



Committee Daily Bulletin

18th Congress
First Regular Session

A publication of the Committee Affairs Department

Vol. I No. 98
May 27, 2020

COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Banks and Financial Intermediaries	HB 1297	Deputy Speaker Villafuerte	Enabling banks to expand service delivery channels through cash agents and providing guidelines therefor	<p>The Committee, chaired by Quirino Rep. Junie Cua, approved the Technical Working Group (TWG) Report on HB 1297 and directed the Secretariat to file the corresponding Committee Report.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Henry Oaminal (2nd District, Misamis Occidental) is the Chair of the TWG that deliberated on HB 1297.</p>
	HB 6375	Rep. Romualdez (Y.M.)	Consolidating all subsequent amendments to the Charter of the Philippine Veterans Bank, reenacting for the said purpose the pertinent portions of RA 3518, or the law creating the Philippine Veterans Bank, as amended, and introducing further amendments thereto	<p>The Committee will schedule an executive session to discuss unresolved contentious issues pertinent to HB 6375 in the hope that a consensus among the Members will be reached.</p> <p>In today's meeting, the Committee discussed and reviewed Sections 23 to 32 of the bill.</p> <p>Philippine Veterans Bank (PVB) President and Chief Executive Officer Roberto de Ocampo, PVB Director Federico Manalo, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Managing Director for Financial Supervision Sector III Arifa Ala, Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO) Administrator Ernesto Carolina, and Veterans Federation of the Philippines (VFP) Legal Officer Phydias Emmanuel Ramos gave their respective comments and recommendations on the bill.</p> <p>Among the points agreed upon by the Committee to be incorporated in the bill were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The provision on the Articles of Incorporation (AOI) of the PVB will be revised to allow the PVB to upgrade or downgrade its license in accordance with BSP rules and regulations;• The operations and changes in the capital structure of the PVB and principal address, as well as other amendments to its AOI and by-laws under RA 7169 or the law rehabilitating the PVB under RA 3518, shall be in accordance with the Revised Corporation Code of the Philippines (RA 11232), the General Banking Act (RA 8791), and other related laws;• The PVB needs to amend its existing by-laws or adopt a new one to be consistent with the provisions of the bill;

Continuation... Banks and Financial Intermediaries				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The repeal provision shall cite specific laws, executive orders, proclamations, and other issuances that will be repealed for being inconsistent with any of the provisions of this proposed law, instead of a general repeal provision; and The proposed Act shall take effect 15 days following its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines. <p>On the issue of the management and administration of the 2.4 hectares of land being occupied by the Board of Trustees of the Veterans of World War II, the Chair decided to study the matter further in an executive session considering the opposing views between the PVAO, VFP and the PVB.</p> <p>In addition, the provision authorizing the PVB as a government depository under Section 28 of the proposed law will be discussed in the executive session.</p>
Good Government and Public Accountability	HRs 879 & 882	Reps. Zarate and Lacson	Inquiry on the sudden increase in electricity rates and interruptions during the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) and general community quarantine (GCQ)	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. "Kuya" Jose Antonio Sy-Alvarado (1st District, Bulacan), will deliberate further on HRs 882 and 879 in its next meeting.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Sy-Alvarado said that the sudden increase in electricity rates during the ECQ or GCQ due to COVID-19 came as a surprise to thousands of consumers being serviced by the Manila Electric Company (MERALCO). To the affected people, Rep. Sy-Alvarado said, this spike in the electricity bill is another burden they have to bear during this pandemic.</p> <p>Department of Energy's (DOE) Electric Power Industry Management Bureau Director Mario Marasigan said that the Department instructed MERALCO to explain the basis of its computation of the electricity bills from March to May while Metro Manila and other parts of Luzon are in ECQ or GCQ.</p> <p>Marasigan informed the Committee that MERALCO attributed the sudden spike in the electric bills to the increase in the consumption of electricity during the summer months and because residential consumers were mostly home because of the ECQ.</p> <p>Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) Commissioner Josefina Patricia Asirit said that in order to provide some economic relief to the majority of electricity consumers, the ERC suspended the collections of the feed-in-tariff allowance (FiT-All) which will lower the electricity rate by P0.04 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) as well as the Universal Charge-Environmental Charge (UC-EC) equivalent to</p>

<p>Continuation... Good Government and Public Accountability</p>				<p>P0.0025 per kWh. Likewise, she said that the ERC approved the staggered payment of MERALCO bills within four months at the minimum.</p> <p>Asirit also said that the distribution utilities (DUs) were required to immediately adjust and correct the estimated consumption used in billing their consumers during the quarantine months as soon as the DUs are able to conduct actual meter readings. Consequently, MERALCO will issue a new bill reflecting the actual consumption and the corresponding amount due not later than June 8.</p> <p>MERALCO Assistant Vice President Agnes Macob narrated that on March 16, MERALCO provided a 30-day payment extension for bills due from March 1 to April 14. She added that on March 20, MERALCO suspended the meter reading and bill delivery activities due to COVID-19 and the subsequent ECQ. She explained that the March and April bills were merely estimates based on the average of the past three-month consumption in accordance with the Distribution Services and Open Access Rules (DSOAR) issued by the ERC. The actual meter reading activities resumed on April 11.</p> <p>Rep. Virgilio Lacson (Party-List, MANILA TEACHERS), author of HR 882, said that according to the rules of the COVID-19 Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF), the DUs are allowed to conduct meter reading even during the lockdown. He then requested MERALCO to submit data of its personnel who are in charge of meter reading.</p> <p>On the convenience fee of P47 charged to customers who are paying online, Macob explained that the fee goes to PayMaya – an online payment account. She assured that MERALCO will shoulder the convenience fee charged to its consumers from March 16 to May 15.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Deputy Speaker Dan Fernandez (1st District, Laguna) said that the ERC should review its approval increasing the interim Maximum Annual Revenue (iMAR) of the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) to P47.05 billion for 2020 from P43.7 billion last year. The Deputy Speaker said that the increase in the iMAR, as approved by the ERC last February 2020, will entail added costs for the consumers and is uncalled for during these trying times.</p> <p>Asirit said that the approved iMAR for 2020 may result in an increase in the electric bill. However, she stressed that the increase is largely attributed to lower system demand due to the pandemic.” The ERC, she said, is currently reviewing the energy projects of</p>
--	--	--	--	---

Continuation... Good Government and Public Accountability				<p>national significance (EPNS) which were applied for by the NGCP.</p> <p>The iMAR is the maximum revenue that NGCP is allowed to earn from its transmission operations, or the process of transporting electricity from power generators to distributors.</p>
Labor and Employment	HB 309	Rep. Salceda	Instituting a 35-hour work week scheme as an alternative work arrangement for employees in the private sector	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Enrico Pineda (Party List, 1-PACMAN), approved the Committee Report on HB 309.
	HB 1670	Deputy Speaker Villafuerte	Amending Article 83 of PD 442, otherwise known as the Labor Code of the Philippines, as amended (by allowing alternative work arrangements and by putting a ceiling on the maximum number of working hours to 48 hours per week)	<p>The Committee will deliberate further on HBs 1670, 1904, and 5471 in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Pineda said that the three bills were initially referred to the Subcommittee on Labor Standards. However, the Subcommittee could not build a consensus among the stakeholders due to the opposition of the labor sector to HB 1904, citing in particular the effect of the compressed workweek on the overtime benefits of workers.</p>
	HB 1904	Rep. Go (M.)	Increasing the normal work hours per day under a compressed work week scheme, amending Articles 83, 87, and 91 of PD 442, as amended	According to Rep. Pineda, the labor sector said it is within the rights of workers to be paid for overtime work rendered beyond eight hours.
	HB 5471	Deputy Speaker Villanueva	Allowing the adoption of alternative work arrangements, amending for the purpose PD 442, as amended	<p>Baguio City Rep. Mark Go, author of HB 1904, explained that if the employees work for more than eight hours a day under a compressed work week arrangement, they may not be entitled to overtime pay as long as the total working hours do not exceed 48 hours per week. He said that employers and employees can agree on shortening the number of work days to five if their normal work week is six days.</p> <p>Atty. Arnold de Vera, representative of the <i>Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa</i>, pointed out that HB 1904 does not limit the number of hours that workers will be required to work on a given day, thus will deprive the workers of overtime pay. The bill sets a limit of 48 hours only as it pertains to a particular week.</p> <p>Likewise, National Anti-Poverty Commission labor sector representative Edwin Bustillos said that based on studies, longer work hours adversely affect the health of employees. In this time of COVID-19 pandemic, he said, pushing for this proposed law is uncalled for, stressing that increasing the normal daily work hours may compromise the immune system of the workers, thereby making them susceptible to the disease. Instead, Bustillos suggested lowering the daily working hours to enhance workers' productivity and ensure their health and safety.</p> <p>The resource persons were requested to submit their position papers on the bills.</p>

Ways and Means	Substitute Bill to HB 6414	Deputy Speaker Villafuerte	Converting the Bicol State College of Applied Sciences and Technology (BISCAST) in the City of Naga, Province of Camarines Sur into a state university, to be known as the Southeast Asian University of Technology, and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda (2 nd District, Albay), approved the tax provision of the Substitute Bill to HB 6414 with amendment.
	Substitute Bill to HB 4937	Rep. Suansing (E.)	Establishing a polytechnic state college in the Municipality of Allaga, Province of Nueva Ecija, to be known as the Allaga Polytechnic State College and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee approved the tax provision of the Substitute Bill to HB 4937 with amendment.
	Substitute Bill to HB 4488	Rep. Chungalao	Separating the Ifugao State University (IFSU)-Potia Campus in the Municipality of Alfonso Lista, Ifugao from the IFSU in the Municipality of Lamut, Ifugao and converting it into a state university to be known as the Eastern Cordillera State College of Agriculture, Science and Technology (ECSUAST) and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee approved the tax provision of the Substitute Bill to HB 4488 with amendment.

DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE (DCC) MEETING				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
New Normal Cluster	Substitute Bill to HB 6623	Speaker Cayetano	Establishing policies and regulations and public health and safety for the better normal in the workplace, public places and communities toward a sustainable recovery from COVID-19 pandemic	<p>The Cluster, chaired by Deputy Speaker Loren Legarda (Antique), approved the Substitute Bill to HB 6623. The Cluster will submit its report on the bill to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee (DCC) for consideration and approval.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Legarda said that the Cluster has exhaustively deliberated on the substitute bill and included therein the suggestions of the House Members as well as the concerned government agencies.</p> <p>The Deputy Speaker explained that the proposed law uses the term “better normal” instead of “new normal” because the former essentially tackles the injustices that the pandemic has highlighted together with the permanent and evident challenges of climate, digital, and demographic transitions. She underscored that “better normal” should provide science-based solutions to health and safety, should be just and equitable and uphold human dignity, and should be responsive to such climate, digital and demographic changes.</p>

AGENCY BRIEFING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Labor and Employment	Briefing by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) on its plans for displaced local and overseas Filipino workers (OFWs)	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Enrico Pineda (Party List, 1-PACMAN), listened to DOLE's report on its plans for displaced local and overseas Filipino workers.</p> <p>DOLE Secretary Silvestre Bello III reported that 2.7 million workers in the country are affected by the temporary closure of business establishments including those on flexible working arrangements adopted by some companies. Bello, however, warned that should the COVID-19 pandemic continue for two to three years, the number of affected workers would exponentially increase to five to 10 million.</p> <p>Likewise, Bello said that around 322,000 OFWs were displaced from their work due to the pandemic, and 62,000 of them are stranded in various countries which also imposed lockdowns to contain the spread of the disease. Meanwhile, 44,000 OFWs are expected to return to the country between May and June who will all go through swab testing and 14-day quarantine period in government-designated facilities.</p> <p>To accommodate the huge number of returning OFWs, Bello disclosed that President Rodrigo Roa Duterte instructed DOLE to immediately send home the 24,000 OFWs who are still "confined" in quarantine facilities in Metro Manila in a week's time. Bello said that these OFWs tested negative of COVID-19 and have stayed in temporary shelters way beyond the government-imposed 14-day quarantine period.</p> <p>Bello also said that DOLE's recovery plan for displaced workers includes cash assistance and sending OFWs back to their hometowns through the <i>Balik Probinsya</i> Program.</p> <p>The Labor Secretary assured the Committee that the DOLE will give immediate attention to the repatriation of OFWs and the release of workers from quarantine facilities and ensure their safe arrival to their respective provinces.</p>

DISCUSSION WITH AGENCIES/ENTITIES		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Energy	Inquiry into the alleged spike in the electricity bills during the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ)	<p>The Committee, chaired by Marinduque Rep. Lord Allan Jay Velasco, listened to the explanations of concerned parties on the alleged spike in the electricity bills particularly in areas serviced by the Manila Electric Company (Meralco) during the ECQ.</p> <p>Meralco First Vice President Victor Emmanuel Genuino, also the Head for Customer Retail Services and Corporate Communications, informed the body that the high electricity bills for the month of May was due to increased energy usage plus the adjustments from estimated March and April consumption the payments for which were deferred.</p> <p>He explained that during the ECQ, there are two main customer experiences: high consumption and low/no consumption. The first category includes residents who are studying or working from home, and businesses which are able to continue operating during the ECQ and therefore consume higher electricity. The second category includes homes with less or no residents and vacant condominiums and other rented dwellings, as well as businesses that had reduced or partial operations during the ECQ, and therefore consume lesser electricity. This second type of consumers are likely to receive</p>

<p>Continuation... Energy</p>		<p>electricity bills higher than actual consumption for the months in question, but Genuino said excess payments will be refunded.</p> <p>Genuino further explained that the estimated bills for March-April were based on the average consumption of the customers from December to February, when the weather was cooler compared to the months of March to May. Thus, he said, it follows that electricity consumption will be higher during the summer months.</p> <p>Meralco will fully comply with the directives of the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) and the Department of Energy regarding the billing, payment extension, and installment payments during the ECQ and modified ECQ (MECQ), Genuino said.</p> <p>ERC Chair Agnes Devanadera explained the latest ERC Advisory for MECQ areas with regard to the amortization scheme for the payment of electricity bills. She confirmed Genuino's earlier statements that that electricity bills falling due within the ECQ and MECQ period (March 15 to May 31) may be paid in four to six equal monthly installments starting June 15, without interest and penalties. Meanwhile, the collection of the Universal Charge-Environmental Charge, which is part of the Meralco monthly electricity bill, will be suspended until further notice.</p> <p>Philippine Rural Electric Cooperatives Association, Inc. (PHILRECA) Executive Director and General Manager Janeene Depay-Colingan agreed that electricity consumption during the summer season is at its highest compared with other months of the year. She also mentioned that member-consumers of electric cooperatives (EC) may pay their electricity bills in full or on staggered basis without interest, penalty, or possibility of disconnection of service.</p> <p>Former Congressman and Bayan Muna Chair Neri Colmenares stressed that there should be a long-term solution to the recurring problem of overcharging of Meralco customers. He proposed a one-month condonation of electricity bills for the customers of Meralco, non-profit ECs in the provinces, and other energy players to be funded by the government's collections from the 12% value added tax or from the Malampaya Fund which has a current estimated balance of P226.25 billion as of 2020. He also proposed a review of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA) and chart a new framework that will govern the energy sector.</p> <p>Rep. Sergio Dagooc (Party-List, APEC) concurred with the proposal of Colmenares on using the Malampaya Fund for the one-month condonation of electric bills.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Jericho Jonas Nograles (Party-List, PBA) inquired on the refund system that Meralco will implement to rectify the overcharging of its customers.</p> <p>Meralco First Vice President and Head of Regulatory Management Jose Ronald Valles replied that Meralco will still have to confer with the ERC on the matter.</p>
-----------------------------------	--	---