



Committee Daily Bulletin

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First Regular Session

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| ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING | | |
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| COMMITTEE | SUBJECT MATTER | DISCUSSIONS |
| Persons with Disabilities (Special Committee) | Organizational meeting and adoption of the Committee's Rules of Procedure | <p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Ma. Lourdes Arroyo (5th District, Negros Occidental), held its organizational meeting during which the Committee's Rules of Procedure for the 18th Congress was adopted.</p> <p>Under the Rules of the House, the Committee has jurisdiction over "all matters directly and principally relating to the needs, rights and welfare of persons with disabilities, as well as policies and programs that will enhance their active participation and integration in society."</p> <p>The Special Committee on PWD, which used to be a subcommittee under the Committee on Social Services, was created last December 2019.</p> |

| COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES | | | | |
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| COMMITTEE | MEASURES | | SUBJECT MATTER | ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION |
| | NO. | PRINCIPAL AUTHOR | | |
| Ecology | HBs 1678, 2805, 4012 & 4856 | Deputy Speaker Villafuerte, Reps. Rodriguez, Villarica, and Sy-Alvarado | Prohibiting the dumping of sewage sludge and industrial waste into the seawaters and providing for penalties in violation thereof | <p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Glona Labadlabad (2nd District, Zamboanga del Norte), agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to deliberate further on the five bills.</p> <p>Rep. Francisco "Kiko" Benitez (3rd District, Negros Occidental) was designated as TWG Chair. The TWG deliberations will include bills on the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), which were also referred to the Committee.</p> <p>Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) Legal Officer Johonsan Fabilane informed the Committee that the prohibited acts stated in the bills are already covered by RA 9275 (Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004) and PD 979 (Providing for the Revision of PD 600 Governing Marine Pollution). He said these laws are, to him, already enough to protect the marine environment of the country.</p> <p>Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Senior Ecosystems Management Specialist Jhorace Engay-Tupas added that some of the provisions in the bills are also already included in RA 9003 (Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000). She also mentioned that the bills should adhere to the London Convention which promotes the effective control of all sources of marine pollution.</p> <p>Philippine Inter-Island Shipping Association (PISA) Executive Director Pedro Aguilar gave</p> |
| | HB 1870 | Rep. Rodriguez | Declaring and establishing rivers, river systems, beaches, shores, and waterways as ecological zones | |

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| Continuation... Ecology | | | | <p>assurance that the members of his group adhere to maritime rules, particularly the prohibition against dumping of wastes and other materials into the sea. He also advised the Committee to ensure that the agreements in the MARPOL and London Convention will be reflected in the proposed bills.</p> <p>The London Convention or the "Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter 1972" is one of the first global conventions to protect the marine environment from human activities and has been in force since 1975. (Source: IMO website)</p> |
| Ethics and Privileges | Committee Case No. SC-2020-01 | | Case filed by Jorge Bengua, complainant, versus former Rep. Rolando Aureo Andaya Jr., respondent, for alleged grave misconduct, serious dishonesty, gross neglect of duty, and illegal solicitation in violation of Presidential Decree No. 910 (Creating an Energy Development Board, defining its powers and functions, providing funds therefor) | <p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Rosanna "Ria" Vergara (3rd District, Nueva Ecija), decided that the sworn complaint does not substantially comply with the provisions of Sec. 24 (b), Rule V (Form and Content of Sworn Complaint) of the Committee Rules of Procedure.</p> <p>Rep. Joseph Stephen Paduano (Party-List, ABANG LINGKOD) and Rep. Florida "Rida" Robes (San Jose del Monte City) argued that the Committee has no jurisdiction over the matter because the alleged complaint against former Rep. Andaya happened during his term as Secretary of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) from years 2006 to 2010 and that the respondent is no longer a Member of the House of Representatives.</p> <p>The Committee decided to return the sworn complaint within five calendar days to the complainant pursuant to Sec. 25 (a), Rule V of the Committee Rules. The Committee Secretary was directed to prepare the necessary correspondence to be signed by the Chair with a statement explaining how the sworn complaint failed to comply with Sec. 24 (b), Rule V of the Committee Rules.</p> |
| Housing and Urban Development | HBs 159 & 5986 | Reps. Belmonte and Cabochan | Strengthening the right of government to expropriate lands for socialized housing, amending for the purpose Sections 9, 10, and 11 of RA 7279 | The Committee, presided by its Vice Chair, Rep. Alfonso Umali Jr. (2 nd District, Oriental Mindoro), reconsidered its previous approval of the Committee Report on HB 159 to include therein HB 5986, which has a similar subject matter. Thereafter, the Committee approved HB 159 in consolidation with HB 5986. |
| | HBs 42, 156, 2861, 3227 & 4869 | Reps. Benitez, Belmonte, Nieto, Salo, and Rodriguez | Establishing a local government resettlement program that implements an on-site, in-city or near-city strategy for informal settler families (ISFs) in accordance with a people's plan and mandating relocating local government units (LGUs) to provide other basic services and livelihood components in favor of the recipient LGU, amending for the purpose RA 7279, otherwise known as the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA) of 1992, as amended | <p>The Committee will deliberate further on the eight bills in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Umali explained the circumstances that led to urban poverty and ISF proliferation in the country. He said that the influx of people from rural areas to urban areas in the past decade has caused an increase in the demand for jobs, housing, and basic services for which the LGUs in urban centers were unprepared for.</p> <p>According to Rep. Francisco "Kiko" Benitez (3rd District, Negros Occidental), author of HB</p> |

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| Continuation... Housing and Urban Development | HBs 236 & 4245 | Reps. Vargas and Abaya | Establishing an on-site, in-city or near-city resettlement program for ISFs and, in connection therewith, mandating LGUs to provide livelihood assistance and other basic services, amending for the purpose RA 7279, as amended | 42, providing housing for the homeless and underprivileged remains a challenge despite the enactment in 1992 of RA 7279. He also said that the dismal condition in some relocation sites and lack of livelihood or job opportunities due to the sites' remoteness are forcing families to return to the cities. The establishment of on-site, in-city, or near-city resettlement will address this problem, Rep. Benitez added. |
| | HB 3041 | Rep. Aguinaldo | Establishing a comprehensive resettlement program for the underprivileged and homeless citizens, amending for the purpose RA 7279, as amended | <p>Rep. Naealla Bainto Aguinaldo (Party-List, BAHAY), author of HB 3041, explained that the proposed amendments to the UDHA in her bill will ensure that socialized housing and resettlement sites are close to areas with livelihood opportunities and have basic utilities such as water and electricity. Her bill also provides clear guidelines and limitations on summary eviction and demolition, and proposes the establishment of a unified database of qualified beneficiaries.</p> <p>The resource persons from the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DSHUD), National Housing Authority (NHA), National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP), Social Housing Finance Corporation (SHFC), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and the League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP) expressed their support for the bills.</p> <p>On the clarification raised by the LCP if the property's title is awarded to the beneficiaries, and if the latter may transfer the title to another individual, the NHA replied that a Certificate of Lot Award (CLA) is given to the beneficiaries and that the transfer of the CLA is prohibited as stated explicitly in the contract, except in extreme circumstances, but that the transferee must also be a qualified beneficiary.</p> <p>However, Rep. Benitez said that ideally, the title to the property should be awarded to the housing beneficiaries, and not just a CLA, in order to provide assets and not only shelter, to improve the beneficiaries' financial standing.</p> <p>The resource persons were requested to submit their respective position papers within the week to expedite the Committee's deliberations on the bills.</p> |
| | HBs 711 & 1044 | Reps. Belmonte and Singson- Meehan | Prescribing the mechanisms to facilitate the disposition of idle government-owned lands for socialized housing | The Committee laid on the table the seven bills as the intentions of the bills are already covered under RA 11201 or the "Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development Act." |
| | HB 1173 | Deputy Speaker Romero | Rationalizing the implementation and standards of socialized housing projects | |
| | HB 1174 | Deputy Speaker Romero | Rationalizing the sale of subdivision lots and condominiums, increasing its penalties for violations thereof | |

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| Continuation... Housing and Urban Development | HB 1186 | Deputy Speaker Romero | Creating a continuing mechanism to promote the implementation of urban housing projects, to establish sustainability, providing funds therefor | |
| | HB 1292 | Deputy Speaker Villafruerte | Instituting a national comprehensive framework on resilient housing and human settlements, appropriating funds therefor | |
| | HB 2134 | Rep. Castelo | Mandating that at least 10% of government-owned lands be sold, alienated or otherwise encumbered for development purposes, be segregated for socialized housing projects | |
| | HB 2038 | Rep. Sy-Alvarado | Providing a magna carta for the beneficiaries of housing programs of the government | The Committee laid on the table HB 2038 as the intentions of the bill are already covered under RA 7279, and in certain provisions of the Conditional Contract to Sell between the NHA and the beneficiaries. |
| | HB 4929 | Rep. Herrera-Dy | Requiring developers of proposed condominium projects to develop an area for socialized housing, amending for the purpose RA 4726 entitled "The Condominium Act" | The Committee laid on the table HB 4929 as the intentions of the bill are already covered under RA 1084 or the "Balanced Housing Development Program Amendments." |
| Natural Resources | HBs 266, 462, 1130, 1447, 1775 & 4420 | Reps. Ramirez-Sato, Kho (E.), Tupas, Singson-Meehan, Limkaichong, and Deputy Speaker Gonzales (A.) | Declaring watershed reservations, forest lands, and similar places as protected areas under RA 7586, otherwise known as the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act of 1992, providing for their management | The Committee, presided by its Vice Chair, Quirino Rep. Junie Cua, approved the six bills subject to final review of the bills' technical description by the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA). |
| | HB 36 | Rep. Biazon | Establishing the Philippine Rise Natural Park in the Province of Isabela as protected area under the NIPAS Act, providing for its management | <p>The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to deliberate further on HB 36.</p> <p>Muntinlupa City Rep. Rozzano Rufino Biazon, author of HB 36, explained that the Philippine Rise has not yet been given legal protection which makes it vulnerable to exploitation and destruction from unscrupulous individuals and companies. He suggested that the ongoing study being conducted by the Biodiversity Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (BMB-DENR) should be sustained in order to fully understand the area. According to marine conservationists and experts, the reefs in the Philippine Rise have dodged fishing pressure and pollution because these are located far offshore.</p> <p>Benham Plateau, also known as the Benham Rise, was officially renamed as Philippine Rise by virtue of Executive Order No. 25 Series of 2017.</p> <p>On the query of Rep. Cua pertaining to the study of the BMB on the Philippine Rise, BMB Director Ricardo Calderon said that the Bureau and the University of the Philippines' Marine Science Institute are still assessing</p> |

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| Continuation... Natural Resources | | | | <p>which areas to conserve and which areas have potential for economic activities in the future.</p> <p>Commander for Naval Forces Northern Luzon Caesar Bernard Valencia of the Philippine Navy expressed his support for the bill. He also recommended the inclusion in the bill of a provision on law enforcement and security to ensure that the area will be protected and secure.</p> |
| | HB 3212 | Rep. Angara | Establishing Aurora Memorial Protected Landscape in the Municipalities of Maria Aurora and San Luis in the Province of Aurora and in the Municipality of Bongabon, Nueva Ecija as a protected area, providing for its management | The Committee agreed to create a TWG to study the bill's technical description. |
| Public Information | HB 1553 | Rep. Garbin | Declaring November 23 of every year as Philippine Press Freedom Day | <p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Ron Salo (Party-List, KABAYAN), agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to consolidate HBs 1553 and 1922.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Rodante Marcoleta (Party-List, SAGIP) will serve as head of the TWG.</p> <p>Rep. Alfredo Garbin Jr. (Party-List, AKO BICOL), author of HB 1553, said that his bill seeks to recognize and honor media practitioners whose rights have been violated in the performance of their profession.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Marcoleta expressed support for the intention of the bills but advised that the proposed "Philippine Press Freedom Day" should not be held every November 23 – the date when the Maguindanao massacre happened. He said that commemorations and other festivities should not fall on the date of such a "morbid" incident.</p> <p>On November 23, 2009, 58 people, including members of the media, were killed in broad daylight in Ampatuan, Maguindanao. The victims were part of a convoy making their way to the local office of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to file the Certificate of Candidacy for provincial governor of then Buluan Vice Mayor Esmael "Toto" Mangudadatu who ran against Datu Andal Ampatuan Jr.</p> <p>Rep. Michael Defensor (Party-List, ANAKALUSUGAN) agreed to the proposal in HB 1922 declaring August 30 as the National Press Freedom Day. He explained that it is the date of birth of one of Philippines' national heroes and best-known propagandist Marcelo H. Del Pilar. The National Historical Commission of the Philippines also suggested that the proposed National Press Freedom Day be held every August 30.</p> |
| | HB 1922 | Rep. Sy-Alvarado | Declaring August 30 of every year as National Press Freedom Day | |
| | HB 2741 | Rep. Rodriguez | Providing for a Magna Carta for Journalists | |

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| Continuation... Public Information | HB 5553 | Rep. Zarate | Providing for mandatory additional insurance coverage and benefits for journalists, employees of media entities on field assignment, and freelance journalists | position papers by the resource persons present during the meeting. |
| | HB 6114 | Rep. Salo | Providing for a Magna Carta for Media Professionals | <p>Rep. Salo, author of HB 6114, said that his bill seeks to promote and protect the rights of media professionals by developing programs that will deepen the practice of their profession and providing them justifiable living wage as well as additional insurance benefits and corresponding hazard pay in view of the various risks that they face in the performance of their jobs.</p> <p>Rep. Salo further said that his bill provides for an accreditation of media professionals and media organizations. HB 6114 classifies media professionals into two categories, accredited and non-accredited media professionals. Accredited media professionals will be entitled to all benefits and privileges accorded to them by law, by their employers and by the Philippine Council for Media Professionals (PCMP) – the proposed self-regulatory body for media professionals. On the other hand, non-accredited media professionals shall enjoy only those benefits and privileges accorded to them by their employers. The absence of an accreditation, however, shall in no way bar them from exercising their duties and rights as media professionals.</p> <p>National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) Deputy Secretary General Raymund Villanueva is against the bills arguing that regulating the practice of journalism runs contrary to the principle of press freedom.</p> |
| Tourism | HB 5523 | Rep. Aragones | Mandating hotels and resorts with swimming pools and beach fronts to employ lifeguards | <p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Sol Aragones (3rd District, Laguna), approved HB 5523 subject to style.</p> <p>Rep. Aragones, author of HB 5523, said that her bill ensures the safety of swimming pools and beach fronts in hotels and resorts by mandating the hiring of at least one lifeguard for every 250 square meters of swimming area.</p> <p>The Department of Tourism (DOT), Philippine Red Cross (PRC), and the Tourism Congress of the Philippines (TCP) expressed their support for the bill.</p> <p>The resource persons were requested to submit their respective position papers on the bill.</p> |
| | HBs 1206, 3684, 3954 & 4839 | Reps. Arroyo (J.M.), Villa, Vargas, and Matugas | Establishing an intergovernmental task force for the protection and assistance of tourists | <p>The Committee agreed to consolidate the bills and create a technical working group (TWG) to study the bills further.</p> <p>Rep. Edgar Chatto (1st District, Bohol) was designated as head of the TWG.</p> <p>Rep. Juan Miguel Macapagal Arroyo (2nd District, Pampanga), author of HB 1206, said</p> |

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| Continuation... Tourism | | | | <p>that his bill seeks to establish an intergovernmental task force for international visitor assistance to make the Philippines a premiere travel and tourism destination in the world.</p> <p>Rep. Francisco Jose "Bingo" Matugas II (1st District, Surigao del Norte), author of HB 4839, said that his bill mandates the establishment of health facilities in tourist destinations that shall have the minimum capability to respond to emergency cases affecting tourists. He added that this will address the concern among tourists that tourist destinations in the country are not ready to respond to medical emergencies which may happen to them while vacationing in the country.</p> |
| Women and Gender Equality | HBs 2810 & 3081 | Reps. Rodriguez and Saulog | Establishing resource development and crisis assistance centers for women and children in every province and city of the country, amending for the purpose RA 8505, otherwise known as the Rape Victim Assistance and Protection Act of 1998 | <p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Ma. Lourdes Acosta-Alba (1st District, Bukidnon), agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to consolidate the bills.</p> <p>The Secretariat was directed to prepare a working draft which will be used by the TWG during its meetings.</p> <p>Rep. Irene Gay Saulog (Party-List, KALINGA) was designated as head of the TWG.</p> <p>Rep. Saulog, author of HB 3081, said that a bill with similar subject matter was filed in the previous Congresses but was never enacted into law. She said that her bill aims to uplift the condition of women and children, particularly those who are victims of abuse, by establishing resource development and crisis assistance centers to address their plight and help in their recovery.</p> <p>Expressing support for the proposed law were representatives from the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), Department of Health (DOH), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Philippine National Police (PNP), Department of Justice (DOJ), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority's (TESDA) Women's Center, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).</p> <p>The Committee asked the stakeholders to submit their respective position papers for the TWG's consideration in drafting the bill.</p> |
| | HB 5826 | Rep. Vargas | Establishing a refuge and assistance center for young pregnant women in every province, city, and municipality of the Philippines, appropriating funds therefor | |

| COMMITTEE MEETING ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS | | |
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| COMMITTEE | SUBJECT MATTER | DISCUSSIONS |
| Constitutional Amendments | Proposed amendments to the 1987 Constitution submitted by the Inter-agency Task Force on Federalism and Constitutional Reform (IATF) and the Constitutional Reform (CoRe) Movement | The Committee, chaired by Rep. Rufus Rodriguez (2 nd District, Cagayan de Oro City), continued its discussion on the proposed amendments to the 1987 Constitution submitted by the IATF and the CoRe Movement. |

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| <p>Continuation... Constitutional Amendments</p> | | <p>The IATF was created in 2018 through Memorandum Circular No. 52 with the primary duty of integrating, harmonizing, and coordinating ongoing efforts towards federalism and constitutional reform. It is chaired by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), with the Department of Justice (DOJ) as Vice Chair and several agencies as members. On the other hand, the CoRE Movement is the citizen arm of IATF lobbying with Congress to pass a broader package of social, political, and economical reforms in the 1987 Constitution.</p> <p>In today's meeting, the Committee listened to the views of the representatives from the Consultative Committee to Review the 1987 Constitution, the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA), Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), University of the Philippines (UP), League of Cities, League of Provinces, StratSearch Foundation Inc. (SFFI), the Royal Maharlika First Nation Assembly of Asia, Muslim Association of the Philippines, IBON Foundation, and the business sector.</p> <p>The resource persons were generally supportive of the amendments aimed at strengthening the fiscal status of local government units (LGUs). However, they have differing opinions on the basis of computation of the internal revenue allotment (IRA) share of the regions and LGUs.</p> <p>League of Cities' Senior Policy Officer Anne Janelle Rabe called for the institutionalization of the Supreme Court (SC) ruling on <i>Mandanas and Garcia v. Ochoa et al.</i> part of which states: "The exclusion of other national taxes like customs duties from the base for determining the just share of the LGUs contravened the express constitutional edict in Section 6, Article X of the 1987 Constitution." Under the same SC ruling, the sources of IRA should include national internal revenue taxes collected by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and Bureau of Customs (BOC), tariff and customs duties collected by the BOC, among others.</p> <p>On the other hand, UP Emeritus Professor of Economics Gerardo Sicat and UP College of Law Professor Emerson Bañez said that determining the base of computing the just share of LGUs in national taxes is a job best left to Congress, instead of specifying this in the Constitution. Aside from increased IRA share, PIDS Research Fellow Justine Sicat said there is a need to focus on improving the planning and fund utilization capabilities of LGUs citing their low IRA utilization rate in recent years.</p> <p>On the creation of a Regional Development Authority (RDA), former Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonio Eduardo Nachura, also a member of the Consultative Committee to Review the 1987 Constitution, and League of Provinces Executive Director Sanda Tablan-Paredes opined that RDAs will create an additional layer of governance. The proposed RDA is composed of provincial governors, city mayors, president of leagues of municipalities of each province, and regional heads of departments and other national government offices within the region. It shall formulate, implement and monitor plans and programs for the development of their respective regions.</p> <p>Resource persons agreed that political and electoral reforms were needed. UP Associate Professor Clarita Carlos referred to the amendments as a way to "short-circuit" the system instead of having to wait several generations to change individuals and attitudes. She also expressed her support for the strengthening of political parties, a sentiment shared by the other resource persons. Carlos also advocated for a shift to a parliamentary system of government, while Muslim Association of the Philippines Secretary General Almarim Tillah and Royal Maharlika First Nation Assembly of Asia Founding Chairman Sultan Mangacop Saud pushed for federalization.</p> |
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| Continuation... Constitutional Amendments | | <p>Meanwhile, resource persons from the business sector and the academe were supportive of IATF's proposed economic provisions which will open up the economy to more foreign investments. IBON Foundation Executive Director Jose Africa opted for caution, explaining that the global trend is moving away from the idea of globalization and adopting more protectionist policies. He stressed that opening up the economy may not be in the best interest of the country.</p> <p>The Committee will vote on the IATF's proposed amendments in its next meeting.</p> |
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| TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES | | | | |
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| COMMITTEE | MEASURES | | SUBJECT MATTER | ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION |
| | NO. | PRINCIPAL AUTHOR | | |
| People's Participation (Technical Working Group) | Substitute Bill to HB 230 | Rep. Vargas | Institutionalizing the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the preparation and authorization process of the annual national budget, providing effective mechanisms therefor | <p>The technical working group (TWG), presided by Committee Secretary Rolando Cronico, terminated its deliberation on the substitute bill. The substitute bill will be presented to the mother Committee for its consideration and approval.</p> <p>The Committee Chair, San Jose del Monte City Rep. Florida "Rida" Robes, said that one of the purposes of the bill is to harmonize and standardize the framework for the accreditation of civil society organizations (CSO.)</p> |
| | Substitute Bill to HBs 832 & 4244 | Reps. Bordado and Abaya | Creating a system of partnership between local governments and CSOs through the establishment of a people's council in every local government unit, prescribing its powers and functions | <p>The TWG terminated its deliberation on the substitute bill. The substitute bill will be presented to the mother Committee for its consideration and approval.</p> <p>Cronico informed the body that the proposed law has counterpart bills in the Senate, SBNS 561 and 692, authored by Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon and Senator Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan, respectively.</p> |
| Population and Family Relations (Technical Working Group) | HBs 100, 838 & 2263 | Reps. Lagman, Brosas, and Alvarez (P.) | Instituting absolute divorce and dissolution of marriage in the Philippines | <p>The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Edcel Lagman (1st District, Albay), will deliberate further on the three bills in its next meeting.</p> <p>During the discussion, Rep. Lagman said that most of the grounds for legal separation under the Family Code were adopted in the bills as grounds for a judicial decree of absolute divorce.</p> <p>Atty. Alpha Joy Alfafara, Chapter Coordinator of Divorce Pilipinas Coalition, suggested that the filing fee for a petition for absolute divorce and other costs that will be incurred in the process of litigation, such as the professional fee of the psychologist and psychiatrist, should be made affordable for the petitioners.</p> <p>Rep. Lagman said that there is a provision in the bill that states that upon application of a court-assisted petitioner, the court shall waive the payment of filing fees and other costs of</p> |

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| Continuation... Population and Family Relations (Technical Working Group) | | | | <p>litigation, and the court shall likewise assign the petitioner his counsel, psychologist, psychiatrist, and other professionals that may be required, preferably from the government.</p> <p>Atty. May Zayra Cuevas of the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) suggested that a single incident of physical or sexual violence should already be considered as ground for absolute divorce instead of repeated and grossly abusive conduct of respondent. Rep. Lagman said that the ground for repeated violence was taken from the grounds for legal separation. Just the same, the lawmaker said that the TWG will take into consideration the various types of domestic violence in its discussion of the grounds for absolute divorce.</p> <p>Rep. Arlene Brosas (Party-List, GABRIELA), author of HB 838, is amenable to the suggestion that gender discriminatory words used in the proposed law be replaced with politically correct terms. Commission on Human Rights (CHR) Legal Division Chief Erwin Caliba suggested that the definition of "insanity" be derived from the definition provided under RA 11036 or the Mental Health Act.</p> <p>The TWG will study further the suggestion to remove the penalty for a spouse who is party to a petition for absolute divorce, who is found to have used threats or coercion to compel the other spouse in filing the petition; and the reduction of the period of abandonment of petitioner by the respondent from one year to three months. The abandonment of petitioner by the respondent is among the grounds for absolute divorce.</p> |
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| AGENCY BRIEFINGS | | |
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| COMMITTEE | SUBJECT MATTER | DISCUSSIONS |
| Economic Affairs jt. w/ Tourism | <p>Briefing on the effect of the 2019 novel coronavirus or the 2019-nCoV, now renamed as COVID-19, on tourism and economy, and the corresponding plans to cushion its effect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Health (DOH) | <p>The Committee, co-chaired by Rep. Sharon Garin (Party-List, AAMBIS-OWA), Chair of the Committee on Economic Affairs, and Rep. Sol Aragon (3rd District, Laguna), Chair of the Committee on Tourism, discussed with the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Tourism (DOT) the effects of the COVID-19 on tourism and economy, and their corresponding plans to cushion its effect.</p> <p>Rep. Aragon said that the recent travel ban due to the COVID-19 could have a huge impact on the country's tourism. According to Rep. Garin, tourism is the main contributor to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country and thus necessary measures should be taken by government agencies to cushion the travel ban's effect on the industry.</p> <p>DOH Assistant Secretary Kenneth Ronquillo presented some facts regarding the COVID-19. Because it is a new strain, she said, no vaccine has been developed yet against it, and treatment is largely symptomatic relief and supportive care, like any viral infection.</p> <p>Based on the latest World Health Organization (WHO) situation report, as of February 11, 2020, a total of 43,103 cases have been recorded, 1,017 of</p> |

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| <p>Continuation... Economic Affairs jt. w/ Tourism</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Tourism (DOT) | <p>which have died. All of the reported deaths occurred in China, except for one case which occurred in the Philippines. Out of the 314 persons under investigation (PUIs) in the Philippines, three were confirmed positive for the coronavirus, 262 were admitted in the hospital and 49 were already discharged. Currently, 49 persons evacuated from Wuhan City in China are under quarantine at the New Clark City in Pampanga.</p> <p>Ronquillo emphasized that while the COVID-19 is not as fatal as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV), it is more easily transmissible. In response to the outbreak, the DOH has adopted the “four-door framework” which includes the following measures: 1) data gathering and advisory; 2) interception and screening in airports and sea ports; 3) contact tracing, quarantine, and case management; and 4) handling of the epidemic surge.</p> <p>DOH Epidemiology Bureau Director Ferchito Avelino furnished the Committee with a summary report on the COVID-19 dated February 11, 2020, which contains the profile, demographics, and laboratory results of all PUIs in the country as well as contact tracing results relative to the three confirmed cases.</p> <p>DOT Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat discussed the possible effect of the COVID-19 outbreak on tourism. She said that 465 flights per week were canceled covering countries such as China (238), Hong Kong (112), Taiwan (61), and Macau (54). Based on projected arrivals from these four countries from February to March, it is estimated that the country's foregone revenues will reach P42.9 billion.</p> <p>The DOT has proposed the following tactical marketing programs in response to the issue: strengthened partnership with traditional online travel agents; summer and multi-destination packages promotion; and increased conduct of meeting, incentives, conventions, events (MICE) within the government, among others.</p> <p>Rep. Jesus Crispin Remulla (7th District, Cavite) asked for an update on potential losses to the country and the projected duration of the COVID-19 outbreak.</p> <p>National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Undersecretary Rosemarie Edillon answered that an estimate of P22.7 billion losses per month is expected because of the travel ban. With regard to the duration of the virus outbreak, Asec. Ronquillo said no projection can be made. However, he said that the MERS-CoV and the SARS-CoV have lasted for five to six months.</p> <p>Vice Chair Roberto Lim of the Air Carriers Association of the Philippines Inc. (ACAP) said that the loss from the travel ban could reach P3 billion over a two-month period due to the combined refunds from various airlines.</p> |
| <p>Persons with Disabilities (Special Committee)</p> | <p>Briefing by the following government agencies on their plans and programs for persons with disabilities (PWDs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) | <p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Ma. Lourdes Arroyo (5th District, Negros Occidental), heard the briefing of government agencies on their plans and programs that are relevant to PWDs. It later agreed to create a technical oversight committee to oversee the implementation of laws concerning the PWDs.</p> <p>NCDA Officer-In-Charge Mateo Lee Jr. presented the Council's legislative agenda for 2020 among which are the amendment of <i>Batas Pambansa Blg. 344</i> or the Accessibility Law, establishing the Disability Development Support Fund, and strengthening the NCDA.</p> <p>Lee also said that the definition of “persons with disability” under RA 7277 or the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons should be amended to conform to the definition adopted by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Under the UNCRPD, PWDs “include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”</p> |

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| <p>Continuation... Persons with Disabilities (Special Committee)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Presidential Human Rights Committee (PHRC) Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) | <p>The representatives from various PWD groups said that laws relative to PWDs must be based on human rights principle and not as acts of charity. They also recommended that the NCDA should be converted into a commission, distinct and separate from the DSWD.</p> <p>The NCDA, an attached agency of the DSWD, formulates policies on PWDs and coordinates and monitors the enforcement of laws on PWDs.</p> <p>DSWD Program Management Bureau's social worker officer Danilo Deinla said that the DSWD has a comprehensive program for the PWDs which focuses on disability prevention, rehabilitation, and equalization of opportunities. He reported that there is a growing number of PWD enrollees in the National Vocational Rehabilitation Center (NVRC) located in the National Capital Region (NCR) and in Area Vocational Rehabilitation Centers in Regions I, VII, IX and XII. These DSWD-administered facilities are non-residential vocational training centers that cater to the needs of the PWDs. Likewise, the number of children with disabilities (CWD) has increased in DSWD's Reception and Study Center for Children which houses abandoned and abused children.</p> <p>PHRC Director Gerald Bitonio reported that the PHRC, a primary advisory body to the President on human rights concerns, held the First Philippine Accessibility Summit with the theme "Enabling Persons with Disabilities in a Barrier-Free Society" last July 25, 2019. He said that the summit focused on providing the PWDs access to education, health, transportation, infrastructure, information communications technology, and social security. The recommendations during the summit were submitted to the Office of the Executive Secretary for appropriate action.</p> <p>DTI Resource Generation and Management Service Director Lydia Guevarra presented the Department's existing programs for the PWDs. Guevarra also mentioned the Department's PWD Economic Empowerment Framework with the following interventions: enterprise level assistance, enabling environment, and policy advocacy. She likewise said that the DTI created a Manual on Disability Inclusive Governance which features persons with disabilities and PWD organizations in various parts of the country that DTI helped through its programs and services.</p> <p>Guevarra said that Executive Order 417, series of 2015, requires that 10% of government procurement should be composed of products made by PWDs. Although this executive issuance is an economic empowerment measure for PWDs, it is rendered ineffective because their products could not participate in government biddings for not being able to meet certain requirements under RA 9184 or the Government Procurement Reform Act.</p> <p>DOLE Labor Employment Officer Melchor Sampang said that pursuant to RA 10524 or the law expanding the positions reserved for PWDs, DOLE is mandated to develop a registry of qualified and skilled PWDs. The registry, he said, is being maintained and updated by the Public Employment Service Office (PESO) through its online employment information system. This online registry contains a database of active manpower supply, including the profile of workers and employers under the National Skills Registration Program of the DOLE, qualifications of the applicants, and job vacancies. At present, there are 2,099 skilled PWDs who are listed in the online registry.</p> <p>The PESO is a non-fee charging multi-dimensional employment service entity established in all local government units (LGUs) in coordination with DOLE pursuant to RA 8759 or the PESO Act of 1999, as amended by RA 10691.</p> <p>Sampang said that the DOLE always designates special lanes for the PWDs during events or activities, such as job fairs, that it organizes.</p> <p>DPWH's Programming Division Engineer Emma Banatao said that the Department regularly conducts accessibility audit of all public buildings and facilities and even national roads to ensure the mobility and safety of</p> |
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| <p>Continuation... Persons with Disabilities (Special Committee)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) | <p>PWDs. This is in connection with Batas Pambansa 344 or the law enhancing the mobility of PWDs by requiring certain buildings, institutions, establishments and public utilities to install PWD-friendly facilities.</p> <p>Banatao suggested the amendment of the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of BP 344 to comply with the universal barrier-free design for ramps, washrooms and toilets, parking areas, and similar facilities being used by PWDs.</p> <p>Robert Dominic Echiverri, executive assistant in the Office of DILG Undersecretary Ricojudge Janvier Echiverri, said that the Department supports the enactment of laws that would promote and protect the welfare of PWDs. He informed the Committee that each LGU in the country has Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office.</p> <p>Echiverri shared the result of the study conducted by the DILG which showed that one of the reasons for the PWD youth dropping out of school is their difficulty in comprehending the lessons because of learning disabilities and mental health concerns. The DILG, Echiverri said, recommends revisiting the academic standards of public schools in the country to address this matter.</p> <p>Other offices like the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and the Department of Transportation (DOTr) gave brief observations on efforts to facilitate the mobility of PWDs. Likewise, the PWD groups present in the meeting were given the opportunity to raise their concerns.</p> <p>Rep. Edgar Chatto (1st District, Bohol) suggested the codification of various laws relevant to the PWDs to improve the implementation of these laws for the benefit of this sector.</p> |
| <p>Public Information</p> | <p>Briefing by the following agencies on their plans and programs and major accomplishments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) | <p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Ron Salo (Party-List, KABAYAN), listened to the briefings conducted by the PCOO, MTRCB, and the FDCP on their plans and programs and major accomplishments.</p> <p>PCOO Assistant Secretary and Freedom of Information (FOI) Program Director Kristian Ablan apprised the Committee of the status of implementation of Executive Order No. 2, series of 2016 which operationalizes in the Executive Branch the people's constitutional right to information and the state policies to full public disclosure and transparency in the public service.</p> <p>Section 7, Article III of the 1987 Philippine Constitution recognizes the right of the people to information on matters of public concern. It further provides that "access to official records, and to documents, and papers pertaining to official acts, transactions, or decisions, as well as to government research data used as basis for policy development, shall be afforded the citizen, subject to such limitations as may be provided by law."</p> <p>Ablan reported that at present, 447 offices and agencies are FOI-compliant and connected with the electronic FOI (eFOI) portal. However, he stressed that about 13% of the requests lodged in the portal have been invalidated not because they were requesting sensitive or confidential information but the agency upon which the requests had been lodged did not have the data or information asked for. Addressing this issue, Ablan said that the PCOO implemented the "No Wrong Door Policy" which means that the requested agency shall forward the request to the agency concerned as having such information to facilitate the request instead of denying it outright. Requests will generally take no more than 15 days to process, Ablan added.</p> <p>MTRCB Chair Ma. Rachel Arenas presented the agency's mandates, accomplishments, and initiatives. She said that since 2012, the MTRCB has already conducted 796 forums, seminars and other related activities nationwide under its "Matalinong Panonood Program." The Program seeks to empower the viewing public and various stakeholders on how to effectively use the MTRCB rating system and to raise public awareness of the importance of proper discernment and self-regulation.</p> |

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| Continuation... Public Information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP) | <p>Arenas likewise reported that from 2017 to 2019, the MTRCB has always exceeded its targets in movie, television, and other optical media review and classification. On the other hand, 95.35% of the cases being heard by the Board are resolved within the 90-day period, she added.</p> <p>Arenas also reported that the MTRCB's 2019 revenue collections amounting to P137 million exceeded its target of P133 million.</p> <p>FDCP Chair and Chief Executive Officer Mary Liza Diño-Seguerra reported that the FDCP, created by virtue of RA 9167, is mandated to establish and implement a cinema evaluation system (CES) as well as to develop an incentive reward system for film producers for the purpose of promoting the production of quality films, among others.</p> <p>Diño-Esguerra enjoined the Committee Members to help the local film industry by appropriating adequate funds for its development and by legislating appropriate measures that will make the industry at par with international standards.</p> |
| Ways and Means (Technical Working Group) | <p>Briefing on the performance of other tax and non-tax revenue collecting agencies, particularly on the processes involved and fees collected in the issuance of visas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Department of Trade and Industry-Board of Investments (DTI-BOI) | <p>The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo (2nd District, Marikina City), listened to the briefing conducted by revenue collecting agencies on the processes involved and fees collected relative to the issuance of visas.</p> <p>Assistant Secretary Neil Frank Ferrer of the DFA's Office of Consular Affairs (OCA) reported that as of November 2019, collections from visa fees amounted to P1.8 billion involving 1.5 million visas issued by the Department in 2019. He also presented the list of countries whose nationals are required to obtain a visa to enter the Philippines, and countries whose nationals are not required to obtain a visa pursuant to EO 408 (no visa entry for a 30-day stay).</p> <p>Ferrer explained the three categories of visas being issued by the DFA, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The "9 series" - Visas for Temporary Visitor (tourism, business, journalist/media groups, and missionaries on short visit), Transit, Seafarer/Crew list, International Treaty Trade/Investor, Student, and Pre-Arranged Employment/Working; The "13 series" - Non-Quota Visas which are applicable to the wife or husband or unmarried minor children of Filipino citizen, returning permanent resident foreigners, returning natural-born Filipinos who were naturalized as citizens of foreign countries, and child born subsequent to the issuance of immigrant visa to accompanying parent, among others; The "47(a)(2)" or the Special Non-Immigrant Visa - Includes Visas for Special Investors and Special Companies. <p>Ferrer also discussed the procedures for the online visa application system (OVAS), which was recently launched by the DFA, and the security features of the visa with its new design.</p> <p>BOI's Director of the Incentives Administration Service Erlinda Arcellana discussed the investment requirement to obtain a Special Investor's Resident Visa (SIRV), which should amount to at least US\$75,000 for every foreign investor. She also explained the other features of the SIRV Program including the qualifications of investors, required areas of investment, fees and charges, and fines or penalties for violations of SIRV rules and regulations.</p> <p>The SIRV entitles the holder to reside in the Philippines for an indefinite period as long as the required investments and all other qualifications are met and maintained.</p> <p>Arcellana reported that in 2019, revenue collections from SIRV application fees amounted to P2.4 million and from SIRV identification card fees, P2.3 million.</p> |

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| <p>Continuation... Ways and Means (Technical Working Group)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) | <p>The DOLE-Bureau of Local Employment (BLE) discussed the procedure for the issuance of Alien Employment Permits (AEPs). An AEP is a permit issued by the DOLE to a foreign national authorizing the latter to work in the Philippines.</p> <p>As reported by the Chief of the DOLE-BLE's Employment Service Policy and Regulation Division, Rosalinda Pineda, the revenue collections from AEPs amounted to P1.96 billion last year. Most of the AEPs issued went to Chinese nationals who applied for these permits upon arrival in the country.</p> <p>PRC Assistant Commissioner Aristogerson Gesmundo presented the four categories of the special temporary permits being issued by the PRC to foreigners who wish to temporarily practice their profession in the Philippines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Category B - Foreign professionals who are to practice a profession in the Philippines under reciprocity or international agreements (Architecture, Agriculture, Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering, Environmental Planning, Fisheries, Geodetic Engineering, Landscape Architecture, and Radiologic Technology); Category C - Foreign professionals who are to be engaged as consultants in foreign-funded, joint venture, or foreign-assisted projects of the government; Category D - Foreign professionals who are to be employed by local or foreign private firms or institutions; and Category E - Foreign professionals engaged in humanitarian mission. <p>Categories A1 and A2 are reserved for foreigners who are applying for permanent practice with examination and without examination, respectively.</p> <p>The TWG requested the DOLE to submit a flowchart on the processes involved in the issuance of a working visa or permit that is issued or that passes through the DOLE. The DFA and the BOI are asked to submit data on the total fees collected for each type of visa from 2000 to 2019.</p> <p>Rep. Quimbo urged all government agencies involved to harmonize and streamline the processing and issuance of visas.</p> |
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| <p>Sustainable Development Goals (Special Committee)</p> | <p>Briefing by the Future Earth Philippines (FEP) on its recommended policy framework on sustainable water resource development and assessment of existing water reservoir and dam projects in the country</p> | <p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Anna Marie Villaraza-Suarez (Party-List, ALONA), listened to the briefing conducted by the FEP on its recommended policy framework on sustainable water resource development and its assessment of the status and performance of the country's water reservoir and dam projects.</p> <p>Rep. Villaraza-Suarez said that the purpose of the briefing is to be updated on the current state of water supply in the country and to identify the steps that should be undertaken to address the water crisis.</p> <p>The FEP works with various agencies of the government and civic organizations for the development and application of inclusive sustainability and resilience programs in the Philippines.</p> <p>FEP Project Leader Lourdes Cruz informed the body that the FEP Program (FEPP) is a multi-sectoral and transdisciplinary endeavor that seeks to strengthen the country's sustainability and resilience through science-based solutions. It aims to provide societies with the required critical knowledge in order to face challenges posed by global</p> |

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| <p>Continuation... Sustainable Development Goals (Special Committee)</p> | <p>environmental change, and to identify opportunities for a transition to global sustainability.</p> <p>Funded by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), FEPP is now being implemented by the National Research Council of the Philippines (NRCP). Its team is composed of notable scientists, academics and researchers and collaborates with the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST).</p> <p>FEP Team Member and Professor of the University of the Philippines Institute of Civil Engineering Guillermo Tabios III, presented a policy study on sustainable reservoir and dam projects in the Philippines.</p> <p>Tabios discussed the importance of constructing dams that takes into account not only the needs of the current generation but also of future generations. According to Tabios, large-scale, complex water systems such as multi-purpose reservoirs in the Philippines are rarely planned in timeframes of sustainable development. These systems are planned on economic life basis (computations of over 50 to 70 years), thus only covering the current and part of future, first generation. If a timeframe of sustainable development has been followed in the planning and construction of these reservoirs, the water crisis in Metro Manila may not have occurred, Tabios asserted.</p> <p>Moreover, he proposed that the planning horizon for the sustainable development of large-scale reservoirs including large-scale river works should be over 150 years or so.</p> <p>Department of Public Works and Highways' (DPWH) Project Manager for Flood Control and Sabo Engineering Center Dolores Hipolito agreed with the policy research presented by the FEP, adding that the management of the country's water system cannot be handled by a single body.</p> <p>Rep. David "Jay-Jay" Suarez (2nd District, Quezon) underscored the need to create a master plan that will harmonize and integrate all plans, programs and strategies on water management and sustainability.</p> <p>Asked by Pasig City Rep. Roman Romulo on other water sources that can be tapped to augment Metro Manila's water supply, Tabios answered that ground water, Laguna Lake, Kaliwa Dam, and the Pampanga River Basin are all possible sources of water supply.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to draft a resolution expressing support for the creation of a Department of Water in order to integrate existing frameworks, guidelines, and policies on water management, and to harmonize old and new programs and projects on sustainable water resource development.</p> |
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