



# Congressional Record

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

## House of Representatives

Vol. 4

Wednesday, May 20, 2020

No. 57b

### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 3:00 p.m., the session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Roberto V. Puno presiding.*

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

### SUSPENSION OF SESSION

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

*It was 3:00 p.m.*

### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 3:00 p.m., the session was resumed.*

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

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

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

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

### ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

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

### BILLS ON FIRST READING

House Bill No. 6757, entitled:

“AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE NATIONAL

TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION TO ISSUE PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY TO OWNERS AND OPERATORS OF PUBLIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS ENTITIES FOR THEIR CONTINUED OPERATIONS PENDING RENEWAL OF THEIR CONGRESSIONAL FRANCHISE, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NUMBER 7925, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE PUBLIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY ACT OF THE PHILIPPINES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Gonzales (Aurelio)  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE FRANCHISES

House Bill No. 6758, entitled:

“AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION TO ISSUE PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY TO OWNERS AND/OR OPERATORS OF RADIO, TELEVISION, AND/OR CABLE ANTENNA TELEVISION SYSTEM, NETWORK AND/OR STATIONS FOR THEIR CONTINUED OPERATIONS PENDING THE RENEWAL OF THEIR CONGRESSIONAL FRANCHISE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Gonzales (Aurelio)  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE FRANCHISES

House Bill No. 6759, entitled:

“AN ACT SUPPORTING THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL CAREERS IN THE PHILIPPINES”

By Representative Villafuerte  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

House Bill No. 6760, entitled:

“AN ACT REQUIRING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF QUARANTINE FACILITIES IN EVERY REGION IN THE COUNTRY, PROVIDING

FUNDS THEREFOR AND OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Chipeco  
TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE

House Bill No. 6761, entitled:

“AN ACT PROMOTING FARMER COOPERATION, MANDATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FARMER COOPERATION HUBS, ADOPTING THE FIRST DISTRICT OF BATAAN AS PILOT SITE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Roman  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

House Bill No. 6762, entitled:

“AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE ‘BALIK PROBINSYA, BAGONG PAG-ASA’ ACT CREATING A COUNCIL THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Olivarez  
TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE

House Bill No. 6763, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING A PROVISION OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7581, ENTITLED ‘AN ACT PROVIDING PROTECTION TO CONSUMERS BY STABILIZING THE PRICES OF BASIC NECESSITIES AND PRIME COMMODITIES AND BY PRESCRIBING MEASURES AGAINST UNDUE PRICE INCREASES DURING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS AND LIKE OCCASIONS’, THEREBY ALSO AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10623 AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Savellano  
TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE

House Bill No. 6764, entitled:

“AN ACT TO REQUIRE EACH AGENCY OF THE GOVERNMENT TO ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT A POLICY UNDER WHICH EMPLOYEES SHALL BE AUTHORIZED TO TELECOMMUTE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Romulo  
TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE

House Bill No. 6765, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FISCAL REGIME

FOR THE DIGITAL ECONOMY, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTIONS 57, 105, 108, AND 114 OF THE NATIONAL INTERNAL REVENUE CODE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Salceda  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

House Bill No. 6766, entitled:

“AN ACT UPGRADING THE MINIMUM SALARY GRADE OF HEALTH WORKERS IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS, RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS”

By Representative Biazon  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 6767, entitled:

“AN ACT REQUIRING OWNERS OF MEDIA COMPANIES TO GRANT HAZARD PAY TO MEDIA WORKERS, AND FOR OTHER RELATED PURPOSES”

By Representative Taduran  
TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE

House Bill No. 6769, entitled:

“AN ACT FURTHER EXTENDING THE TERM OF THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO DAVAO LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY, INC. TO CONSTRUCT, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN AN ELECTRIC, LIGHT, HEAT AND POWER SYSTEM IN DAVAO CITY, PANABO CITY, AND THE MUNICIPALITIES OF CARMEN, DUJALI, AND SANTO TOMAS IN THE PROVINCE OF DAVAO DEL NORTE, FOR A PERIOD OF TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

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

RESOLUTIONS

House Resolution No. 882, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE/S, TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, CALLING UPON THE ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION (ERC) AND MANILA ELECTRIC COMPANY (MERALCO), ON THE SUDDEN INCREASE IN ELECTRICITY RATES AND INTERRUPTIONS DURING THE

ENHANCED COMMUNITY QUARANTINE  
AND GENERAL COMMUNITY  
QUARANTINE”

By Representative Lacson  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 883, entitled:

“RESOLUTION URGING THE SECRETARY OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AS THE VICE  
CHAIRPERSON FOR PREPAREDNESS  
OF THE NATIONAL DISASTER RISK  
REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT  
COUNCIL, TO DIRECT ALL LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT UNITS TO PREPARE  
THEIR EVACUATION CENTERS IN VIEW  
OF COVID-19”

By Representative Dy (Faustino Inno)  
TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC  
COMMITTEE

House Resolution No. 884, entitled:

“RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF  
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO  
URGE THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND  
EMPLOYMENT SECRETARY SILVESTRE  
BELLO III TO RECALL TAIWAN LABOR  
ATTACHÉ FIDEL MACAUYAG FOR  
ABUSING HIS AUTHORITY AND FAILING  
IN HIS MANDATE TO PROTECT MIGRANT  
WORKERS OVERSEAS”

By Representatives Gaité, Zarate and Cullamat  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON OVERSEAS  
WORKERS AFFAIRS

House Resolution No. 885, entitled:

“RESOLUTION URGING THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES, THROUGH THE  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSEAS WORKERS  
AFFAIRS AND THE DEFEAT COVID-19  
AD HOC COMMITTEE, TO CONDUCT AN  
INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON  
THE SURGE OF COVID-19 INFECTION  
AMONG REPATRIATED DISPLACED  
OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS AND  
REPORTED RISKY AND DISMAL  
SITUATION IN QUARANTINE FACILITIES,  
AND RECOMMEND URGENT MEASURES  
TO PROTECT AND SUPPORT OFW’s”

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

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

Message dated May 18, 2020, informing the House of

Representatives that the Senate on even date passed  
Senate Bill No. 1354, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING ARTICLES 183 AND  
184 OF ACT NO. 3815, AS AMENDED,  
OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE REVISED  
PENAL CODE”

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

TO THE COMMITTEE ON REVISION OF  
LAWS

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Committee on Banks and Financial  
Intermediaries (Committee Report No. 310), re  
H.B. No. 6768, entitled:

“AN ACT AFFORDING MORE PROTECTION TO  
CONSUMERS OF FINANCIAL PRODUCTS  
AND SERVICES”

recommending its approval in substitution of House  
Bills Numbered 5976, 6143, 6299, 6416 and  
6603

Sponsor: Representative Cua  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

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

PRIVILEGE HOUR

REP. CASTELO. Mr. Speaker, with leave of the  
House, I move that we open the Privilege Hour.

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

The Chair declares a Privilege Hour.

REP. CASTELO. Mr. Speaker, I move that  
we recognize Hon. France L. Castro of the ACT  
TEACHERS Party-List for her privilege speech.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Hon.  
France Castro is recognized for her privilege speech.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. CASTRO (F.L.)

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Maraming salamat, G.  
Ispiker.

Magandang araw, G. Ispiker, sa mga kapwa ko  
Kinatawan at sa ating mga mamamayan.

Noong nakaraang Biyernes, Mayo 15, ang  
Kinatawan pong ito ay nagtungo sa NBI Taft upang  
matulungan at damayan si Teacher Ronnel Mas na isang  
social studies teacher ng Taltal National High School

sa Zambales. Isa siyang outstanding secondary teacher noong 2019 ngunit kamakailan lang ay inaresto dahil sa kaniyang post sa social media.

Bilang Kinatawan ng mga guro, kinokondena po namin ang ginawa ng NBI kay Teacher Ronnel. Dahil sa kombinasyon ng dami at kilos ng mga pulis, napilitan si Teacher Ronnel na umamin kahit wala siyang abogado. Isinapubliko pa ng kaniyang arresting officers ang uncounseled confession na ito. Walang indikasyon na sinabihan siya ng kanyang Miranda Rights dahil kung sinabihan siya ay hindi siya titiklop sa pressure. Ipinaranas ng mga ahente ng NBI ang emotional torture kay Teacher Ronnel. Dala ng pressure at coercion, at kahit wala itong independiyenteng abogado, sa loob mismo ng sasakyan ito umamin. Base sa resolusyon ng prosecutor, sinabi nito na invalid warrantless arrest ang pag-aresto kay Teacher Ronnel. Isang violation ito ng kaniyang constitutional rights against unreasonable search and seizure at dahil sa puwersahang pagpapaamin, nilabag rin ang kaniyang right against self-incrimination at custodial rights.

Alam naman natin na mababa lang ang sahod ng mga guro sa pampublikong paaralan at madalas pa nga, puro loan ang mga ito. Kahit siguro P100,000 ay wala si Teacher Ronnel kung kaya't hindi actual threat ang post ni Teacher Ronnel na P50 million bounty. Samakatuwid, ang post na ikinagagalit ng mga NBI o pulis ay isang satirical comment sa panlipunang kalagayan dahil ramdam niya ang abang kalagayan ng mamamayan dahil sa COVID-19 pandemic. Nakikita sa paligid mismo, sa kilos at pananalita ng mga opisyal at ng Pangulo ang mga kapalpakan, kabagalan at kakulangan ng COVID-19 response ng pamahalaan. Ginagarantiya naman ng ating Konstitusyon ang malayang pamamahayag at pagsabi ng ating hinaing laban sa gobyerno kung kaya't wala namang masamang intensyon si Teacher Ronnel sa kaniyang post.

Kagabi ay ni-release na si Teacher Ronnel dahil sa bisa ng bail na nanggaling sa Branch 72 ng RTC sa Olongapo. Alam ninyo po, naging emotional si Teacher Ronnel paglabas niya doon sa NBI at sinabi ng kaniyang nanay na pagsakay sa loob ng sasakyan ay talagang naghi-hysterical si Teacher Ronnel at nagsisisigaw, kaya ramdam na ramdam natin kagabi ang kaniyang takot, ang kaniyang naransang emotional torture doon sa pagkakahuli sa kaniya. Kaya ngayon, si Teacher Ronnel ay nag-a-undergo ng psychological therapy. Ito iyong idinulot ng ginawang pag-aresto at iligal na detention kay Teacher Ronnel.

Hina-highlight ng pag-aresto at pagsampa ng kaso kay Teacher Ronnel ang double standard at hindi pagsunod sa due process. Isa siyang ordinaryong mamamayan na naglabas lamang ng kaniyang pagkadismaya sa Pangulo dahil sa pagtrato nito sa COVID-19 pandemic, habang ang mga bigating opisyal na tahasang lumalabag sa batas ay hindi naman

pinaparusahan. Kapag ordinaryong mamamayan at kritiko ng pamahalaan, iligal na warrantless arrest at patong-patong na human rights violations samantalang kapag politikal na kaalyado, appointee na pinuno ng pulisiya at propagandista ay nananawagan ng compassion o idadaan sa regular na proseso simula sa subpoena, sa pagpapaliwanag kung ano ba iyong post, katulad na lamang ng ginawa kay Asec. Mocha Uson na inimitahan at pinagpaliwanag lang samantalang malinaw naman na mayroon itong bayolasyon doon sa Bayanihan Act.

Patuloy ang panawagan namin na pabilisin at palawakin ang ayuda at itigil na ang political repression laban sa mga mamamayan. Sa panahon ng matinding medikal na krisis, dapat bukas ang gobyerno sa puna at kritisismo dahil dito manggagaling ang pagwawasto sa mga kapalpakan at kakulangan nito. Sa panahon na sinusubukang patayin ang coronavirus, hindi dapat patayin ang batayang constitutional rights.

Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker.

Muli, magandang hapon po sa ating lahat.

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

#### SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session.

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

*It was 3:12 p.m.*

#### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 3:12 p.m., the session was resumed.*

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the privilege speech of Hon. France L. Castro to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The privilege speech of Hon. France L. Castro is referred to the Committee on Rules.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. CRISOLOGO. I move that we recognize

the honorable Rep. Adriano A. Ebcas for his privilege speech.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Hon. Adriano A. Ebcas of the Party-List AKO PADAYON PILIPINO is hereby recognized for his privilege speech. Honorable Ebcas, please proceed.

#### PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. EBCAS

REP. EBCAS. Honorable Deputy Speaker, mga Kinatawan ng Kongreso na nasa Plenary ngayon, at sa mga kasama ko na nasa teleconference sa Zoom, magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat.

Ako po ay nandito ngayon para ibahagi ang mga kahirapan na dinaranas ng ating sambayanang Pilipino sa sektor ng enerhiya sa pagpapatupad ng Enhanced Community Quarantine sa Luzon noong Marso at ang kasunod na quarantine sa iba't ibang lugar sa bansa. Lubos po na bumaba ang kabuuang demand ng kuryente sa ating bansa. Dahil po sa idinulot ng pandemyang ito, marami po ang nawalan ng hanapbuhay at marami ang nawalan ng kapasidad na magbayad sa pang-araw-araw na gastusin. Bagamat gumagawa ng paraan ang ating gobyerno upang matulungan ang ating mga kababayan, batid naming mga Representante ng Power Bloc na may ipapaabot pa na karagdagang tulong para sa bawat kabahayan na kumukunsumo ng kuryente.

Mr. Speaker, kami ay nagpapasalamat sa advisory na inilabas ng Energy Regulatory Commission noong March 17, 2020, April 15, 2020 at May 5, 2020 na nagdidirekta sa mga generation companies na magbigay ng palugit sa pagbabayad ng mga power bills hanggang May 15, 2020. Bukod dito, batid namin ang posibleng pagtaas ng presyo ng kuryente.

Kaya noong April 14, 2020, kami pong Power bloc ay sumulat kay President Duterte at kay Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles para po ipahatid ang request ng Philippine Rural Electric Cooperatives Association o PHILRECA at ng National Association of General Managers of Electric Cooperatives o NAGMEC para matugunan ang pangamba ng ating mga konsumante pagdating sa posibleng epekto ng COVID-19 pandemic sa bayarin sa kuryente. Mr. Speaker, sa liham po na ito, sa ngalan ng 121 electric cooperatives, kami po ay humihiling po ng konsiderasyon sa mga power suppliers para sa mga sumusunod na billing adjustments:

Una, na maipagpaliban ang Minimum Energy Offtake sa mga kontrata ng power supplier sa mga distribution utilities gaya ng electric cooperatives dahil sa pagbaba ng demand dulot ng pagsasara ng mga establisimiyento. Nanganganib na tumaas ang bayarin sa kuryente dahil hindi maaabot ng mga electric cooperatives ang Minimum Energy Offtake sa kanilang mga kontrata sa power supplier.

Ikalawa ay ang pag-allow na ang contract capacity charges, peso per kilowatt per month, ay ibabase sa actual nomination ng electric cooperatives sapagkat lubos ang pagtaas ng presyo ng kuryente kung hindi ito maipapatupad.

Ang ikahuli, ang mai-apply pa rin ang prompt payment discount sa deferred payment scheme base sa Energy Regulatory Commission advisory. Ang mga kahilingang ito ay upang maprotektahan ang bawat konsumante ng kuryente mula sa pagtaas ng presyo ng kuryente dulot ng kinakaharap nating crisis ngayon. Magiging malaking tulong sa bawat pamilya ang mababang bayarin sa kuryente sapagkat ang matitipid nila dito ay maipandadagdag para sa ibang pangangailangan.

Sa mga kasama namin sa Kongreso, Mr. Speaker, samahan ninyo kami sa aming panawagan sa mga power suppliers na sana ay mabigyang konsiderasyon ang aming pakiusap para sa kapakanan ng bawat Pilipino na kumukunsumo ng kuryente, lalo na ngayon na malakas ang ating paggamit dahil sa mainit na panahon at dahil naka-quarantine. Ito po ang oras para tulungan natin ang isa't isa at ang mga lubos na nangangailangan. Hindi po natin masasabi kung kailan matatapos ang pandemyang ito at wala pong kasiguraduhan ngayon kung ano ang mga mangyayari. Kaya kami po ay humihiling ng pag-unawa at pagkakaisa upang maprotektahan ang ating mamamayan at matulungan na malagpasan ang crisis na dala ng pandemyang COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, maraming salamat po sa pribilehiyong makapagsalita para maiparating ang aming panawagan.

Kaming mga Representante ng mga electric cooperatives at member-consumer-owners ay patuloy na kikilos at magtatrabaho upang masiguradong patuloy ang supply ng kuryente sa bawat kabahayan sa panahon ngayon. Makakaasa ang bawat mamamayang Pilipino na patuloy kaming mangangalampag sa power suppliers upang maibsan ang hirap na kinakaharap ng bawat consumer ngayon.

Muli, maraming salamat at sabay-sabay nating lagpasan ang hamon na ito.

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

REP. EBCAS. That ends my speech. Thank you, honorable Deputy Speaker.

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move to refer the speech of the Honorable Ebcas to the Committee on Rules for proper referral to the choice committee.

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

The privilege speech of Honorable Ebcas is so referred.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Sarah Jane I. Elago for her privilege speech.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Hon. Sarah Jane I. Elago of the Party-List KABATAAN is recognized for her privilege speech.

Honorable Elago may proceed.

REP. ELAGO. Ay opo. Nagsabi po ako before the session, opo.

#### SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session for a minute to give our technical people time to organize the audio of Honorable Elago.

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

*It was 3:22 p.m.*

#### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 3:22 p.m., the session was resumed.*

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, before we recognize Hon. Godofredo N. Guya, I first want to put on record that Honorable Elago will just make her privilege speech next week, because we cannot seem to organize her audio.

So, with this, Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Honorable Guya.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Hon. Godofredo N. Guya of the Party-List RECOBODA is recognized for his privilege speech.

#### PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. GUYA

REP. GUYA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Magandang hapon po sa mga Kinatawan ng Kongreso na nasa Plenary sa hapon ito, gayundin sa ating mga kasamang Representante sa iba't ibang dako ng bansa na kasama sa ating virtual session. Magandang hapon din po sa ating mga kababayan na nakaantabay sa atin.

Sa nakaraang Mayo Uno ay ipinagdiwang natin ang Araw ng mga Manggagawa. Naging kaugalian na nating mga Pilipino ang ialay ang araw na ito upang papurihan at parangalan ang natatanging kontribusyon ng ating mga manggagawa sa iba't ibang sektor ng lipunan.

Mula nang magdeklara ang ating Pangulo ng state of emergency ay binigyan ng mandato ang publiko upang manatili sa ating mga tahanan, wika nga, "Stay home, Stay safe." Layunin ng lockdown na maiwasan ang pagkalat ng COVID-19. Dahil dito, may pribilehiyo ang pangkalahatan sa atin na maging ligtas sa panganib at malayo sa sakuna, ngunit taliwas ito para sa ating magiging na frontliners. Ang hamon sa kanila ay ang patuloy na pagsisilbi sa bayan. Mapalad tayo sapagkat hindi nagsasawa ang ating mga frontliners na magsilbing depensa natin sa ating kalabang hindi nakikita. Naniniwala ako na ang nag-uumpaw na suporta para sa kanila ay nararapat lamang. Sa hapon ito, Mr. Speaker, ay nais ko pong gamitin ang pribilehiyong makapagsalita sa harap ninyo upang ipaabot ang aking taos-pusong pagpupugay sa ating mga sundalo ng pailaw o ang mga manggagawa ng energy sector.

Ang tinutukoy ko po na mga energy sector frontliners ay ang ating office personnel na patuloy na tumutugon sa mga katanungan ng ating mga member-consumer- owners, mga meter readers, mga lineworkers, mga linemen, na nangangalaga sa integridad ng ating mga poste at sinisigurado ang tuloy-tuloy na daloy ng kuryente. Madalas ay pahapyaw lamang ang pagbanggit sa ating mga kasama sa energy sector. Sa kaliwa't kanang pagkilala sa ating mga frontliners ay hindi maikakailang may mga pagkakataon na nakakaligtaan natin ang magbigay pugay sa mga empleyado, mga meter readers at mga lineworkers. Silang mga manggagawa ang dahilan kung bakit tayong lahat ay may tuloy-tuloy na suplay ng kuryente sa ating mga tahanan sa kabila ng krisis na ating pinagdaraan.

Ang ating mga kasamang sundalo ng pailaw ay itinataya ang kanilang kaligtasan upang masigurado ang tuloy-tuloy na daloy ng kuryente lalo na sa mga industriyang nangangailangan nito kagaya ng ospital, pamilihan at ilan pang sentro ng komersyo na nagbibigay serbisyo sa ating mga kababayan. Hindi ninyo alintana ang mabilad sa mapagparusang init ng araw. Iniinda ninyo ang panganib ng palagiang pakikisalamuha sa iba at buong tatag ninyong hinaharap ang lahat ng pagsubok sa pagpapailaw. Hindi bago ang kabayanihang ito sa inyo. Maging sa panahon ng bagyo, lindol at anumang hamon ng panahon, palagi ninyong inuuna ang kapakanan ng bayan kaysa sa inyong sariling kaligtasan dahil kaakibat ng mga panganib na ito ay ang katotohanang handa kayong mag-alay ng inyong buhay sa ngalan ng serbisyo.

Noong February 17 ng taong ito ay nagsalita ako sa Plenary kasama ang mga Kinatawan ng Power bloc mula sa PHILRECA, APEC at AKO PADAYON

PILIPINO, upang magbigay pugay sa ating mga sundalo ng pailaw kasabay ng pag-alala sa mga binawian ng buhay sa pagtupad ng kanilang mga tungkulin. Sila ang ating mga fallen warriors of light.

Tunay na mapanganib po ang pagpapailaw. Sa katunayan, simula ng naimplementa ang lockdown, tatlong magigiting na sundalo ng pailaw na po ang itinaya ang kanilang mga buhay sa ngalan ng serbisyo. Ito ay sina Leo Agsunod ng Isabela II Electric Cooperative, Karl Ar-jay Balinas mula ng Guimaras Electric Cooperative, at Prodican Dolor ng Surigao Electric Cooperative. Ang Power bloc ay mataas ang pagkilala sa inyo. Hindi po namin makakalimutan ang inyong sakripisyo. Nakakalungkot man na nawalan tayo ng mga kasama sa ating layuning makapagpailaw ngunit sa inyong kadakilaan, kami ay huhugot ng lakas upang harapin ang bukas.

Mahaba pa po ang tatahakin nating landas. Nandoon pa rin ang mga sitwasyong kagaya nito. Kaakibat na ng pagsisilbi natin sa sambayanan ang napakaraming sakripisyo ngunit nais ko po sanang ipaalam sa ating mga sundalo ng pailaw na hindi kayo nag-iisa sa labang ito. Makakaasa kayo na kami, na inyong mga kasangga sa Kongreso ay hindi titigil upang ipaglaban ang inyong mga benepisyo at kapakanan. Alam nating lahat na napakahalaga ang tuloy-tuloy na daloy ng kuryente sa panahon ng COVID-19, kung kaya't lubos po ang aming pasasalamat at paghanga sa inyong serbisyong hindi matatawaran. Para sa ating mga sundalo ng pailaw na nagsisilbing energy sector frontliners, mag-ingat kayo palagi at nawa ay patnubayan kayo ng Maykapal sa inyong araw-araw na tungkulin.

Muli, sa ngalan ng RECOBODA, saludo kami sa inyong mga sundalo ng pailaw.

Maraming salamat po, G. Ispiker.

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

REP. TADURAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the privilege speech of Hon. Godofredo Guya to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The speech of Hon. Godofredo Guya is so referred.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the Privilege Hour.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The Privilege Hour is suspended.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we take up bills for approval on Third Reading.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### NOMINAL VOTING ON H.B. NO. 5083 ON THIRD READING

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we vote on Third Reading on House Bill No. 5083 and direct the Secretary General to read the title of the measure, and call the roll for nominal voting.

I so move.

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

*Thereupon, the Secretary General read the title of the measure, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on March 10, 2020 pursuant to Section 58, Rule X of the House Rules.*

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 DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN REFORM (DAR), DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (DA), PEOPLE'S CREDIT AND FINANCE CORPORATION (PCFC), COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (CDA), NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA) AND THE QUEDAN AND RURAL CREDIT GUARANTEE CORPORATION (QUEDANCOR).

*The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. The result of the voting on Third Reading\* on the aforesaid measure is reflected in Journal No. 57, dated May 20, 2020.*

\* See ANNEX (printed separately)

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 5083  
ON THIRD READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). With 203 affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bill No. 5083 is approved on Third Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

NOMINAL VOTING ON H.B. NO. 6137  
ON THIRD READING

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we vote on Third Reading on House Bill No. 6137 and direct the Secretary General to read the title of the measure, and call the roll for nominal voting.

I so move.

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

*Thereupon, the Secretary General read the title of the measure, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on March 10, 2020, pursuant to Section 58, Rule X of the House Rules.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6137, entitled: AN ACT ENCOURAGING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, PROVIDING INCENTIVES THEREFOR.

*The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. The result of the voting on Third Reading\* on the aforesaid measure is reflected in Journal No. 57, dated May 20, 2020.*

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 6137  
ON THIRD READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). With 209 affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bill No. 6137 is approved on Third Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

NOMINAL VOTING ON H.B. NO. 6139  
ON THIRD READING

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that we vote on Third Reading on House Bill No. 6139 and direct the Secretary General to read the title of the measure, and call the roll for nominal voting.

I so move.

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

*Thereupon, the Secretary General read the title of the measure, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on March 10, 2020, pursuant to Section 58, Rule X of the House Rules.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6139, entitled: AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING AND ENHANCING THE ROLE OF PARENT-TEACHER AND COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS IN PROMOTING THE WELFARE AND PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 603, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS “THE CHILD AND YOUTH WELFARE CODE.”

*The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. The result of the voting on Third Reading\* on the aforesaid measure is reflected in Journal No. 57, dated May 20, 2020.*

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 6139  
ON THIRD READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). With 209 affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bill No. 6139 is approved on Third Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. CASTELO. Mr. Speaker, I move for the consideration of ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). With leave of the House, we will correct the vote count for House Bill No. 5083. Earlier it was reported that we had 203 affirmative for House Bill No. 5083. The correction is that we have 209 affirmative votes and therefore, with 209 affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bill No. 5083 is approved on Third Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

NOMINAL VOTING ON H.B. NO. 5855  
ON THIRD READING

REP. CASTELO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we vote on Third Reading on House Bill No. 5855 and direct the Secretary General to read the title of the measure, and call the roll for nominal voting.

I so move.

\* See ANNEX (printed separately)



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

*Thereupon, the Secretary General read the title of the measure, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on March 10, 2020, pursuant to Section 58, Rule X of the House Rules.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 5855, entitled: AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE SECOND DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF COMPOSTELA, PROVINCE OF DAVAO DE ORO, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

*The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. The result of the voting on Third Reading\* on the aforesaid measure is reflected in Journal No. 57, dated May 20, 2020.*

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 5855  
ON THIRD READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). With 208 affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bill No. 5855 is approved on Third Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

NOMINAL VOTING ON H.B. NO. 2397  
ON THIRD READING

REP. BAGATSING. Mr. Speaker, I move that we vote on Third Reading on House Bill No. 2397 and direct the Secretary General to read the title of the measure, and call the roll for nominal voting.

I so move.

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

*Thereupon, the Secretary General read the title of the measure, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on March 11, 2020, pursuant to Section 58, Rule X of the House Rules.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 2397, entitled: AN ACT DECLARING MAY 19 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF BUTUAN, IN CELEBRATION OF THE BALANGAY FESTIVAL.

*The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. Thereafter, pursuant to the Rules of the House, a second roll call was made. The result of the voting on Third Reading\* on the aforesaid measure is reflected in Journal No. 57, dated May 20, 2020.*

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 2397  
ON THIRD READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). With 209 affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bill No. 2397 is approved on Third Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

NOMINAL VOTING ON HOUSE BILLS  
ON THIRD READING

REP. TADURAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that we vote on Third Reading on House Bill No. 4939 and House Bill No. 5027 and direct the Secretary General to read the titles of the measures, and call the roll for nominal voting.

I so move.

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

*Thereupon, the Secretary General read the titles of the measures, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on March 11, 2020, pursuant to Section 58, Rule X of the House Rules.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 4939, entitled: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FISH PORT IN BARANGAY MACUYON, MUNICIPALITY OF SIRAWAI, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR; and

House Bill No. 5027, entitled: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FISH PORT IN BARANGAY MALINTUBUAN, MUNICIPALITY OF LABASON, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

*The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. The results of the voting on Third Reading\* on the aforesaid measures are reflected in Journal No. 57, dated May 20, 2020.*

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILLS  
ON THIRD READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). With 210

\* See ANNEX (printed separately)

affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bills Nos. 4939 and 5027 are approved on Third Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### NOMINAL VOTING ON HOUSE BILLS ON THIRD READING

REP. TADURAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that we vote on Third Reading on House Bills Nos. 6441, 6442, 6443, 6445, 6446, 6447 and 6448 and direct the Secretary General to read the titles of the measures, and call the roll for nominal voting.

I so move.

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

*Thereupon, the Secretary General read the titles of the measures, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on March 11, 2020, pursuant to Section 58, Rule X of the House Rules.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6441, entitled: AN ACT INCLUDING AREVALO PLAZA IN THE ILOILO CITY CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM ZONE, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10555, ENTITLED: “AN ACT DECLARING THE JARO CATHEDRAL, MOLO CHURCH, THE ILOILO CITY CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT, FORT SAN PEDRO, JARO PLAZA COMPLEX, MOLO PLAZA COMPLEX AND PLAZA LIBERTAD COMPLEX, ALL LOCATED IN THE CITY OF ILOILO, AS CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM ZONE”;

House Bill No. 6442, entitled: AN ACT DECLARING MOUNT ARAYAT, BORDERING THE MUNICIPALITIES OF ARAYAT AND MAGALANG, PROVINCE OF PAMPANGA A TOURIST DESTINATION, PROVIDING FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

House Bill No. 6443, entitled: AN ACT DECLARING GANGUB CAVE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BATARAZA, PROVINCE OF PALAWAN AN ECOTOURISM SITE, PROVIDING FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

House Bill No. 6445, entitled: AN ACT DECLARING PILIS FALLS IN BARANGAY PALILI, MUNICIPALITY OF SAMAL, PROVINCE OF BATAAN AN ECOTOURISM SITE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

House Bill No. 6446, entitled: AN ACT DECLARING THE PALANI BEACH LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BALUD, PROVINCE OF MASBATE AN ECOTOURISM ZONE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;

House Bill No. 6447, entitled: AN ACT DECLARING THE BAT-ONGAN PEAK, CAVE AND UNDERGROUND RIVER LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF MANDAON, PROVINCE OF MASBATE AN ECOTOURISM ZONE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR; and

House Bill No. 6448, entitled: AN ACT DECLARING KAPANGYAN FALLS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BATARAZA, PROVINCE OF PALAWAN AN ECOTOURISM SITE, PROVIDING FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

*The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. The results of the voting on Third Reading\* on the aforesaid measures are reflected in Journal No. 57, dated May 20, 2020.*

#### APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILLS ON THIRD READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). With 213 affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bills Nos. 6441, 6442, 6445, 6446 and 6447 are approved on Third Reading.

With 214 affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bills Nos. 6443 and 6448 are approved on Third Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### NOMINAL VOTING ON HOUSE BILLS ON THIRD READING

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we vote on Third Reading on House Bills Nos. 6467, 6491 and 6492, pertaining to national roads and highways, and direct the Secretary General to read the titles of the measures, and call the roll for nominal voting.

I so move.

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

*Thereupon, the Secretary General read the titles of the measures, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on March 11, 2020, pursuant to Section 58, Rule X of the House Rules.*

\* See ANNEX (printed separately)

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill 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;

House Bill No. 6491, entitled: AN ACT MANDATING THE FULL REHABILITATION AND MAINTENANCE OF KENNON ROAD UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS; and

House Bill No. 6492, entitled: AN ACT CONVERTING THE SAGADA-BESAO-QUIRINO, ILOCOS SUR ROAD INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

*The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. The results of the voting on Third Reading\* on the aforesaid measures are reflected in Journal No. 57, dated May 20, 2020.*

#### APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILLS ON THIRD READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). With 217 affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bill No. 6491 is approved on Third Reading.

With 216 affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bill No. 6467 is approved on Third Reading.

Lastly, with 216 affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bill No. 6492 is approved on Third Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### PRIVILEGE HOUR *Continuation*

REP. BAGATSING. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the Privilege Hour.

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

The Privilege Hour is resumed.

REP. BAGATSING. Mr. Speaker, I now move that the Gentleman from the Fourth District of Pangasinan,

the honorable crush ng bayan, Rep. Christopher V.P. De Venecia, be recognized to avail of the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Honorable De Venecia of the Fourth District of Pangasinan is recognized for his privilege speech.

REP. DE VENECIA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, thank you so much to my distinguished colleague from Manila, the honorable Lady from Manila, Rep. Cristal Bagatsing.

Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon. I come before you today to speak about an issue that is admittedly very close to my heart on many levels, the issue of renewing ...

#### SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, I am very sorry, may I ask for a one-minute suspension of the session.

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

*It was 4:36 p.m.*

#### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 4:38 p.m., the session was resumed.*

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

Honorable De Venecia is once again recognized for his privilege speech.

#### PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. DE VENECIA

REP. DE VENECIA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My distinguished colleagues, again, good afternoon. Today is the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2020. At the turn of the decade, as we waited to welcome the year with perfect vision, open hearts and open arms, nobody could have predicted what was coming.

The year 2020 started off with a literal bang. In the first few weeks, we were greeted with the eruption of the Taal Volcano. Meanwhile, on the other side of the globe, international conflict was brewing between powerful nations. We lost a global icon, whom we honored in these distinguished halls, beloved by so many, when wildfires ravaged the Land Down Under.

We have barely picked ourselves up from these tragic events, especially with increasing globalization and the digital space bringing our cultural experiences closer together, when yet another disaster, the scale of

\* See ANNEX (printed separately)

which we have not experienced in this generation or the generations before, hit us—COVID-19, the deadly virus that has infected more than four million people across the world in a matter of months and have claimed the lives of over 300,000 individuals.

In the Philippines alone, the DOH has confirmed that as of May 18, 2020, 12,942 Filipinos have been infected, with a death toll of 837. Our hearts and prayers go out to the families of those whose lives were taken by this deadly pandemic.

As if these statistics and mortalities were not enough, COVID-19 has also brought devastating effects to our economy. Many sectors have undoubtedly been affected by this Enhanced Community Quarantine. By now, you must have seen the Moody's Heat Map and all the studies that show which industries are heavily, moderately and slightly impacted by this pandemic. The workers from the public transport sector were among the first followed by those from manufacturing, retail and other services. Tourism is also heavily hit as shared to us by Chairperson Sol Aragon in a privilege speech a few weeks ago.

Mr. Paulo Mercado, founder and president of the Creative Economy Council of the Philippines, a non-stock, non-profit organization dedicated to helping the Philippines become a globally competitive, creative economy, generated an impact analysis of COVID-19 on our creative industries, with "1" being low impact and fast recovery; and "5" being very high impact and very slow recovery. He scored: culture and natural heritage tours, based on revenues from visitor fees, as "4.1"; performance and celebration, deriving revenues from audience tickets, as "4.8"; and visual arts and artisan products, based on revenue from the sale of products, as "3.4," meaning, high impact and slow recovery. Apart from those mentioned by Mr. Mercado, many of our colleagues in the House of Representatives and numerous public figures have spoken up for and on behalf of many other sectors.

This is why I am here before you today, my dear colleagues, to shed light on the effects of the pandemic and the ECQ on a sector that is very close to my heart and that has been overlooked for the longest time in the country, the freelancers or the workers in the so-called gig economy. So, let me share a personal story before I get into this. I started out as a freelancer, I still am in a way. Before joining politics, I was a theater actor, then I became a director, and then an artistic director for a theater company, and then a producer for the stage. I must have taken after my grandfather Doc Jose Perez who founded Sampaguita Pictures, one of the country's most illustrious film companies during the golden age of Philippine cinema.

In my earlier years, I was a child actor and appeared in both TV and the silver screen. During college and in the last decade, I served as a columnist and editor

for a youth section in a national broadsheet. I wrote and contributed articles to various publications. I contributed content to books that got published and sold in bookstores nationwide. I also became a lifestyle editor for a major glossy.

In short, Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, I was a writer and also a theater artist, both of which fall under the category of a freelancer. I spent hours, sometimes days, perfecting how the words fell on the page or how the elements onstage came together. It was a passion that, with determination, became my proud profession. I was living the freelance life to the fullest and to this day, my closest friends are freelancers who, through their unique and unabashed skills and talents, are able to help shape, mold and sculpt the soul and consciousness of our nation and at times, even the national conversation. Case in point: Full House Theater Company's *Ang Huling El Bimbo*, featuring the songs of *The Eraserheads*, themselves freelancers, which streamed via Facebook and YouTube just last week and garnered millions of views, seven million when I last checked.

Or, let us go to many months back, the world-class Opening Ceremony of the 30<sup>th</sup> Southeast Asian Games that no less than our Speaker Alan Peter "Compañero" S. Cayetano spearheaded showcasing hundreds of world-class Filipino performers made possible by hundreds of production staff behind the scenes, and where no less than the President himself, Rodrigo Roa Duterte, was dancing to the popular OPM hit, *Manila*, another product or creative output of a group of freelancers, the OPM band *Hotdog*.

My dear colleagues, these freelancers, whether in music production, film, photography, visual arts, fashion, culinary arts, television, animation, literary arts, jewelry design and many others, are tireless, passionate and they work incredibly hard to perfect their crafts, deliver on their commitments to their clients with utmost professionalism and strive so hard to make ends meet for themselves and their families. They go from paycheck-to-paycheck and have managed to survive before the ECQ, percolating concentric, complex and hyphenated industries that power our creative economy.

I want to start by pointing out that the gig economy, to which our creative workers and freelancers belong, not only contributes to nation-building insofar as igniting the spirit and soul of our nation is concerned, but that their capacity for job and revenue generation makes them an important actor in both our local and national economies. During this ECQ, stakeholders from the live events sector banded together to form what is known as the National Live Events Coalition PH, a broad aggrupation of stakeholders who work in a sector that most likely organized your weddings when you tied the knot with your partners and your daughters' debuts when they came of age. They put up your children's parties and many other social events that

you and I daily frequented before this new normal. They mounted concerts that we attended, parties and festivals that your sons and daughters or you yourselves might have rocked out to while singing along to your favorite bands; their workers sang and played instruments while you dined in restaurants, bars and hotel lounges; and they produced your favorite theater productions, operas, ballets, dance, orchestral, jazz and cultural performances, comedy, improv, jazz that provided you with entertainment, astonishment, and inspiration on a regular Friday, Saturday or Sunday night, maybe even during the weekdays.

I recently gleaned from a study conducted by the National Live Events Coalition PH which was generated during the ECQ that their sector alone generated an estimated gross revenue of almost P200 billion in 2019 and early 2020. In addition, the live events sector generates about 500,000 events per year, provides employment to more than 316,700 individuals nationwide across 27,000 various business enterprises belonging to the MSME sector. This number is likely to be higher given the limitations of the study.

The newly formed League of Event and Activation Agencies of the Philippines or LEAP, one of the stakeholders in this broad coalition, conducted a quick online survey last April 30 among its set of stakeholders. Out of 68 respondents from their growing network, of which 50 are registered corporations, 15 are single proprietorships and three are partnerships, it was revealed that the subsector provided a diverse array of services to corporate clients that differ in scale and budget. From corporate and lifestyle events, media launches, concert production, conventions and expos or what is called MICE, fashion events, sporting events and the like, it was estimated to contribute P97 billion to an overall total of P200 billion based on 2019 statistics, of which P41-billion worth of income stands to be lost.

Of course, the live events sector is just a slice of the bigger pie known as the creative economy. In a position paper by the Film Development Council of the Philippines or FDCP, they noted that the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines or IPOPHL estimated that the income generated by creative industries, both core and non-core copyright-based, is at P689 billion. This included the film and audiovisual content industry which comprises about 11,000 micro, small and medium enterprises and eight major companies that provide employment to over 460,000 workers. The cinema sector alone, according to FDCP Chairperson Liza Diño-Seguerra, generated approximately P11.5 billion in gross box office revenues, while P3.65 billion was generated in audiovisual and related services in 2018.

According to a 2012 global study conducted by Ernst and Young, by 2020 around one out of five workers will be freelancers. In the Philippines that would be about 21.34 million Filipinos. This is not

discounting the fact that a percentage of workers within these industries is considered formal workers by these specific MSMEs. Another 2019 report by Payoneer on the Global Gig Economy Index showed that the Philippines was sixth in the world as the fastest-growing market for the gig economy, with a 25 percent growth in freelance earnings. Unfortunately, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the gig economy was already one of the most vulnerable sectors of our society.

Being a staunch advocate of culture and the arts of which most of its stakeholders are considered freelance, I have taken part in numerous congressional hearings tackling bills aimed at improving the welfare of workers from this sector. I know it is against our rules to talk about specific bills filed in the committee, so I will refrain from doing so. But I have heard first-hand the accounts of freelancers and captains of industry and their experiences of doing freelance or creative work in this country. Film Development Council of the Philippines Chairperson Liza Diño-Seguerra shared that 70 percent of those working in the audiovisual industry comprising film, television and other emerging digital media, are freelancers. She shared how often freelancers engaged in work with clients through a “kaliwaan” system, meaning to say, without the protection of a written contract.

Jenny Jamora herself, an industry leader in the performing arts has shared her experience of lending her voice to a voice acting gig and where she was not paid for three whole years. She said that in those instances where a written contract is available, hindi nakalagay sa kontrata kung kailan dapat bayaran ang isang freelancer. She shared how this has become a standard practice for voice actors and how a lot of freelancers have developed an attitude of not wanting to rock the boat for fear of being passed over for future projects. In short, discrimination. Ice Seguerra, one of the most established names in the music industry and former Chairperson of the National Youth Commission shared how, as a singer-songwriter, some of the songs he wrote which are his intellectual properties were used in a film without him receiving any compensation or equity whatsoever. He also shared an instance when minutes before performing in front of a live audience, the client told him that his payment would be delayed.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, there is a famous saying in the performing arts, “The show must go on.” In instances such as this, when hundreds of patrons and fans are out there waiting, when you have already dedicated so much time and effort into preparing for a show that will satisfy the audience, what other choice does an artist like Ms. Seguerra have other than to go on? The story shared by him and his wife, and Ms. Jamora are only some of the persisting problems besetting the workers in the gig economy, wherein workers whose tenure in this ECQ and transitioning into

the “no-touch” economy or the new normal has become very much fraught with uncertainty. Unfortunately, for freelancers and gig workers, they cannot rely on existing labor laws for protection as these do not apply to them due to the nature of freelance work.

The outbreak of the pandemic and the subsequent ECQ only exacerbated the already deplorable conditions of members of the gig economy. While the ECQ may have been necessary, it has unfortunately left many of our creative workers and freelancers without a viable source of income now and into the foreseeable future. Pundits are saying that the live events sector and creative industries that dabble in mass gatherings will be the last to recover among all, in an estimate of nine whole months to be exact, or what is the balance of 2020 and well into the early part of 2021, according to a survey conducted by the NEDA, during the ECQ for stakeholders within the MSMEs sector.

Broadway and the West End alone, Broadway being the theater community in New York, and West End being the theater community in London, have had rolling targets for reopening their theaters, with Broadway announcing a September reopening just a few weeks ago. But theater impresario and top theater producer Cameron Macintosh, who produced the likes of *Les Misérables*, *Phantom of the Opera* and *Miss Saigon* which once starred our very own Lea Salonga, herself a freelancer, predicts that on both sides of the Atlantic, theater probably will not come back until next year. So what I am saying, my dear colleagues, is that the insight of the top producer in theater in the whole world corroborates the findings of the survey that was rolled out by NEDA. Under the ECQ, community gatherings and face-to-face interactions are prohibited and these have effectively cancelled or postponed activities which members of the creative and freelance sector rely on for income and for livelihood. These have likewise affected a slew of industries like venues and rentals, restaurants and bars, transport and a whole value chain that is closely associated with the sector.

The National Live Events Coalition PH states that by the end of the year, over P130-billion worth of gross revenue from the live events sector would have been displaced due to COVID-19. They likewise project that the pandemic will affect more than 284,000 individuals in the country who earn their income from live events, including workers and talents from the music industry which mounts concerts. These data exclude the TV and film sectors which will also be adversely impacted by the new normal, especially those whose revenue streams include showing their outputs in brick and mortar cinemas nationwide.

Kung walang teatro, concerts at live events ay wala rin pong mga sinehan.

In a recent town hall meeting organized by the Film Development Council of the Philippines which I had

the privilege of attending, a representative from the Department of Health presented draft safety protocols for the sector which recommended that patrons in theaters and cinemas be seated at least two seats apart. This social distancing measure in the new normal, while very much necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and of course the welfare of our audiences and patrons, should be of top priority. Unfortunately, this adversely affects stakeholders in the live events sector by decimating the seating capacity of venues from which they generate a huge chunk of their revenue. For most performing arts companies and concert producers, that is almost 80 to 90 percent of their revenue streams, with the remaining balance divided between diminishing institutional support from corporate partners and hardly any from the government, and other minimal revenue streams like food concessionaires, souvenirs and merchandise.

In a 1,000-seater theater, possibly only 300 to 400 seats will be left. It has yet to be elucidated whether this rule applies not just horizontally but vertically as well, meaning, two seats in front of the patron and two seats behind the patron, that it should be vacant. So, my dear colleagues, if that were to be the case, then it would obliterate the seating capacities of theaters and movie houses by four-fifths. A 1,000-seater theater would be down to 200 seats for potential revenue. This is assuming that audiences even show up in the first place, given diminished consumer confidence, tightening of purse strings and uncertainty in the new normal, especially where mass gatherings is vital to an industry’s DNA.

If break even for most performing arts companies is 50 to 60 percent capacity sold of their theater, or for the likes of Ovation Productions, a concert production company whose purveyors shared with TV host David Celdran in a recent ANC interview, that they would need to sell at least 80 percent of their tickets just to break even, then why bother mounting shows and live events to begin with?

If these estimates and projections from the National Live Events Coalition PH do not bother us, then perhaps real-time data will. A survey conducted by the NEDA and the Department of Finance on MSMEs indicates that the arts, entertainment and recreation is the number one hardest-hit sector in terms of revenue loss with 82.3 percent average losses in number of sales.

I believe we have a slide presentation for that. Yes, there you go.

In terms of job loss, on the other hand, the arts, entertainment and recreation sector is the sixth hardest-hit sector with 39,446 jobs lost according to the same survey. Note the limitations of the NEDA’s survey based on who responded or who got forwarded the link during the ECQ, but the National Live Events Coalition PH lists more than 300,000 jobs being displaced for the live events sector alone.



According to [ilostmygig.ph](http://ilostmygig.ph), a private sector initiative that was organized to get a more diverse snapshot of the gig economy, as of May 11, 2020, more than P250-million pesos worth of income had been lost due to the pandemic. A total of 4,175 people were surveyed coming from various sectors such as arts, design, entertainment, media, retail and health and wellness. The biggest industries affected so far are arts and media, each with over 1,000 employees affected as per the survey which, again, had its own set of limitations. This key determinant of arts, entertainment and recreation being the heaviest hit is very much consistent with the findings of the DOF and the NEDA, as well as the study generated by the National Live Events Coalition PH.

What we have to realize altogether, my dear colleagues, Mr. Speaker, is that the data gathered by these entities, whether public or private, are not just statistics. Each one of these numbers represent a human being, a Filipino who has a family to feed, rent to pay and other expenses that must be met in order to survive on a day-to-day basis, not to mention surviving a pandemic and the scary and uncertain new normal that is already upon us. But do not take it from me. Take it from the words of one of the respondents to [ilostmygig.ph](http://ilostmygig.ph) survey herself. She says,

As a full-time artist with no definite monthly salary, relying solely on art sales and project commissions, I find my savings depleting very fast. I recently gave up the lease of my art studio since I cannot afford it anymore, on top of my basic 24-square meter home apartment where I live alone. In the middle of all of these, I am currently five months pregnant, with no assurance of when my OB doctor's clinic will be open again.

To make matters worse for our struggling creative workers and freelancers, the stress of not having enough support for their basic necessities and the lack of human interaction due to the quarantine have been causing a toll on their mental health and well-being as well. I am sure this is true for many Filipinos from other sectors.

If I may share another quote by one of the respondents:

Given all of these uncertainties, I find myself in a slow, downward spiral to bouts of anxiety and ceaseless worry that it has affected my concentration and had shelved any desire to create or to be productive. As the days go on, it gets harder to imagine how I will float financially and professionally in the next few months, and most of all, with the arrival of the baby in August 2020.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, this is the current state of the freelance workers or freelancers in the gig economy. As you have heard, even before COVID-19, this was a sector already vulnerable to economic difficulties and one that generally lacks welfare and protection and admittedly, regulation from the State. The spread of the pandemic has only made matters worse as they are now also deprived of their source of income and face numerous and insurmountable challenges in the new normal. Workers from this sector do not enjoy most benefits from the Social Amelioration Program currently being implemented by the State. Due to the gaps in our current laws and policies, these workers are in a policy limbo, they are not formal workers entitled to receive emergency employment assistance from DOLE through CAMP, and neither are they included in the list of priority recipients of the Social Amelioration Program of the DSWD.

There was an initial move by the DOLE to partner with the NCCA or the National Commission for Culture and the Arts to administer TUPAD to a few thousand stakeholders from the sector which actually number to the hundreds of thousands but alas, the DOLE's coffers have run dry and the partnership did not come into full fruition. Of course, we must recognize the good work that some of our government actors have been doing to assist members of the gig economy during this ECQ. My sincerest thanks and gratitude to the local government units that were magnanimous and encompassing in their food and cash assistance programs which may have reached the households of these freelancers and workers in the gig economy.

I would also like to commend the National Commission for Culture and the Arts under the leadership of Chairman Nick Lizaso for realigning some of its limited funds to provide P3 million to each of its 17 national sub-committees or a total of P54 million for distribution to stakeholders coming from architecture, literary arts, galleries, museums, cultural education, cinema and the dramatic artworks, among others. This was implemented in the form of a one-time cash assistance of P5, 000 per beneficiary as Pantawid during the quarantine, benefitting a total of 10,800 vulnerable stakeholders.

I must also commend the Film Development Council of the Philippines under the stellar and enterprising leadership of Chairperson Liza Diño-Seguerra for successfully realigning some of their funds for the Disaster Emergency Assistance and Relief Program or DEAR which provided P8,000 pesos cash assistance to some 2,000 workers in the audiovisual and live events sector.

Though in a letter that the Arts and Culture bloc of the Eighteenth Congress endorsed to the Speaker's office last March 24, of which the likes of Deputy

Speakers Loren Legarda and Dan S. Fernandez as well as John Marvin “Yul Servo” C. Nieto, Camille A. Villar, and Alfred D. Vargas were among its signatories, who themselves were freelancers and creative workers once upon a time during their stint as TV and movie personalities, the FDCP was requesting for an additional budget of P400 million to be able to provide assistance to 50,000 more displaced workers in the audiovisual sector. Like I said, in the live events sector alone, there are 300,000 displaced workers and in the audiovisual sector, there are 460,000 displaced workers. Both the financial assistance disbursed by the NCCA and the FDCP in their current capacities are welcome but they are not enough. We continue to call the attention of our House leadership here in Congress and the economic managers on this pressing matter.

While these initiatives are commendable, they are at the same time palliative and not enough to sustain freelancers through the two-month ECQ and most especially in the new normal until a vaccine is discovered or when consumer confidence is restored. I reiterate that a huge chunk of these workers will be affected and displaced in so far as: 1) the ban on mass gatherings and its impact on specific industries; 2) social distancing protocols that while very much necessary, would prove deleterious to their industry’s sustainability especially for those in live events; and 3. the contraction of consumer confidence across the board. If they are to continue in the new normal, we must institutionalize programs that will ensure their survival.

Allow me to present five ideas which we can explore to achieve this purpose:

First, we must put in place mechanisms whereby freelancers can be formally recognized by the State, and where they can be provided not only with dignity in view of their contributions to society but also welfare in and outside of this pandemic.

Yes, there was help from the NCCA and the FDCP but for lack of resources, it is not enough to cover their displacement in the last two months of the lockdown and possibly in the next six to eight months of the new normal. In fact, some of them have had to mobilize in their own capacity as private sector stakeholders to raise funds for their own survival.

Lockdown Cinema for example organized a highly successful fund-raising initiative for displaced film workers, streaming films and creating online content to generate funds. But like most who have migrated their content online, it has exposed them to the perils of online piracy and violation of intellectual property rights.

Open House, which this Representation helped convene, organized a two-month long online fund-raising initiative for displaced workers in the

performing arts, and I thank majority of our colleagues who heeded the call and helped out in this noble cause. I would also like to give special thanks to Rep. Cristal L. Bagatsing for her significant contribution to this initiative. Performing arts workers who were displaced include stage managers, dressers, lights men, sound engineers, artist-teachers and the like.

National Artist for Music Maestro Ryan Cayabyab and the convenors of Bayanihan Musikahan helped raise tremendous funds in partnership with the country’s top OPM artists not only for displaced workers in the music industry, but also for medical frontliners and for the urban poor of Metro Manila and its contiguous communities. Freelance concert workers organized Faith Over Fear to raise funds for their vulnerable and displaced stakeholders as well. Comedian Vice Ganda also launched a fund-raising initiative for stand-up comedians and the hundreds of freelance workers both onstage and off, and so many more that you have likely seen or heard of online.

Again, while these private sector initiatives are very much welcome and very much laudable—in fact, I salute these artists who galvanized their networks in the bayanihan spirit despite the uncertainty of their industries and livelihood in the new normal to be able to help the most vulnerable among them. We must shift the burden now to those mandated to serve and protect them, the State. In deliberating fiscal stimulus proposals, I reiterate the need for substantial wage subsidies and financial assistance to freelancers to help them cope with their displacement and loss of income in the new normal and to MSMEs that dabble in these industries.

My second proposal, Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, is that we must put in place capacity-building programs and support mechanisms aimed at assisting stakeholders of the gig economy. The State must help freelancers and even production outfits that rely on modes of mass gathering for income generation to upskill and retool, learn new ways of delivering content to their consumers and help them evolve or even elevate their existing business models and revenue streams, to gear up for the fourth industrial revolution and ignite a shift towards the so-called knowledge economy as mentioned in the Philippine Development Plan prepared by the NEDA during the start of the Duterte administration.

It was mentioned in a recent tourism hearing which I attended that digital tourism products are now being monetized in countries like Portugal. A recent CNN report also posited a boom in digital safari and wildlife content in South Africa that workers in the region have now been able to monetize in the interim while tourism is very much shut. Perhaps, the government through the DTI and Go Negosyo Centers, as well as the Department of Tourism, since many of these stakeholders are part of the value chain insofar as



cultural tourism and MICE tourism is concerned, perhaps they can provide or generate public sector-led or supported platforms whereby freelancers may promote and monetize their talents and creative services online, among other marketing and direct-to-consumer initiatives. If stakeholders in the creative economy were to venture into digital content production, perhaps the DTI or the Board of Investments can help connect them to markets both here and abroad. In FDCP's position paper, it was mentioned that in 2019, creative industries which include the film and audiovisual sector were key drivers of our export economy.

In the National Export Congress as mentioned in the paper, DTI Secretary Mon Lopez stressed that apart from making our creative talent pool more competitive and attractive in international markets, we should be pushing for more trade and intellectual property rights activities—again, a shift to the knowledge economy. Of course, we can always look into our own backyard for this kind of support. Maybe in the new normal, the State itself can become a market for this digital content that will evolve out of these creative disruptions. Case in point—upgrading DepEd's MAPEH curriculum by incorporating digital content through its DepEd Commons or multimodal learning upon the resumption of classes. Imagine music classes being conducted to all of our millions of learners by the likes of Ryan Cayabyab or peppered with insights from National Treasure Lea Salonga or dance classes being conducted by the likes of Lisa Macuja-Elizalde and other foremost stakeholders in the dance industry. Many other industry leaders who, in their shift to digital content during this new normal, can bolster the knowledge and skills of our learners in the public school system and especially the senior high school track which continues to be challenged with low enrollment in arts and design, as well as sports.

Which leads me, Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, to my third recommendation: for the State to galvanize our creative industries to embark on a carefully crafted communication campaign to restore and inspire consumer confidence not only for the creative economy and its network of freelancers, but across all industries that are heavily impacted by COVID-19. Communication is key for any stakeholder in the public sector. What a more powerful way to communicate than through culture and creative industries that help shape and mold our collective consciousness.

Fourth, we can explore the option of enacting regulatory forbearance as stakeholders within these industries' transition into the new normal. Considering the exigencies of the current circumstances, we must look into relaxing existing policies that directly and indirectly affect those belonging to this sector. One such policy that we may look into is the imposition of the amusement tax under the Local Government Code. While this is vital to local government revenues in the

pre-COVID-19 world, in the new normal, it becomes an additional burden on stakeholders who are just trying their best to recalibrate their business and to survive.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, we call on government agencies such as the Philippine Statistics Authority, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Philippine Institute of Development Studies, the DOF and NEDA, in collaboration with cultural agencies like the Film Development Council of the Philippines, the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts as well as the private sector, to ramp up efforts in collecting and consolidating data in order to generate a more vivid picture of our creative industries.

In the New Normal Committee hearing last Monday, NEDA Usec. Rosemarie Edillon mentioned the need for targeted interventions and the need for disaggregated data in order to determine what these targeted interventions would be. These could lead to more sound policies, industry roadmaps per subsector of our creative economy and generate responsive programs to cater to this rising star of our Philippine economy.

Professor Esguerra from the UP School of Economics argues that there are no official estimates on the size of the gig economy in the Philippines. While the surveys I cited earlier are a good start and it has to take a crisis of this magnitude for both the public and the private sectors to come together, there remains a pressing need to determine the creative industry's potency and innate power. Institutionalizing such data gathering initiatives will allow us to get a clearer picture of just how much revenue is being generated by the gig economy, how many jobs are created and are therefore displaced or affected by the ECQ and the new normal, its value chain and multiplier effects i.e. impacts on domestic and local tourism. In the end, how the public sector responds always boils down to numbers.

My dear colleagues, let me remind you that tourism, once upon a time, was only 5.8 percent of our country's GDP during 2000 to 2010. When Republic Act No. 9593 or the Tourism Act of 2009 was enacted, proper policies and sound programs were put in place to allow the tourism industry to flourish into what is now 12.9 percent of our country's GDP. Based on a study conducted by the Philippine Institute of Development Studies in 2014, creative industries was right around that same range—4.3 to 5.4 percent of the country's GDP in 2008 and 2009. Imagine what we can do for our creative economy and its ecosystem of freelancers if we move forward with creativity and foresight in the new normal as we start thinking about legacy of the Duterte administration.

Dear colleagues, I know that the COVID-19 pandemic and the ECQ have been hard on all of us. For those of us who are privileged enough to have had access to television and the Internet, we must remind ourselves,

who created the shows that we binged on in Netflix, iFlix, iWant, cable and free TV that kept us company amidst our isolation? Who made it possible to watch live streams of theater, ballet and opera productions that brought us entertainment and inspiration and even introspection? Who wrote the biographies, novels, fiction, articles and think pieces we read that stimulated our brains and transported us into worlds that we could not access any longer? Who created the paintings, the drawings, the comic books, the graphic novels and all the other visual media that inspired us to wonder and made us dream? Who composed the music that woke us up in the morning, kept us company through long afternoons and put us to slumber at night? Who developed the video games that connected our youth and the young at heart in cyberspace despite the physical boundaries of the quarantine?

The questions pile up but the answer is simple—freelancers, creative workers and workers in the gig economy. We relied on them during this quarantine for our mental health, for our wellness and yes, for our survival. We relied on them even long before the pandemic and we will continue to rely on them in this new normal. Now in their time of need, they rely on us as well.

I simply ask that this Body not forget them as we move forward in the new normal or as this legislative Body decides on its legacy for both the Eighteenth Congress and the Duterte administration, a gentle reminder that arts and culture is number eight in the 10-point Socio-Economic Agenda. This is an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, to build, build, build or in the words of our Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano, “to build back better” in order to reshape a world with, hopefully, our gig economy and creative industries at the forefront.

If South Korea has creative industries as among the top drivers of its economy, I believe the Philippines, given our creative potential and if properly galvanized with sound policies, programs, roadmaps and maybe even a seat at the big table, we can do the same, if not better. I mean, just look at all the YouTube videos of foreigners and global players all dancing to the song “Tala” by Sarah Geronimo which went viral. Meaning to say, the culture creative industry has the power to reach absolutely everyone.

As legislators, we have the capacity to make that difference. But as with everything else in this pandemic, time is of the essence. We must act with haste, but also with foresight. We cannot return, my dear colleagues, to business as usual. We have a unique opportunity to recreate our society with “business unusual”—a society where our knowledge economy, our freelancers and our creative industries are finally at the forefront.

Before I end, my dear colleagues, Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank all of you for even providing a listening

ear to all the messages, proposals and ideas contained in this privilege speech. Our office is very much open to work with you to craft measures that will help stimulate the creative economy. I am currently working on several proposals and will gladly take in as many coauthors as possible so that we can finally help the creative economy realize its fullest potential.

An ongoing joke for the longest time, as a stakeholder in the creative industry, I myself, is that if the Philippines could pay for all of its utang or debt with talent alone, then we might already have been long in the green. Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, I believe that is true. We have so much creative talents and a lot of them have had to undergo brain drain or go abroad for lack of opportunities here. A lot of the stakeholders in that industry have had to rely on their own capacity to be able to be successful with hardly any support from the government and the State na sometimes po, nakakasagabal pa sila.

Sana po, my dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, pakinggan naman natin ang creative economy, ang creative industries, at sana ay huwag rin nating kalimutan ang freelancers na malaking parte ng ating buhay at ng ating ekonomiya.

Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, thank you and good afternoon.

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

REP. BAGATSING. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Lady from Bataan, Hon. Geraldine B. Roman, for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Hon. Geraldine Roman from the First District of Bataan is recognized for her interpellation.

REP. ROMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Can you hear me? I would just like to confirm.

REP. DE VENECIA. Yes, my dearest beloved colleague, I can hear you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Please proceed.

REP. ROMAN. Thank you very much. I would like to beg your indulgence. My video is not working, but I would like to ask the brilliant and talented Representative from the Fourth District of Pangasinan if he would yield to a few comments and questions.

REP. DE VENECIA. Gladly.

REP. ROMAN. Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I would like to congratulate my dear colleague for what is actually a firsthand testimony of the current situation of a much-neglected sector in our economy and in society. Hindi po lingid sa ating kaalaman, kapag nagsalita po ang Kinatawan ng Ikaapat na Distrito ng Pangasinan, ito po ay may hugot sapagkat siya po ay galing din sa sektor na ito. Isa po siyang talented theater director. Mahilig po siya sa musika at talaga naman pong may pinanggagalingan at mayroong nilalaman ang kaniyang sinabi.

I want to thank the Representative from the Fourth District of Pangasinan for calling our attention to the plight of a much-neglected sector and this is the sector of the creative and performing arts as well as the events organization, more commonly known as the gig and the creative industries. Sa matagal na panahon po ay napabayaang po itong sektor na ito sapagkat ito po ang malungkot na katotohanan—this sector is considered as nonessential. The sad thing is that hindi lamang po ito nako-consider as nonessential in this time of the COVID crisis, pati na rin po noong panahon na bago pa tayo magkaroon ng krisis dahil sa COVID-19 ay napapabayaang na rin po ang sektor na ito pero alam ko na lahat sa atin ay kinikilala natin ang kahalagahan ng sektor na ito.

Sabi nga sa Bibliya: “Not by bread alone does man live,” but of course, I want to continue by saying, “We also have to feed our souls.” We have to be more complete human beings by feeding our spirits through the arts, through culture, and this is only possible if the industry, for the longest time, have been reflected.

Nagpapasalamat din ako kay Congressman De Venecia sapagkat ang malaking bahagi ng gigs at saka ng creative industries belong to the LGBT sector. Siyempre, ang mga freelancers po natin, marami sa kanila ang mga designers, mga nag-aayos ng ating buhok at nagpapaganda sa atin at mga scriptwriters. Marami sa kanila sa ngayon ay walang trabaho at ang malungkot po, sila po ay mga breadwinners at hindi po sila or they were not even considered as beneficiaries of our SAP Program po. So nais ko sanang tanungin sa ating kasamahan kung mayroong siyang figures na eksakto, more or less, diyang sa mga nabanggit niya, kung ilan ang galing sa LGBT community na naapektuhan at alam ko marami talaga sila. Mayroon ka po bang figures o statistics dito?

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, thank you so much for that question, my distinguished and beloved colleague from Bataan. Unfortunately, that data have not been disaggregated from the figures that I presented. Definitely, it is worth investigating and looking into, but offhand, I know for a fact that a lot of our beloved members of the LGBTQIA+ sector percolate these industries of the creative economy. It seems to be some kind of a—it is sort of like a summation of their creative

potential to be in such industries that allow them to express themselves and their creative gig.

As we call on the NEDA, Mr. Speaker, and the Philippine Institute of Development Studies, the DOF and the DTI, in partnership with the FDCP and NCCA to create these studies, perhaps it can be included as a criterion or a data item to also be able to disaggregate and extract which of these members are part of the LGBTQIA+ community so that we could also put into place the policies that will respond to that sector as well. They are also in very much need of help and support from our government.

REP. ROMAN. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Go.

REP. ROMAN. Yes, I would like to join my colleague in appealing for the adoption of the measures that he just mentioned, and I just would like to remind also our colleagues na hindi po panghabang-buhay ang krisis ng COVID-19; at kung papabayaang natin ang mga sektor na ito na hindi sila makaka-survive, ano na lang po ang mangyayari sa atin kapag na-normalize na ang ating mga buhay?

Personally, I cannot imagine a life without music, the arts, the performing arts, ang ating mga events. Alam po ninyo, ang sektor na ito ang nagpapagawa ng ating mga buhay na mas maging memorable, more bearable and more beautiful. Muli po, nais kong i-congratulate ang aking kaibigan mula sa Ikaapat na Distrito ng Pangasinan at ako ay nagpapasalamat sa kaniyang pagtawag ng atensyon sa isang sektor na napapabayaang po natin. Sana po ay samantalang natin ang pagkakataong ito upang bigyan sila ng karampatang suporta patungo na rin po, sa pagtatapos ng krisis na ito, na mabigyan po sila ng due recognition.

Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker. Maraming salamat po kay Cong. Toff De Venecia.

REP. DE VENECIA. Maraming salamat din.

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

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of Honorable De Venecia to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The privilege speech of Honorable De Venecia, along with the interpellation of Honorable Roman, is referred to the Committee on Rules.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. CRISOLOGO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that we recognize Rep. Greg G. Gasataya from the Lone District of Bacolod City for his privilege speech.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Hon. Greg Gasataya from the Lone District of Bacolod City is recognized for his privilege speech.

#### PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. GASATAYA

REP. GASATAYA. The *(inaudible)* ... collective privilege, Mr. Speaker, allow me to be direct on this urgent matter in pursuit of our constitutional duty to promote the rights and welfare of our workers, Mr. Speaker.

This stems from the implementation of the Department of Labor and Employment's COVID-19 or CAMP Program for affected workers that has triggered a lot of questions, reactions and if I may be frank, Mr. Speaker, pointed accusations. Mr. Speaker, I see this however as reactions from worried and anxious Filipinos struggling to survive amid the crisis. This cannot really be any other thing but pleas for help.

During the past few weeks, Mr. Speaker, affected workers and their employers, those who have less and those who have none at all, have reached out to this Representation. Allow me very briefly, Mr. Speaker, to sum up what I have gathered.

In Western Visayas, out of 3,716 establishments that have applied for the DOLE's cash assistance program, only 1,418 were covered by the program due to the insufficiency of funds according to DOLE Region VI, Mr. Speaker. Employees here in Bacolod City, on the other hand, informed this Representation that most of their affected workers voluntarily disclosed the information to barangay workers about their application to avail of the DOLE's cash subsidy program, thus making themselves not qualified of availing themselves of Social Amelioration Program, Mr. Speaker. It is very unfortunate that some of the affected establishments which did not qualify for the DOLE's CAMP, were informed only two weeks ago about the denial of their applications. Mr. Speaker, this made employers of small-scale businesses unable to apply for the Department of Finance's Small Business Wage Subsidy Program, the application for which ended last May 8, Mr. Speaker, not to mention that there were also those who were disqualified from the said program of the Department of Finance.

Apparently, Mr. Speaker, there are affected workers who have not availed of anything and were not able to receive the badly needed help from the government which is evident and undeniable. In Bacolod City alone, Mr. Speaker, and in the province of Negros Occidental,

about 60,000 applications were denied due to lack of funds, Mr. Speaker.

So as part of our oversight functions in the implementation of the Bayanihan To Heal As One Act, may I humbly propose the following:

First, Mr. Speaker, that national government agencies should streamline emergency assistance or subsidy programs, making them easier and less confusing for those who want to avail of the much-needed help, along with a more responsive system to address queries and disseminate information regarding applications, Mr. Speaker.

Second, that an automatic referral system be established that would allow the agency which initially denied the application for assistance to automatically forward such application to another agency which possesses the same capacity and mandate to extend the assistance sought by the affected applicant. Meaning, Mr. Speaker, kung nag-apply ka na sa DOLE, na-forward sa DOF, that should already be considered as an application and the DOF will only require from the applicant additional documents and he need not apply again, as this is a very strenuous process, Mr. Speaker.

As we continue to listen to the plea and cries for help of our brethren and search for immediate solutions to their problems, Mr. Speaker, I so humbly submit.

Madamo gid nga salamat, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me and maayong gabii sa tanan-tanan.

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

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mr. Speaker, I move that the privilege speech of the honorable Rep. Greg Gasataya be referred to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The speech of Hon. Greg Gasataya of the Lone District of Bacolod City is referred to the Committee on Rules.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we close the Privilege Hour.

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

The Privilege Hour is closed.

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mr. Speaker, I move to immediately transmit to the Senate the House bills approved on Third Reading today, namely: House Bills Nos. 5083, 6137, 6139, 5855, 2397, 4939, 5027, 6441, 6442, 6443, 6445, 6446, 6447, 6448, 6467, 6491 and 6492.

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

#### SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. CRISOLOGO. I move to suspend the session, Mr. Speaker.

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

*It was 5:44 p.m.*

#### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 5:57 p.m., the session was resumed.*

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### CONCURRENCE WITH SENATE AMENDMENTS TO H.B. NO. 4581

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mr. Speaker, we are in receipt of a message from the Senate informing the House that the Senate passed with amendments House Bill No. 4581, entitled: AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO GOLDEN BROADCAST PROFESSIONAL, INC. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8025 ENTITLED "AN GRANTING THE GOLDEN BROADCAST PROFESSIONAL, INC. FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, MAINTAIN AND OPERATE A STATION FOR FM RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING IN THE ISLAND OF MINDANAO" AND EXPANDING ITS COVERAGE TO THE ENTIRE PHILIPPINES.

We have been advised that the Committee on Legislative Franchises, the Sponsor of the said Bill,

as well as the author thereof, has no objection to the amendments introduced by the Senate.

In accordance with our rules, Mr. Speaker, I move that we concur with the Senate amendments to House Bill No. 4581.

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

#### CHANGE OF REFERRAL OF CERTAIN MEASURES

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mr. Speaker, I move for the change of referral of the following measures:

House Resolution No. 846, from the Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability to the Committees on Legislative Franchises, and Good Government and Public Accountability; and

House Resolution No. 853, from the Committee on Legislative Franchises to the Committees on Legislative Franchises, and Good Government and Public Accountability

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn the session until Tuesday, May 26, 2020, at four o'clock in the afternoon.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). In solidarity with our Muslim brothers and sisters, the House will not be holding session on Monday, May 25. We are adjourned until May 26, Tuesday, at 4:00 p.m.

*It was 5:59 p.m.*

