Bill No. 6419, entitled:

“AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL GARDENING PROGRAMS IN ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Estrella
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 6420, entitled:

“AN ACT PROTECTING AND PROMOTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH APPROPRIATE, TRANSPARENT AND EASILY COMPREHENSIBLE LABELLING OF ALL PROCESSED AND SEMI-PROCESSED FOOD PRODUCTS CONTAINING FREE SUGARS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Estrella
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND INDUSTRY

House Bill No. 6421, entitled:

“AN ACT PENALIZING BULK CASH SMUGGLING AND PROVIDING PENALTIES THEREFORE AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representatives Yap (Eric) and Duterte
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

House Bill No. 6422, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING UPLAND SUSTAINABLE AGROFORESTRY DEVELOPMENT (USAD) PROGRAM IN UPLAND AGRICULTURAL LANDS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Plaza
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

House Bill No. 6423, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE LINGAYEN-BINMALEY BAYWALK ROAD LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF LINGAYEN AND IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BINMALEY IN THE PROVINCE OF PANGASINAN INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Espino
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

House Bill No. 6424, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A REGULAR DISTRICT OFFICE OF THE LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE (LTO) IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CALAMBA, PROVINCE OF MISAMIS OCCIDENTAL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREOF”

By Representative Ty (Diego)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

House Bill No. 6425, entitled:

“AN ACT CONSOLIDATING THE LOAN ALLOCATION PROVIDED FOR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES, AND AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES, AND INCREASING THE PENALTIES ON LENDING INSTITUTIONS FOR NON-COMPLIANCE AND UNDER COMPLIANCE AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10000, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘AGRI-AGRA REFORM CREDIT ACT OF 2009’ ”

By Representative Garin (Sharon)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

House Bill No. 6426, entitled:

“AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING A NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR THE PREVENTION OF ADOLESCENT PREGNANCIES AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Garin (Sharon)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON WELFARE OF CHILDREN

House Bill No. 6427, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING THE MAGNA CARTA OF BARANGAY NUTRITION SCHOLARS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Garin (Sharon)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

FUNCTIONS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Bañas-Nogales
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION AND THE COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES RESOURCES

House Bill No. 6428, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING FRESHWATER AQUACULTURE CENTER IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TALACOGON, PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL SUR AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Bascug
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES RESOURCES

House Bill No. 6434, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE CEBU TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY INTO A SYSTEM AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representatives Calderon, Del Mar, Abellanosa, Gullas, Caminero, Garcia (Pablo John), Salimbangon, Frasco, Ouano-Dizon, Radaza and Lagon
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

House Bill No. 6429, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING CACAO RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PROSPERIDAD, PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL SUR AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Bascug
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

House Bill No. 6435, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE SCIENCE FOR PEOPLE AND COMPETITIVENESS PROGRAM”

By Representative Vargas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

House Bill No. 6431, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PENSION TO ALL SENIOR CITIZENS, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7432, AS AMENDED, ENTITLED ‘AN ACT TO MAXIMIZE THE CONTRIBUTION OF SENIOR CITIZENS TO NATION BUILDING, GRANT BENEFITS AND SPECIAL PRIVILEGES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES’”

By Representative Datol
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SENIOR CITIZENS

House Bill No. 6436, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PENSION TO SENIOR CITIZENS, FURTHER AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7432, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9994, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘EXPANDED SENIOR CITIZENS ACT OF 2010’ ”

By Representative Vargas
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SENIOR CITIZENS

House Bill No. 6432, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE MUNICIPALITY OF POLOMOLOK IN THE PROVINCE OF SOUTH COTABATO INTO A COMPONENT CITY TO BE KNOWN AS THE CITY OF POLOMOLOK”

By Representative Bañas-Nogales
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 6437, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING SECURITY OF TENURE FOR BARANGAY HEALTH WORKERS, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE SECTION 6 (D) OF REPUBLIC ACT 7883, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘BARANGAY HEALTH WORKERS BENEFITS AND INCENTIVES ACT OF 1995’ ”

By Representative Vargas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 6433, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING A DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES AND AQUATIC RESOURCES, PROVIDING FOR ITS POWER AND

House Bill No. 6438, entitled:

“AN ACT ALLOWING AND REGULATING THE USE OF MOTORCYCLES AS PUBLIC UTILITY VEHICLES, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 4136,

OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LAND TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC CODE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Cabatbat
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

House Bill No. 6439, entitled:

“AN ACT UPGRADING AND STRENGTHENING THE PHILIPPINE MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY TO MEET THE STRATEGIC NEEDS OF THE CHANGING INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC MARITIME INDUSTRY, IN EFFECT, ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC AND NATIONAL DEFENSE SITUATION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

RESOLUTIONS

House Resolution No. 748, entitled:

“RESOLUTION URGING THE DILG TO WITHDRAW MC 2020-036 WHICH IMPLEMENTS THE TRICYCLE BAN ON NATIONAL HIGHWAYS AND FOR THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION TO CONDUCT HEARINGS, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, FOR THE REVIEW OF NATIONALLY-IMPOSED POLICIES ON LOCAL TRANSPORTATION, ESPECIALLY TRICYCLES”

By Representative Salceda
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 749, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION URGING AIRLINE COMPANIES AND TRAVEL AGENCIES TO ALLOW PASSENGERS WHO BOOKED FLIGHTS TO COUNTRIES WITH CASES OF CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) TO REBOOK OR REFUND THEIR SCHEDULED FLIGHTS FOR FREE”

By Representative Castelo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

House Resolution No. 750, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE/S, TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE CONDUCT AND PRACTICE OF THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM IN BUYING OUT LOANS OF ITS MEMBERS FROM PRIVATE LENDING INSTITUTIONS

UNDER THE GSIS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (GFAL), AND DEDUCTING THE LOANS FROM THE SALARIES, PENSIONS, AND RETIREMENT BENEFITS OF ITS MEMBERS, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF ENACTING LEGISLATION TO REGULATE THE SAME”

By Representative Datol
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 751, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO IMPLEMENT SEC. 11 OF EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 125, ENTITLED, ‘REORGANIZING THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSE’ AS AMENDED, THEREBY CREATING A REGIONAL OFFICE FOR TRANSPORTATION IN REGION VII”

By Representative Abellanosa
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

House Resolution No. 752, entitled:

“RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON COOPERATIVES DEVELOPMENT TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9520, ALSO KNOWN AS THE ‘PHILIPPINE COOPERATIVE CODE OF 2008’ ”

By Representative Canama
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 753, entitled:

“RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY TO BAN THE IMPORTATION AND USE OF INDUCTION FURNACES IN THE PHILIPPINES DUE TO THEIR HARMFUL EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE RISKS THEY IMPOSE UPON PEOPLE”

By Representative Savellano
TO THE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY

House Resolution No. 754, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION URGING THE BUREAU OF FIRE PROTECTION, IN COORDINATION WITH THE STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES AND THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION, TO ENSURE

THE FIRE SAFETY COMPLIANCE OF BUILDINGS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY IN ACCORDANCE TO REPUBLIC ACT 9514 (FIRE CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES)”

By Representative Pimentel
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ORDER AND SAFETY

House Resolution No. 755, entitled:

“RESOLUTION COMMENDING MR. JOSE ACUESTA JUAN JR. FOR HIS NATIONALISM, DEDICATION TO PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE, AND EXEMPLARY PARTICIPATION IN REPATRIATING THE DISTRESSED OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS IN WUHAN CITY, HUBEI, CHINA, THE EPICENTER OF THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19) OUTBREAK”

By Representative Cuaresma
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 756, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED \$370 MILLION (P18.7 BILLION) IN FOREIGN CURRENCIES BROUGHT INTO THE PHILIPPINES BY TWO SUSPECTED SYNDICATES”

By Representative Barbers
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 757, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A SPECIAL ELECTION IN THE PROVINCE OF BENGUET TO FILL IN THE VACANCY FOR THE LONE CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT CAUSED BY THE UNTIMELY DEMISE OF REP. NESTOR B. FONGWAN SR. AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representatives Salceda, Lagman, Pichay, Revilla, Defensor (Michael), Legarda, Gonzales (Aurelio), Pimentel, Abante, Villanueva (Eduardo), Hataman, Remulla and Zamora (Ronaldo)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON SUFFRAGE AND ELECTORAL REFORMS

House Resolution No. 758, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION URGING THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION (SEC) TO REQUIRE ALL PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE (PSE) - LISTED COMPANIES TO RESERVE FOR WOMEN AT LEAST

ONE (1) INDEPENDENT DIRECTOR SEAT IN THEIR GOVERNING BOARDS”

By Representative Campos
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

House Resolution No. 759, entitled:

“RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE PROFOUND CONDOLENCES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FAMILY OF HONORABLE ELNORITA P. TUGUNG, FORMER REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LONE LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF BASILAN DURING THE NINTH CONGRESS”

By Representatives Cayetano (Alan Peter), Romualdez (Ferdinand) and Abante
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 760, entitled:

“RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE PROFOUND CONDOLENCES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FAMILY OF HONORABLE EDGAR L. MENDOZA, FORMER REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECOND LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF THE PROVINCE OF BATANGAS DURING THE ELEVENTH CONGRESS”

By Representatives Cayetano (Alan Peter), Romualdez (Ferdinand) and Abante
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

COMMUNICATION

Letter dated January 27, 2020 of Nelson M. Bayani, Supervising Administrative Officer, Sangguniang Panlalawigan ng Batangas, Province of Batangas, furnishing the House of Representatives a copy of a passed/enacted Sangguniang Panlalawigan Resolution No. 053 Year 2020.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report of the Committee on Youth and Sports Development (Committee Report No. 262), re H.B. No. 6456, entitled:

“AN ACT DECLARING AUGUST 12 OF EVERY YEAR AS NATIONAL YOUTH DAY”
recommending its approval in substitution of House Bills Numbered 323 and 3859

Sponsors: Representatives Martinez, Elago and Agabas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Public Works and

Highways (Committee Report No. 263), re H.B. No. 6467, entitled:

“AN ACT RENAMING THE PORTION OF THE MOUNTAIN PROVINCE BOUNDARY-CALANAN-ENRILE ROAD, STRETCHING FROM THE ANTONIO CANAO BRIDGE IN BARANGAY CALANAN, TRAVERSING THROUGH BARANGAYS BULANAO AND IPIL, UP TO THE ALLILOG BRIDGE IN BARANGAY NAMBARAN, ALL IN THE CITY OF TABUK IN THE PROVINCE OF KALINGA, AS MANUEL S. AGYAO BOULEVARD”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 2431

Sponsors: Representatives Madrona and Mangaoang
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries Resources and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 264), re H.B. No. 5027, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FISHPORT IN BARANGAY GIL SANCHEZ, MUNICIPALITY OF LABASON, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval with amendments

Sponsors: Representatives Cueva and Ungab
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries Resources and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 265), re H.B. No. 4939, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FISHPORT IN BARANGAY MACUYON, MUNICIPALITY OF SIRAWAI, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval without amendment

Sponsors: Representatives Cueva and Ungab
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms (Committee Report No. 266), re H.B. No. 6470, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10366, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS ‘AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS TO ESTABLISH PRECINCTS ASSIGNED TO ACCESSIBLE POLLING PLACES EXCLUSIVELY FOR PERSONS

WITH DISABILITIES AND SENIOR CITIZENS’ ”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 5254

Sponsors: Representatives Ferrer (Juliet) and Quimbo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

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

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the session for a few minutes.

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

It was 3:13 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:32 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

ROLL CALL

REP. SUAREZ (D.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we call the roll.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). 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. 51, dated March 4, 2020.**

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. Mme. Speaker, the roll call shows that 227 Members responded to the call.

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker, ...

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker, may we recognize ...

REP. ATIENZA. ... before we proceed, ...

REP. PALMA. ... Hon. Jose L. Atienza Jr.

REP. ATIENZA. ... this Representation would like to manifest ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Excuse me, Majority Leader.

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). With 227 Members responding to the call, 36 Members in the Committee on Rules meeting, and 10 Members in the Commission on Appointments meeting, the Chair declares the presence of a quorum.

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker, I move that ...

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. ... we recognize—Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Lito Atienza of the BUHAY Party-List.

REP. ATIENZA. Thank you, Mr. Majority Leader.

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

REP. ATIENZA. Thank you, Mr. Majority Leader.

It is very important that we be honest with the calling of the roll. This is not a light matter. It is not a discretionary matter. It is something that can be counted as far as the membership is concerned. So, I am calling the attention of the Secretariat once more. They declared 227 warm bodies on the floor, responding to the call. That is what they said. Our count is very simple. We only have 136 on the floor, so there is a big difference, Mme. Speaker, between 227 and 136. We have a big difference with the count of the Secretariat who are very, very known for being generous in crediting attendance when Members are not even around. So, I would like to state our position very clearly. Again, we are accusing the Secretariat of intercalating their own figures which are not reflective of the membership on the floor.

Our count today is 136 and not 227. We have a difference of 91, and that is a big difference as far as mathematics is concerned, unless I took up the wrong kind of mathematics and they took up another kind of mathematics. Their mathematics is very simply, multiplication. Mine is subtraction, addition, and multiplication.

Mme. Speaker, we would want a clarification on

this from the Majority Leader. Why is there a difference between their count and our counters who are also in the Hall right now?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Noted, Honorable Atienza.

Majority Leader, would you answer?

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker, let me reiterate that we have a rule that provides for those who are deemed present, and those Members of the House who are attending Committee meetings. We would like to give a copy to Honorable Atienza of the list of where the Committees are having their Committee meetings right now and the list of the Members who are attending them.

Let me point out, Mme. Speaker, the Committee hearings: in the Committees on Trade and Industry, and Health, we have 18 Members who are attending; in the Committee on Public Works and Highways, we have six; in the Committee on National Defense and Security, we have eight; and in the Committee on Veterans Affairs and Welfare, we have four. That totals to our number of 36. In the Commission on Appointments, we have 10 Members. We have eight Members who are on official business—two in foreign and six in local trips. And I would be glad, Mme. Speaker, to provide Honorable Atienza with copies of the authorization provided by our Majority, by the Rules Committee for their extension in the Committee; thus, they are not physically present in the plenary right now.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Is that acceptable, Honorable Atienza?

REP. ATIENZA. May we, again, know the total of what the Majority Leader is claiming to be technically present but are not physically around.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker, may I move for a suspension of the session so that I can confer with Honorable Atienza.

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

It was 3:49 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:49 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker, judging from the figures given to me by the Majority Leader, he claims that there are 36 attending Committee hearings: the Commission on Appointments, 10 of them, and those on official trips abroad, so eight, so we have about 54. Fifty-four, Mme. Speaker, is still very far from the declared quorum count by the Secretariat. They claimed we have 227; we counted 136 plus 54; that is only 190. We have the presence of a quorum but we do not have the number claimed by the Secretariat. That is what we are complaining about and we will continue to be vigilant on this. The Secretariat has to be accurate; otherwise, we will have to probably elevate this matter outside of these halls of Congress because we cannot fool around with the rules of the House. We play with the integrity of this House. We cannot fool around believing what is coming from the Secretariat that is obviously not true. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Noted, Honorable Atienza.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Honorable Lito Atienza.

Mme. Speaker, may we proceed with ...

REP. SUAREZ (D.). Mme. Speaker, may I move that we acknowledge the presence of the guests of our dear colleague, Cong. Solomon R. Chungalao. They are Provincial Governor Jerry Dalipog, SP Member Orlando Addug, and the following Mayors from the Heritage Towns of Ifugao: Hon. Armando Domilod, Hon. John Wesley Dulawan, Raldis Andrei Bulayungan, Casan Damulag, Jimmy Padchanan, and Hon. Gaspar Chilagan.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). The guests of Honorable Chungalao, please stand. Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

REP. SUAREZ (D.). Mme. Speaker, may we also move that we acknowledge the presence of the guests of Cong. Arlene D. Brosas. They are the guests from different divorce advocacy groups who will be attending the meeting of the Committee on Population and Family Relations, the Divorce Pilipinas Coalition, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). The guests of Hon. Arlene Brosas, please stand up. Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. SUAREZ (D.). Mme. Speaker, we also move that we acknowledge the presence of the guests of our Minority Leader, Rep. Bienvenido M. Abante

Jr. They are Chairman Fernando Mercado, Chairman Jimmy Anselmo, Chairman Angelo Joseph Abanes, Chairwoman Aida Legaspi, Chairman Ricky Yoingco, Chairwoman Emily Chavez, Chairwoman Grace Parel, Kagawad Warren Diaz, Kagawad Lito Rulloda, Kagawad Cleo Revilla, and Barangay Secretary Elizabeth Verona, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). The guests of Minority Leader Bienvenido Abante, please rise. Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. SUAREZ (D.). Mme. Speaker, we move that we acknowledge the presence of the guests of Hon. Aloy Lim from the RAM Party-List, RAM leaders from the Cavite Chapter; Holy Spirit Chapter; Taytay Chapter; Antipolo Chapter; Lucena Chapter; Caloocan Chapter; Valenzuela Chapter; Bantay Bayan, District 6, Quezon City Chapter, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). The guests of Hon. Aloy Lim of the RAM Party-List, please stand. Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 5832

Continuation

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. SUAREZ (D.). Mme. Speaker, we move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 5832, under Committee Report No. 142, and for this purpose, may I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read the title of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Is there any objection? *(Silence)* The Chair hears none; the Secretary General is directed to read the title of House Bill No. 5832.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 5832, entitled: AN ACT CREATING THE DEPARTMENT OF FILIPINOS OVERSEAS AND FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT, DEFINING ITS MANDATE, POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

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

REP. SUAREZ (D.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Chairman, Cong. Marvey Mariño.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Hon. Mario Vittorio “Marvey” A. Mariño is recognized.

REP. SUAREZ (D.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we also recognize Hon. Edcel Lagman from the First District of Albay to continue his interpellation and be given 30 minutes to finish his interpellation on the said Bill.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Hon. Edcel Lagman is now recognized.

REP. LAGMAN. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Before I continue with my interpellation on the reasons why Filipinos work overseas, let me start by taking up where Hon. Lito Atienza left off in his interpellation yesterday.

Will the distinguished Sponsor yield to this interpellation?

REP. MARIÑO. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. For the past half century, the Philippines has been exporting Filipino manpower abroad from the time the late President Marcos instituted labor migration in the Labor Code of the Philippines, albeit on a supposedly stop-gap basis. Will the distinguished Sponsor confirm that?

REP. MARIÑO. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. In that period of time, expanding almost half a century, the distinguished Sponsor said that we have exported Filipino manpower in various countries and territories worldwide to the tune of 10,000,000 OFWs. Is that correct?

REP. MARIÑO. Ten million, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Ten million? Is that correct?

REP. MARIÑO. That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Per figures of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, in a report dated February 17, 2020, the personal remittances of OFWs was at a record high of US\$33.5 billion in 2019. Is that correct?

REP. MARIÑO. That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. This is 3.9 percent higher than the \$32.2 billion which was remitted in 2018. Is that correct?

REP. MARIÑO. That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. If we consider this number

of OFWs employed abroad and the record-high US dollar remittances as milestones, these milestones were achieved under the auspices of the Department of Labor, the POEA and OWWA, among others. Is that correct?

REP. MARIÑO. That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Has there been a performance audit of the Department of Labor, OWWA and POEA with respect to the functions and the discharge of their duties in relation to Filipino labor migration?

REP. MARIÑO. By Congress or by ...

REP. LAGMAN. By any agency, by Congress, by the Executive, by the private sector, whatever—has there been a performance audit?

REP. MARIÑO. None that I know of, Mme. Speaker, but they have their own programs and evaluation as for their own departments.

REP. LAGMAN. In other words, there has been no performance audit by these functioning agencies like the Department of Labor, POEA and OWWA. Then why are we replacing these agencies and creating a new Department when there is no showing that these agencies failed to discharge their powers and duties with respect to labor migration?

REP. MARIÑO. Mme. Speaker, we are not actually replacing these agencies. They are to be subsumed by the new Department, so they will still perform their duties, same duties, but only under one Department so that the direction of the Secretary will be straight to the different needs of our OFWs. And aside from that, this is the request of millions of OFWs and their families, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Why create a new Department? Why create a new bureaucracy when the present agencies like the Department of Labor and Employment, the POEA and the OWWA, among others, are performing, considering that milestones had been achieved in our export of labor? Even if they are subsumed, they will be under a new Department. Why do this? What is the rationale for this particular creation except that we are just trying to fulfill the campaign promise of President Duterte that he is going to create a Department for OFWs?

REP. MARIÑO. Mme. Speaker, the promise of the President came from the requests of the OFWs. The OFWs would not request any improvement in creating this Department if they did not have problems. So, I am assuming that OFWs and their families have been asking for this Department since the agencies that are

in existence right now are totally different as far as their programs are concerned. They want an agency; they want a Department. In which case, they will only approach one Department so that all their problems will be addressed.

Right now, if we have different agencies, then they have to approach these agencies for different problems. So, this is mainly for the convenience of our OFWs requesting for assistance, for help whether legal or financial. The only purpose of this Department is for the programs to be consolidated in one department so that one Secretary will be the one responsible for the needs of our OFWs.

REP. LAGMAN. In other words, the reason is that we are going to create a Department so that there will be a one-stop shop ...

REP. MARIÑO. That is correct.

REP. LAGMAN. ... to be patronized by OFWs. Is that correct?

REP. MARIÑO. That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, after establishing the Department, is it not true that the POEA will still be subsumed under that Department?

REP. MARIÑO. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. In other words, despite the creation of this Department, the OFWs will still go to the POEA. Is that correct?

REP. MARIÑO. Well, that is correct, but it is under one Department.

REP. LAGMAN. Yes, but ...

REP. MARIÑO. There will be no POEA.

REP. LAGMAN. ... they are going to the POEA. Will these OFWs, despite the creation of the new Department, still go to OWWA?

REP. MARIÑO. Well, OWWA is an attached agency.

REP. LAGMAN. Yes, it is an attached agency, and the OFWs will still go to OWWA. Then, if they are now abroad, the OFWs will still go to the POLO. Is that not correct?

REP. MARIÑO. The POLO will be subsumed by this Department, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Yes, it will be subsumed under the Department, but it is still existing, and the OFWs will still go to the POLO. So, what is new? There is nothing new. The one-stop shop is a very flimsy reason.

Now, according to the distinguished Sponsor, the Bill proposes a sunset provision. Is that correct?

REP. MARIÑO. That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. What is the understanding of the distinguished Sponsor of a sunset provision? Is it not that when the sunset provision is determined and has arrived, there will be an automatic dissolution of an agency, because the sunset has arrived and the agency has to go? But is that the concept of the so-called "sunset provision" under this Bill?

REP. MARIÑO. Under Section 25 of this Bill, there is a 10-year period in which the Congressional Oversight Committee shall conduct a systematic evaluation of the accomplishments and impact of this Act. So as far as the performance and organizational structure, and all these implementing agencies are concerned, the 10-year sunset provision is on Section 25, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. My reading of Section 25(b) is that it is not a sunset provision. It is a review which could even extend the life of the Department.

Let me read Section 25(b):

Ten years from the creation of this Department, the Congressional Oversight Committee may choose to abolish the Department should circumstances prove that there is no more need for its existence. The relevance and practicality of maintaining the Department shall be renewed every five years after the 10-year mandatory review.

In other words, there is here an escape hatch wherein the Department will continue, and after 10 years, there will be another review every five years. So, the intention really is not to abolish or dismantle the Department. This is only a ploy so that those opposing the creation of the Department will be temporized in their opposition because effectively this is not a sunset provision. And in the first place, why create an agency just to be abolished. You do not create an agency so that it will be dismantled. So, there should be a concrete basis for the creation of an agency so that it will not be disestablished.

Now, let me proceed, no, let me first ask. During the Committee hearings in the Seventeenth and in the Eighteenth Congresses, was there a position paper

submitted by the Department of Labor and Employment with respect to the creation of this Department?

REP. MARIÑO. Yes, there was.

REP. LAGMAN. And what was the recommendation of the Department of Labor and Employment?

REP. MARIÑO. Mme. Speaker, initially, the Department of Labor and Employment was suggesting a commission to be created, but since the President mentioned during the SONA that he wanted to create a Department, the Department of Labor and Employment obviously changed their position and supported the creation of the Department.

REP. LAGMAN. Yes. Is that statement of the distinguished Sponsor anchored on the position paper of the Department of Labor and Employment? And if it is so, can we request that the particular recommendation be read for the record?

REP. MARIÑO. During the Committee hearing, it was the Secretary of Labor and Employment, who mentioned it himself.

REP. LAGMAN. No, I was asking whether that is stated in their position paper.

REP. MARIÑO. Yes, we can get the position paper, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. I beg your pardon, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. MARIÑO. We can get the...

REP. LAGMAN. Yes.

REP. MARIÑO. We can read the position paper of the Department.

REP. LAGMAN. Yes. Okay, and also the other position papers submitted to the Committee either during the Seventeenth Congress or the current Congress. While they are looking for these position papers, Mme. Speaker, may I request that we suspend the interpellation so that it will not be deducted from my time.

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

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker, may I move for a suspension of the session for a few minutes.

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

It was 4:12 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:28 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 5832

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker, the parliamentary status of the Bill is that Hon. Edcel C. Lagman is requesting for certain documents which we cannot provide immediately. We are reproducing the documents. Therefore, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 5832 to give way to the technical staff to produce our documents.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

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

The consideration of House Bill No. 5832 is hereby suspended.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6134 *Continuation*

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 6134, under Committee Report No. 210, and that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker, the parliamentary status is that the measure is still in the period of sponsorship and debate. I move that we recognize the Chairman of the Committee on Banks and Financial Intermediaries, Hon. Junie E. Cua, to continue his sponsorship of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). The Chairman of the Committee on Banks and Financial Intermediaries, Representative Cua, is now recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker, the parliamentary status of this Bill is that we have finished the period of sponsorship and debate, and therefore, I move that we open the period of amendments.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker, there being no Committee amendments, I move that we proceed to consider individual amendments.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized. .

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker, to give the individual amendments, I move that we recognize the Hon. Xavier Jesus D. Romualdo.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Hon. XJ Romualdo is recognized.

INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS

REP. ROMUALDO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. We would like to propose the following amendments to House Bill No. 6134.

First, on page 5, lines 14 to 19, we propose that the entire contents of SEC. 5 be deleted and be replaced with the following: SEC. 5. Rural Community Beneficiaries of the Development Financing System. – THE FINANCING SYSTEM MENTIONED IN THE PRECEDING SECTION SHALL BE EXTENDED TO FARMERS, FISHERFOLK, AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES, SETTLERS, AGRICULTURAL LESSEES, AMORTIZING

OWNERS, FARMWORKERS, FISHWORKERS, OWNER-CULTIVATORS, COMPACT FARMERS, TENANT FARMERS, AND MEMBERS OF THEIR HOUSEHOLDS, OR TO COOPERATIVES, ASSOCIATIONS, MSMES OR ORGANIZATIONS IN GOOD STANDING OF SUCH BENEFICIARIES LOCATED IN RURAL COMMUNITIES, REGARDLESS OF CAPITALIZATION BASED ON THE FEASIBILITY OF THE PROJECT AND THEIR PAYING CAPACITY, THEIR ESTIMATED PRODUCTION, AND/OR SECURITIES THEY CAN PROVIDE AS WELL AS SUCH ASSETS AS MAY BE ACQUIRED BY THEM FROM THE PROCEEDS OF THE LOAN, INVESTMENTS, AND GRANTS.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Escudero relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Pablo John F. Garcia.

REP. CUA. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Committee on Banks and Financial Intermediaries, I accept.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, we join the author and accept the amendments.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, our next proposal is on page 6, lines 26 to 31, after the phrase “Provided, further,” we propose to delete the provisions and replace with the following: THAT LOANS TO FINANCE ACTIVITIES THAT SHALL GENERALLY BENEFIT AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES, AGRARIAN REFORM COMMUNITIES, OR OTHER PRIORITY SECTORS, AS MAY BE DETERMINED BY THE AFFCC, SHALL BE COUNTED AT NOT MORE THAN TEN (10) TIMES THEIR OUTSTANDING AMOUNT, AS MAY BE PRESCRIBED BY THE AFFCC, FOR PURPOSES OF DETERMINING COMPLIANCE WITH THE MANDATORY AGRICULTURAL AND FISHERIES FINANCING REQUIREMENT.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). What is the pleasure of the Sponsor?

REP. CUA. Again, on behalf of the Committee on Banks and Financial Intermediaries, I accept, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I join the author and accept the amendments.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

Honorable Romualdo is recognized.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, on page 6, line 40, we propose to delete the phrase “or at rates prescribed by the BSP Monetary Board”.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Mr. Sponsor.

REP. CUA. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Committee, I accept.

REP. PALMA. We join, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, on page 7, line 18, we propose for the addition of the following sentence: THE AFFCC SHALL BE ORGANIZED NOT LATER THAN ONE (1) YEAR FROM THE DATE OF THE EFFECTIVITY OF THIS ACT.

REP. CUA. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Committee, I accept.

REP. PALMA. We join the author, Mr. Speaker.

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

Honorable Romualdo is recognized.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, on page 7, line 27, we propose that the phrase “activities and” be deleted.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Sponsor is recognized.

REP. CUA. On behalf of the Committee, I accept, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. We join the author, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, on page 7, line 28, we propose that the phrase AND ACTIVITIES be inserted after the word “programs”.

REP. CUA. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Committee, I accept.

REP. PALMA. We join the author, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Still on page 7, Mr. Speaker, this time on line 43, we propose that the phrase “activities as well as” be deleted.

REP. CUA. On behalf of the Committee, I accept, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. We join, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Still on page 7, Mr. Speaker, line 44, we propose to insert the phrase AND ACTIVITIES after the word “programs”.

REP. CUA. On behalf of the Committee, I accept, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. We join, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, on page 8, line 1, we propose that the phrase “for this purpose” be deleted and placed with the following: FOR PURPOSES OF ENSURING THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE SPECIAL FUND.

REP. CUA. On behalf of the Committee, I accept, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. We join, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Still on page 8, Mr. Speaker, on line 2, after the word “fund”, we propose to add the phrase WHICH SHALL BE COUNTED AT NOT MORE THAN FIVE (5) TIMES THE AMOUNT OF CONTRIBUTION, AS MAY BE PRESCRIBED BY THE AFFCC, FOR PURPOSES OF DETERMINING COMPLIANCE WITH THE MANDATORY AGRICULTURAL AND FISHERIES FINANCING REQUIREMENT.

REP. CUA. On behalf of the Committee, I accept, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. We join the author, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, on page 8, line 9, we propose to insert the phrase IF ANY after the word “Act”.

REP. CUA. On behalf of the Committee, I accept, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. We join, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, on page 8, lines 27 to 30, we propose for the deletion of the contents of Section 17, and replace it with the following: SEC. 17. DURATION OF THE EFFECTIVITY OF THE CREDIT QUOTA AND SPECIAL FUND FOR CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS. – THE PROVISIONS RELATED TO THE MANDATORY CREDIT QUOTA UNDER ARTICLE II HEREOF SHALL CEASE TO HAVE EFFECT TEN (10) YEARS FROM EFFECTIVITY OF THIS ACT. THE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE SPECIAL FUND UNDER ARTICLES III AND IV HEREOF SHALL CEASE TO HAVE EFFECT TEN (10) YEARS FROM THE ORGANIZATION OF THE AFFCC. ANY REMAINING BALANCE OF THE SPECIAL FUND UNDER THE CUSTODY OF THE AFFCC SHALL BE TURNED OVER TO THE NATIONAL TREASURY.

REP. CUA. On behalf of the Committee, I accept, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. We join, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Finally, Mr. Speaker, on page 8, lines 31 to 33, we propose that the provisions under Section 18 be deleted entirely and be replaced with the following: SEC. 18. IMPLEMENTING RULES AND REGULATIONS. – THE BSP SHALL PROMULGATE SUCH RULES AND REGULATIONS AS MAY BE NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT ARTICLES I AND II OF THIS ACT WITHIN NINETY (90) DAYS AFTER THE EFFECTIVITY OF THIS ACT. THE BSP SHALL ORGANIZE A TASK FORCE WHICH SHALL PROMULGATE SUCH RULES AND REGULATIONS AS MAY BE NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT ARTICLES III AND IV OF THIS ACT WITHIN NINETY (90) DAYS AFTER THE EFFECTIVITY OF THIS ACT.

REP. CUA. On behalf of the Committee, Mr. Speaker, I accept.

REP. PALMA. We join, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. That is all, Mr. Speaker. Thank you and we thank the Sponsor.

REP. CUA. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Yes, the Honorable Cua is recognized.

REP. CUA. Before we end, may I manifest for the record that the honorable Deputy Speaker Luis Raymund “LRay” Villafuerte Jr., as well as Hon. Joey Sarte Salceda, be made coauthors of this Bill.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The manifestation is duly noted.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. We join, Mr. Speaker.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the Minority Leader, Hon. Bienvenido Abante, is also requesting to be a coauthor of this Bill.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The manifestation is duly noted.

Please take note that the Chair is also requesting to be a coauthor of the Bill.

The Secretary General will please take note of the manifestations.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Xavier Jesus Romualdo is also requesting to be a coauthor of the Bill.

REP. CUA. May I also manifest, Mr. Speaker, that the Hon. Xavier Jesus Romualdo be made coauthor of the Bill.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (REP. GARCIA, P.). The manifestation is noted, and the Secretary General will please take note of that.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6134

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration on Second Reading of House Bill No. 6134, under Committee Report No. 210.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the consideration of House Bill No. 6134 is suspended.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Jose Enrique “Joet” S. Garcia III from the Second District of Bataan, who wishes to rise on a question of privilege.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Hon. Joet Garcia is recognized.

What is the nature of the Gentleman’s question of privilege?

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mr. Speaker, this is about my position on the value-added tax.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Gentleman has 10 minutes.

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE OF REP. GARCIA (J.)

REP. GARCIA (J.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Majority Leader.

Distinguished Members, ladies and gentleman, good afternoon.

I rise on a matter of personal and collective privilege to pitch once again a cause my father, the late Cong. Tet Garcia, had resolutely waged and which I have now embraced as a continuing crusade. I refer, Mr. Speaker, to his staunch opposition to the loophole-laden value-added tax system, and his determined push for a shift

to a sales tax system which I initially narrated in this August Chamber last September 24.

As a five-term Congressman, spread over a period of three decades commencing in 1987, Congressman Tet never relented on this advocacy. Picking up where he left off, let me articulate on the following points: he highlighted three weaknesses of the VAT, namely: 1.) input tax deduction loophole; 2.) poor collection efficiency; and 3.) high administrative cost; and compared them to the strengths of his proposed sales tax system, to wit: 1.) input tax deduction loophole is eliminated, thereby increasing collection efficiency; 2.) lower tax rate means lower tax passed on to consumers; 3.) all taxes paid are remitted to the government; and 4.) sales tax system is easier to administer, thus lower cost to government.

The loophole of the input tax deduction mechanism continues to wreak havoc and negate efforts to improve collection efficiency. I still vividly recall my father repeatedly underscoring that under the VAT, there is no limit to the input tax credits that sellers of goods and services can claim and deduct from the 12 percent output tax they collect from customers. Said input tax can go beyond the 12 percent output tax, and in which case, the excess can be carried over and deducted from output taxes of succeeding quarters until fully utilized or refunded in the case of exporters. While he observed this with a grain of prophecy or in anticipation of a clearly foreseeable loophole in the input tax deduction mechanism, the summary of the VAT returns for the past 12 years now speaks volumes of loophole he entirely pursued to eliminate. The same records also show that, by and large, taxpayers reported input taxes that are tremendously higher by 47 percent than output taxes as of 2019.

To put these numbers in proper perspective, let me briefly dwell on some fundamentals about the VAT.

The VAT is an indirect tax, which may be shifted or passed on to the consumer. In a typical cycle of a good from production to consumption, the VAT payable to the government may be computed as follows:

Sa nakikita nating table, ang isang producer ng tela, halimbawa, ay nakagawa ng isang pirasong tela sa halagang P100, ipagbibili niya ito sa presyong P112 dahil sa patong na P12 para sa VAT. Ang tela ay nabili ng isang manufacturer at ginawa itong t-shirt na may presyong P200. Ipagbibili niya ito sa distributor, pero sa presyong P224 dahil sa kailangang magpatong ng P24 bilang VAT na 12 percent. Ipapasa ng distributor ang t-shirt sa isang retailer sa presyong P300, na magiging P336 dahil sa 12 percent VAT. Para sa consumer na bibili at magsusuot ng t-shirt, ang presyo ng retailer na P400 ay magiging P448 dahil sa 12 VAT na nagkakahalaga ng P48.

Sa sistemang ito ng VAT, makikita ang buwis na dapat papasok sa kaban ng bayan kahit pa may mga

deduction nang input taxes. It is possible, however, that at the level of a taxpayer, the input tax could exceed the output tax in a given period. This occurs, for example, when in a given quarter, a taxpayer sells goods less than what it produced. The VAT implication of this scenario may be illustrated as follows:

Sa halimbawang ito, kapansin-pansin na ang distributor na bumili ng t-shirts mula sa manufacturer sa halagang P800 ay nakabenta lamang ng halagang P300. Dahil dito, magiging mas malaki ang ire-report niyang input kaysa output sa BIR. Gayunpaman, sa kabuuan, hindi pa rin hihigit ang input tax sa output tax pagdating sa BIR dahil ang input tax na ire-report niya ay may katumbas na output tax na dapat bayaran ng manufacturer.

Kahit sa pagkakataong walang nabenta ang distributor at puro input tax lamang sa halagang P96 ang ire-report sa BIR, sa kabuuan, magiging pantay lamang ito sa output tax na dapat bayaran ng producer at ng manufacturer. Samakatuwid, kapag ang lahat ng output tax at input tax na galing sa mga lehitimong transaksyon ay tama at inire-report ng taxpayers, wala dapat pagkakataon na ang kabuuang halaga ng input tax na naka-report sa BIR ay hihigit sa kabuuang output tax.

What I am driving at, Mr. Speaker, is that the BIR data showing the total input tax perennially exceeding the total output tax from 2008 to 2019 at an increasing rate from 25 percent to 47 percent is disturbing, to say the least. Even if we try to subtract the total amount of the VAT collections from the Bureau of Customs, assuming these are all reported as input taxes. For example, in 2019, the BOC VAT collection amounted to P426.7 billion, the excess input tax will still be P497.95 billion given that output taxes amount only to P1.986 trillion. This means that the excess of input tax over the output tax every year constitutes an applicable deduction in favor of taxpayers.

The BIR record showing input tax significantly exceeding the output VAT for the past 12 years unquestionably demonstrates the adverse effects of the nagging loopholes that beset our VAT system. These loopholes emanate from the inherent complexity of the VAT system, particularly its deceitful input tax mechanism and the difficulty of administering and monitoring the same. These challenges emboldened tax cheats to resort to a combination of schemes in order to lessen or totally eliminate their tax liabilities. The schemes could involve underreporting of sales or overreporting of the inputs through the use of spurious receipts or receipts issued by fly-by-night companies.

The BIR disclosed that the effective collection rate of the 12 percent VAT for the past 12 years ranged only from 2.8 percent to 3.1 percent. In other words, while the 12 percent VAT passed on to the consumers is dutifully

paid by the latter, an average of only 3 percent is being collected out of the 12 percent VAT. This translates to a collection efficiency of only 25 percent.

Furthermore, if we compare our efficiency with other ASEAN countries in 2015, Cambodia and Laos' VAT rate is only 10 percent, yet, the efficiency rate is at 40 percent and 38 percent, respectively. Thailand, which only imposes 7 percent VAT rate, has a significantly better efficiency rate of 68 percent.

The BIR records also disclosed that on the average, only 1 percent of the VAT-registered taxpayers are randomly audited to validate the allowable input taxes that were deducted from their output taxes. The BIR blames this slow validation rate to the inadequacy of their manpower and resources.

This reminds me again, Mr. Speaker, of the arguments articulated against the VAT. One columnist wrote that the VAT expands the venue for corruption and tax evasion.

In this regime, a manufacturer can easily cheat by fabricating spurious purchase invoices to increase his tax credits, thus, reducing his tax liability to the government. Since the country's tax administration is weak, the BIR cannot monitor the use of these invoices which nullifies the self-policing mechanism of the VAT.

Another columnist noted that even the mighty US stepped back from the daunting task of the VAT administration, it is stated, and I quote:

The United States itself x-x-x had rejected VAT mainly because it entails huge spending for new equipment and additional tax personnel while leaving a proportionately small net tax collection and so much confusion.

On the other hand, by shifting to a simple sales tax, we will be able to achieve at least four beneficial reforms. First, we do away with the tax loopholes and tremendously increase internal revenue tax by pegging a tax rate much lower than the 12 percent VAT. Using the record of output tax reported for the past 12 years, the total gross sales and the estimated tax collection for the same period, using a sales tax of 4 percent, may be calculated as follows: Based on the above calculations, the significantly reduced sales tax of 4 percent could have generated P5 trillion or 57 percent more compared to the actual BIR VAT collection of P3.180 trillion.

Second, with the lower tax rate, we also appreciably reduced the tax which consumers pay on goods and services. This is demonstrated by the following comparison wherein in the previous slide, the VAT ultimately passed on to the consumer amounting to P48 is 20 percent higher compared to the sales tax of P40.

Third, by going gross, all the taxes we pay go to the government's coffers. This is unlike the VAT in

the preceding comparison where, although the VAT amounted to P120, only P48 is payable to the government because of the input tax deduction mechanism, which I intimated early on, is laden with loopholes.

Fourth, the gross tax system is relatively easier and simpler to monitor and administer. This undoubtedly reduces the cost of administration.

Given all the foregoing advantages, the simplicity of the sales tax system over the VAT system is indisputable. The imperative of making the shift and abandoning altogether the VAT system obviously requires nothing much to ponder.

Mr. Speaker, with no less than the President pushing for gross taxation in order to plug the huge tax leakage, curb corruption and improve collection, now is the time to make the shift. In due time, I will be filing a measure proposing to replace the VAT and imposing instead, a straightforward sales tax amending for that purpose the National Internal Revenue Code.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Members, for your attention.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Jose L. Atienza Jr. of BUHAY Party-List for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Honorable Atienza is recognized for his interpellation.

REP. ATIENZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Majority Leader.

At the outset, let me congratulate the Gentleman from Bataan for taking up the issue of the VAT in Congress, sapagkat ayon sa report niya, maraming dapat ayusin para tunay na pakinabangan ang VAT ng ating sambayanan, ng ating ekonomiya, at ng ating mga mamamayan.

Did I get you right when you mentioned that the VAT is not essentially succeeding in its mission to increase collection and benefits for the citizens and the taxpayers? You mentioned about the weakening and the lessening collection of the VAT in the country today. Did you mean that?

REP. GARCIA (J.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, based on the data that we collected from the Bureau of Internal Revenue, as I mentioned earlier, the loophole is in the input tax, Mr. Speaker. If we show again the table on the input tax versus the output tax for the past 12 years, the input tax, as of 2019, this is a running total, is now higher by 47 percent over the output tax. That means businesses are able to use their input tax to lower their output tax payments to the government.

Second, Mr. Speaker, according also to the BIR estimates, out of the 12 percent VAT that is collected, only 3 percent actually go to the government.

REP. ATIENZA. Gentleman from Bataan, we would like to assure you that we are equally concerned with the ineffectiveness of the VAT to fulfill the promised benefits when it was first crafted and passed into law. Kung bumababa man ang halaga ng nakokolekta sa VAT at nawawalan na ito ng bisa katulad ng naplano ng mga may akda nito, isa sa mga kadahilanan, and I am sure the Gentleman would agree with our observation, that the collection may not be at its optimum level simply because the BIR today and yesteryears has not done correctly their mission to implement and enforce the VAT in favor of the general economy of the country, and beneficial to all especially to the local communities.

Tayo ay pinatawan ng 10 percent additional tax tapos ginawang 12 percent, subalit iyong benepisyo para sa lokal ay hindi nila ibinigay kailanman. Are you familiar with that, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GARCIA (J.). Yes, Mr. Speaker. In the case of our city in Bataan, we were able to receive around an estimated P500,000 from VAT in 2015 and 2017. I think may condition sila, Mr. Speaker, on when they are able to give a share of the VAT to the local government unit. So far, in the past five years, we were only able to receive in 2015 and 2017 the amount of P500,000, if I am not mistaken.

REP. ATIENZA. The law creating the VAT, very clearly, provides that from the very beginning of the implementation of the VAT, the local government units and the local communities should have benefitted from the collection, but that has not been done. Alam po ninyo, malaking-malaking halaga, probably tens of billions or maybe hundreds of billions of pesos have not been remitted for the benefit of the local government units. That may be the reason why collection is going down and the interest of the participants, particularly of the local government units, is not working for the benefit of a successful VAT collection. Kailan po ba natin inumpisahan ang VAT, would you remember, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GARCIA (J.). Kung hindi po ako nagkakamali, Mr. Speaker. This was started around 1988, the value added tax of the Philippines.

REP. ATIENZA. Ano pong taon?

REP. GARCIA (J.). It was in 1988, if I am not mistaken, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. Kung naalala ko po panahon ito

ni Presidente Ramos, so 1998, subalit ang batas ay malinaw, iyong koleksyon noong unang taon ay dapat may bahagi na ang local, pero ang pinakamalaking bahagi ay iyong between the first and the second year because the increment between the two years, inilalaan po ng batas na 50 porsyento, kalahati ng koleksyon, ay dapat bahagi ng local government unit, hindi po ginawa iyan. Thereafter, every year, the VAT should be shared with local government units so that the collection of this tax is made efficient, more effective if the locals are involved and part of it. Pero dahil po hindi ibinibigay ang share ng local government, knowing the sentiments of the local officials, why would they collect a tax that burdens people, as you enumerated, additional burden for everyone, when the intention of the law is not being enforced by the national government, starting from President Ramos, President Erap, President Noy Aquino, up to the present President? Wala silang ibinibigay na bahagi sa local government units. So, why would the local government units be interested at all in collecting a tax which is not benefiting them?

So, if you may accept the suggestion of this Representation, let us review the law, let us review the implementation of this law. I think the questions you have propounded this afternoon will be answered dahil itinatago nila ang koleksyon, the national government refuses to share this tax to the local government units which are supposed to be the collection arm, they are the implementers of this law.

Kaya ginawa ng batas na may share ang local government unit para po naman mayroong encouragement ang mga local official na magtrabaho rin, sapagkat ang koleksyon ng VAT ay pakikinabangan nila sa kanilang local development plan. Pero kung ganito ang ating pinag-usapan at hindi natin titingnan ang pagkukulang, the shortcomings of the national leadership, the national government, the BIR, in particular, and I would like to invite the Gentleman, try to inquire from the BIR the figures that I am citing. You will not be given the privilege of getting an accurate answer because the continued refusal of the national government to share the VAT collection will mean a continuous, sustained reduction of interest as far as collecting this tax is concerned.

So, iyong magandang pakay ay hindi po nangyayari sapagkat ang bahagi ng kolektor ay hindi po ibinibigay. Pagpasok sa national government niyan, humingi ka ng accounting, they will not even respond to your letter, so it is time. Now that you have taken up the issue on the floor, we join you in the interest, but let us look into it from that point of view. The VAT is not shared by the national government as envisioned by the law creating it so that collection will be continuous. Collection will be coming with more vigor from the local units as they benefit from the collection; on the other hand, if we do not address that particular problem, I am already

stating to the Gentleman, his frustrations will continue as the frustrations on my part also have amounted to an unexplainable sin of the national government.

The collection of taxes should always be shared with local government units. Iyan po ay provision ng ating Saligang Batas. Hindi po IRA lang ang sini-share dapat, all taxes, iyan po ang sabi ng ating Konstitusyon. But VAT, as a special law, specifically touches on the issue of sharing which has never been done. Let us craft an amendment, a resolution to call the attention of the BIR and to create a national awareness as to why the VAT is not succeeding unlike in other countries? It is because the intention of the law creating it has not been implemented by the BIR.

I will join the Gentleman with his permission. I will work with him on this issue because it has long been also my frustration that the good intention of this particular law has not been felt by the economy or by the country. But again, congratulations for taking it up. It takes someone like you, knowledgeable and well-intentioned, to take up the issue in this hall of Congress, and we urge our colleagues to join us in this effort as this will help the economy of the country.

Thank you. Congratulations.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mr. Speaker, I agree with Honorable Atienza in looking at the role of the local governments and the share that they are supposed to get from the VAT. But just to clarify, VAT collections from 2008, at least, the data that I have, from 2008 to 2019, has increased. From P140 billion in 2008, in 2019 it is now P406 billion. But the problem is, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, it should have been much, much higher. As I mentioned, this is only around 3 percent of the actual VAT payments or taxes that our consumers are paying, whereas, it should be hopefully higher or if not, the full 12 percent.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I reiterate my position. The best way to go about it is to do away with VAT, move to a simple sales tax system that does not have this input tax mechanism that allows businesses to use it as a tax deduction from their VAT payments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker, that is the whole point of our interpellation, to get the matter of really probing into the implementation of the VAT for the purpose of knowing why the collection is only in that level when probably it should be 10 times more, sapagkat ang VAT ay regular 12 percent of the value of the product or the service. Twelve percent coming from where it was is a measly sum now compared to what it should be. So, the promise of a better economy is not materializing simply because the mechanics involving the local government units are not being enforced. Why? Only the BIR would

be able to answer that and possibly the Presidents of the different periods wherein it was not attended to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity of being part of this very timely constructive criticism of how the VAT is being implemented and why it is not done in the right way. Sayang ang pagkakataon.

Salamat po.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mr. Speaker, in fairness to the Bureau of Internal Revenue, ang main problem with the VAT is they need more equipment, more people since there are too many voluminous receipts that they have to evaluate and audit. So, iyon po iyong initial na ibinigay po sa aming comment na kaya ho hindi nila ma-flag iyong mga loophole ng VAT system is because kulang ho sa tao, kulang sa mga kagamitan ang ating Bureau of Internal Revenue.

REP. ATIENZA. Let me add to that, Mr. Speaker, as the Gentleman may be influenced by the alibi, and those are alibis for failure. The real reason is that, kung short sila sa tao, you can imagine if all local government units in the country—1,700 municipalities, 100 cities and so many provinces, and everyone in the Treasury Department of these LGUs would be involved with VAT collection, the figure that he has read to us now will probably be 10 times more.

Salamat po.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that the speech of Hon. Joet Garcia and the interpellation be referred to the Committee on Rules for appropriate action.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6134

Continuation

PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 6134, under Committee Report No. 210, and that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). 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.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary status of this Bill is that we are in the period of amendments.

Mr. Speaker, there being no other individual amendments, I move that we close the period of amendments.

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

The period of amendments is closed.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve House Bill No. 6134, under Committee Report No. 210, as amended, on Second Reading.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). As many as are in favor of House Bill No. 6134, as amended, please say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

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

FEW MEMBERS. *Nay*.

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 6134, AS AMENDED, ON SECOND READING

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

House Bill No. 6134, as amended, is approved on Second Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. FARÍÑAS, RIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we acknowledge the presence of the guests of Hon. Jose Enrique “Joet” S. Garcia III, Representative of the Second District of Bataan. We have his balikbayan guests from Toronto, Canada: Mr. Ulysses Guarin, Ms. Judith Guarin, Ms. Jocelyn Del Mundo, Ms. Carmen Fernandez and Mrs. Isabel F. Garcia. (*Applause*)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The guests of Hon. Joet Garcia will please rise. Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Welcome to the House of Representatives. The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we also acknowledge the presence of the guests of Majority Leader Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez. We have with us the following judges: Judge Hannah Arriola from RTC 6, Manila; Judge Maria Lorelai Dulig, RTC 66, Makati; Judge Rainald Paggao; Judge Billy Evangelista; Judge Renato Pambid; Judge Romel Odronia; Judge Ronald August Tan and Judge Jacob Montesa.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The guests of the Majority Leader will please rise. Welcome to the House of Representatives. Thank you for your visit. *(Applause)*

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, likewise, we would like to acknowledge the presence of the guests of Hon. Raymond Democrito C. Mendoza of the TUCP Party-List. They are OFWs who were stranded in Saudi Arabia for four months without any salary, and they have just recently been repatriated this morning, March 4 of 2020. They are: Mr. Jerson Enriquez of Iligan City; Mr. Emerson Mendoza of Marinduque; Mr. Ernie Soguilon of Cadiz City, Negros Occidental; and Mr. Ronaldo Zamora of Tanza, Cavite.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The guests of Hon. Raymond Mendoza are recognized. Welcome home and welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H. B. NO. 5832 *Continuation*

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 5832, under Committee Report No. 142, and that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). 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. 5832, entitled: AN ACT CREATING THE DEPARTMENT OF FILIPINOS OVERSEAS AND FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT, DEFINING ITS MANDATE, POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that the Chairman of the Committee on Government Reorganization, Hon. Mario Vittorio “Marvey” A. Mariño, be recognized and, likewise, the interpellator, Hon. Edcel C. Lagman, to continue with his interpellation.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Honorable Mariño is recognized to sponsor and Honorable Lagman is also recognized for his interpellation.

REP. LAGMAN. Mr. Speaker, earlier, the distinguished Sponsor manifested that they were looking for the position paper filed by the Department of Labor with respect to the creation of the Department of Filipinos Overseas and Foreign Employment. What was handed to me was a transcript of the testimony of the Secretary of Labor, but I will not insist anymore on the production of that position paper because my time is running out.

Hon. Raymond Mendoza called up the Secretary of Labor so that I could talk to him over the phone earlier, and the Secretary of Labor confirmed to me that his position with respect to this creation of a new Department was, at the start, neutral. He said that he could not go against the preference of the President for the creation of this Department, so he said that he was recommending the creation, and this statement is reflected in the transcript given to me, which I quote, “Being the alter ego of the President, I support the creation of the Department; however, from the transcript which I read, he did not, in any way, mention the merits of this Department. All he said was that he was a member of the Cabinet, and that he called the President and he had no choice but to support the creation.

Be that as it may, I am also informed that the OFWs represented by various sectors and associations were virtually divided with the creation of this Department, and the position papers are submitted—I will not ask for them anymore because I have other questions to ask, Mr. Speaker.

So, let me go to the reasons why Filipinos work overseas. The first reason, to which the distinguished Sponsor agreed, is the unstable economic situation in the Philippines which is not addressed in the Bill creating the Department. May we know from the distinguished Sponsor, what are the other reasons why Filipinos work overseas?

REP. MARIÑO. Mr. Speaker, there are many reasons why OFWs work abroad. One of them is, of course, they want better opportunities, higher salary, and they also want other opportunities for their family. The jobs are also not available right now in our country, so they are looking for greener pastures, Mr. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. To expedite the process, let me just mention the major causes why Filipinos work overseas in addition to the unstable economic situation in the Philippines. The other is high unemployment rate.

As of July 2019, the labor force survey of the Philippine Statistics Authority said that the unemployment rate is 5.4 percent and the underemployment rate is 13.9 percent. Another reason is the low salary offered by local companies. Another is the contractualization of labor. Another is poor benefits. Another is that OFWs are more pampered by the government. Next, it is not so lonely to go abroad anymore because of modern technology facilitating communication, and last is discrimination in job training where graduates from high-standard schools are preferred. There is also a height requirement which the applicants will have to meet.

Now, my question is, knowing these are the reasons why Filipinos work overseas, may we know whether under this Bill, these reasons are being addressed and sought to be resolved?

REP. MARIÑO. Mr. Speaker, all the other reasons why Filipinos work abroad will not be answered by this Department alone. It requires the help of the whole of the government especially for job creation. It is not the sole responsibility of this Department to provide jobs. For instance, it requires the whole improvement of our economy for jobs to be created. So, this Department will not answer all of the problems but it will try to address with some solutions. For instance, at times when the OFWs will need to be repatriated, then it is the job of this Department to look for other alternatives, but it will not solve the whole problem by itself, Mr. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, for that candid answer that despite the creation of this Department, it is not the responsibility of this Department to address the reasons why Filipinos work overseas. Nakabitin tayo sa Department na ito.

Now, let me go to the major problems encountered by OFWs in the host countries. May we know from the distinguished Sponsor what are the major problems besetting the OFWs in the host countries?

REP. MARIÑO. Just recently, of course, we have heard in the news the abuse of our OFWs, particularly

the domestic helpers in Kuwait. Of course, there are other problems such as the substitution of contracts and other abuses in some of the countries where the OFWs are deployed, the latest is in Kuwait and also the United Arab Emirates.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, ...

REP. MARIÑO. We have different kinds of cases. We also have welfare cases, contract violations, maltreatment, sexual abuse, rape, among others, Mr. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. If this Department is not designed to address the major reasons why Filipinos work overseas, then, with more reason this Department cannot address the problems encountered by OFWs in the host countries where the Department or the Philippines for that matter has no jurisdiction.

Let me enumerate, for the record, what are these major problems besetting the OFWs in the host countries:

1. 30 percent of the migrants do not have contracts signed prior to departure;
2. 14.7 percent do not receive wages on time;
3. 77.3 percent reported that they received wages that were lower than those promised before departure or the wages they received have unforeseen deductions;
4. the average number of weekly hours is 71, with women working much longer hours than men;
5. 25 percent of migrants report not having any rest day per week;
6. 30 percent of migrants experienced health-related problems, and about one in five had serious work-related injuries;
7. migrants receive lower average wages than the local workers; and
8. deaths of migrants are higher compared to those in similar age groups in their countries of origin.

These are problems which this Department, under the Bill, is not designed to solve.

Now, let me go to the social costs of labor migration. May we know from the distinguished Sponsor, what are the social costs of labor migration?

REP. MARIÑO. Well, some of the social costs include, of course, being separated from the family. In some cases, having been separated from the family, they tend to have marital problems, and also problems with their children getting into drugs. So, there are other social problems, Mr. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Can we be more specific, distinguished Sponsor? I think the Committee has studied the social costs of labor migration well, considering that many of those who responded to the

notices for hearing by the Committee mentioned these social costs of labor migration in their opposition to the establishment of this new Department. So, can we get a more specific answer?

Let me volunteer the social costs of labor migration, which I do not think this new Department, once created, will be able to address because it is not in its mandate:

a. breakdown of relationships between spouses and between parents and children;

b. loneliness, anxieties, and emotional aches and longings from long-term separation, including psychiatric problems. Filipino families have to stay apart just to stay together;

c. children of migrants experience more issues and problems with coping in school due to lack of parental supervision and guidance resulting in serious behavioral consequences such as substance use and early entry into sexual relations;

d. children of migrants are prone to sexual abuse because of the absence of the mother or the father or both of them;

e. the cycle of economic dependence continues until the migrants can no longer work and must confront the reality of their own survival and quality of life after retirement;

f. data show that 70 percent of OFWs have been unable to save enough to attain their financial goals; and

g. children of migrant mothers consider migration as an abandonment leaving them both less socially adjusted.

Nowhere in the Explanatory Note or in the provisions of the Bill are there attempts to solve these social costs of labor migration, and if we continue exporting Filipino manpower abroad, these social costs will even escalate.

Now, is the distinguished Sponsor aware of the feminization of workers' migration?

REP. MARIÑO. Again, Mr. Speaker?

REP. LAGMAN. Is the distinguished Sponsor aware of the feminization of workers' migration?

REP. MARIÑO. Female OFWs comprise 55.8 percent of the total OFWs. Out of that 55.8 percent, more than half of the female OFWs are in elementary occupations.

REP. LAGMAN. No, the real data from the Philippine Statistics Authority is that 55.8 percent of OFWs are women. That is the import of what is known as the feminization of workers' migration. This problem will not be addressed by the Department. It has no mandate to solve this problem and the more

we send female workers abroad, particularly those in domestic and low-caliber positions, the more the social costs will escalate because mothers are needed to be at home to care for her children and monitor their activities. With 55.8 percent of OFWs being women, this problem will continue to remain unsolved. There are a number of studies by the ILO which would document the detrimental cause of the feminization of labor migration.

Now, may we know what are the adverse effects of labor migration other than the social costs?

REP. MARIÑO. Honorable Lagman, please repeat.

REP. LAGMAN. The adverse effects of labor migration—what are the adverse effects of labor migration in addition to the social costs?

REP. MARIÑO. Well, number one is that the skills will be abroad instead of available locally, so that will be the number one consequence of labor export. There is also brain drain, as we will be losing our engineers and our teachers. So it is a matter of supply and demand, Mr. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, that is correct, brain drain or loss of human resources that could have contributed to the local and national development. Another is poor quality of goods and services at home because those who are qualified are abroad; the loss of public funds invested in education and training of those who migrate for foreign employment; and the complacency effect reduced the share in the workforce of persons in the household relying on overseas remittances.

Compared to the assistance and support given to those who seek overseas employment, there is a glaring lack of assistance to the unemployed and underemployed at home. Just like the major causes of why OFWs go abroad, the social cost and other ill effects of labor migration and the adverse effects of labor migration, these are not being addressed by the Department as provided for in the Bill.

Now, may we know who are the ranking countries worldwide who are engaged in the export of manpower?

REP. MARIÑO. Mr. Speaker, just to mention a few: China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia.

REP. LAGMAN. It is China, ...

REP. MARIÑO. India...

REP. LAGMAN. ...India, Mexico, ...

REP. MARIÑO. ...Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Indonesia.

REP. LAGMAN. ... Indonesia.

May we know, among these major labor-migration exporting countries, have they established in their respective countries a department for overseas workers?

REP. MARIÑO. Among those mentioned, it is only Bangladesh who has a ministry.

REP. LAGMAN. And Bangladesh is not even one of the major countries. The major ones are China, India, Mexico and Indonesia. I would like to underscore that in these countries that are exporting manpower overseas, they do not have a separate department catering to OFWs. The Philippines, which is a major country in the export of manpower, is now creating a Department when there are existing agencies like the Department of Labor, the POEA and OWWA, which have been catering to the needs of the OFWs, so much so that we have deployed, according to the distinguished Sponsor, 10 million over the last half century and our dollar remittances are record high.

So, for all of these reasons I have mentioned, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, there is no need, there is no urgency to establish or create another bureaucracy to be known as the "Department of Filipinos Overseas and Foreign Employment."

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would terminate my interpellation and I would like to thank the distinguished Sponsor for being gracious in answering my questions and for being candid when there is no answer to my questions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. MARIÑO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were issues mentioned, a lot of concerns, problems. If the existing departments are working properly then why do we have social problems as it is? That is my contention, that the more we need a Department, Mr. Speaker, to address all these issues. But thank you again. I respect the position and also the suggestion of Honorable Lagman. Thank you.

REP. LAGMAN. The social problems, Mr. Speaker, are inherent to labor migration. They are not because of the fault or failure of the implementing agencies, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 5832.

I withdraw the motion, Mr. Speaker, sorry. There being no other interpellators, Mr. Speaker, I move that we close the period of sponsorship and debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of sponsorship and debate is hereby closed.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 5832

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 5832, under Committee Report No. 142.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the consideration of the House Bill is hereby suspended.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session for a few minutes.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The session is suspended.

It was 5:39 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:39 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The session is resumed.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Deputy Speaker Johnny Ty Pimentel to make a manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Deputy Speaker Johnny Ty Pimentel is hereby recognized.

MANIFESTATION OF REP. PIMENTEL

REP. PIMENTEL. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is regarding House Resolution No. 757. I would like to manifest my intent that my name be withdrawn as one of the authors of this Resolution.

Therefore, in this connection, Mr. Chair, I move that my name be deleted as one of the authors of House Resolution No. 757, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I join the honorable Deputy Speaker.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Deputy Speaker Aurelio “Dong” D. Gonzales Jr. for his manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Deputy Speaker Aurelio “Dong” D. Gonzales Jr. is hereby recognized.

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

Regarding House Resolution No. 757, I am also withdrawing my name as a coauthor of this proposed measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. I join, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. GONZALES (A.). Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Secretary General will note.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 5832

Continuation

PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 5832, under Committee Report No. 142, and that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). 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. 5832, entitled: AN ACT CREATING THE DEPARTMENT OF FILIPINOS OVERSEAS AND FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT, DEFINING ITS MANDATE, POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Mario Vittorio “Marvey” A. Mariño, the Chairman of the Committee on Government Reorganization.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Hon. Mario Vittorio “Marvey” A. Mariño is recognized.

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of amendments is hereby opened.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Committee amendments, I move that we close the period of Committee ...

REP. MARIÑO. Mr. Speaker. I am sorry, Majority Leader.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Hon. Mario Vittorio “Marvey” A. Mariño, the Sponsor, is recognized.

REP. MARIÑO. I would like to make a Committee amendment, please.

REP. PALMA. I am sorry. I withdraw my motion, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Honorable Mariño will please proceed.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT

REP. MARIÑO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On Section 2. Declaration of Policy, page 2, paragraph c, lines 26 to 28, delete the entire sentence starting with: “The State, therefore, shall continuously create local employment opportunities and promote the equitable distribution of wealth and the benefits of development.”

That would be the Committee amendment, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. We join the author, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. PALMA. With that, Mr. Speaker, there being no other Committee amendment, I move that we proceed to consider individual amendments.

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

REP. PALMA. To introduce individual amendments, Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Sharon S. Garin.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Honorable Sharon S. Garin is recognized to propose her individual amendments.

INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On Section 8, page 12, lines 19 to 35 and page 13, lines 1 and 2, delete the entire Section 8(b), and in lieu thereof, insert new sections (b) and (c) to read as follows:

B) OFFICE OF THE UNDERSECRETARY FOR LAND-BASED FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT

THE OFFICE OF THE UNDERSECRETARY FOR LAND-BASED FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT SHALL SUBSUME THE RELATED MANDATES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE PHILIPPINE OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT ADMINISTRATION UNDER EXECUTIVE ORDER 247, S. 1987 AND REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8042, AS AMENDED, AND SHALL HAVE THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONS:

1. ADVISE AND ASSIST THE SECRETARY IN THE FORMULATION OF THE DEPARTMENT'S OVERALL LONG-TERM AND SHORT-TERM PLANS AND PROGRAMS ON LAND-BASED OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT;

2. REVIEW AND EVALUATE THE PROGRESS OR STATUS OF PROJECTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN RELATION TO SET STANDARDS, OBJECTIVES, AND SCHEDULES;

x x x

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, may I request the Honorable Garin to stop because this is the period of individual amendments; therefore, the amendments must be made line by line. So, we will first take up the first amendment, and we would like to request the author if he will approve the amendment introduced by the Honorable Garin.

REP. MARIÑO. We accept the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. Let me join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, on Section 8, page 12, lines 19 to 35 and page 13, lines 1 and 2, delete the entire Section 8(b).

REP. MARIÑO. We accept the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAR. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. GARIN (S.). In lieu thereof, insert new sections b) and c) to read as follows:

(b) OFFICE OF THE UNDERSECRETARY FOR LAND-BASED FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. We accept the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAR. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. GARIN (S.). To follow section (b): THE OFFICE OF THE UNDERSECRETARY FOR LAND-BASED FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT SHALL SUBSUME THE RELATED MANDATES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE PHILIPPINE OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT ADMINISTRATION UNDER EXECUTIVE ORDER 247, s. 1987 AND REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8042, AS AMENDED, AND SHALL HAVE THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONS, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. We accept the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAR. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. GARIN (S.). Following that: 1. ADVISE AND ASSIST THE SECRETARY IN THE FORMULATION OF THE DEPARTMENT'S OVERALL LONG-TERM AND SHORT-TERM PLANS AND PROGRAMS ON LAND-BASED OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. We accept the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAR. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (S.). 2. REVIEW AND EVALUATE THE PROGRESS OR STATUS OF PROJECTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN RELATION TO SET STANDARDS, OBJECTIVES, AND SCHEDULES, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. We accept the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAR. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (S.). Number 3.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Rule on the motion first.

REP. GARIN (S.). Number 3. SUPERVISE AND CONTROL OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF ONE (1) ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. We accept the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAR. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. GARIN (S.). Number 4. PERFORM SUCH OTHER FUNCTIONS AS MAY BE PROVIDED BY LAW OR ASSIGNED BY THE SECRETARY.

REP. MARIÑO. We accept the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAR. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. GARIN (S.). (c) OFFICE OF THE UNDERSECRETARY FOR SEA-BASED FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. We accept the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAR. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. GARIN (S.). And under (c), THE OFFICE OF THE UNDERSECRETARY FOR SEA-BASED FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT SHALL SUBSUME THE RELATED MANDATES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE PHILIPPINE OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT ADMINISTRATION UNDER EXECUTIVE ORDER 247, s. 1987 AND REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8042, AS AMENDED, AND SHALL HAVE THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONS, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. We accept the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAR. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. GARIN (S.). Number 1. ADVISE AND ASSIST THE SECRETARY IN THE FORMULATION OF THE DEPARTMENT'S OVERALL LONG-TERM AND SHORT-TERM PLANS AND PROGRAMS ON SEA-BASED OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. We accept the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAR. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. GARIN (S.). Number 2. REVIEW AND EVALUATE THE PROGRESS OR STATUS OF PROJECTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN RELATION TO SET STANDARDS, OBJECTIVES, AND SCHEDULES, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. We accept the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAR. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. GARIN (S.). Number 3. SUPERVISE AND CONTROL OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF ONE (1) ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. We accept the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAR. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. GARIN (S.). Number 4. PERFORM SUCH OTHERFUNCTIONSASMAYBEPROVIDEDBYLAW OR ASSIGNED BY THE SECRETARY, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. We accept the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAR. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. GARIN (S.). And thereafter, Mr. Speaker, the succeeding paragraphs shall be rearranged accordingly, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. We accept the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLAR. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. MARIÑO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 5832

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 5832, under Committee Report 142.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none, the consideration of House Bill No. 5832 is suspended.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6091 ON SECOND READING

REP. VILLAR. Mr. Speaker, under the Calendar of Business for the Day, I move that we consider House Bill No. 6091, contained in Committee Report No. 207, as reported out by the Committee on People's Participation.

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). 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. 6091, entitled: AN ACT PROVIDING PROTECTION FROM LIABILITY TO VOLUNTEERS FOR ACTS OR OMISSIONS COMMITTED IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES DURING EMERGENCY SITUATION.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. VILLAR. Mr. Speaker, I move that the Chairperson of the Committee on People's Participation be recognized to begin sponsorship of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Chairman of the Committee is hereby recognized for her sponsorship speech.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. VERGARA

REP. VERGARA. Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of our Chairman of the Committee on People Participation, Rep. Florida "Rida" P. Robes, we the members of her Committee recognize volunteerism as one of the most effective mechanisms of people participation. However, for volunteerism to fulfill its idealistic dimension, a clear vision of its goal must be articulated and put simply. It is all about selfless giving to others. Ang tumulong na walang hinihintay na kapalit. The ultimate expression of generosity is not giving of what you have, but giving of who you are.

Considering that volunteers are involved in everyday activities that involve risks, these volunteers deserve to be protected and be given due recognition

* 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."

because of their contribution to society especially in crisis situations.

In good and hard times, we can always count on volunteers. They were visible during the Yolanda crisis, the Taal emergency evacuation and relief operations, and even during the staging of the successful Southeast Asian Games held in our country last year. In order to encourage volunteerism, and to limit the risks that volunteers face, I believe we must pass a law that will provide liability protection to government agencies and volunteers when performing acts of volunteerism especially during times of disaster and emergency.

The proposed law will protect volunteers and clearly define their rights and responsibilities. These are the salient points of House Bill No. 6091, also called the Emergency Volunteer Protection Act. The main objective of House Bill No. 6091 is to protect volunteers who provide assistance during emergencies, during times of calamity against possible liability that may be caused by acts performed in line with volunteer work. The Bill specifies conditions where a volunteer cannot be held liable for harm when acting in the performance of an act of volunteerism.

Honorable Speaker, this Bill was previously approved by the Seventeenth Congress and already transmitted to the Senate. On behalf of our Chairperson, Cong. Rida Robes of the Committee on People's Participation, we earnestly encourage our fellow colleagues to support the approval of House Bill No. 6091.

Thank you, Honorable Speaker, and good evening.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Bernadette "BH" Herrera-Dy of BH Party-List for her additional sponsorship speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Honorable Herrera-Dy is recognized for her sponsorship speech.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. HERRERA-DY

REP. HERRERA-DY. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My esteemed colleagues, friends, stakeholders and guests, good afternoon.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is about the traveler who was robbed, beaten, stripped of clothing, and left dying on the side of the road. A priest happened to be travelling on the same road, and when he saw the man, he simply passed on the other side. Eventually, a Levite also came by and saw him, but he ignored the

traveler too. Finally, a Samaritan found the traveler, and took pity on him. He bandaged his wounds, put the man on his own donkey, clothed and sheltered him at an inn, and even paid the expenses. Despite the Samaritans' and Jews' long historic hate for each other, the Samaritan acted upon compassion, a prime example of human empathy. Unfortunately, as depicted in this parable, empathy for others is scarce.

Oftentimes, people flock towards the scene of an accident just to see what unfolds. Some may even record videos on their phones and upload them, and livestream rather than help. Mas uso na po iyong nagfe-Facebook live at ipinagkakalat ang video kaysa tulungan ang mga naaaksidente. The common mentality is to ignore the incident out of fear, that if they provide assistance, the good Samaritan may end up being sued by the rescued party. This has happened so many times already.

The situation simply boils down to ignoring and leaving the victim at risk or help and be punished. This circumstance is certainly a catch-22. It reinforces the words of discouragement, "Don't be a hero," while creating a society comprised of bystanders and breeding a culture of indifference. Consequently, this dilemma has either cost the lives of far too many victims or has resulted in good Samaritans becoming victims of hefty lawsuits.

Accidents, calamities, and other emergencies are unavoidable in the Philippines. There are countless ways, outside of the volunteer sector, where one can assist those in need. Incidents such as traffic accidents, unprecedented injuries, holdup, robberies, and house fires, to name a few, are common, yet spontaneous and fatal occurrences in the country.

Each emergency necessitates immediate urgency by civilians at close proximity, regardless if they are trained volunteers or just simply rescuers. In other words, victims can be saved from life-threatening situations in possibly a shorter period of time by others who are willing to help to the best of their capacities. By the same token, one can even be saved in a matter of seconds by the goodwill of a fellow individual who happened to be nearby.

As opposed to only protecting professional volunteers and rescuers from possible liability, protection should also be extended to the general public.

Hence, this Representation has filed House Bill No. 3474, which seeks to exempt any Good Samaritan who acts in good faith and provides assistance to another who is in danger, wounded, or requires immediate medical assistance, from any subsequent liability due to injury, loss of life or damage to property. It also demonstrates that the victim, who is conscious and of legal age, must first give verbal or nonverbal consent to be assisted or rescued. It takes into account the context

of an incidence, whether the person rendering aid was the cause of the incident, accident or emergency, and if negligence occurred in the act of rescuing or assisting another. Hence, I urge you to help in the passage of this House Bill.

As pianist Marcus Stanley once said, "Remember, whenever you are in a position to help someone, be glad and always do it because that is God answering someone's prayers through you."

Thank you and God bless the Filipino people.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6091

REP. VILLAR. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 6091, under Committee Report No. 207.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the consideration of House Bill No. 6091 is hereby suspended.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 5083 ON SECOND READING

REP. VILLAR. Mr. Speaker, under the Calendar of Business for the Day, I move that we consider House Bill No. 5083, contained in Committee Report No. 198, as reported out by the Committee on Agrarian Reform.

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). 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. 5083, entitled: AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE RESTRUCTURING AND CONDONATION OF UNPAID INTERESTS, PENALTIES, AND SURCHARGES ON LOANS SECURED BY FARMERS, FISHERFOLK AND AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN REFORM (DAR), THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (DA), THE PEOPLE'S CREDIT

AND FINANCE CORPORATION (PCFC), THE COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (CDA), THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA) AND THE QUEDAN AND RURAL CREDIT GUARANTEE CORPORATION (QUEDANCOR).

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. VILLAR. Mr. Speaker, I move that the Chairperson of the Committee on Agrarian Reform be recognized to begin his sponsorship of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Hon. Solomon R. Chungalao is hereby recognized for his sponsorship speech.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. CHUNGALAO

REP. CHUNGALAO. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker and dear colleagues of this august Chamber, I wish to express my appreciation for the House leadership and its entire Membership for the inclusion of our measure in today's plenary agenda.

I finally stand before you this afternoon to sponsor a very significant piece of legislation that would facilitate the reintegration into the financial and banking system of the farmers, fisherfolk, and agrarian reform beneficiaries, and give them access to new and additional government credit programs.

The measure that I am referring to is the substitute measure to House Bill No. 5083, entitled: AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE RESTRUCTURING AND CONDONATION OF UNPAID INTERESTS, PENALTIES, AND SURCHARGES ON LOANS SECURED BY FARMERS, FISHERFOLK AND AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN REFORM (DAR), THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (DA), THE PEOPLE'S CREDIT AND FINANCE CORPORATION (PCFC), THE COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (CDA), THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA) AND THE QUEDAN AND RURAL CREDIT GUARANTEE CORPORATION (QUEDANCOR), authored by Rep. Sabiniano Canama.

Mr. Speaker, this measure provides the condonation of unpaid interests, penalties, and surcharges of agricultural and agrarian reform loans secured by farmers, fisherfolk and agrarian reform beneficiaries from the DAR, the DA, the PCFC, the CDA, the NFA and the QUEDANCOR, in other words, those loans made through government lending programs.

* 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."

It also provides that the justification of the condonation shall only be due to *force majeure* or market aberration and not due to willful default of the borrowers.

Mr. Speaker, the measure is in consonance with the social justice provisions of the Constitution. It relieves the cooperatives, farmers, fisherfolk associations and agrarian-based organizations from allocating certain portions of their income to pay the interests, penalties, and surcharges of their loans, hence, giving them the opportunity to utilize and invest the condoned amounts to enhance land productivity and improve their income. Likewise, the measure enables the precited sectors to access new additional credit from the government and private sector credit program.

Mr. Speaker and esteemed colleagues, we should fulfill the constitutional duty to make laws that respond to the needs of the Filipino people and fulfill the aspirations for a just and humane society where every Filipino can enjoy the blessings of freedom and democracy under a government strengthened by the rule of law, social justice and people empowerment.

I earnestly implore your support for the passage of this measure.

Maraming salamat po.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 5083

REP. VILLAR. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 5083, under Committee Report No. 198.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The consideration of House Bill No. 5083 is hereby suspended.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Minority Leader for his manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The honorable Minority Leader is hereby recognized.

REP. ABANTE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just would like to withdraw my name as coauthor

of the Resolution, Mr. Speaker, which the Deputy Speaker Pimentel talked about. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The manifestation of the honorable Minority Leader is hereby noted.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Vincent Franco “Duke” D. Frasco to avail of the question of privilege.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Hon. Duke Frasco of the Fifth District of Cebu is hereby recognized.

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE OF REP. FRASCO

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Majority Leader.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished Members of the House, I speak today, on a matter of personal and collective privilege in reply to two of my colleagues, the distinguished Gentlemen from the city of Cebu and my fellow Cebuanos for whom I have nothing but utmost respect.

Yesterday, my two colleagues rose on a matter of personal and collective privilege, and made on record their displeasure and disappointment, accusing me of gross misrepresentation and falsehoods. They denounced the statement I had allegedly made in my capacity as Chairman of the Visayas Development Committee, in reply to the media which had quoted a former Congressman purporting to express the collective stand of the Visayan bloc in regard to the ABS-CBN franchise.

Under the same umbrella of privilege, my colleagues put forth their position, favoring the renewal of the ABS-CBN franchise application and explicitly lobbying before the Members of the House on the merits why the ABS-CBN franchise be given its day in Congress and its franchise extended.

At the outset, as we are all aware, the measure concerning the ABS-CBN franchise is now pending before the Committee on Legislative Franchises. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, in regard to the statement of my colleagues on the merits and their favorable endorsement of the ABS-CBN franchise, I would like to raise a point of order.

Rule XVI, Section 122 of the House Rules states, and I quote:

Members shall not avail of the Privilege Hour to speak on concerns that are principally and directly related to the subject matter of measures already pending in any committee or plenary session.

Further, Rule XIII, Section 102 of the Rules of this House states that:

The presiding officer shall declare out of order a Member who, having previously registered for the Privilege Hour to speak on a specific subject matter, rises on a question of personal and collective privilege on the same subject matter. The presiding officer shall also declare out of order a Member who rises on a question of personal and collective privilege to speak on concerns that are principally and directly related to the subject matter of measures pending in any committee or in plenary session.

Mr. Speaker, Rule XIV, Section 139 of the House Rules unequivocally states that as Members of this House, we “shall adhere to the spirit and the letter of the Rules of the House and to the rules of the committees.”

I humbly submit, Mr. Speaker, that in taking advantage of the Privilege Hour to speak on their concerns that are principally and directly related to the subject matter of a measure already pending before a committee, specifically lobbying before the Members of this House the merits of immediate action by the Committee and the House on the ABS-CBN franchise, my two colleagues, with all due respect, have acted out of order.

While I myself wish not to discuss this pending matter any further than my two colleagues have, I beg the kind indulgence of the distinguished Members of this House, if only to clarify the misinterpretations and misattributions which my two colleagues may have made against me, in response to what is clearly an important and urgent issue for them.

First, my statement to the media was in reply to a question posed regarding former Negros Congressman’s claim that the Visayan bloc, an unofficially convened alliance of the Visayas lawmakers, had, and I quote, “agreed” that Congress should “act quickly” on the ABS-CBN issue.

My reply was sought by the media considering that I am the Chairman of the Visayas Development Committee of the House to which Representatives from the Visayas belong. For the record, I was never consulted on the purported stand of the Visayan bloc, favoring ABS-CBN, as conveyed by the former Congressman from Negros. As my colleague from Cebu has confirmed, there was never any meeting of the Visayan bloc agreeing to support the renewal or extension of the ABS-CBN franchise.

When the convener of the Visayan bloc purported to speak for all Visayan Congressmen of the House, my two colleagues were silent, in contrast to the condemnation, which I now face from them, for simply speaking, as the

duly elected Chairman of the Committee representing Visayas Congressmen.

Being the duly elected Chairman of the Committee recognized by the House as the official body representing the hopes and aspirations of the members of the Committee on Visayas Development, I exercised my right of reply to the media on the basis of the facts of which I was aware.

May I state for the record the exact statement I made to the media, and I quote: “With due respect to the former Congressman, I can speak as Chairman of the Committee on Visayas Development, that my fellow Visayas Representatives stand solidly behind Speaker Alan” in observing the protocol and courtesy due to our fellow Representatives in the Committee on Legislative Franchises before whom the ABS-CBN Franchise matter has been presented.

My statement being based on truth and fact, confounds me to no end that as a consequence, my two colleagues should find it necessary to publicly impugn my integrity and my reputation before my fellow Members of the House, and before the nation, instead of approaching me to clarify and discuss.

Mahimo raman gyud unta na among mahisgutan ug mag sinabtanay raman sad tingali mi, considering nga puros ra mi Sugbuanon ug Bisaya.

Is it not true that as sitting Members of this House, the Office of the Speaker and the person holding it, currently enjoys majority support? After all, under the Speaker’s leadership and guidance which all of us heeded, various matters of national concern had been duly addressed, most importantly, the Budget, benefitting all of our constituencies, and passed in record time. Hence, the trust and confidence of the Filipino people in the House is at an all-time high.

Is it not true that all of us, Majority and Minority, take pains to observe courtesy and protocol among our colleagues not only because the House rules mandate it but also because, despite our political differences, we genuinely have mutual respect for each other? After all, each of us, duly elected Members of this House, sworn to a solemn oath that we are entrusted with the mandate of our constituencies to protect the interest of the Filipino people.

Lastly, is it not true that the Visayas Representatives recognize the urgency of finding ways to mitigate the impact of the new coronavirus outbreak which has caused thousands of deaths worldwide and global economic downturns? After all, it is in the Visayas, particularly Central Visayas, our home, province of Cebu, that is most negatively impacted by the coronavirus, wiping out revenues and employment from tourism which is our major source of income.

Mr. Speaker, fellow Members of the House, these facts, we all know to be true. Churchill once said, “The

truth is incontrovertible.” “Malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end, there it is.”

To you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Members of this House, I offer my profound gratitude for your kind indulgence, and to my two colleagues, the distinguished Gentlemen from Cebu City and my fellow Cebuanos, I humbly offer a hand of peace. Since this is merely in answer to what was said during the Privilege Hour yesterday, when I was not around, I will sit down for the sake of unity.

Daghang salamat, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of the Hon. Vincent Franco “Duke” D. Frasco to the Committee on Rules for appropriate action.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The speech of Congressman Duke Frasco is referred to the Committee on Rules.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6091

Continuation

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 6091, under Committee Report No. 207, and that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

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

The Secretary will please read only the title of the measure.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6091, entitled: AN ACT PROVIDING PROTECTION FROM LIABILITY TO VOLUNTEERS FOR ACTS OR OMISSIONS COMMITTED IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES DURING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. John Marvin “Yul Servo” C. Nieto to deliver his additional sponsorship speech.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Hon. “Yul Servo” Nieto is hereby recognized.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. NIETO

REP. NIETO. Maraming salamat, G. Ispiker.

G. Ispiker, mga kagalang-galang na Miyembro ng House of Representatives, mga opisyal po ng House Secretariat, at sa mga bisita na naririto ngayon, magandang hapon po sa ating lahat.

Isa pong pribilehiyo na maging Sponsor po ng panukalang nagsusulong upang magbigay proteksyon sa ating mga volunteer. Ito po ay aprubado na noong Ikalabimpitong Kongreso, kaya sana po ay makuha pong muli ang inyong suporta ngayong hapon para maipasá muli ito ngayon sa Kongreso.

Sa atin pong kultura, ang pagiging hospitable po sa iba’t ibang klase ng sitwasyon ay isang tatak ng Pilipino. Mayroon nga po tayong kataga para rito—“bayanihan.” Bagama’t ang pinagmulan po ng salita ay ang simpleng pagtutulungan ng magkakapitbahay para maglipat ng tirahan, ito po ay lalong pinapatibay ng panahon upang magkaroon ng mas malawak na depinisyon: ang pagkakaisa at pagtutulungan sa mga panahon ng pangangailangan, iyan po ang isinasabuhay ng ating mga volunteer tuwing sila po ay tumutulong.

Sa modernong panahon na ating ginagalawan, mas komplikado na po ang uri ng pamumuhay ng mga tao. Marami na ang nagbago sa lipunan. Minsan, ang simpleng kilos ng pagtulong ay nagdudulot pa sa hindi ginustong abala. Responsibilidad po natin na magsulong ng mga batas na magbibigay proteksyon sa mga karapatan ng tao.

Ang mga volunteer ay kasama rin natin sa mga tungkulin at misyon na nagbibigay ng serbisyo sa bayan. Ako po ay naniniwala na ang panukalang ito kapag naisabatas ay makatutulong sa lalong ikauunlad ng ating bansa.

Nais po ng panukalang ito na mapalaganap muli ang spirit of volunteerism o ang “bayanihan” na matagal na nating kaugalian. Ang pagtugon sa pagsubok ng panahon para lang makatulong ay dapat protektahan at kilalanin ng batas, hindi suguin.

Maraming salamat po. Sana maipasá po ang panukalang ito para mahikayat ang ating mga kababayan na hindi matakot na maging isang boluntaryo lalo na sa mga panahon kung saan ang bayan ay nangangailangan.

Muli po, maraming, maraming salamat.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6091

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 6091.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The consideration of House Bill No. 6091 is hereby suspended.

CONSIDERATION OF H. B. NO. 6365

Continuation

PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 6365, under Committee Report No. 243, and that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). 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. 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.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary situation of this Bill is that we are in the period of amendments, and with that, I would like to recognize the Vice Chairman of the Committee on Health, Hon. Ruth Mariano-Hernandez of the Second District of Laguna, to continue her sponsorship of the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Hon. Ruth Mariano-Hernandez is hereby recognized.

REP. MARIANO-HERNANDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Dahlia A. Loyola of the Fifth District of Cavite to introduce individual amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Honorable Loyola is hereby recognized to propose amendments.

INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS

REP. LOYOLA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We would like to propose individual amendments to Committee Report No. 243 on House Bill No. 6365, and I would like to start off with the proposed amendments on page 1, Section 2, line 11 by deleting the word “increase” after the word “capacity”.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). What does the Sponsor say?

REP. MARIANO-HERNANDEZ. On behalf of the Committee on Health, we accept, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. LOYOLA. Mr. Speaker, on the second page, Section 3, delete the whole paragraph and, in lieu thereof, substitute the following: SECTION 3. THE EXISTING WORKFORCE OF THE SIMC, INCLUDING DOCTORS, NURSES, AND SUPPORTING PERSONNEL SHALL BE CORRESPONDINGLY INCREASED TO CONFORM WITH SECTION 1 OF THIS ACT.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). What does the Sponsor say?

REP. MARIANO-HERNANDEZ. On behalf of the Committee on Health, we accept, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. LOYOLA. Mr. Speaker, lastly, on page 2, Section 4, delete the entire provision, and in lieu thereof, substitute the following: SECTION 4. THE SECRETARY OF THE DOH SHALL IMMEDIATELY INCLUDE IN THE DEPARTMENT'S PROGRAMS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS ACT, THE FUNDING OF WHICH SHALL BE INCLUDED IN THE ANNUAL GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). What does the Sponsor say?

REP. MARIANO-HERNANDEZ. On behalf of the Committee on Health, we accept, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. LOYOLA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. MARIANO-HERNANDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no other Members who wish to introduce amendments, I move that we close the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of amendments is hereby closed.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve House Bill No. 6365, as amended, on Second Reading.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). As many as are in favor of House Bill No. 6365, as amended, please say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

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

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 6365, AS AMENDED, ON SECOND READING

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

House Bill No. 6365, as amended, is hereby approved on Second Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The session is suspended.

It was 6:22 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 6:22 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The session is resumed.

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, before we continue, I move that we approve Journal No. 49, dated March 2, 2020.

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

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 875

Continuation

PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 875, under Committee Report No. 247, and may we request that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the Secretary General will please read only the title of the measure.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 875, entitled: AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE IMPROVEMENT, REHABILITATION, AND MODERNIZATION OF THE NAVOTAS FISH PORT COMPLEX.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary status of this Bill is that we are in the period of amendments. I therefore move that we recognize the Sponsor and Chairman of the Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries Resources, the Hon. Leo Rafael M. Cueva.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Honorable Cueva is hereby recognized.

REP. CUEVA. Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, honorable colleagues. We are now to consider individual amendments.

REP. PALMA. To introduce individual amendments, may we recognize Hon. Diego “Nonoy” C. Ty from the First District of Misamis Occidental.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Hon. Diego Ty is hereby recognized to propose individual amendments.

INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS

REP. TY (D.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to propose the following amendments to House Bill No. 875. First, renumber “Section 4” to SECTION 3 of House Bill No. 875.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). What does the Sponsor say?

REP. CUEVA. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries Resources, we accept the amendment.

REP. PALMA. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. TY (D.). Lastly, Mr. Speaker, renumber “Section 5” to SECTION 4 and amend the same to read as follows: SEC. 4. THIS ACT SHALL TAKE EFFECT FIFTEEN (15) DAYS AFTER ITS PUBLICATION IN THE OFFICIAL GAZETTE OR IN A NEWSPAPER OF GENERAL CIRCULATION.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). What does the Sponsor say?

REP. CUEVA. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries Resources, we accept the amendment.

REP. VILLAR. We join the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. TY (D.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no other Member who wishes to introduce individual

amendments, I move that we close the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of amendments is hereby closed.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve House Bill No. 6365, as amended, on Second Reading.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). As many as are in favor of House Bill No. 6365, as amended, please say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

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

REP. PALMA. I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. May I make a correction, it is House Bill No. 875. I apologize.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). As many as are in favor of House Bill No. 875, as amended, please say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

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

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 875, AS AMENDED, ON SECOND READING

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

House Bill No. 875, as amended, is approved on Second Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 59 *Continuation*

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we continue the consideration of House Bill No. 59, under Committee Report No. 73, and may we request that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). Is

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

The Secretary General will please read only the title of the measure.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 59, entitled: AN ACT SETTING THE MINIMUM PAID-UP CAPITAL AND LOCALLY PRODUCED STOCK INVENTORY REQUIREMENTS FOR FOREIGN RETAIL BUSINESS ENTERPRISES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8762, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE “RETAIL TRADE LIBERALIZATION ACT OF 2000.”

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary status of the Bill is that we are still in the period of sponsorship and debate. I therefore move that we recognize the Chairman of the Committee on Trade and Industry, Hon. Wes T. Gatchalian.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Honorable Gatchalian is hereby recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, to interpellate the Sponsor, I move that we recognize Hon. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, P.). The Honorable Zarate is recognized for his interpellation.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Magandang gabi po sa ating lahat. Will the good Sponsor entertain some clarificatory questions on House Bill No. 59 now being considered?

REP. GATCHALIAN. It is my pleasure, Mr. Speaker.

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

During the sponsorship of this measure under consideration, the authors mentioned that the paid-up capital currently under RA 8762, otherwise known as the “Retail Trade Liberalization Act of 2000,” is \$2.5 million, the highest among the ASEAN countries. They also claim, Mr. Speaker, that this high minimum requirement is restrictive to foreign investors, that is why they want to amend RA 8762. They seek to open the Philippine industry: first, according to them, to have greater variety of products; second, to have more competitive local players; third, to have an inflow of technology; and fourth, to provide more jobs to Filipinos, as they promised. Is my appreciation of the statements mentioned by the authors during the sponsorship correct, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Yes, it is correct, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. The Sponsors are saying that because of this high minimum paid-up capital requirement, which is what hinders investments in our country today, particularly in the retail trade sector. Is that correct, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. GATCHALIAN. That is correct, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Before I proceed, may I inquire from the good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. What are the industries now that are still under the control of Filipinos? Can the good Sponsor cite sectors or industries that are still controlled by Filipinos?

REP. GATCHALIAN. I do not have the exact details pero marami pa rin naman pong industriya na pinapatakbo o majority-owned pa rin ng mga Pilipinong kumpanya o Filipino entities. With regard po sa mga industriyang, sabihin na nating malalaki, if we are talking about manufacturing, agriculture or telecommunications, marami naman ang still majority-owned by the Filipino people.

Pero dito po sa ating panukala o House Bill No. 59, ito ang wholesale at retail sector, just to point out to our colleague from our BAYAN MUNA Party-List, ang wholesale and retail sector is the biggest employer of the country. This is around 19.6 percent o sabihin na lang po nating 20 percent of the total employment comes from this sector. The wholesale and retail sector is 20 percent of the total job-generating sectors in the country next to agriculture.

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

Bago po tayo pumalawig doon sa katanungan kung kailangan bang susugan o amyendahan ang kasalukuyang batas, puwede po bang ilatag o ilahad ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, ano ba ang rason o kadahilanan bakit po ang ating Kongreso ay nagpasá ng isang batas na naglilimita? First, we passed Republic Act No. 1180 in 1954 at binago natin ito nang ipinasá natin noong Ikalabing-isang Kongreso ang Republic Act No. 8762, ang kasalukuyang batas. Puwede po bang mailatag ng kagalang-galang na Sponsor, ano ang kadahilanan kung bakit nagbabalangkas tayo ng ganitong batas?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Opo. Ang dahilan kaya natin isinusulong itong panukala na ibaba to the proposed \$200,000 paid-up capital is because when we passed the law in the year 2000, only 43 foreign retail investments have been recorded. This has generated only 22,000

jobs accounting for only 0.6 percent of the total jobs generated.

Ano po ang ibig sabihin nito? Ang ibig sabihin mga kasama, dahil mataas po ang paid-up capital noong batas na ating ipinasá noong year 2000, only 43 foreign retailers came to our country. Nasaan po iyong iba? Iyong iba na gustong pumasok at magnegosyo sa Pilipinas ay kinakailangang makipagpartner sa malalaking shopping malls. Gusto po nilang pumasok sa Pilipinas pero kailangan makipagpartner sa mga naglalakihang supermarket, kailangan nilang makipag-joint venture.

Ito pong panukala na ating ipinaglalaman ay hindi lang para sa malalaking retailers o foreign brands, kundi para rin sa medium-scale enterprises na makapasok sa ating bansa na hindi na nila kailangang makipagpartner sa mga giant shopping mall or supermarket na alam naman nating sa Pilipinas ay pinapatakbo ng iilang pamilya lang.

So, with House Bill No. 59, binibigyan po natin sila ng pagkakataon to set up shop on their own, na kaya nilang tumayo as long as sumunod sa mga batas under House Bill No. 59 or our Retail Act para sila mismo ay hindi na mangailangan ng partner.

From the year 2000, makikita po natin na hindi successful, kumbaga, 43 lang ang nakapasok.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat, kagalang-galang na Sponsor.

Bago po tayo pumalaot doon sa pag-amyenda noong taong 2000, puwede rin bang mailatag ng kagalang-galang na Sponsor bakit in 1954 ay nagpasá tayo ng batas na Retail Trade Nationalization Act? Ano po ba ang kadahilanan noon?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Hindi ko po alam ang diretsong kadahilanan noong panahon iyon, ngunit ang masasabi ko lang siguro, in the years 1954, 2000 at 2020, nag-iba na po ang environment sa negosyo at trade natin, kaya kailangan nating mag-adjust. We need to adjust to the constant ever-changing environment para po maimbitahan naman nating magkaroon ng mas maraming kompetisyon ang pumapasok sa Pilipinas. So mas maraming kompetisyon is equivalent to more choices to the Filipino people, and more choices is equivalent to lower prices of goods.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po.

Hindi po ba ang kadahilanan in 1954 ay dahil nakita ng ating mga Mambabatas at ng pamahalaan na halos lahat ng sektor ay pinasok na rin ng mga dayuhan. Kaya nga in 1954, ang isang sektor na sa tingin nila ay dapat nasa kontrol ng mga Pilipino ay ang retail sector, dahil ito naman ang ikinabubuhay ng maliliit at mas maraming entrepreneurs natin, ang small and medium enterprises. Kaya inilabas natin iyan noong

1954 dahil nga sa katotohanan na noong panahong iyon, kahit na ang sektor ng retail ay kinokontrol na ng mga dayuhan.

Ano po ba ang nagbago? Sabi ninyo between 1954 at 2000, may nagbago na kaya noong year 2000, inilabas natin iyong kasalukuyang batas na nag-amyenda sa Republic Act No. 1180, itong Republic Act No. 8762, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Garcia (P.) relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Henry S. Oaminal.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Ang nagbago po, Mr. Speaker, ay nakita na hindi successful ang mga nakaraang batas natin. The data can show na ang pagpasok lang po despite all the efforts, despite na nasabi ninyo from 1950s to 2000 na naamyendahan natin ito, pero 43 lamang na foreign investors ang pumasok sa atin. Kapag ikukumpara po natin sa ating mga kapitbahay sa Southeast Asia, makikita natin ang growth ng investment, ang growth ng job generation, na nadadala ng sektor na lumago dahil sila mismo ay nag-adjust din sa paid-up capital na similar po sa ating panukala. Iwan na iwan na po tayo kumpara sa ating mga kapitbahay sa Southeast Asia, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po.

So, inaamin po ninyo, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, na between 1954 to 2000, between 2000 up to now, sa katunayan ang ating ekonomiya ay binuksan na dahil gusto nating makahikayat ng mga mamumuhunang dayuhan. Sa katunayan, sa ating Foreign Investments Law, iyong ating mga negative list doon na kung saan ay hindi puwedeng pasukin ng mga dayuhan ay na-expand na natin. Pero sinasabi pa rin ninyo ngayon na hindi pa po ito enough, hindi ito nagdala ng ipinangakong paglago ng ating ekonomiya, hindi nito natugunan ang ipinangakong makapagbigay ng employment sa milyon-milyon nating mga kababayan. Tama po ba iyong pagkaintindi ko, kaya po gusto nating buksan pang muli, mas lalo pa nating buksan itong naiiwang sektor na nasa kontrol ng mga Pilipino, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Mahirap namang sabihin natin na ang mga naiiwang sektor dahil hindi naman po lahat ng sektor sa atin ay puwedeng may foreign ownership. Hindi naman po puwedeng lahat. Marami pa rin sa sektor natin ay maiiwan pa rin sa kamay po ng mga Filipino entities and companies. Ang sinasabi lang po natin, we have to evolve in the changing environment, we have to evolve in the global landscape na nagpapalit to further improve. Ang meaning po ng “to further improve” ay magkaroon ng mas malaki pang investment na pumasok sa ating bansa, magkaroon pa

ng smooth trading relationships, at siyempre iyong job generation, na inuulit ko ay makapagdadala pa ng maraming trabaho sa sektor ng retail. Kaya ko lang po na-mention nang maaga kanina ay dahil naipakita na po sa ating statistics na ang wholesale at retail na sektor ay ang second biggest employer ng ating bansa, accounting to 20 percent of the total employment.

That is around 13.3 percent of the GDP of the Philippines po.

REP. ZARATE. So, sila po ang second biggest employer, ano, iyong wholesale and retail. Tama po ba iyong pagkaintindi ko?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Tama po.

REP. ZARATE. At sila rin po ang isa sa may pinakamalaking ambag sa ating ekonomiya? Tama rin ho ba?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Hindi naman ho pinakamalaki but isa sa nagdadala po ng ekonomiya natin.

REP. ZARATE. So, tama po. So, mainam pala na ang sektor na ito ay nasa kamay ng ating mga kababayang Pilipino, ano, dahil ito ay nagbibigay ng—second in employment—malaking ambag sa ating ekonomiya. So, sinasabi ninyo po ngayon, buksan na natin pa lalo sa mga dayuhan. So, ano ang mangyayari po noon? Ang makikinabang nito ay ang mga dayuhan, sa halip na ang ating mga lokal na mga entrepreneur na siyang dapat nating binibigyan ng pangunahing pagtangkilik at pagsuporta dahil sila nga ay ating mga kababayan.

Along that line, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, puwede po bang mabanggit sa atin ng kagalang-galang na Sponsor, ano ba ang nakasaad sa ating Saligang Batas, in particular doon sa Article II, Section 19 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Hindi ko pa ho alam. Wala po akong kopya...

REP. ZARATE. For the information of the Sponsor, according to Article II, Section 19 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, it says:

The State shall develop a self-reliant and independent national economy effectively controlled by Filipinos.

So, ano po ba ang pagkaintindi natin sa patakarang ito or policy na inilagay ng ating sovereign Filipino people sa ating 1987 Constitution? Ano po ba ang pagkaintindi ng kagalang-galang na Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, sang-ayon naman

po ako na atin pong kailangang protektahan din ang ating mga lokal na mga entrepreneur, lokal po na maliliit na negosyo o negosyante po at tangkilikin po ang mga produktong sariling atin, ngunit hindi rin po natin puwedeng talikuran, mga kasama, ang changing globalization po natin na kumbaga makatutulong din po ito sa pagdala ng trabaho at ng investment, at hindi lang ho iyon, mga kasama, marami po tayong brands, new technology at new innovation na puwede pong i-adopt ng Philippine companies, Philippine retailers na puwede rin po nilang makuha sa mga dayuhan. Ito po ay option lamang po to increase the competition, at to increase the competition, ang ibig sabihin po roon, more choices for the Filipino people ay mas mababang presyo po.

At the end of the day po, ang mga consumer natin ang kailangan nating bigyan ng pagkakataon na pumili kung alin po ang produkto na gusto nila. Hindi lang ho ang mga namumuno po at naglalakihang shopping mall ang nagdidikta kung ano po ang puwede nilang bilhin dahil no choice ho sila, dahil kapag tiningnan po natin ang mga shopping mall ngayon, kung kayo po ay bumisita sa supermarket natin doon, karamihan naman po, mga kasama, nakita po natin na majority po ay puro imported products.

Just to share sa atin pong colleague from the BAYAN MUNA Party-List, noong kami po ay naghi-hearing ay naimbitahan po natin ang Philippine Retailers Association. Ang unang tanong ko sa kanila, “Is it possible that you give the Committee the list of your members?” That is the unang-una and the people hiring you kasi po abogado, at makikita naman po natin, the older members are the giant shopping malls, establishments, supermarkets that are already controlling our country. Pangalawa, sinabi ko pa, “Ilang porsiyento ba ng mga produktong inyong ibinebenta ng mga miyembro ninyo sa shopping mall ninyo o supermarket ang gawang Pilipino or ito ba ay nanggagaling sa sektor ng micro-entrepreneurs or Filipino products?” Hindi ho sila makasagot at hiningi po natin ang listahan, hindi rin naman ho nila ibinigay po. Ang nakita ko lang ho sa listahan nila ay majority po ay owned by ika nga mga matatagal nang shopping mall na matagal na pong nag-o-operate sa ating bansa at ito lang po iyong choices ng mga Pilipino so far.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po.

Kaya nga po ang hindi ko pa rin ma-reconcile, ano, inaamin naman natin na mayroong mandato sa ating Konstitusyon na kailangang mayroon tayong isang pambansang ekonomiya na nagsasarili, independent at effectively controlled by Filipinos.

Sinabi ninyo kanina, nabanggit ninyo, we have to adopt to a changing global economy, pero iyon ho ang masama na nakita natin. Sa nakaraang halos tatlong dekada ng rehimen ng globalisasyon dito sa ating bansa

ay kayo na rin ang umamin kanina, hindi rin ito nadala o hindi nito napatotohanan iyong pangakong magkaroon ng isang masiglang ekonomiya ang Pilipinas kapag pumasok tayo sa age or regime of globalization, if we will liberalize our economy. And here we are now, again, as a prescription to further—sabi ninyo, para umunlad talaga ang ating ekonomiya, buksan pa natin ang ating naiiwang sektor ng wholesale and retail.

Along that line, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, I also have to remind the good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, that, again, sinabi rin sa ating Saligang Batas:

The Congress shall enact measures that will encourage the formation and operation of enterprises whose capital is wholly owned by Filipinos.

Kaya nga itong sektor na ito na dati ay 100 percent na kontrolado ng mga Pilipino, hinayaan natin in 2000 na susugan ito, amyendahan. Pinapasok natin ang may kapital na \$2.5 million on the promise that it will help generate employment, it will help our economy, pero hindi rin dumating. At sabi natin ngayon, mas bababaan pa natin.

Paano na po ang mangyayaring sinasabi ng ating Saligang Batas na kailangan proteksiyunan natin ang ating mga lokal na mga namumuhunan at kailangan itong mga impresa na ito ay controlled?

So, earlier, the good Sponsor said that in this current proposal, tinanggal na natin iyong categories from Category A, B, C, D, ...

REP. GATCHALIAN. Opo.

REP. ZARATE. ... at iniwan na lang natin, sabi natin dito, wala nang category. Hayaan na lang natin na kung mayroon silang \$200,000, itong mga dayuhang mamumuhunan na ito ay puwede na nilang pasukin ang ating retail trade sector.

Now, with the current exchange rate of peso, so itong \$200,000 is just parang equivalent to ...

REP. GATCHALIAN. P10.5 million.

REP. ZARATE. P10.5 million, and iyong current \$2.5 million is nasa range ng P127 million. Tama ba iyong pagkakalahad ko?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Opo. Bale ang \$200,000 is roughly equivalent to P10 million.

REP. ZARATE. Okay. So, kung bababaan natin iyan sa P10 million or P10.5 million, kahit sabihin na nating P11 million ang kanilang puhunan na puwede na silang pumasok dito, ang tanong ko po sa ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor, sa tingin ninyo, ang maaapektuhan

ba nito ay itong malalaking malls na sinasabi ninyo kanina or ang maaapektuhan nito ay ang mga mas maliliit pang mga negosyante na namumuhan sa retail and wholesale, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Mr. Speaker, tama ho iyong nabanggit ninyo na may items A, B, C, D na atin pong tinanggal. Hindi po ito tinanggal na walang rason po. Ito po ay just to simplify po ang ating competition.

So, according ho sa Board of Investments natin, ang sektor po ng micro-entrepreneurs are the micro na tinatawag natin na nasa range po ng P3 million.

REP. ZARATE. Yes.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Ang small po ay nasa range po ng P3 to P15 million.

REP. ZARATE. Yes.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Ang medium po ay nasa range po ng P15 to P100 million. Ang large po is above P100 million according to the Board of Investments. Kaya po, mga kasama, if ikukumpara natin sa ibang kapitbahay natin, mayroon po tayong data dito na sa atin pong mga kapitbahay, for example na lang po, to the honorable Congressman Zarate, makikita po natin, example po ng kapitbahay natin ay, sabihin na lang po natin, ang Vietnam po ay ito po ay ibinaba nila sa as low as US\$10,000; sa Thailand ho is 66,300; sa Singapore po, 36,700. So, bakit po natin, ang Committee po ay naisipan na i-peg sa US\$200,000? Simple po, dahil ito po ang benchmark natin na hindi po tamaan ang ating mga micro-entrepreneur na nabanggit ninyo po, ang maliliit na negosyante.

Right now, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority, mayroon po tayong higit na 887 micro-entrepreneurs composed po ng 88 percent, napakalaki po. Ang small po na nabanggit po natin ranging to P3 million to P15 million, we have close to 108,175 establishments with the share of almost 10 percent. Ang medium naman po na nabanggit natin kanina sa Pilipinas ay mayroon lamang 4,895. Ang large naman po ay mayroon tayong 4,769.

Ang panukalang ito po, ang matatamaan po ay hindi ho ang mga maliliit na negosyante natin. Ang matatamaan po dito ay iyong nasa bracket ng medium and large. If you total, both of them compose only 1 percent of the total number of establishments in the Philippines. So, kaya po ginawa natin o nag-peg ho tayo to \$200,000 o P10 million roughly, para ho ang atin pong matatamaan or maaapektuhan ay ito naman pong mga medium at large, which is around 1 percent lang ho ng ating total number of establishments. Ang ating layunin

po ay maprotektahan din ang ating mga maliliit na negosyante, mga local po na entrepreneur at local micro and small entrepreneurs, kaya din po, Mr. Speaker, nagdagdag po tayo ng provision doon na mayroon pa rin pong mga produkto sa loob po ng mga establishment na dapat po Filipino-made.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat, G. Isponsor, Mr. Speaker.

Again, iyon din po ang hindi ko maintindihan. Kayo na rin po ang umamin na kung ibababa natin ito sa \$200,000 or just the equivalent of P10,173,000, sabihin na nating P11 million, sa nabanggit ninyo po, ang matatamaan nito ay ang small and medium. Dahil ang small, sabi natin, ang small enterprise, ito iyong namumuhunan ng nasa P3 million to P15 million. So, kung P15 million ang kapital ko ngayon at may papasok na isang dayuhan na ang minimum lang ay P10 million ang kailangan, tatamaan ninyo ang aking negosyo. Tatamaan din ang medium dahil ang medium naman ay nasa P15 million and up. So, ang mahahagip nito, effectively, if we lower the paid-up capital and give way to foreign capital, it will surely encroach on our SMEs. In effect, sisirain nito ang ating local economy. Why? Dahil kanina po, inamin na rin ninyo, ang ating retail trade ngayon or wholesale and retail sector ngayon is the number two contributor in terms of employment and even sa kaniyang contribution sa ating ekonomiya. Kapag pinasok po natin ito, pinayagan po natin na mas babaan pa natin ang threshold para pumasok ang mga dayuhang capital, you are destroying our small and medium enterprises dahil ang dayuhang capital ay magko-compete sa kanila. Papatayin sila.

Ganoon po ang kalakaran diyan and alam naman po natin na hindi papasok ang mga dayuhang kapital dito para iyong kanilang kinikita ay tuloy-tuloy nilang ibubuhos dito sa ating lokal na ekonomiya. They will expatriate their profit. Dalhin nila sa ibang bansa iyan samantalang ang ating mga lokal na mga namumuhunan ay kung kikita sila, tuloy-tuloy na ii-invest nila dito sa ating bansa. Kaya, should we not, in fact, pass a law that will further protect our local entrepreneurs rather than this kind of law that will in fact destroy our local economy and put our Filipino entrepreneurs out of business, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, it is hard to say na ito po ay magiging out of business dahil ho we should look at it from another perspective. There are other countries na kapitbahay lang natin. For example ho, in China in 1992, they decided to open up their economy. Makikita naman po natin na hindi naman po namatay ang local na mga industriya sa China nang pumasok

po ang mga dayuhan. In fact, nag-coexist ang local at foreign entities at lumaki po ang market nila. For example, bakit lalaki po ang market nila? At simple po, kapag pumasok po ang more choices, pumasok po ang foreign brands, example po, lumalaki po ang buying population, lumalaki po ang mga mamimili natin at kapag lumalaki po ang mamimili ay it does not mean naman po na mamamatay kaagad ang local brands natin. Ito ay puwedeng mag-coexist, puwede pong magtulungan ang dalawa para ho palaki nang palaki ang isang retail sector at maging kilala na isang shopping destination po. For example, tulad ng Singapore at tulad po ng Hong Kong kung saan nag-coexist naman. Hindi naman po natin sinasabi na kapag kayo po ay pumunta sa Hong Kong o Singapore, foreign brands lang po iyong nakikita natin. Namumuhay pa rin po ang mga local brand kasi nagko-coexist po sila at lumalaki po ang bigger picture of the pie natin.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat, Mr. Sponsor.

REP. GATCHALIAN. So, that is the other perspective po, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Well, I respect your position on that, pero kung aalalahanin po natin, at kung aaralin natin ang ating ekonomiya noon at hanggang ngayon, ang historical trend ng ating Philippine economy since the time probably when Marcos initiated this liberalizing our economy, tuloy-tuloy na bumubulusok ang ating ekonomiya. Hindi siya talagang umaangat nang umaangat kahit na binuksan na natin ang mayor na bahagi ng ating ekonomiya sa mga dayuhan. Despite the fact that in the 1987 Constitution ay mayroon tayong mga restriction diyan, the good Sponsor knows na naiikutan iyan. That is why a lot of our investment sectors now that are supposed to be controlled by Filipinos are, in fact, not controlled by Filipinos.

So, ang pinapangambahan ho natin, kapag itutuloy natin itong ating sinasabing pagliberalize pa ng retail trade, again, itong sinabi natin kanina na napakalaking ambag nito sa ating ekonomiya, sa employment ay mawawala po iyon dahil alam naman po natin na ang foreign capital napakahaba po ng kanilang pisi at doon sa binanggit nating halimbawa sa Tsina ay magkaiba po ang sitwasyon ng Pilipinas at Tsina. Alam naman natin na sa Tsina, lahat state-owned ang mga impresa doon. Kung may namumuhunan mang mga dayuhan ay hindi nila talaga fully pag-aari iyong mga impresa doon dahil pag-aari ng Estado iyan at parang naging partner lang sila ng Estado doon sa mga negosyong iyon.

Dito sa Pilipinas ay magkaiba. Kaya nga kung maaalala siguro ng kagalang-galang na Sponsor, noong binuksan natin noong nag-liberalize tayo, sa Marikina na lang, iyong mga namumuhunan noon sa paggawa ng mga sapatos diyan, dahil sa sobrang sabi nating maganda ang kompetisyon, papasukin ang mga dayuhan, ano ang nangyari sa ating local shoe industry? It is now dying. Tinutuloy-tuloy na lang ito ng mga talagang gustong ituloy sa kung anong mga rason nila na gusto nilang ituloy, pero sa kabuuan, halos wala na iyang industriyang iyan at marami pang iba. Dahil gusto nating papasukin ang mga dayuhan, it kills our local industry.

Now, dahil marami pang ibang magtatanong, I want to go to another aspect na gustong baguhin dito sa ating kasalukuyang batas.

Will the good Sponsor confirm that the measure in consideration not only wants to lower the paid-up capital requirement but it also wants to lower the percentage of our locally manufactured goods in the stock inventory of the foreign retailers from 30 percent to 10 percent? Is that correct, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GATCHALIAN. It is correct, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Again, hindi ko po talaga maintindihan din. Sabi natin, hindi naman papatayin ang mga lokal na mga negosyo na ito dahil magkakaroon ng kompetisyon, pero kahit na iyong safety nets or safety measures na inilagay dito sa kasalukuyang batas, RA 8762, ay gusto rin nating walisin.

Ano po ba ang kadahilanan bakit from 30 percent ay gusto nating 10 porsiyento na lang ng manufactured goods from the Philippines ang ibebenta nitong mga namumuhunang mga dayuhang ito, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, Mr. Speaker at sa ating kagalang-galang na kaibigan, ito po ay just to maintain lang po the presence of our local goods inside the stores and retailers po na bubuksan ng mga investors ho natin. In case lang ho wala, we just maintained that 10 percent po ng goods na i-allow ho natin, should come from the Philippines, be Philippine products.

REP. ZARATE. Well, kung magkaganoon po ay talagang ang nakikita ko rito ay tahasang pagsuko na ng ating ekonomiya sa mga dayuhan. Kasi kahit na doon lang sa inventory, eh tokenismo na nga, token na lang iyong 30 porsiyento na dapat galing sa lokal na paggawa, ay gagawin pa nating 10 porsiyento na lang.

Again, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, this runs counter

to the spirit, to the policy laid down in our Constitution. Article XII, Section 12, states:

The State shall promote the preferential use of Filipino labor, domestic materials and locally produced goods, and adopt measures that help make them competitive.

So, kung ito po ang ating panukala, sa halip na tulungan ang ating mga local manufacturers, dahil nga 30 percent ang nakalagay dito sa kasalukuyang batas, mas inilagay pa natin sa mababang antas, 10 percent. How can our local manufacturers be competitive? Is this not a violation of our Constitution? Our Constitution states that we have to protect our local manufacturers, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

May we get a response from the good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, the 10 percent na atin pong peg ay iyan po ay para to maintain ho. Kaysa ho sa wala, iyan ay para lang to maintain ho the same stocks na puwede nating i-support po sa ating local products po.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, for admitting that—"kaysa wala," kaya talagang token. Talagang ang ating binibigyan na ng preference dito ay ang mga dayuhan sa halip na ang ating mga lokal na mga kababayan, at iyon po ay, at the very least, nakakalungkot sa ipinapanukalang batas na ito.

Sabi ko nga noong aking panimula kanina, itong retail sector, wholesale-retail sector, kahit na ho sinabi ninyo kanina, "Ah, ito ay kontrolado ng iilan lamang, mga nagmamay-ari ng malls," they do not make up the whole picture of the retail sector. Alam po natin, kapag sinabi nating "retail sector," may small iyan, may medium. Dito ho sa ginagawa natin ngayon, kahit na iyong mga sari-sari store ay namimiligro po na wawalisin din niyan. Alam naman natin ngayon, kahit na iyong mga sari-sari store, dahil ang dami ng branches itong mga foreign convenience stores, halos wala na iyong mga sari-sari store na iyan. At alam ninyo ho, ang pinangangambahan ko dito, baka pati iyong mga takatak boys na nagbebenta ng Chiclet, nagbebenta ng mga pagkain diyan sa daan ay mawawala na rin dahil kontrolado na ng mga dayuhan iyong retail trade na iyan, dahil ang gusto nating paboran ay iyong kapital ng mga dayuhan. So iyon po sa tingin ko, napakasamang magiging dulot nitong ating panukalang batas.

Panghuli po, bilang ako ay naniniwala na bilang mga Kinatawan ng mga mamamayang Pilipino, sa halip na ibubuyangyang natin lalo sa mga dayuhan ang ating pambansang ekonomiya, siguro naman po ay nararapat lamang na tumulong tayo to strengthen our local economy para maging masigla ang ating lokal

na ekonomiya, suportahan natin ang ating mga local entrepreneurs in so many ways, not only in access to credit, but also in support services. Iyon po ang dapat sigurong gawin na nakikita ko. Ito pong, with due respect, ating panukalang batas na ito, sa halip na ito ay tutulong sa ating mga kababayan at tutulong sa ating ekonomiya, sa tingin ko, ito ay mas lalong magpapariwara sa marami nating mga kababayan na umaasa sa sektor na ito.

Maraming salamat, G. Isponsor, sa inyong pagkakataong ibinigay na maglinaw ang Kinatawagang ito. Maraming salamat, G. Ispiker.

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

REP. VILLAR. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from the Party-List BAYAN MUNA, honorable Rep. Ferdinand R. Gaité, for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). Honorable Gaité of the BAYAN MUNA Party-List is recognized.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po, kagalang-galang na Speaker at sa ating Sponsor sa gabing ito.

Pahihintulutan ba ng ating Sponsor na mag-clarify ng ilang mga katanungan hinggil sa ipinapanukalang batas, hinggil sa amendments sa Retail Trade Liberalization Act?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po.

Mahaba-haba na rin ang inabot ng pagtatalakay ng pagbabago ng ating Retail Trade Act. Nabanggit na kanina na noong 1950s, tapos noong year 2000 ay nagkaroon ng pagbabago sa mismong paradigm kung paano ituturing ang retail trade sa ating bansa. Pero kapag pupunta na tayo doon sa Retail Trade Liberalization Act of 2000, nabanggit ninyo po na may probisyon dito na naglalagay tayo ng peso equivalent of US\$2,500,000 bilang halaga na maaaring ipasok pag purchase ng maximum na 60 percent of equity thereof sa retail trade. So, mayroon po ngayon palang, as it is prior to the proposal, mayroong US\$2,500 na ceiling kumbaga. Tama po ba, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Mr. Speaker, US\$2.5 million po ang paid-up capital prior po sa panukalang ito.

REP. GAITE. Tanong po, bakit naglagay ng ganitong halaga?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Sa prior po na panukala ...

REP. GAITE. Yes po, ...

REP. GATCHALIAN. ... ang US\$2.5 million.

REP. GAITE. ... Mr. Speaker.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Wala po akong idea kung bakit ho eksakto, if you are asking about the US\$2.5 million.

REP. GAITE. Hindi iyong halaga kung hindi iyong prinsipyo. Bakit naglagay ng cap sa maaaring antas o halaga na kailangang ipasok bago pahintulutan na magnegosyo sa ating bansa?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, Mr. Speaker, ang naiisip ko lang ho diyan ay ito ay para ho magkaroon din ho ng limitasyon ang pagpasok po ng mga foreigners or ibang branches ho sa atin.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po doon sa kasagutan.

So, ang sabi ninyo po, naglagay ng limitasyon. Bakit ho kaya gustong lagyan ng limitasyon, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Sa retail sector ho ay hindi ko ho alam ang kasagutan diyan, but alam ho natin naman sa ibang sector tulad ho ng pag-aari po ng mga lupa, ang batas natin ay may mga limitasyon din ho. But to be specific ho, in the retail sector, hindi ko ho alam back then kung bakit po nag-come up ng US\$2.5 million na figure.

REP. GAITE. Sa kasalukuyan, bagama't totooing malaking halaga ito, doon sa ipino-propose nating US\$200,000 ay napakalaking reduction iyon, more than 90 percent ang pagkaintindi ko. Tama po ba iyan, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Opo, tama ho, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. So, ang tanong ko po ay, ano ba iyong prinsipyong gumagabay kung bakit may mataas na halaga noon at ngayon ay ibinababa? Ano ho ba iyong pinaka-rationale kung bakit itinakda ito sa relatively o comparatively, mas mataas noon, pero ngayon, ibinababa?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, ...

REP. GAITE. Ano ho ba iyong pinaka-main na objective of imposing an amount, which you said, is a form of limitation? Baka puwede hong ipaliwanag iyong concept na iyon, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, ang rationale ho diyan ay ang katotohanan hong nangyayari ngayon sa mga different establishments natin o shopping mall or supermarkets po. Nakikita ho natin naman na ngayon po, kung kayo po ay umikot sa mga lugar na akin pong na-mention, higit na 60 percent or 70 percent ho ng goods na nakikita natin are foreign brands. Iilan na lang naman po ang mga local brands dito. Kaya ho a while ago, I mentioned that we invited the Philippine Retailers Association at nakita ho namin doon na sila mismo ay hindi ho makapagbigay ng listahan kung ilan sa mga miyembro nila ay nagbebenta po or ilang porsyento po ang ibinebenta nilang mga Filipino goods to support the local industry. So, nakikita ho natin na ito po ay nangyayari na rin ho sa present na sitwasyon natin na napakarami na pong foreign brands ang nakikita nating ibinebenta at in partnership with the big shopping malls. But to answer po, ang rationale natin ay siyempre po ay maimbitahan po ang ating mga foreign investors para ho dumagdag ang investments dito sa ating bansa, dumagdag po ang trabaho na maidadala po ng retail sector, at mag-exchange po ng technology at knowledge when it comes to different issues or knowledge po pertaining to the retail sector.

REP. GAITE. Salamat, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, pero hindi ho ba kaya naglagay ng restriction o halaga, kaya ito isinama sa batas ay para protektahan at magsilbing safety net para sa ating lokal na industriya, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker? Noong inilagay iyong US\$2.5 million noong year 2000, hindi ho ba ang layunin noon ay para protektahan ang ating small or micro or even large enterprises? Hindi ho ba iyon ang pinakabuod kung bakit naglagay ng ganitong proteksyon, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Tama ho at ito po ay naglalagay tayo ng safety nets po at proteksyon ho para ho maprotektahan ang local industry. But ang nangyari po dito, US\$2.5 million po were not able to protect but it was a bit of overprotection ho. We did not benefit that much dahil iyong nakita po natin, gaya po ng sinabi ko, noong 2000, noong atin pong inamyendahan muli itong panukala na ito, iyong net effect po ay hindi naman ho gaanong naramdaman. 'Ika nga, only 43 foreign retail investors ang pumasok ho, which is roughly just 0.6 percent po.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po doon sa kasagutan, pero kung kayo ay sumasang-ayon na ito ay dapat na safety net, hindi ho ba kapag ibinaba natin ang US\$200,000, parang tinanggal na rin natin iyong safety net, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, tayo po ay sang-ayon na dapat po may safety nets at suportahan natin

ang ating mga lokal na industriya kaya po nag-iwan tayo ng dapat na 10 percent po ng stocks to be sold inside the retail outlets are local products, ngunit ang atin pong panukala ay, ito po, ang tina-target na rin naman ho is only the 1 percent, which is the medium and large category, at mapoprotektahan pa rin natin ang iba. Hindi naman ho natin ibinaba iyan ng 60,000 tulad po ng Vietnam, and the mere reason na nakikita natin ay kailangan nating protektahan ang ating micro-entrepreneurs.

So, ito pong panukala natin ay imbes po ang mga foreign investors natin ay kailangan pang magpartner o mag-joint venture sa mga namumuno o ng mga may-ari ng malalaking shopping mall, sila po ay hinihikayat natin na makapagtayo ng sarili nilang mga establishments basta ho makakatulong ito sa investments na dadalhin sa atin at trabaho na dadalhin para sa ating bansa. Hindi na nila kailangan pang makipag-usap sa distributor or exclusive distributor. Alam naman po nating iilan lang po ang mga may-ari ng mga big shopping malls dito. Ito po ay para lang ho bigyan sila ng pagkakataon na makapasok ho dito at to add more choices to the Filipino people at a lesser price.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po doon sa inyong kasagutan, ngunit hindi pa rin makita ng Kinatawang ito na itong binabanggit na pagbaba sa US\$200,000, iyong binabanggit na local content na 10 percent, ay supisyenteng safety net. As a matter of fact, mas naniniwala ang Kinatawang ito na mas marami sa ating mga small- and medium-scale retail enterprises ang maapektuhan dahil iyong sinasabing safety net ay effectively tinanggal na natin. Ito sana iyong sinasabi na isang paraan para sinasabing protektahan iyong ating lokal na mga retailers.

Naniniwala ang Kinatawang ito na bunga na nga nitong liberalization offensive na naganap since the 1990s. Ito iyong isa sa mga isinulong na paraan para daw sa argumentong o bilang panagot sa inefficiencies noong ating current retail trade. Iyong sinasabing oligarchs na nagmo-monopolize ng retail trade, ito iyong paraan para daw lalong maibukas ang ating ekonomiya. Pero ang pinangangamba ng Kinatawang ito, maaaring buwagin mo iyong mga oligarchs to be replaced by other oligarchs from other countries because as we all know, mayroon rin naman na mga malalaking mga retail companies, foreign retail companies who are dominating the retail trade, practically, worldwide. Kaya po iyong term na ginamit ng unang interpellator, iyong "tokenism," very apparent dito sa ipino-propose na amendments sa retail trade. Pero bago po ako magtapos, magfo-focus din ako dito sa effect naman sa ating mga manggagawa. Aware po ba ang ating Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, doon sa mga dayuhang kompanya na kamakailan lamang, bunga na nga rin ng ating pagbubukas ng ating ekonomiya sa paghihikayat sa

foreign direct investments, sa pagpasok ng mga iba't ibang kompanya, gamitin central hub ang Pilipinas, at binigyan natin ng napakaraming incentives mula sa mga tax holidays, mas mababang bayarin sa corporate income tax at iba pa. Alam ba ng ating Sponsor iyong naganap dito sa Honda na at least 387 workers ang matatanggal dahil, practically, nag-alsa balutan at nagpasiya sila na itigil na ang kanilang operasyon sa Pilipinas, hindi sa nalulugi sila based on the hearing we conducted the other day, but because their profit margins have decreased although they were in the black not in the red? Kung alam rin ba ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, iyong balak na pagsasara ng Nokia Technology Center na may more than—by the way, dito sa Nokia, marami pang ibang manggagawa ang apektado dahil doon sa supply chain ng Honda, mahigit 1200 employees are under threat to lose their jobs because of the closure of the manufacturing division of Honda?

Iyong nabanggit sa Nokia ay ganoon din, mahigit 700 empleyado ang matatanggal. Bagama't hindi pa ito naipapatupad, they have already announced that by September 30, 2020, iyong kanilang technology center will be closing shop.

Gayundin sa closure ng isang banking and finance, BPO Back Office, Business Process Outsourcing Company, iyong Wells Fargo, na gayundin, 700 na mga manggagawa ang balak na tanggalin sa trabaho. Ito po ay mga foreign companies na pumasok sa ating bansa, na hinikayat ng ating bansa bunga ng layunin na mag-invest sa Pilipinas, lumikha ng trabaho, lumikha ng tubo, hindi lamang para sa mga dayuhan, para rin sa mga Pilipino, pero ngayon, sila ay nag-aalisan.

Ang isang pangamba ng Kinatawang ito na kapag pumasok na naman itong mga dayong kompanya na wala namang loyalty sa ating sariling ekonomiya, na kapag lumiliit ang kanilang mga profit margin, hindi nalulugi, lumiliit ang profit margin, ay mag-aalsa balutan tulad ng ginagawa ngayon. At ang masakit, sino ang maiiwang hahagupitin ng ganitong mga pagpapasya, iyong mga manggagawang Pilipino na nawalan ng trabaho?

Ano ho ba ang tingin ng ating Mr. Sponsor sa ganitong kalagayan na habang naghikayat tayo ng mga dayong kapital na pumasok sa ating bansa, marami namang nagsisilisan.

As a matter of fact, iyong foreign direct investments of our country since 2016, bagama't totoong tumaas noong 2017, almost P2 billion ang pumasok bilang new investments, gayundin din noong 2018, pero ngayong 2019, kung ano iyong halaga noong foreign direct investments noong 2016, which was about US\$600 million, ngayon nasa same level na. So, ano ho iyong nakikita ng ating Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, sa ganitong phenomenon na mayroong nag-aalisan at ang naiwan ay iyong mga manggagawang walang trabaho, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Mr. Speaker, siguro pag-aralan din po natin muna ang mga sektor po na inyong nabanggit: number one, ang nabanggit ninyo yata ay nasa manufacturing sector; number two ay nasa service sector, iyong BPO natin, tulad ng Wells Fargo. Kaya ho alam na po natin ang sitwasyon natin na ganito po ang pangyayari sa ibang sektor, at alam din po natin ang katotohanan na may kakulangan pa ng trabaho sa ating bansa. Alam din natin ang katotohanan na because of the COVID-19 ay malaki ang epekto nito sa ating trade at ekonomiya, kaya po lalo pa nating dapat bigyan ng pagkakataon ang ating retail sector, ito po ay palakasin pa natin.

Gaya ng nabanggit ko, presently, ang retail sector natin ay the second biggest employer already. So, if we will further improve that, kapag mayroon pa tayong bubuksan na maraming mga establisimiyento at retail outlets, ito po ang magbibigay ng additional na mga trabaho at additional na investments to compensate doon sa nabanggit ninyo sa manufacturing at service industry.

Tingnan na lang po natin ang nangyari po sa Hong Kong at Singapore po. Ito po, mga kasama, ay naging main tourism hub, not only because of the beauty of their country, but also because of the strong retail sector that they have. Marami po sa mga Pilipino ay lumilipad ho doon, pumupunta doon, dahil po ito po ay naging strong tourism destination because of the foreign brands and because of the choices inside the country na naging shopping destination ito and, in turn, nakadagdag po sa tourism, nakadagdag po sa job generation at nakadagdag din po sa investments.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

Gusto ko lang i-point out, wala pa ho iyong COVID-19 ay pababa na po, early part of 2019 ay pabulusok na ang ating foreign direct investments, wala pa, hindi pa ho tumatama iyong COVID-19.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Yes, the more po na parating na po...

REP. GAITE. Kaya po, ...

REP. GATCHALIAN. ... itong problema kaya ho mas dapat pa tayong maghanap ng mga sektor na puwede nating palakasin pa tulad po ng ating retail sector.

REP. GAITE. Sang-ayon po ako doon sa konsepto, Mr. Speaker, na palakasin ang ating retail sector, pero hindi sa pamamagitan ng kailangan pang manghikayat ng dayong kapital. Kayang buuin ito sa pamamagitan ng ating sariling lakas, ng ating lakas na kapital para tulungan iyong industriya ng retail.

Panghuli na lang, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, nabanggit ninyo, totoo naman po na ang empleyo sa services sa kasalukuyan ang pinakamalaking contributor sa ating ekonomiya. Tama po ba iyan, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Retail sector po iyong sinabi ko.

REP. GAITE. Sorry, iyong retail sector.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Retail, opo.

REP. GAITE. So, pinakamalaki na ang...

REP. GATCHALIAN. Isa ho sa...

REP. GAITE. ...kasama sa services.

REP. GATCHALIAN. ...Isa po sa pinakamalaki ang wholesale at retail sector natin sa nagdadala po ng trabaho sa ating bansa.

REP. GAITE. Sa paniniwala ba ng ating kasamahang proponent, ito ho ba ay masasabi nating high value-added na work o doon sa agrikultura at sa manupaktura, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Mr. Speaker, mahirap pong masabi kung high value o hindi. Ang importante po ay nakapagbibigay po tayo ng trabaho sa ating mga kababayan. Nasabi ninyo na ho na ang service industry ay bumabagsak, at nasabi ninyo na rin ho na ang manufacturing industry ay bumabagsak, so maybe this is the chance na makatulong po sa ating bansa by improving our wholesale and retail sector. Palakihin ho natin ang sektor na ito dahil hindi lang po ang saleslady at nagbantay ng mga tindahan ang makikinabang dito kundi pati po ang mga other parallel na negosyo po tulad ng marketing, tulad ng logistics na nagdeliver po ng goods, tulad po ng mga maintenance and manpower agencies.

Across the board po ang retail sector, napakalaki ho niyan. Napakaraming tao ang puwede makahanap ng trabaho sa pamamagitan po ng pagpasok po ng ating mga foreign investor. At ang mas importante po, mga kasama, ay buksan natin ang Pilipinas sa more competition para ho ang ating mga consumer have more choices, and more choices means lower prices po. Magiging competitive lang po ang ating retail sector.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po. Naitanong ko ito kasi kahit sa Sustainable Development Goals ng Pilipinas No. 8 ay hindi lang po simpleng paglikha ng trabaho kung hindi paglikha ng trabahong disente at nakakatulong sa ating ekonomiya. Ang sabi sa

Sustainable Development Goals ng Pilipinas, Target 8.2, and I quote:

Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading, innovation, including through a focus on high value-added and labor-intensive sectors x x x.

Ang sabi ho rito, kailangan po disenteng trabaho na masasabi nating nagdadagdag ng halaga sa ating ekonomiya sapagkat tulad sa manupaktura, tulad sa agrikultura, ito ay lumilikha hindi lamang ng produkto kundi lumilikha pa ng ibang trabaho. Ito ay lumilikha ng dagdag na halaga para sa ating ekonomiya, para sa ating pagkain, sa ating industriya at iba pa. Kung kaya't kung sa retail lamang o sa services ay hindi natin masasabi nang buong-buo na ito ay high value-added jobs o labor, kaya't naniniwala pa rin ako na hindi necessarily ito ang dapat na direksyon na pinapasok natin. Tama po iyong binanggit ninyo, dapat tulungan natin ito, pero talagang iyong iba pang larangan ng ating ekonomiya, tulad ng agrikultura at manupaktura, ang dapat bigyan ng mas malaking halaga at suporta.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, ...

REP. GAITE. Panghuli po, naniniwala rin po ako na itong pagsulong na pagbukas ng ating ekonomiya, ng retail trade sa dayuhan, dati nabasa ko noong dini-deliberate ito noong year 2000, ang argument ay passé na raw ngayon ang protectionism, na ang new kid on the block ay si "globalization," si "liberalization," at si "deregulation," pero 20, 30 years after that event, baliktad na. Balita natin ngayon iyong "Brexit" wherein Britain decided to opt out of the European Union. We hear the President, no less than the U.S. President Trump, stating that, "we should protect our own, we should buy our own, we should develop our own industries, our local economy." Hindi ho ba hindi na ngayon uso ang terminong liberalization kung hindi balik na sa proteksyon, Mr. Speaker, Your Honors?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Mr. Speaker, sagutin ko muna po iyong una pong sinabi ninyo. Ang definition po ng "disente" ay mahirap hong masabi iyan at iba-iba po ang definition ng "disente." Para po sa akin, ang retail sector ay mas disente pa dahil maging ikaw man ay manager na nagbantay po ng retail outlet na napakalaki, na branded po, na nasa aircon ka buong araw ay ito po ay nagdadagdag ng dignidad para sa atin po kumpara ho siguro sa ating mga kababayan na OFW na naghihirap ho sa Middle East na maglinis po ng toilet at maging housekeeper po sa bahay. Kumpara po sa agriculture, I think po, napakadisente na rin po ang makapasok po sa ating retail industry kung ikaw

po ay paid well, mayroon kang tulad po ng rights po na ibinibigay natin sa manggagawa sa loob po ng malls, sa loob po ng retail outlets, at ito naman po ay hindi naman ho mababang trabaho.

Like I have mentioned to you kanina po, iyong retail ay madami pong industry na nakakabit ho diyan—ang advertising, ang marketing. Those are, I think, very decent industry that are connected to the retail industry. The transport and logistics, the manpower, et cetera, iyon ang mga dagdag na industriyang kapag napalago natin ay lalakas. At even po ang tourism, ang maging Singapore po, nakita ninyo naman po ang mga industriya doon at mga tindahan, ito naman po, sa tingin ko, ay disente po na mga trabaho na puwede nating ibigay po sa ating mga kababayan.

Ang importante po ay ang trabaho na maidadala po sa ating bansa. Makatutulong ho ito gaya ng sinabi ninyo na kailangan na natin ng additional jobs dahil nagsasara po ang mga nasa service industry, manufacturing industry or nagkaroon po ng COVID-19 na sakit. Ito po ay nakita na natin na may potensyal kasi number two na po ito na employment-generating sa ating bansa at kapag mabigyan po natin ng pagkakataon, malay natin ay lumaki pa ho ito at lumikha po ng mas maraming investment at lumikha ho ng mas maraming trabaho para sa ating kababayan.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat ho sa paglilinaw. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, kaisa tayo sa pananaw na kailangang tulungan natin iyong ating ekonomiya para sa kapakanan ng ating mga mamamayan, ng ating mga manggagawa. Ngunit iyong proposal na ibukas ang ating ekonomiya sa dayong retailers ay does not bode well for our small- and medium-scale enterprises. Hindi nito matutugunan o masasagot iyong suliranin na kapag nagkakaroon ng mga downtrend sa ating ekonomiya, iyong mga global financial crisis tulad ng tumama noong 2008 at ngayon ay nagbabanta muli na manumbalik, walang assurance na ang mga investments ng mga nabanggit na mga dayuhang kompanya ay mananatili at magiging kapaki-pakinabang sa ating mga mamamayang Pilipino. Kung kaya't dito sa usapin ng amendment sa Retail Trade Act, hindi ako kumbinsido na ito ay napapanahon para sa ating bayan.

Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker. Maraming salamat, Mr. Sponsor.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Maraming salamat din.

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

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the session.

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

It was 7:34 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 7:35 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Sharon S. Garin for her sponsorship speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). The Honorable Garin is recognized for her interpellation. The Honorable Garin, you have the floor.

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is actually an interpellation, not a sponsorship speech. Thank you.

Mr. Sponsor, currently, in Southeast Asia, on foreign retail sector investment: Thailand has \$3.2 billion; Malaysia has \$2.5 billion; Indonesia has \$2 billion; Vietnam received \$2 billion as well; Singapore, even more, at \$8 billion.

Now, the Philippines has received \$101 million on foreign retail sector investment. How come we are way lower than the rest of the Southeast Asia, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, Mr. Speaker and to the Honorable Garin, one of the reasons for this is actually the barriers to entry that we have on foreign investors. There are a couple of things that are not investor-friendly, that is why a lot of the investors are hesitant to come in to our country. They would rather invest in Hong Kong, they would rather invest in Thailand, and the other countries that you mentioned, especially in China, because of the barriers to entry of our laws, which we need to improve.

Just to share with you as well, Mr. Speaker and to the Honorable Garin, in 2017, the ASEAN region received the largest FDI inflows amounting to \$38.9 billion for the wholesale and retail sector. This represented the growth of 75 percent from the \$22 billion in 2016. However, during this period, the Philippines only received a mere \$83.1 million or 0.2 percent of the total FDI, foreign direct investment, to the ASEAN for the wholesale and retail sector.

So, this means that there is something wrong already with our laws that we need to improve on.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, what laws or what amendments in the Retail Trade Act would attract foreign investors on the retail trade sector, and likely, should we attract, lured and we will have more jobs in the Philippines to increase our economic growth as well? But, what exactly is the proponent amending so that we could have more foreign direct investments on retail trade sector?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, honestly speaking, the direction of the Philippines is already there. As I mentioned to you, this sector has been very strong for a couple of years already and it is generating a lot of jobs. But, we know that we still have a big potential ahead of us. The Philippines has a big potential when it comes to being a tourism destination, when it comes to being a strong retail and wholesale capital or a retail city or country in Southeast Asia.

So, one of the amendments that we saw that we need to further improve is the paid-up capital. Ito po ang unang napapansin po ng ating foreign retailers. Napakataas po ng ating paid-up capital kaya they would rather go to distributors or they would rather just leave it to the big mall owners for their goods to be distributed in the Philippines. And, marami ho sa mga medium and small foreign brands, takot na pong pumasok dito dahil po sa ating paid-up capital.

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

But, do we have any projections? Should we adjust the paid-up capital? And how much is the influx that we expect or the increase in the number of jobs, the increase in investments that we expect if the paid-up capital is adjusted as proposed by this Bill?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, I do not have right now the exact data, but if we compare it to the Southeast Asian neighbors, nakita ho naman natin na ang laki ng improvement nila especially ng China and Vietnam. These are the countries that were closed before and have opened up. So, we can already see that it is being maximized in the present situation because they have been improving their laws and lowering the paid-up capital.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, this Representation has observed that the current Congress has been active in liberalizing not only on the part of the retail trade, but also on foreign investments; hence, for the proposed amendment in the Foreign Investments Act as well as Public Service Act, which will liberalize our economy, as well as the improvements or the amendments on the tax regimes, we have several packages that we are passing now. I fully support the passage of this proposed Bill under the liberalization or the amendment to the Retail Trade Act because this will be in consonance

with the rest of the bills that the Congress is currently tackling.

I am in full support of this Bill and hopefully, as I think the NEDA and all our economic team in the administration expect, this will improve on employment and investments, as well as help our different sectors because of the influx of our direct investments.

Mr. Speaker, I, together with Congressman Gatchalian, manifest our full support for this Bill. I encourage all our colleagues and Members of this House to support it as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. SUAREZ (D.). Mr. Speaker, we move to recognize Cong. Arlene D. Brosas for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). Hon. Arlene Brosas is recognized for her interpellation.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the good Sponsor yield to a few questions?

REP. GATCHALIAN. It is my pleasure, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor.

Mr. Speaker, liberalization has been the oft-repeated buzzword in this Chamber to argue for the supposed better services, lowered prices and increased job generation. This is the same argument being used to push the amendments to the Public Service Act that would allow full foreign ownership of key public services including telecommunications and transport sectors, para bang liberalisasyon ang sasagot sa mga pang-ekonomiyang suliranin ng ating bayan. Ngayon, nakasalang na naman itong neoliberal na patakaran na naglalayong itodo ang liberalisasyon ng retail trade sector ng ating bansa.

Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor, kung iveribisualize po natin iyong pasok ng mga imported goods dito sa ating bansa, hindi ba marami na iyong pumapasok na imported goods sa atin? Hindi pa natin pinag-uusapan iyong smuggled goods that make their way through our markets, online stores and informal retail arrangements. Ibig sabihin, binabaha na tayo ng mga imported na produkto pero gusto pa rin nating magpasok ng mas maraming foreign retail investors dito sa ating bansa para ibagsak iyong sobra-sobrang produkto.

Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor, regarding competition, as what the good Sponsor has argued to push for the

measure, hindi ba under intense competition na ang local retailers vis-à-vis the online retailing business and services offering foreign goods? Hindi pa ba ito sapat?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, Mr. Speaker, mahirap naman hong masabi kung ano po ang sapat. Mahirap din hong masabi na binabaha na tayo ng imported goods dahil, mga kasama, tanungin ho natin sino ba ang may-ari ng imported goods na ito na dini-distribute po sa shopping malls. Sino ba ang exclusive distributors? Sino ba ang may-ari ng mga shopping mall or venues kung saan dini-distribute itong mga item na ito? Mga kasama, ang kasagutan diyan ay iilan lamang na mga oligarch, ang mga may-ari po ng shopping malls at supermarkets at sila po ang nagka-cartel ng mga brand na ito. Ano po ang ibig sabihin noon? Ang ibig sabihin po, sila po ang nagdidikta sa mga consumer natin kung ano ang puwede at hindi mo puwedeng bilhin. Sila rin ang nagdidikta sa presyo na ganito na lamang po ang presyo natin.

Ang panukala po natin, ang House Bill No. 59, ay nagbibigay lamang po ng pagkakataon sa mga foreign brand po na pumasok dito without being beholden to the oligarchs. Parang bigyan lamang po natin sila ng pagkakataon to set up shop para ho sila mismo ay makapag-deliver ng quality goods sa mga Pilipino being consumers natin. At katulad nga ng nasabi ko ho kanina, more competition po ang habol natin, kung itinatanong ninyo ho kung grabe na ba ang kompetisyon sa sitwasyon natin, dahil more competition po, ang ibig sabihin ay lower prices for our Filipino consumers. Makatutulong ho ito sa maraming mga kababayan natin habang nakikita na po nating nagtataasan, may inflation na po ang mga presyo sa ating mga pamilihin.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor, sinasabi ninyo po sa proposal, further liberalizing the retail sector will break the monopoly of large Filipino enterprises like SM and Robinsons, pero sa tingin po ng Kinatawag ito, they will hardly be affected by the proposal, dahil in competition na nga rin sila with foreign retailers online and offline. Kung ganoon, Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor, magkakaroon ng full-scale entry of foreign MSMEs, hindi po ba, indirect competition with our local MSMEs.

Gaano po tayo nakasisiguro na the MSMEs would really compete head on with these foreign retailers given the highly disadvantaged position of our local businesses? Paano tayo nakasisiguro na makaka-compete nga ang local MSMEs natin dito sa mga foreign retailer na ito?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, to the Honorable Brosas at Mr. Speaker, mga kasama, kaya po tina-target natin iyong paid-up capital na US\$200,000 o

P10 million ay dahil po ang target po natin ay ang tinatawag nating medium at large industries wherein this is only around 1 percent of the total establishments. Sa kasalukuyan po, ang medium natin ay nasa 4,800; ang large natin ay nasa 4,700, so that is roughly around 10,000 medium- and large-scale establishments.

Hindi naman po ito diretsong makaaapekto sa ating maliliit o micro establishments. Ang micro ho natin ay mayroon tayong 887,000 composed of 88 percent of our total establishments, dahil po ang ating mga sari-sari store, ang atin pong mga mom-and-pops family-owned establishments ay hindi naman ho nire-require ng paid-up capital na P10 million above. Ang atin pong layunin, mga kasama, ang matatamaan po rito mostly ay ang sinasabi po nating medium and large establishments, stores o outlets.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor, kaya ko po itinatanong ito, kalakhan po sa mga MSME retail sectors natin ay nakakonsentra sa mga kababaihan, mostly, lalo na po iyong mga maliliit na grocery at sari-sari stores. Marami po rian ang mga nagtatrabaho ay kababaihan. Apektadong-apektado po sila sa mga ganitong usapin.

Sa current po nating batas, in our current law, puwedeng ma-exploit pa rin by foreign retailers to circumvent the US\$2.5 million requirements since the definition of luxury goods in Category D of the law is defined loosely by the Board of Investments. Ang ibig sabihin, nakakaikot nga minsan e. Using this route, a foreign investor needs only US\$250,000 capital to operate in the Philippines. So, ito pong pagpapababa ninyo ng US\$200,000 pa, tama po ba iyong scrap din iyong minimum investment requirement of US\$830,000 per retail store?

Ang sinasabi ninyo po na—tama po ba, US\$830,000 per retail store?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, na-simplify na lang po natin. Noon po ay may category iyan, A, B, C, D, E. Ngayon po, na-simplify ho natin ito basta ho may paid-up capital of US\$200,000 plus 10 percent of your goods should be local products.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor, ano-ano pong mga foreign retail businesses ang gusto nating papasukin sa mababang pamantayan para makapagnegosyo dito? Ano-ano po iyan na nagre-require ng lowering ng capital requirements? Kasi sabi ninyo hindi maaapektuhan iyong mga sari-sari o grocery stores.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Ito po, mga kasama, for example, ay mga dini-distribute na ngayon ng mga iilang shopping malls. Kung kayo ay pupunta sa SM, sa Rustan's o sa Puregold, ang katotohanan pong nangyayari

ay ito naman po eh. Kayo po ay pumasok sa Rustan's, kayo po ay pumasok sa mga sikat na department stores ngayon at makikita naman po natin na 70 percent of the products are foreign brands. Minsan nga, hindi ho ako nakakakita ng local brands ho doon. Ito po ay hindi naman po pag-aari ng kompanya na brand na iyon. Ito po ay pag-aari ng official exclusive distributors na namumuno ng naglalakihan at nagpapatakbo ho ng ilang retail outlets at malls natin for the longest time. Kaya po ang sinasabi lang po natin dito ay healthy competition, because healthy competition is better para ho sa ating mga consumer, at healthy competition is equal to more choices; more choices are equal to lower prices.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor, kaugnay po rito sa consignment na sinasabi, dahil monopolyo ng SM at saka ng Robinson's, ang sinasabi ninyo ay iba-iba, kaugnay dito sa monopolyo ng malalaking malls sa bansa. Has the good Sponsor looked into the practice of consignment by SM and other shopping malls? Hindi ba kahit papasukin iyong mas maraming foreign retailers pero nananatili iyong consignment nila, kaya pa rin nilang panatilihin iyong dominant position nila?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Well, gaya ng sinabi ninyo, kung gusto naman po nilang i-circumvent at hanapin ang lusot ay mailulusot, pero ang importante po ...

REP. BROSAS. Ko-compete.

REP. GATCHALIAN. ... ma-position natin ang Philippines as a tourism and shopping capital katulad lang po ng successful stories ng ating mga kapitbahay tulad po ng Singapore and Hong Kong.

Ito naman po, sa Singapore and Hong Kong, kahit pumunta kayo, mayroong mga local brands pa rin. Nakikita natin na namumuhay pa rin ang local brands doon. Hindi naman ho sila namamatay despite the presence of foreign brands. Lumalaki pa ho ang market, lumalago pa ang namimili at lumalaki pa ho ang spending income ng mga naninirahan doon sa lugar na iyon.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor, saan po natin nakikita na magtatayo ng retail stores ang mga dayuhang negosyanteng ito, considering na ang Metro Manila ay already congested? Hindi ba nangangahulugan ito ng agresibong land-grabbing sa urban at dislokasyon ng mga komunidad, Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor? Kung hindi sila magko-consign ay magtatayo sila. Kung magtatayo sila, saan natin nakikita iyon, Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Mr. Speaker, Mme. Brosas, ito po ay mostly naman nakikita ho natin papasok din po sa loob ng shopping malls. Hindi naman po natin

nakikita na kailangan nilang mag-land-grab ng sobrang laking lupain o hektaryang lupain para ho magkaroon ng retail outlet.

Most probably, well, I may be wrong dito. Hindi natin alam kung anong direksyon ng foreign investors eh. Ang importante ho ay papasok sila, for example, sa shopping malls, papasok sila sa, maybe, magtatayo sila ng sariling department store nila, at dito ho nila ibebenta ang produkto nila.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor, on another subject po. Will these foreign retail businesses be allowed to bring their workers with them? Kasi we have seen this in the case of POGO, how the Duterte administration has, in fact, been granting provisional and other types of work permits to thousands of Chinese coming to the country. Kaya ko po itinatanong, sana sagutin na lang, Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Opo. Kapag babalikan po natin iyong FIA natin, iyong Foreign Investment Act, kakailanganin po nilang mag-hire ng minimum na 15 na empleyado po na Pilipino, pero hindi ko naman nakikita na magkakaroon ng ika nga oversupply ng mga dayuhan dito dahil kapag ikaw po ay nasa consumer industry, kung kaharap mo ang Pilipinong mamimili, kailangan pong marunong kang magpaliwanag ng goods mo. So, it is obvious already na magha-hire sila ng Pilipina na saleslady, magha-hire po sila ng Pilipino na driver para i-deliver iyong goods nila, magha-hire sila ng Pilipino na security guard para magbantay po ng tindahan nila, for example po. So, ika nga, malaking bulto ng mga foreigner ang pupunta sa atin. Iba ho ito sa POGO. Ang POGO ho ay full operation po ng mga dayuhan. Ito po, kaharap mo ang mga Filipino buyers, siyempre ho, mas karapat-dapat na Pilipino rin po na saleslady ang magpapaliwanag sa produktong kanilang ibinebenta.

REP. BROSAS. Now, Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor, assuming that foreign retail investors would indeed be enticed by the simplified requirements, will these foreign retailers cause labor market distortion in existing retail businesses and restructuring among MSMEs? Hindi ba tanggalan ang maaaring idulot nito lalo na sa maliliit na negosyo na tatalunin sa competition, Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Mr. Speaker, baligtad pa nga ho. Dadagdag pa ho ito at lilikha ng trabaho dahil po kapag ikaw ay naging isang tourism destination, na siya pong ginagawa ngayon ng ating Department of Tourism to promote the Philippines, kasama na po rito ang mga dayuhan na pupunta ho dito, I mean, ang foreign visitors natin ay pupunta ho dito para mag-shopping o para mamili, ito po ay additional na trabaho, additional shopping malls, additional department stores kung

gusto nating ma-direct ang Philippines to be a major tourism destination katulad po ng Singapore at Hong Kong. So, hindi ho tayo nanganganib na makikiagaw ito sa trabaho ng mga Pilipino. Naniniwala po ako na ito ay magdadagdag pa nga ng trabaho para sa ating mga kababayan.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor, nais ko pong sagutin ng ating Sponsor iyong tanong. Kapag nalugi o natalo sa negosyo ang mga maliliit na negosyo dahil sa kompetisyon, magkakatanggalan po ba, Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Mr. Speaker, hindi ko naman ho mapo-project o masasabi kung ang isang negosyo ay lalakas o malulugi. Mahirap naman pong masabi ho iyan. Ang atin lang po ay bigyan natin ng tiyansa o oportunidad ang wholesale and retail sector dahil ito po ay nakikita na nating number two na po na biggest employer. Andiyan na po tayo and I perceive and foresee na kaya pa nating lakihan ito para ho ang ating mga kababayan ay hindi na po kailangang magtrabaho.

Alam ninyo po, kapag pumunta kayo sa Dubai, sa mga shopping mall, lahat ho doon ay mga Pilipina rin ang nagbebenta, mga Pilipina rin ang saleslady, at Pilipino rin ang driver na nagde-deliver ng goods. Bakit hindi natin dito buksan ang mga establisimyento na iyon sa Pilipinas para dito na sila magtrabaho? Ang maganda po sa mga Pilipino po, sa ating mga kababayan ay magaling ho sila sa Ingles, kaya po sila hinahanap-hanap doon sa Dubai o Middle East. Bakit ho hindi nila ma-harness ang mga skill at talento ng ating mga kababayan?

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor, itinanong ko po kanina, kapag nalugi nga iyong negosyo ay mawawalan ng trabaho. Tama po ba, Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor?

We cannot just say that our local entrepreneurs can bear and survive the competition kung wala tayong projection, wala tayong data, hindi ba, Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor? Kaya, in fact, sa ibang mga bansa po, the Philippines would run counter to the trend among ASEAN markets wherein certain levels of protection are being legislated for their respective MSMEs.

Iyong Indonesia and Malaysia are examples of countries which pushed for stronger measures to regulate foreign ownership in the retail sector. Pinoprotektahan po nila ang retail sector nila, Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Opo, pero ito rin po ang mga bansa ho na ang kanilang paid-up capital ay mas mababa pa rin ho sa US\$200,000.

Ang Indonesia po ay US\$177,000 lang ang paid-up capital at ang Thailand yata, gaya ng sinabi ninyo, sa kasalukuyan ay US\$66,300. Ano po ang ibig sabihin nito? Ang ibig sabihin, they have a growing wholesale

and retail market. Binuksan po nila ito kaya lumago ang kanilang retail sector at sila ay naging major tourism destination in Southeast Asia. Kaya ang sinabi po ninyong success nila siguro ay maiko-connect natin sa kadahilanang ito.

REP. BROSAS. Okay, Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor, the argument on lower prices and supposed better job-generation through the influx of more foreign retail simply do not stand. Maraming sa halip na nagiging sanhi ng kawalan ng trabaho, halimbawa, ang isa sa mga pangunahing dahilan ay ang palagiang pagsandig sa dayuhang kapital. We have seen this in the case of Honda, Wells Fargo, Nokia and other foreign companies that were forced to cut jobs in the Philippines due to practical business considerations. When will we, Filipinos, break away from the mercy of foreign capitals? When will we prioritize the strengthening of our local capacity to move up the value chains and support local businesses?

Mr. Speaker, these sudden amendments to the Retail Liberalization Act sadly make these dreams more difficult to attain, especially for our small entrepreneurs who are mostly women, Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor.

Maraming salamat po.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, the next to interpellate is the honorable Minority Leader, Rep. Bienvenido Abante. May he be recognized.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). The honorable Minority Leader, Rep. Bienvenido Abante, is hereby recognized.

REP. ABANTE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Majority Leader. Would the Sponsor of the Bill allow me to ask some pertinent questions?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Gladly, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ABANTE. Okay. Doon po sa Republic Act No. 8762, na papalitan ng House Bill No. 59, mayroong apat na categories. Una, paid-up capital of US\$2,500,000 and below, for Filipinos only; pangalawa, more than US\$2,500,000 but not more than US\$7,500,000, 60 percent foreign-owned; pangatlo, US\$7,500,000 and above, 100 percent foreign-owned; at pang-apat, high-end products, US\$2,500,000 per store, 100 percent foreign-owned.

Dito po sa House Bill No. 59, tatanggalin na natin ang apat na categories at papalitan ng isa na lang na minimum paid-up capital of US\$200,000 and 100 percent foreign-owned. Hindi po ba, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Opo. Na-simplify na natin, Mr. Speaker, to US\$200,000.

REP. ABANTE. That is for 100 percent foreign ownership.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Opo.

REP. ABANTE. Iyan po ba ay isang simplification lang o may mga maaapektuhan na Filipino-owned retailers natin?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Mr. Speaker, sa aming pag-aaral, hindi po ito makakaapekto sa ating micro entrepreneurs tulad ng sari-sari stores o ng family-owned na mga tindahan.

This is merely inviting our investors to bring in more competition in the Philippines and to give more choices to the consumers. Basically po, ang medium and large enterprises natin ay roughly 1 percent lang of the total share of the establishments. Ang projection po namin, most probably ang tatamaan ay ang medium and large scale sectors.

REP. ABANTE. Okay. In Section 2 of Republic Act No. 8762 o ang Retail Trade Liberalization Act of 2000, it provides that the objective is “to encourage Filipinos and competitive retail trade sector in the interest of empowering the Filipino consumers through lower prices, higher quality goods, better services and wider choices.” But the original provision requires a much higher amount of US\$2.5 million. Ano po ba talaga ang intention to peg the amount of only US\$200,000?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Mr. Speaker, sa aming hearings at pag-aaral, nakita po namin na noong na-amend ito noong year 2000, only 43 foreign retail investors have been recorded na pumasok sa Pilipinas. Ito po ay roughly around 0.6 percent lamang of the total jobs generated in the wholesale and retail sector. Nakita po namin na kahit na-amend ito noong 2000, iyong target natin at expectations ay hindi natin na-reach. Nakikita naman natin dito na malaki po talaga ang potential ng wholesale and retail sector dahil nga pangalawa ito sa largest job generator sa Pilipinas. Kapag ibinaba pa ang paid-up capital, nakikita natin na mas magdye-generate ito ng more jobs para po sa ating bansa.

REP. ABANTE. So, it is giving the opportunity na marami pang sumali kaya natin ibinaba ito.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Opo, at maraming trabahong maitatala, marami ring investments ang papasok.

REP. ABANTE. Ano po ba ang safeguards to

be undertaken para protektahan ang Filipino retail industry?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Naglagay po tayo na dapat 10 percent of the goods na ibebenta sa tindahan o sa retail outlet ay made in the Philippines. Filipino goods po dapat.

If we will connect this to our Foreign Investment Act, there is still the need to hire 15 direct employees from our country. Gaya po ng nasabi ko kanina, natural lang na kapag ikaw ay magbubukas ng tindahan sa isang shopping mall, natural lang na ang saleslady ay Pilipina, hindi dayuhan; ang driver para sa delivery goods, natural lang na Pilipino rin po ang gagamitin.

Marami po ang malilikhang trabaho, not only in retail but also those connected sa mga ibang negosyo tulad ng logistics; ang manpower and security agency; ad agency and marketing. Maraming karagdagang trabaho ang malilikha.

REP. ABANTE. Hindi po kaya kapag naging batas ito, ang foreign direct investments natin doing retail trade will most likely or definitely flood the market at matatabunan ang ating local products?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Mr. Speaker, honestly speaking, kapag kayo po ay pumunta ngayon sa department stores at big shopping malls, 70 percent of the goods are already foreign brands. Kinausap din po namin ang Philippine Retailers Association, at mostly po ang goods nila ay foreign brands na rin.

Hindi ko naman po sinasabi na hindi natin dapat protektahan ang ating lokal na industriya. I agree with our good Minority Leader na dapat po ang priority natin ay still protektahan ang ating local entrepreneurs at micro-entrepreneurs. Ang sinasabi lang po natin ay mapagbigyan sila na dumiretso nang magbukas ng negosyo, hindi na tayo magpa-partner pa sa big shopping malls, big distributors exclusively, iyong mga ganoong bagay po.

REP. ABANTE. Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, puwede po ba ninyong ma-assure ang inyong lingkod na itong Bill ay hindi magiging parang Rice Tariffication Law that greatly affected all Filipino farmers and drove the price of palay to a level that is not competitive anymore?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Mahirap po sagutin iyan, pero nakita naman natin ang pangyayari nang na-open up iyong economy ng China, noong na-open up ang economy ng Singapore at Hong Kong, naging positibo naman ang resulta. It is a matter of executing it well. It is a matter na susundan ang batas na ating ginawa. Naniniwala naman po ako na makakatulong ito sa ating bansa at hindi magiging problema sa ating mga Pilipino.

REP. ABANTE. The thing is, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, ang concern ko lang ay iyong huge volume ng foreign direct investments, na matatabunan po iyong ating domestic products. Kaya ang concern ko lang po dito ay ang safeguards upang maging pantay ang labanan between the foreign direct investments at ng ating local retailers. Ano po sa palagay ninyo? Even if you say, for example, that Filipino workers will be preferred, what are your assurances that it will happen?

Now, please be reminded of the POGO industry, where this business without so much as by your leave or request permission, brought in so many workers that even the BIR, the Pagcor and other lead agencies could not handle the fallout and repercussion. Hindi po ba, Mr. Speaker? Ano po iyong mga magiging safeguard natin dito?

REP. GATCHALIAN. Sa ating kagalang-galang na Minority Leader, sa tingin ko po, malayo ito sa POGO dahil sa POGO, 100 percent ng empleyado ay foreigners na kaagad. Dito mga kasama, marami po tayong safeguards. Makaka-assure tayo na ito po ay magdadala ng healthy competition.

Babalikan ko lang po ang katanungan ninyo tungkol sa competition. In fact, magiging much better pa, better quality products, mas mababang presyo ng goods na mabibili po ng mga mamimiling Pilipino because of the competition. Hindi po natin puwede na lang iwan ito sa monopolies o oligarchs na magko-control kung ano iyong goods na puwedeng bilhin ng Filipino consumers. Iyong 10 percent po na na-mention ko kanina, 10 percent of the products will be sourced from our micro, small and medium enterprises. Isa po ito sa mga pang-safeguard natin.

REP. ABANTE. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, mayroon pa po akong ilang mga katanungan pero inagaw na ng mga kabarkada ko. Itong parang mga anak ko na walang galang na inagawan po ako. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, maraming, maraming salamat po. Tatapusin ko na po ang aking mga katanungan, hindi sapagkat gusto ko, sapagkat ako ay pinilit. Maraming, maraming salamat po.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). Thank you very much, honorable Minority Leader. The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we close the period of sponsorship and debate on the said measure, because we already have three speeches in favor and two against on this Bill.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion to terminate the period of sponsorship and debate. Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion to open the period of amendments. Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Committee or individual amendments, I move that we close the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion to close the period of amendments. Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve House Bill No. 59 on Second Reading.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion to approve House Bill No. 59 on Second Reading. As many as are in favor, please say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

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

FEW MEMBERS. *Nay*.

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 59 ON SECOND READING

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

House Bill No. 59 is approved on Second Reading.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 5832 *Continuation*

PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move to resume the consideration of House Bill No. 5832, under Committee Report No. 142, on the creation of the Department of Filipino Overseas and Foreign Employment.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary status of this Bill is that we have recently terminated the period of amendments. I therefore move that we approve House Bill No. 5832, as amended, on Second Reading.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is motion to approve House Bill No. 5832, as amended, on Second Reading. As many as are in favor, please say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

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

FEW MEMBERS. *Nay*.

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 5832, AS AMENDED,
ON SECOND READING

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

House Bill No. 5832, as amended, is approved on Second Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

RATIFICATION OF CONF. CTTEE. RPT.
ON H.B. NO. 5829 AND S.B. NO. 1224

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mr. Speaker, we are in receipt of the Conference Committee Report reconciling the disagreeing provisions of House Bill No. 5829 and Senate Bill No. 1224.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the titles of the measures.

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

The Secretary General is directed to read only the titles of the measures.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. 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; and 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.

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

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we ratify the said Conference Committee Report.

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

The Conference Committee Report on House Bill No. 5829 and Senate Bill No. 1224 is ratified.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO COMMITTEES

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mr. Speaker, may I move for the election of the following Members to various Committees:

The Majority Leader, Rep. Ria Christina G. Fariñas, read the names of the House Members elected to the various Committees, per Journal No. 51, dated March 4, 2020.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON NORTH LUZON
GROWTH TRIANGLE

As Chairperson:

Rep. Ramon “Mon-Mon” V. Guico III, DPM, vice
Rep. Joseph Sto. Niño B. Bernos

As Vice Chairperson:

Rep. Joseph Sto. Niño B. Bernos

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

As member:

Rep. Franciso G. Datol Jr.

COMMITTEE ON DANGEROUS DRUGS

As member:

Rep. Julienne “Jam” L. Baronda

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
AND WELFARE

As member:

Rep. Raymond Democrito C. Mendoza

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN
AND CHILDREN

As member:

Rep. Dahlia A. Loyola

* 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.”

COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY

As member;
Rep. Dahlia A. Loyola

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

As member:
Rep. Dahlia A. Loyola

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion to nominate the aforementioned House Members to various Committees.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we take up the Additional Reference of Business, and may we request that the Secretary General be directed to read the title the same.

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

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

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

Upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General read the following Committee Report which was referred to the appropriate Committee hereunder indicated:

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Committee on Economic Affairs, the Committee on Trade and Industry, the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Ways and Means (Committee Report No. 267), re H.B. No. 6489, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING AND EXPANDING THE LEYTE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ESTATE INTO THE LEYTE ECOLOGICAL INDUSTRIAL ZONE, CREATING FOR THIS PURPOSE THE LEYTE ECOLOGICAL INDUSTRIAL ZONE AUTHORITY, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

Sponsors: Representatives Garin (Sharon), Gatchalian, Yap (Eric), Salceda, Romualdez (Yedda) and Romualdez (Ferdinand)

COMMITTEE ON RULES

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

OMNIBUS CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILLS
ON SECOND READING

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move for the omnibus consideration of the following measures:

1. House Bill No. 6404, contained in Committee Report No. 248;
2. House Bill No. 4443, contained in Committee Report No. 251; and
3. House Bill No. 6489, contained in Committee Report No. 267.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that the respective Explanatory Notes of the measures be considered as the sponsorship speeches on the aforementioned House Bills.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Member who wishes to interpellate on or speak against the subject matter, I move that we close the period of sponsorship and debate.

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

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

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Member who wishes to introduce Committee or individual amendments, I move that we close the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion to close the period of amendments.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve House Bills Nos. 6404, 4443 and 6489 on Second Reading.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion to approve the aforementioned House Bills on Second Reading.

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

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

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

FEW MEMBERS. *Nay*.

OMNIBUS APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILLS
ON SECOND READING

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

House Bills Nos. 6404, 4443 and 6489 are approved on Second Reading.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Bill No. 6136 ...

REP. GARIN (J.). Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. ... under Committee Report ...

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, may I ...

REP. GARIN (J.). Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. May I move that we recognize the Dep. Minority Leader.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). The honorable Dep. Minority Leader, Honorable Garin, is recognized.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With all due courtesy, may I inquire, how old is our distinguished Presiding Officer?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). Is that the point of order?

REP. PALMA. No.

REP. GARIN (J.). No. It is a parliamentary inquiry, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. PALMA. It is a parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). And it is also a privilege of the Presiding Officer to decline ...

REP. PALMA. Privilege.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). ... in responding to the inquiry. Anyway, I am already a senior citizen.

REP. GARIN (J.). Ah, because with that, Mr. Speaker, I admire you for having a very good sense of hearing that you hear the very loud *ayes* despite the very loud *nays*. But with that, Mr. Speaker, with due respect to your good looks and your exemplary sense of hearing, we withdraw our parliamentary inquiry.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). Thank you very much, Honorable Garin.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6136
ON SECOND READING

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Bill No. 6136, contained in Committee Report No. 212, as reported out by the Committees on Ways and Means, and Appropriations.

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). 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. 6136, entitled: AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8794, ENTITLED "AN ACT IMPOSING A MOTOR VEHICLE USER'S CHARGE ON OWNERS OF ALL TYPES OF MOTOR VEHICLES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES," AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11239.

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

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of sponsorship and debate.

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THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of sponsorship is opened.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, Hon. Joey Sarte Salceda, for his sponsorship speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). Hon. Joey Salceda, the distinguished Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, is recognized.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. SALCEDA

REP. SALCEDA. Thank you very much, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

This Bill, essentially, is a very progressive tax. The top 10 percent of households own 60 percent of cars. In Metro Manila, where you now have an emergency called traffic, the rich own 73 percent of the cars, and if you look at the rate increases basically for cars, for the small car owners, the increase will only grow by 30 percent, basically for restoring the equilibrium, since in the past, almost past 15 years, there has been no increase while the others have already increased. The jeepneys are being given subsidies, lower rates and discounts while we are exempting all tricycles and motorcycles. Essentially, this will raise P220 billion and will essentially be earmarked—50 percent of which will be earmarked for jeepneys for 118,000 public utility subsidizing essentially their modernization.

(*Slide presentation*)

Here now is the estimated incremental revenue, basically 12 billion for this year. Even if you compare it with ASEAN rates, the Philippines—next, next—the Philippines will still be the lowest, the third lowest in the region—next, next—there, the blue one, and then these are—next—the comparison of the rates among all countries. Then, of course, next, a broad range of stakeholders, actually, virtually when we had—noong kami po ay nagkaroon ng mga hearing tungkol dito, halos lahat po ng sector pati na po ang mga jeepney sector, sila po ay sumuporta dito sa measure na ito dahil sila ang unang makikinabang dito.

Next—so pagdating po sa inflation, ang epekto po nito ay 0.01 percent. Ang epekto po nito sa ibabayad mo po sa tricycle ay negative 0.02. Ang epekto po nito sa babayaran mo sa jeep ay 0.06, assuming po na ikaw ay bibili ng bagong jeepney, pero kung hindi naman po, ito ay magiging negative.

So, dahil po dito ay iminumungkahi po ng Committee on Ways and Means na ito po ay isang napakaprogresibong tax at ang makikinabang po direktamente ay iyong mga nangangailangan po,

lalong-lalo na ang jeepney sector which will actually benefit. Almost P110 billion out of the P220 billion will actually go to the public utility sector.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I seek the immediate approval of this Bill.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Member who wishes to interpellate the author, I move that we close the period of sponsorship and debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion to close the period of sponsorship and debate.

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

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion to open the period of amendments.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Member who wishes to introduce Committee or individual amendments, I move that we close the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion to close the period of amendments.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve on Second Reading House Bill No. 6136, under Committee Report No. 212.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion for the approval of House Bill No. 6136 on Second Reading.

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

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

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

FEW MEMBERS. *Nay*.

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 6136
ON SECOND READING

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

House Bill No. 6136 is approved on Second Reading. (*Applause*)

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6430
ON SECOND READING

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Bill No. 6430, contained in Committee Report No. 250, as reported out by the Committee on Economic Affairs.

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). 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. 6430, entitled: AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A REINVESTMENT FRAMEWORK FOR REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT TRUST (REIT) SPONSORS, AMENDING SECTIONS 3, 8, AND 9 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9856, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "THE REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT TRUST (REIT) ACT OF 2009."

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

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of sponsorship and debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of sponsorship is opened.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Chairman of the Committee on Economic Affairs, the honorable Rep. Sharon S. Garin, to give us the sponsorship speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). Honorable Garin, Chairman of the Committee on Economic Affairs, is hereby recognized for her sponsorship speech.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. GARIN (S.)

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good evening, my fellow Members of the House of Representatives, ladies and gentlemen. I come before you today to sponsor Substitute Bill No. 6430, which seeks to amend RA No. 9856, otherwise known as the "Real Estate Investment Trust Act of 2009." I know that Filipinos are not that familiar with the concept of REIT, so allow me to give you a brief background. A Real Estate Investment Trust is a company that owns and operates income-generating real estate such as office and apartment buildings, hospitals, shopping centers, hotels and the like.

In the Philippines, RA No. 9856 requires that the REIT should be listed with the Philippine Stock Exchange and the Securities and Exchange Commission. In order to attract more Filipinos into investing in the stock market, the law requires the REIT to offer at least one-third of its outstanding stock to the public. The REIT helped in invigorating stock markets abroad. Investors are attracted to the REIT since they are required to declare dividends every year, and aside from the annual dividends, the stockholder can cash in when the value of the REIT stock increases over time. It has been useful when investors want to diversify their portfolios and it is more liquid than actually owning real property. Since the early 2000, Asian countries have benefitted from the formation of the REIT especially in Japan, Singapore, and Hong Kong. The Philippines is actually a latecomer in this area. Since RA No. 9856 lapsed into law in 2009, no REITs have been established in the country due to some issues with the implementing IRRs.

Last January, the Department of Finance unveiled a new IRR which will remove the impediments to the formation of REITs. This government is optimistic that we can still reap the benefits of REITs more, with the amendments proposed in Substitute Bill No. 6430. The proposed Bill introduces the Reinvestment Plan for REIT sponsors and promoters. Section 3 of the Bill requires that the REIT shall submit a Reinvestment Plan to the PSE and the SEC upon registration. Furthermore, the REIT is required to secure a certification from the SEC that it is compliant with its Reinvestment Plan. Section 1 defines "Reinvestment Plan" as a sworn statement, signed by the sponsor or promoter and the principal shareholder of the REIT making a firm commitment to reinvest any proceeds from the sale of REIT shares or the sale of any of its income-generating real estate to the REIT, in any real estate, including the redevelopment thereof, and/or infrastructure projects in the Philippines within one year from the date of receipt of proceeds by the sponsor or promoter. With the new

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REIT IRR and this amendment to RA No. 9856, the country is ready to reap the benefits of REITs.

In view of the foregoing, this Representation is urgently requesting the passage of this Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6430

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 6430, under Committee Report No. 250.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion to suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 6430.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker.

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

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6091 *Continuation*

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 6091, under Committee Report No. 207, and that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). The Secretary General is directed to read the title of House Bill No. 6091.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6091, entitled; AN ACT PROVIDING PROTECTION FROM LIABILITY TO VOLUNTEERS FOR ACTS OR OMISSIONS COMMITTED IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES DURING EMERGENCY SITUATION.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary status of this Bill is that we are in the period of sponsorship and debate, and with that, Mr. Speaker, since there is no Member who wishes to interpellate on or speak

against the measure, I move that we close the period of sponsorship and debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion to close the period of sponsorship and debate on House Bill No. 6091.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion to open the period of amendments on House Bill No. 6091.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Member who wishes to introduce Committee or individual amendments, I move that we close the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion to close the period of amendments on House Bill No. 6091.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve House Bill No. 6091, under Committee Report No. 207 on Second Reading.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion for the approval of House Bill No. 6091 on Second Reading.

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

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

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

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 6091 ON SECOND READING

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

House Bill No. 6091 is approved on Second Reading. (*Applause*)

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H. RES. NO. 759

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Resolution No. 759.

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). 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 Resolution No. 759, entitled: RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE PROFOUND CONDOLENCES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FAMILY OF HONORABLE ELNORITA P. TUGUNG, FORMER REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LONE LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF BASILAN DURING THE NINTH CONGRESS.

ADOPTION OF H. RES. NO. 759

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adopt House Resolution No. 759.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

House Resolution No. 759 is adopted.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H. RES. NO. 760

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Resolution No. 760.

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). 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 Resolution No. 760, entitled: RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE PROFOUND CONDOLENCES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FAMILY OF HONORABLE EDGAR L. MENDOZA, FORMER REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECOND LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF THE PROVINCE OF BATANGAS DURING THE ELEVENTH CONGRESS.

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

ADOPTION OF H. RES. NO. 760

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adopt House Resolution No. 760.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

House Resolution No. 760 is adopted.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn the session until March 9, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Oaminal). There is a motion to adjourn the session until 3:00 p.m. of March 9, 2020.

The session is adjourned.

It was 8:36 p.m.

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