



COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Agriculture and Food	Substitute Bill to HBs 10, 166, 255, 854, 1242, 1417, 2434, 2522, 2549, 2552, 2610, 2657, 3192, 3299, 3223, 4346 & 4880	Speaker Cayetano, Reps. Tan (A.), Cullamat, Aglipay, Torres-Gomez, Enverga, Canama, Nograles (J.J.), Deputy Speaker Villafuerte, Reps. Garin (S.), Jalosjos, Dy (I. P.), Suarez (A.), Deputy Speaker Romero, Reps. Noel, Tambunting, and Rodriguez	Declaring the coconut levy assets as a trust fund, providing for its management and utilization, authorizing the Privatization and Management Office to dispose the coconut levy assets	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga (1st District, Quezon), will deliberate further on the substitute bill in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Enverga said that the Committee wants to come up with a law on the management of the coconut levy funds that will be acceptable to both the executive and the stakeholders to avoid what happened in the previous Congress when a bill with similar subject matter was vetoed by President Rodrigo Duterte.</p> <p>The coconut levy fund came from levies, taxes, charges, and other fees collected from coconut farmers, planters, millers, and other similar groups during the administration of former President Ferdinand Marcos.</p> <p>Replying to the query of Rep. Gabriel Bordado Jr. (3rd District, Camarines Sur), Rep. Sharon Garin (Party-List, AAMBIS-OWA) said that the President vetoed the proposed Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Trust Fund Act that was approved in the 17th Congress because the bill provides perpetual nature of the trust fund, it lacks vital safeguards that will ensure that small coconut farmers will ultimately benefit from the law and not the wealthy coconut landowners, and it grants broad powers to the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), among others.</p> <p>Rep. Garin, who chaired the technical working group (TWG) that deliberated on the substitute bill, said that the latest version of the coconut levy fund bill provides social protection programs for the marginalized coconut farmers which include health care benefits, scholarship grant, insurance coverage, and livelihood opportunities.</p> <p>Among the recommendations made by the resource persons on the Substitute Bill were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include in the definition of the term "Coconut Farmer" a farmer-owner of coconut farm with more than five hectares;• Increase the number of the PCA Board from 10 to 13 members;• Reorganize the PCA;• Audit all coconut levy assets and determine their present value; and• Provide credit facilities to coconut farmers. <p>The Committee requested the following agencies to submit documents required from them:</p>

Continuation... Agriculture and Food				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission on Audit (COA) - audit report on the coconut levy fund; • Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) - present market value of the coconut levy assets; and • Department of Finance (DOF) – plan on how the Bureau of Treasury (BTr) will transfer P5 billion to the Coconut Levy Trust Fund account in a period of five years. The BTr holds a portion of coconut levy cash assets as a special account in the General Fund and as an escrow fund.
Economic Affairs	HBs 6163 & 6291	Reps. Garin (S.) and Rodriguez	Amending Sections 3, 8, and 9 of RA 9856, otherwise known as the Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) Act of 2009 (by strengthening the reinvestment policy of the government)	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Sharon Garin (Party-List, AAMBIS-OWA), directed the Secretariat to prepare the substitute bill to HB 6163 subject to style and in consolidation with HB 6291.</p> <p>Expressing their support for the bills were the Department of Finance (DOF), Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE), and the Capital Market Development Council (CMDC).</p> <p>DOF Undersecretary Antonette Tionko said that the proposed bill would boost the country's real estate industry.</p>
	HBs 6162 & 6292	Reps. Garin (S.) and Rodriguez	Reorganizing and converting the Insurance Commission (IC) into a collegial body, amending Sections 437, 438, and 439 of RA 10607, otherwise known as the Insurance Code, as amended	<p>The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to refine HB 6162 in consolidation with HB 6292.</p> <p>Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo (2nd District, Marikina City) was designated as TWG Chair.</p> <p>The bills seek to change the structure of the IC by transforming it into a collegial body responsible for setting policies and guidelines and exercising administrative and adjudicatory powers which would require a majority vote of its members.</p> <p>IC Deputy Commissioner Erickson Balmes explained that a majority ruling is not necessary in IC's exercise of its administrative and adjudicatory functions, as it would only lengthen the process. However, he said it is best to foster collegial consultation and decision on policy matters. He also suggested that the Committee consult insurance companies and health maintenance organizations (HMOs), who are under the supervision of the IC, on their comments on the bills.</p> <p>Philippine Insurers and Reinsurers Association Executive Director Michael Rellosa agreed that a majority rule on all the decisions of the IC would be time consuming. On the proposal that IC be placed under the supervision of Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), Rellosa said that it might affect the status of IC as an independent body and it will have severe policy implications noting that the banking industry and the insurance industry supervise distinct industries and operate under separate sets of rules.</p>

Continuation... Economic Affairs				<p>Likewise, Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) Legal Officer Arnold Frane commented that placing the IC under the supervision of the BSP governor, as proposed, would also undermine the operational independence and autonomy of the AMLC as the financial intelligence unit mandated to implement the Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2001.</p> <p>The AMLC is composed of the Governor of the BSP as Chairperson, and the Commissioner of the IC and the Chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) as members. They act unanimously on matters needing their decision.</p> <p>Rep. Lorenz Defensor (3rd District, Iloilo) asked the body to evaluate whether or not the proposed law is necessary considering the issues raised by the IC and other resource persons.</p> <p>Meanwhile, DOF Undersecretary Antonette Tionko and BSP Deputy Director Jocelyn Angelita Angeles both support the bills but promised to submit their position papers.</p> <p>All other resource persons were requested to submit their respective position papers on the bills.</p>
Games and Amusements	HR 221	Rep. Zarate	Investigation into the proliferation of Philippine offshore gaming operators or POGOs, and its effects on the Filipino people, the local economy, and national security	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Eric Go Yap (Party-List, ACT-CIS), will continue its inquiry relative to the issues raised in HRs 221 and 497 in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Yap said there is a need to seriously look into various issues arising from or connected with POGO operations in the country such as the huge amount of uncollected taxes from POGOs, violation of immigration and labor laws, and kidnapping and human trafficking cases.</p> <p>Both Reps. Precious Hipolito Castelo (2nd District, Quezon City), author of HR 497, and Sarah Jane Elago (Party-List, KABATAAN), who sponsored HR 221 in behalf of its author, also recommended the conduct of an investigation into the alleged proliferation of prostitution dens catering to POGO workers.</p> <p>On the issue of uncollected taxes, Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) Acting Assistant Vice President Jose Tria Jr. apprised the body of the existence of an inter-agency task force that cracks down on POGOs, their workers, and their service providers that have not been paying the correct taxes or have not paid at all. The inter-agency task force is led by the Department of Finance (DOF) and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) with the support of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), Bureau of Immigration (BI), PAGCOR, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and the special economic zones that host these online gaming corporations.</p>
	HR 497	Rep. Castelo	Investigation into the proliferation of prostitution dens catering exclusively to POGO workers, with the end view of proposing remedial measures to curb the presence of illegal immigrants in our country	

Continuation... Games and Amusements				<p>Tria added that PAGCOR will shut down the operations of POGOs found by the BIR to be avoiding the payment of taxes.</p> <p>Replying to the query of Deputy Speaker Prospero Pichay Jr. (1st District, Surigao del Sur) on the number of illegal POGOs in the country, Tria answered that there are only 61 licensed POGOs in the country while there are 108 identified illegal POGO sites.</p> <p>Several Congressmen asked about the necessity of hiring a third party auditor to audit the POGO operations. Commission on Audit (COA) State Auditor Rayziell Verunque, the team leader of the group that conducted an audit on GlobalComRCI, the third-party auditor for offshore gaming, said that COA recommended to PAGCOR to reevaluate the need for a third-party audit platform. She also said that PAGCOR has other options to check the Gross Gaming Revenue (GGR) derived from POGO operations.</p> <p>Tria also disclosed that GlobalComRCI is being paid at a rate of 10% of PAGCOR's 2% of the GGR and that the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) is P6 billion for the 10-year duration of the contract with a cap of P600 million a year.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Philippine National Police (PNP) Deputy Director for Operations Elmer Cabrerros reported that there are 10 kidnapping incidents involving foreign nationals, with six cases already filed in court. He also relayed that currently there are no available data specific to crimes committed by Chinese nationals working in the POGO industry.</p> <p>For human trafficking violations connected to POGOs, the PNP Legal Service reported that 60 foreign nationals were arrested and five cases were filed in court.</p> <p>BI Deputy Commissioner Aldwin Alegre said that foreign nationals with possible immigration violations were turned over to the Bureau for evaluation. He said that foreign nationals with no pending cases in Philippine courts may be deported, otherwise they will be detained. He also informed the Committee that an investigation is being conducted on a BI employee allegedly giving special treatment to a Chinese POGO worker. The incident was captured on video.</p> <p>Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda (2nd District, Albay) underscored the need to establish safety and health measures in the course of the government's monitoring of POGOs, especially with the outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).</p>
Justice	HBs 3124, 4609, 5532 & 5914	Reps. Tejada, Flores, and Mariano-Hernandez	Creating additional branches of the Regional Trial Court (RTC) and Municipal Trial Court (MTC) in certain parts of the country, amending for the	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Vicente "Ching" Veloso III (3 rd District, Leyte), approved the Committee Reports on HBs 3124, 4609, 5532 and 5914.

Continuation... Justice			purpose Batas Pambansa Blg. 129, otherwise known as the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980, as amended, and appropriating funds therefor	
	HBs 5006 & 5063	Reps. Aragonés and Paduano	Granting Filipino citizenship to Stanley Lee and Chen Tian Man, respectively	The Committee approved HBs 5006 and 5063.
	HB 2643	Rep. Ferrer (J.M.)	Recognizing Filipino citizens born abroad of Filipino mothers or fathers	<p>The Committee will deliberate further on HB 2643 in its next meeting.</p> <p>Department of Justice (DOJ) State Counsel Paulito de Jesus and Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Assistant Secretary Neil Frank Ferrer sought clarification on the real objective of the proposed law. De Jesus explained that the 1987 Philippine Constitution already provides that as long as either of the parents is a Filipino citizen, their children are, by birth, Filipino citizens and shall enjoy the same rights and privileges as any Filipino following the principle of <i>jus sanguinis</i>. De Jesus added that children born of parents residing abroad who wish to be acknowledged as Filipino citizens can apply for a certificate of recognition with the Bureau of Immigration (BI).</p> <p><i>Jus sanguinis</i> (right of blood) is a legal principle applied in acquiring Filipino citizenship, which means that, at birth, an individual acquires the nationality of his or her natural parents. (Source: immigration.gov.ph)</p> <p>Rep. Juliet Marie Ferrer (4th District, Negros Occidental), author of HB 2643, explained that her bill seeks to recognize as Filipino citizen any individual born abroad whose mother or father is a Filipino. What concerns Rep. Ferrer is that the certificate of recognition issued by the BI is not being recognized by some government agencies and does not grant them full civil, economic, and political rights.</p> <p>Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) Senior State Solicitor Fenicar Tabao said that there are several laws, both judicial and administrative, that covers naturalization.</p> <p>BI representative Atty. Estanislao Canta said that, under the Philippine Immigration Act, aliens have to be registered with the BI in order to be issued an Alien Certificate of Registration (ACR). This law authorizes the BI to cancel the ACR if warranted. However, Canta said the cancellation of ACR by reason of naturalization or acquisition of citizenship has to be affirmed by the Secretary of Justice. He explained that the BI recognition is not a grant of citizenship, but merely a confirmation of an already existing Filipino citizenship.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the Committee noted the absence of a representative from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) and agreed to issue a strongly-worded letter to the PSA directing it to explain its failure to send a representative to attend the Committee's meeting despite due notice.</p>

Poverty Alleviation	Consolidated Bill on HBs 4793, 4907 & 6100	Reps. Bolilia, Nieto, and Malapitan	Declaring October 31 of every year as National Savings and Financial Literacy Day	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Dale "Along" Malapitan (1 st District, Caloocan City), approved the consolidated bill and the corresponding Committee Report.
	HB 184	Deputy Speaker Romero	Mandating the national government to increase the Unconditional Cash Transfer (UCT) Program to P500 to benefit 22 million poor Filipinos	<p>The Committee will deliberate further on HB 184 in another meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Juliet Marie Ferrer (4th District, Negros Occidental) sponsored HB 184 in behalf of the author, Deputy Speaker Michael Romero PhD. (Party-List, 1-PACMAN). According to Rep. Ferrer, the bill seeks to increase the cash grant under the UCT Program from P200 to P500 per month.</p> <p>The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) expressed their support for the bill.</p> <p>Department of Finance's (DOF) Strategy, Economics and Results Group Director Mitch Abdon explained that the UCT is only a temporary mitigating measure under RA 10963 or the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Act aimed at cushioning the impact of the increase in excise taxes on the marginalized sector. The implementation of the UCT Program will end in December 2020.</p> <p>Abdon also said that the UCT cash grant was already increased from P200 in 2018 to P300 in 2019. According to Abdon, increasing the cash grant to P500 per month will entail a huge fiscal requirement amounting to P132 billion per year covering 22 million households.</p> <p>For its next meeting, the Committee will invite as possible sources of funds the following agencies: Aurora Pacific Economic Zone Authority (APECO), Authority of the Freeport of Bataan (AFAB), and Cagayan Economic Zone Authority (CEZA).</p>
	HB 1652	Rep. Cabochan	Creating the National Livelihood Development Council (NLDC) thereby institutionalizing the Livelihood Movement of the Philippines	<p>The Committee, agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to reconcile the comments and recommendations of the resource persons and to draft the substitute bill to HB 1652.</p> <p>Rep. Manuel Cabochan III (Party-List, MAGDALO), author of HB 1652, said that his bill seeks to establish the NLDC which will be mandated to integrate all livelihood initiatives of the government, formulate comprehensive national livelihood development programs, and monitor and evaluate the implementation of livelihood programs, among others.</p> <p>He added that the bill empowers the people by developing their skills and knowledge so they can engage in livelihood activities to improve their quality of life.</p> <p>The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Agrarian</p>

Continuation... Poverty Alleviation				<p>Reform (DAR), and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) expressed their support for the bill.</p> <p>DILG Executive Assistant Robert Dominic Echiverri said that the creation of the NLDC will streamline the government's livelihood programs and make them accessible to the people at the grassroots level.</p> <p>On the other hand, National Economic and Development Authority's (NEDA) Social Development Director Myrna Asuncion said that what the country needs is a comprehensive livelihood program and not the creation of another government instrumentality. She added that existing mechanisms should be improved and duplication of functions by implementing agencies must be addressed. She informed the body that the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) is developing a livelihood framework and that it is better to wait for its completion prior to the Committee's consideration of the bill.</p> <p>The resource persons were requested to submit their respective position papers on the bill.</p>
	HB 1964	Rep. Cabochan	Creating a special poverty alleviation fund to be used to finance school and community-based supplemental feeding programs and related poverty alleviation efforts using the minimum basic needs approach in the poorest of the poor communities in the country	<p>The Committee agreed to archive HB 164.</p> <p>Rep. Cabochan, author of HB 1964, said that the existing National Feeding Program under RA 11037 or the <i>Masustansyang Pagkain para sa Batang Pilipino</i> Act already addresses the intent of the bill.</p> <p>The Department of Finance (DOF) averred that a law creating a special fund for feeding programs is unnecessary because school and community-based feeding programs are existing and well-funded.</p>
Public Order and Safety jt. w/ National Defense and Security	Draft Consolidated Bill on HBs 551, 2082, 2847, 3103, 3413 & 5710	Reps. Biazon, Nograles (J.J.), Deputy Speakers Villafuerte and Romero, Reps. Tulfo and Bolilia	Defining, preventing, and penalizing terrorist acts, repealing for the purpose RA 9372, otherwise known as the "Human Security Act of 2007" and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Joint Committee, co-chaired by Rep. Narciso Bravo Jr. (1st District, Masbate), Chair of the Committee on Public Order and Safety, and Rep. Raul "Boboy" Tupas (5th District, Iloilo), Chair of the Committee on National Defense and Security, will deliberate further on the draft consolidated bill in its next meeting.</p> <p>In today's meeting, the Committee discussed the contentious issues relating to Sections 3 (Definition of Terms), 4 (Terrorist Acts), and 9 (Recruitment to and Membership in a Terrorist Group).</p> <p>After thorough deliberations, the Committee agreed to adopt the provisions in Sections 3 and 4.</p> <p>With regard to Section 9, Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA) suggested deleting the phrase "or organized for the purpose of engaging in terrorist acts." This, according to Rep. Zarate, may be used to apprehend and penalize individuals or groups suspected of</p>

Continuation... Public Order and Safety jt. w/ National Defense and Security				<p>engaging in terrorist acts without due process. He added that the phrase could already be deleted because Section 9 already imposes penalty to any person who shall voluntarily join any organization, association or group of persons knowing that such organization is proscribed under Section 24 of the bill or the United Nations Security Council-designated terrorist organizations.</p> <p>Section 24 (Proscription of Terrorist Individuals, Organizations, Associations, or Group of Persons) provides for the declaration of individuals and organizations as terrorist and outlawed groups by the concerned Regional Trial Court.</p> <p>Reps. Arlene Brosas (Party-List, GABRIELA), France Castro (Party-List, ACT TEACHERS), and Zarate also questioned the language of the definition of "Terrorist Acts" expressing the view that the definition was too broad.</p> <p>Muntinlupa City Rep. Rozzano Rufino Biazon and Rep. Jericho Jonas Nograles (Party-List, PBA) explained that the definition also provides that "terrorist acts shall not cover the legitimate exercises of the freedom of expression and to peaceably assemble, including but not limited to engaging in advocacy, protest, dissent or mass action where a person does not have the intention to use or urge the use of force or violence or cause harm to others."</p> <p>Rep. Brosas manifested that HB 482 be excluded from the draft consolidated bill and that her name and that of all her co-authors of HB 482 be deleted from the draft consolidated bill's list of authors. She stressed that the provisions of the draft consolidated bill are inconsistent with the group's ideology. Aside from Rep. Brosas, the following House Members are co-authors of HB 482: BAYAN MUNA Party-List Reps. Zarate, Ferdinand Gaité, and Eufemia Cullamat; Rep. Castro; and Rep. Sarah Jane Elago (Party-List, KABATAAN).</p> <p>HB 482 seeks to repeal RA 9372 in its entirety, which the authors think has overly broad provisions that already threaten the people's fundamental rights and civil liberties.</p>
Revision of Laws	HB 2778	Rep. Rodriguez	Declaring the Chinese New Year a special nonworking public holiday in the Philippines	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Cheryl Deloso-Montalla (2 nd District, Zambales), approved HB 2778.
	HB 6179	Minority Leader Abante	Making the 16 th day of January a special working holiday to be known as the National Baptist Day	The Committee approved HB 6179.
	HBs 1550 & 2764	Reps. Garbin and Rodriguez	Creating a Civil Code Commission to implement the re-codification of all existing civil laws of the Philippines, defining its composition and functions, and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to consolidate HBs 1550 and 2764.</p> <p>Rep. Rufus Rodriguez (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City) was designated as TWG chair.</p>

Continuation... Revision of Laws				<p>According to Rep. Rodriguez, author of HB 2764, the codification of all existing civil laws will involve the review and consolidation of these laws to be able to detect and correct inconsistencies towards a more effective implementation of the laws.</p> <p>Most of the resource persons present during the meeting expressed their support for the bills with some of them expressing their respective comments and recommendations.</p> <p>Philippine Judicial Academy (PHILJA) Commercial Law Department Chair Jose Vitug and PHILJA Chancellor Adolfo Azcuna said the proposed codification will update or get rid of obsolete laws to respond better to the needs of the times, as well as harmonize laws which are no longer consistent with existing laws. One example mentioned that needs to be harmonized are the Revised Penal Code and several other laws amending the Code.</p> <p>Former Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Chair and University of the Philippines (UP) College of Law Professor Teresita Herbosa also cited various laws amending the Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA) which are not updated and consolidated, causing confusion among the people.</p>
Senior Citizens (Special Committee)	HBs 88, 241, 1565, 2210, 2480, 2541, 2868, 2873, 3038, 3097, 3229, 3525, 3640, 4057, 4669, 4650, 4948, 5056, 5122, 5173, 5632, 5735, 5926 & 6038	Reps. Garbin, Zarate, Angara, Aragones, Tan (A.), Daza, Tupas, Fortuno, Suansing (E.), Revilla, Nieto, Ty, Bagatsing, Lacson-Noel, Deputy Speaker Villafuerte, Reps. Dy (F.), Agabas, Olivarez, Deputy Speaker Duterte, Reps. Guico, Lim, and Quimbo	Expanding the coverage and increasing the amount of social pension to senior citizens under RA 7432, as amended by RA 9994, otherwise known as the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Francisco Datol, Jr. (Party-List, SENIOR CITIZENS), agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to deliberate further on the 24 bills.</p> <p>Rep. Datol noted the communications received by the Committee from various Sanggunians proposing a review and amendment of RA 9994 specifically on the monthly social pension of senior citizens.</p> <p>Resource persons from the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), as well as representatives from the Office of the Senior Citizens Affairs (OSCA) in various localities of the country, expressed their support for the bills.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Ferdinand Hernandez (2nd District, South Cotabato) asked the DSWD on its budget allocation for social pension for years 2019 and 2020. DSWD's Program Management Bureau Director Wilma Naviamos answered that the budget allocations for 2019 and 2020 are P22.13 billion and P23 billion, respectively.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Hernandez raised the issue on the delay in the distribution of social pension and the delisting of some senior citizens as beneficiaries. Naviamos attributed the delay to the directive of the President to re-validate the beneficiaries as there were cases of unqualified beneficiaries continuously receiving pensions. She also cited the lack of manpower and proposed the enactment of a law granting a</p>

Continuation... Senior Citizens (Special Committee)				<p>supplemental budget for the Department to increase its budget for administrative expenses from 5% to 11%.</p> <p>Replying to the query of Rep. Datol on the average monthly pension of senior citizens, Government Service Insurance System's (GSIS) Acting Chief Legal Counsel Lucio Yu and Social Security System's (SSS) OIC for Legal Affairs Department Joseph Desunia said that the average monthly pension is P2,000 per month.</p> <p>The national president of the League of OSCA Heads of the Philippines, Benjamin Medina Sr., proposed that the recipients of the social pension fund should include all senior citizens and not just the indigent senior citizens.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Hernandez requested the DSWD to submit its list of validated beneficiaries.</p> <p>Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA) requested the Committee to invite the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) to attend the next meeting in order to discuss its payout system with regard to the social pension fund.</p>
Veterans Affairs and Welfare	Substitute Bill to HB 936	Rep. Cabochan	Giving juridical personality to the present Veterans Memorial Medical Center (VMMC)	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Geraldine Roman (1st District, Bataan), agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to fine-tune the substitute bill.</p> <p>Rep. Pablo Ortega (1st District, La Union) was designated as TWG Chair.</p> <p>HB 936, authored by MAGDALO Party-List Rep. Manuel Cabochan III, seeks to transform the VMMC into a corporate body to strengthen the hospital's financial operations.</p> <p>Rep. Leonardo Babasa Jr. (2nd District, Zamboanga del Sur) sponsored the bill on behalf of the author.</p>
	Substitute Bill to HB 937	Rep. Cabochan	Establishing and maintaining an Office of Veterans Affairs in the Philippine Embassy in the United States of America (USA), prescribing its functions, providing funds therefor	<p>The Committee agreed to create a TWG to deliberate further on the provisions of the substitute bill.</p> <p>Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO) Administrator Undersecretary Ernesto Carolina affirmed that establishing an Office of Veterans Affairs in the Philippine Embassy in the USA would greatly help Filipino veterans in claiming their full benefits from the US government in recognition of their alliance during the World War II.</p> <p>Department of Budget and Management's (DBM) Budget and Management Bureau D OIC-Assistant Director Beverly Galmesa recommended that the determination of the appropriate staffing pattern for the proposed Office of Veterans Affairs be left to the DBM.</p>

Continuation... Veterans Affairs and Welfare	HB 702	Rep. Biazon	Mandating the use of proceeds from the development, lease or use of certain government properties for payment of pensions and other benefits of the veterans	<p>The Committee agreed to create a TWG to draft a substitute bill to the three bills.</p> <p>Rep. Babasa was designated as TWG Chair.</p> <p>Rep. Cabochan, author of HB 5841, presented the salient features of the bill.</p> <p>Atty. Phydias Emmanuel Ramos of the Veterans Federation of the Philippines (VFP) pointed out that the inclusion of Taguig Industrial Estates as one of the sources of fund for the payment of pensions and other benefits of the veterans would deprive VFP of its only source of funds for its operations. VFP does not receive any funding from the national government, Ramos emphasized.</p> <p>The VFP was requested to submit its financial statements and pertinent reports to the TWG.</p>
	HB 1921	Rep. Sy-Alvarado	Providing for the payment of arrears in the veteran's pensions and benefits mandated pursuant to RA 7696, as amended, or the law standardizing and upgrading the benefits for military veterans and their dependents and appropriating funds therefor	
	HB 5841	Rep. Cabochan	Mandating the use of proceeds from the development, lease or use of certain government properties for payment of pensions and other benefits of the veterans	

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Trade and Industry jt. w/ Health (Technical Working Group)	Substitute Bill to HBs 40, 500, 1508, 1510, 1703, 2277, 2862, 2929, 3049, 3083, 4816, 5072, 5099, 5310, 5510, 5561, 5630, 5702, 5752 & 5873	Reps. Biazon, Barbers, Garbin, Deputy Speaker Villafuerte, Reps. Garcia (J.E.), Salo, Castelo, Tan (A.), Olivarez, Singson-Meehan, Roman, Garin (S.), Herrera-Dy, Alonte, Minority Leader Abante, Reps. Rodriguez, Deloso-Montalla, and Bagatsing	Regulating the manufacture, importation, packaging, use, sale, distribution, and advertisement of electronic nicotine delivery systems and electronic non-nicotine delivery systems (ENDS/ENNDS) and heated tobacco products (HTPs)	<p>The technical working group (TWG), co-chaired by Rep. Wes Gatchalian (1st District, Valenzuela City), Chair of the Committee on Trade and Industry, and Rep. Jose Enrique "Joet" Garcia III (2nd District, Bataan), Vice Chair of the Committee on Health, will deliberate further on the substitute bill in its next meeting.</p> <p>In today's meeting, the TWG focused its discussion on the sale and promotion of ENDS/ENNDS and HTPs.</p> <p>The members of the TWG were divided on whether or not to delete the provision stating that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) shall impose a ban on the flavors and additives used in the manufacture of e-liquids and refills and on electronic components of ENDS/ENNDS and HTPs that are "proven or suspected to be appealing to the youth, toxic, harmful, addictive, or sensitizing."</p> <p>Philippine E-Cigarette Industry Association (PECIA) President Joey Dulay claimed that 90 to 95% of the flavored e-cigarette manufacturers and retail outlets might suffer financially which would eventually lead to closing down once certain e-cigarette flavors are banned. He requested that the transition period for the implementation of the proposed law be set at 12 months instead of six months to provide more time for the affected businesses to adapt to the new policy.</p> <p>Rep. Gatchalian required PECIA to provide the Committee documents and technical data that will support its claim that the ban will adversely affect the e-cigarette industry.</p>

Continuation... Trade and Industry jt. w/ Health (Technical Working Group)				The stakeholders were requested to submit technical details on product packaging and their respective position papers with regard to Section 16 (Product Standards Requirements for ENDS/ENNDS and HTPs) of the substitute bill.
---	--	--	--	--

AGENCY BRIEFING				
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER			DISCUSSIONS
Mindanao Affairs	<p>Briefing by the following agencies on their respective plans and projects for the education sector in Mindanao:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Education (DepEd) 			<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Mohamad Khalid Dimaporo (1st District, Lanao del Norte), listened to the plans and projects of the DepEd and the CHED for Mindanao.</p> <p>DepEd's Education Facilities Division Chief Annabelle Pangan reported that the Department's P2.1 billion Quick Response Fund (QRF) for FY 2020, intended for the repair and replacement of classrooms in Mindanao which were damaged by calamities and disasters, has already been utilized. She said that aside from public school buildings that were damaged by the typhoons during the previous years, there are also 219 school buildings in earthquake-stricken areas in Mindanao that need repairs or replacement. Pangan said that an additional funding of P3 billion is needed to repair or replace the affected school buildings.</p> <p>Pangan also reported that from 2014 to 2019, P91 billion was appropriated for the DepEd's School Building Program (SBP) benefitting all the regions in Mindanao. This, Pangan said, comprises 26% of the national allocation for the DepEd's SBP. She said that out of the target of 57,589 classrooms for Mindanao, 55,317 were already constructed.</p> <p>The budget approved for SBP under the General Appropriations Act of 2020 was only P12.94 billion compared to the Department's proposed budget of P176 billion. Because of this, DepEd could only construct 5,174 classrooms nationwide instead of the original target of 61,000.</p> <p>Pangan explained that one reason for the reduction of the SBP allocation was because the DepEd also needs to fund its new priority program called "Last Mile Schools Program" for the geographically isolated and disadvantaged and conflict-affected (GIDCA) areas. She said that for FY 2020, P6.5 billion was allocated for the repair or construction of 361 target schools nationwide, 89 of which are located in Mindanao.</p> <p>Last mile schools are those with less than four classrooms, usually makeshift and nonstandard ones; no electricity; no funds for repairs or new construction projects in the last four years; and a travel distance of more than one hour away from the center, accessible only through difficult terrain. Likewise, these are schools with multi-grade classes, with less than five teachers, and a population of less than 100 learners, more than 75% of whom are indigenous peoples. (Source: DepEd website)</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Prospero Pichay Jr. (1st District, Surigao del Sur), on his part, stated that the decrease in the DepEd's budget is due to its low absorptive capacity, particularly in the utilization of funds for the SBP.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Henry Oaminal (2nd District, Misamis Occidental) suggested that DepEd and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) should jointly validate the proposed school building projects to avoid delay in the projects' implementation.</p> <p>DepEd was requested to submit a report on the effect of a decreased budget for its SBP for Mindanao.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission on Higher Education (CHED) 			<p>CHED CARAGA Regional Director Leonida Calagui explained that the CHED, as a regulatory agency, monitors and evaluates the performance of</p>

Continuation... Mindanao Affairs		<p>higher education programs offered by all higher education institutions (HEIs) nationwide.</p> <p>Calagui presented the CHED's scholarship programs and projects which include, among others, the State Scholarship Program, Private Education Student Financial Assistance, <i>Tulong-Dunong</i> Program, and student loan program for tertiary education.</p> <p>Meanwhile, CHED's UniFAST Field Operations and Partnerships Technical Assistant Melgie Alas said that qualified beneficiaries of the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) are the continuing grantees of the CHED's Expanded Students Grants in Aid Program for Poverty Alleviation; students residing and studying in private HEIs in cities or municipalities with no existing state universities and colleges (SUCs) or CHED-recognized local universities and colleges (LUC); students included in the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) <i>Listahanan 2.0</i>; and those not in the <i>Listahanan 2.0</i> but show proof of indigency.</p> <p>TES is a component of RA 10931 or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (UniFAST Law). It was created to help support the tertiary education of Filipino students who shall enroll in undergraduate-post-secondary programs of SUCs, LUCs, private HEIs and technical vocational institutions (TVIs).</p> <p>Meanwhile, Deputy Speaker Ferdinand Hernandez (2nd District, South Cotabato) said that he will file a resolution to inquire into the alleged improper implementation of the UniFAST law.</p> <p>CHED was requested to submit data of HEIs in Mindanao that have UniFAST grantees.</p>
-------------------------------------	--	--

DISCUSSION WITH AGENCIES/ENTITIES		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
People's Participation	Discussion on "bilateral cooperation and participation for development"	<p>The Committee, chaired by San Jose del Monte City Rep. Florida "Rida" Robes, met with representatives of foreign diplomatic offices and international organizations to discuss the topic on bilateral cooperation and participation for development on February 18 at the House of Representatives.</p> <p>Those who attended the meeting were officials from the diplomatic offices of several countries such as Australia, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Singapore, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the United States of America (USA), as well as international organizations such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), World Bank, and US Agency for International Development (USAID).</p> <p>Rep. Robes said that the meeting was organized in response to requests from Committee Members to have a discussion on various economic and social problems the country faces and to solicit inputs, coordination, and cooperation from other countries and international organizations.</p> <p>Representatives from various countries and organizations informed the Committee of their respective programs promoting economic growth and development, peace and order, and human security.</p> <p>USAID Mission Director Lawrence Hardy II said that US studies have shown that although the Philippines is progressing, there are still areas outside Metro Manila that remain underdeveloped. He suggested that improvements in regulatory policies be made to create the right investment climate that will encourage foreign investors to invest more in the country. Hardy also informed the Committee that the USAID will have a program which aims to provide potable water and sanitation in some parts of the country. He</p>

Continuation... People's Participation		<p>promised to give the Committee details of such program as soon as they become publicly available.</p> <p>Rep. Sandra Eriguel (2nd District, La Union) agreed with Hardy and informed him that policies on opening up the economy for foreign ownership of lands and businesses in the country are currently being discussed by the House.</p> <p>Chinese Embassy 1st Secretary for Political Affairs Jia Peng, Singaporean Embassy 1st Secretary for Political Affairs Huang Zi, Australian Embassy 2nd Secretary for Political Affairs Felur Calcut, and Russian Federation Minister Consul Tatiana Shlychkova informed the Committee that they are offering scholarship programs for Filipinos. Shlychkova added that Russia has donated more than \$1 billion to various development programs in the Philippines.</p> <p>Japan Embassy's Minister and Consul General Atsushi Kuwabara and JICA Senior Representative Kiyo Kawabuchi promised to continue their support to the Philippines' economic and social development. Meanwhile, Chinese Embassy 2nd Secretary for Political Affairs Zhu Ye said that China is willing to lend its technical support and expertise in the fields of agriculture, fisheries, and capacity-building for local government units (LGUs).</p> <p>In response to Rep. Faustino "Inno" Dy V (6th District, Isabela) concerns on malnutrition especially among children, World Bank's Senior External Affairs Officer Clarissa Crisostomo David said that the World Bank is finalizing its report on the state of nutrition in the country and determine the drivers of malnutrition. According to her, this will be integral in formulating the right programs to combat malnutrition.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Ifugao Rep. Solomon Chungalao requested assistance for the construction of a provincial hospital in Ifugao, to which Ambassador Hamad Saeed Alzaabi, UAE Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, gave an affirmative response.</p> <p>Concerns over the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) were also raised during the meeting. Hardy told the Committee that the USAID is currently expediting the process of donating masks to the Philippines. The Chinese Embassy also requested everyone to stop spreading fake news and called for the cooperation of all nations in combating the outbreak.</p> <p>Rep. Robes and Rep. Chungalao called on other nations to give the Philippines access to programs that will help in the development of the country.</p> <p>The resource persons were requested to provide the Committee a list of their existing developmental programs as well as the requirements and qualifications needed to avail of them.</p>
---	--	---

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Public Information	Roundtable discussion with ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) on the role of parliamentarians to tackle disinformation in the Philippines	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Ron Salo (Party-List, KABAYAN), conducted a roundtable discussion on the role of parliamentarians in addressing the issue on disinformation in the Philippines.</p> <p>In his welcome remarks, Rep. Salo said the roundtable discussion aims to acquire gainful insights and learn from the efforts exerted by the APHR and ICNL in stopping the spread of fake or false news. He added that this discussion would be helpful in crafting a law that will put an end to such irresponsible and malicious acts which are predominant in the country today.</p>

<p>Continuation... Public Information</p>		<p>Zach Lampell, ICNL senior legal advisor, briefly discussed how disinformation or “fake news” can become the biggest threat to democratic governance. He said that disinformation can be prevented through legislative and non-legislative measures. Should laws be crafted to curb the proliferation of disinformation, he said, these should adhere to international standards relating to the protection of freedom of expression.</p> <p>Lampell presented the three-part test that would help determine whether efforts at stopping the spread of disinformation meet international standards: 1) the restriction must be provided by law; 2) the restriction must be in pursuit of national security, public order and safety, or protection of the rights and reputations of others; and 3) the penalties should be proportionate to the harm caused.</p> <p>Speaking on behalf of the APHR, Maria Chin Abdullah, Member of the House of Representatives of the Malaysian Parliament, said that part of the activities and advocacies of ASEAN regional lawmakers in the campaign to end disinformation or fake news includes capacity building and education and information campaign.</p> <p>Both Lampell and Abdullah agreed that disinformation is widely used during campaign periods to mislead voters and discredit rival political candidates or parties.</p> <p>Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) Assistant Secretary Marie Rafael agrees to the passage of a law that will curtail the spread of fake news. She also informed the body that the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) is tasked to submit recommendations that will ensure the “responsible” use of social media by all government employees.</p> <p>On the other hand, Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA) argued that an anti-fake news law may not be the solution to address disinformation. Rep. Zarate expressed his concern that this kind of legislation can be used to further suppress the freedom of expression. Instead, he suggested to strengthen existing mechanisms to stop the spread of fake or false news.</p> <p>APHR is a network of current and former legislators from Southeast Asian countries who use their unique positions and innovative means to prevent discriminations, uphold political freedom, and promote democracy and human rights around ASEAN. (Source: www.aseanmp.org)</p> <p>ICNL is an international not-for-profit organization that promotes an enabling environment for civic space worldwide and provides technical and research assistance to support the reform of laws in more than 100 countries around the world. (Source: icnl.org)</p>
---	--	---