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Journal

SESSION NO. 14
Tuesday, August 27, 2019

**EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION**

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CALL TO ORDER

At 3:00 p.m., the Senate President, Hon. Vicente C. Sotto III, called the session to order.

PRAYER

Sen. Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel III led the prayer, to wit:

Almighty and Heavenly Father, we thank You for all the blessings and gifts that You have given us, especially the gift of life.

As Your legislators and the Senate family are gathered here, may we also ask You to bless us with the gift of wisdom so that all of us may know and will be guided by what You consider to be truly the right and proper actions to do given the unique circumstances of our beloved country.

We acknowledge the presence of Your divine hand in shaping the future of our country.

Here we are, Lord, willing to work with You as You unfold Your wonderful plans for our nation. And as You continuously bless the Philippines, may we never forget the bravery, patriotism, and heroism of our forefathers that have allowed us to be where we are right now as a people under one nation.

We ask for Your forgiveness too as we are fully aware and recognize that we are but *homo sapiens* with faults and shortcomings.

Please help us go beyond our personal differences and unite us in our service to the people as we all strive for transformative nation-building.

God of Glory, we pray for Your continued presence in these Senate halls so that every time we convene, Your wisdom and sound judgment will prevail in the crafting of laws that will be beneficial to our country and the Filipino people.

Amen.

ROLL CALL

Upon direction of the Senate President, the Secretary of the Senate, Atty. Myra Marie D. Villarica, called the roll, to which the following senators responded:

Angara, S.	Pimentel III, A. K.
Binay, M. L. N. S.	Poe, G.
Dela Rosa, R. B. M.	Recto, R. G.
Drilon, F. M.	Revilla Jr., R. B.
Go, C. L. T.	Sotto III, V. C.
Hontiveros, R.	Tolentino, F. T. N.
Lacson, P. M.	Villanueva, J.
Lapid, M. L. M.	Villar, C. A.
Marcos, I. R.	Zubiri, J. M. F.
Pacquiao, E. M. D.	



With 19 senators present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum.

Senators Gatchalian and Gordon arrived after the roll call.

Senator Cayetano was absent on account of illness as indicated in the letter of the Senator's chief of staff dated August 27, 2019.

Senator De Lima was unable to attend the session as she was under detention.

Senator Pangilinan was absent.

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body dispensed with the reading of the Journal of Session No. 13 (August 20, 2019) and considered it approved.

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

At the instance of Senator Zubiri, the Members greeted the following senators who, aside from Senate President Sotto, were also celebrating their birth anniversaries in August, namely: Senators Lapid (August 21), Pangilinan (August 24) and De Lima (August 27).

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

At this juncture, Senator Zubiri acknowledged the presence in the gallery of the following guests:

- Mayor Tina Diaz of San Mateo, Rizal;
- Vice Mayor Ramon Legaspi of Makato, Aklan;
- Vice Mayor Tito Tubigan and councilors from Dinalungan, Aurora;
- Barangay Captain Lorena Umali along with the kagawads and SK officials of Brgy. Payompon, Mamburao, Occidental Mindoro;
- Commissioner Greco Belgica of the Presidential Anti-Corruption Commission;
- Mr. Jeremiah Belgica, head of the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA); and
- Mayor Evangelista of Kidapawan City, Cotabato.

Senate President Sotto welcomed the guests to the Senate.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Availing himself of the privilege hour, Senator Villanueva spoke on the occasion of the observance of the National Tech-Voc day last August 25 pursuant to Republic Act No. 10970, the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) law, that has since benefitted the lives of TVET graduates.

The full text of his speech follows:

I rise before you on a matter of personal and collective privilege.

In February 2018, a new law that elevates, empowers, and energizes Technical Vocational Education and Training or TVET was signed. This law, Republic Act No. 10970, declares the 25th of August of every year as a special working holiday in observance of the National Tech-Voc Day.

It is only the second year of implementation of this law, but we are very happy for the overwhelming support of the entire TVET sector particularly TESDA, being the lead agency in our celebrations.

Unfortunately, the 25th of August falls on a Sunday this year. It is the reason why it is being celebrated this week. So, Happy National Tech-Voc Day *po sa ating lahat*.

The World Café of Opportunities, a one-stop shop for jobseekers, which TESDA and its partners organized in different parts of the country, is a concrete example of the many benefits of the National Tech-Voc Day to our *kababayans*.

This is precisely what we want our people —especially the young — to see, the fact that there is indeed a world of opportunities in Technical-Vocational Education and Training.

And we are very glad that a great proportion of learners in senior high school — almost 40% — chose the Technical Vocational Livelihood or TVL Track. And for the past five years, from 2014 to 2018, TESDA has been able to produce 10,571,843 TVET graduates.

As the author of this law, beholding the enthusiasm that everyone has to readily embrace and celebrate the National Tech-Voc Day, is a humbling experience, indeed. *Maraming,*

maraming salamat po sa inyong pagtugon sa hamon ng bagong batas na ito.

And just a little bit of trivia, August 25th is also the birthday of TESDA. This year, our most beloved — and I would say favorite agency — is celebrating its silver anniversary.

So, to the TESDA family who was here with us — *kanina po kasama natin si Secretary Lapeña at ilang mga deputy director generals* — Happy, happy 25th anniversary.

As you know, the creation of TESDA was a recommendation of the Educational Commission (EDCOM) of 1991, chaired by former Sen. Edgardo Angara, the father of our colleague, Sen. Sonny Angara who, like his father, is also a staunch advocate of education. Let me add that our good Senate President, Sen. Vicente C. Sotto III, was a member of the 9th Congress when Republic Act No. 7769 or the TESDA Charter became a law.

Today, we honor all our predecessors who positioned Technical Vocational Education and Training — through the creation of TESDA — as one of the principal drivers for national development, progress, and improved quality of life. And I feel so proud for having had the chance to be TESDA secretary from 2010 to 2015.

I also remember during my early days at TESDA, we had a “Date with Nature” Project. The project is for every TESDAn to plant a tree. And so I brought my son Jaden, who was just a few months old then, and we planted a mahogany seedling at the TESDA complex in Taguig. Now, just like TESDA, it has grown into a full-grown tree with the promise of providing shade and greenery.

My five years in TESDA allows me to look back and see the importance of TVET in sustaining the future of our industries and giving our people the choices they need to attain a better life.

And now, taking stock of our TESDA experiences, we are continuously toiling in the legislature to make TVET work for our people. We in the Senate have always been hand-in-hand pushing for legislations supportive of TVET, and I am very thankful for all the fervent support and for rallying behind landmark legislations like Republic Act No. 11230 or the Tulong Trabaho Act, Republic Act No. 10968 or the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) Law, and Republic Act No. 10931 or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act. I believe that these new laws will be instrumental in our continuing efforts to reduce, if not eliminate the social bias against TVET and

make its impact felt in dealing with unemployment.

Just outside the Session Hall, in line with our desire to raise the image of TVET, we are showcasing the success stories of Tech-Voc graduates through a week-long exhibit. *Maraming salamat sa ating mga kasamahan na nagpunta kanina — Sen. Win Gatchalian at Sen. Cynthia Villar — at nakita po namin, na-experience namin iyon pong mga in-exhibit doon lalo na iyong paghahanda natin sa Industry 4.0. Mayroon po hanggang ngayon dito sa ating second floor, iyong mechatronics, iyong simulator para sa mga backhoe operation, maging sa pagwe-welding, et cetera.*

Isa po sa nais kong banggitin si Cherry S. Galit, 28 taong gulang at taga Pandacan, Manila. Mula si Cherry sa isang broken family.

Pinangarap po niyang makapagtrabaho sa hotel pero hindi siya naha-hire dahil sa kawalan ng proper training. Kaya naisip po niyang mag-TESDA. Inamin ni Cherry na dumanas siya ng panghamak dahil sa kanyang pag-aarial sa TESDA.

Kumuha si Cherry ng kursong Food and Beverage Services NC II noong 2014 at noong 2015 ay kumuha ng kursong Bartending NC II.

Habang nag-aarial si Cherry sa TESDA, nakipag-tie-up po ang isang beverage company sa TESDA noong 2014. Nakasama si Cherry sa programa. Pagka-graduate po niya naka-tanggap siya ng isang package na mobile bar.

Dito na po nagsimula ang kanyang negosyo mula sa zero capital. At mula sa P5,000 na una nitong kita, nakaipon siya hanggang nakabili ng pangalawang mobile bar, hanggang naging tatlo po ito sa kasalukuyan. Sa ngayon, isa na po siyang professional bartender, negosyante at may-ari ng sikat na JCAB I-Mix Mobile Bar sa Maynila.

I thank Cherry and all Tech-Voc graduates who shared their own narratives with nothing in return. Now, their authentic, personal and passionate stories are influencing more and more young people to choose TVET, to dream, and to act. Their success stories create positive change through information and inspiration.

We have put up this exhibit to bring the value of TVET to life by sharing these remarkable success stories. We hope to initiate, if not to culminate a movement that puts premium on TVET.

Inside Committee Room No. 1, we can also witness our world-class TVET graduates demon-



strating not only their skills but also the products of their innovation in robotics, mechatronics, and graphic design. We chose these qualifications to emphasize the need to respond to the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution where automation and artificial intelligence are becoming the norm more than the exception.

May I share also that I have learned about new technologies and product innovations in our neighboring countries. In Japan, for example, the worldwide race among companies to launch the first self-flying vehicle is taken seriously, as electronic giant NEC tests a drone-like prototype inside a cage in an Abiko facility.

The Japanese government intends at trailblazing and leading the flying car industry. They are poised at making fashionable flying cars normal city rides by the 2030s.

It is to this kind of international, technological, competitive, innovation challenge that TVET, and our whole education system for that matter, must respond.

I do hope that as we celebrate today's National Tech-Voc Day, our attention and focus are directed towards preparing our graduates in general, not just our Tech-Voc graduates, into this new kind of international, technological, competitive, innovation challenge that TVET, and our whole educational system for that matter, must respond.

I do hope that as we celebrate today's National Tech-Voc Day, our attention and focus are directed towards preparing our graduates in general, not just our Tech-Voc graduates, into this "new world of work."

For TVET, as for our whole education system, a curriculum revolution is an imperative to respond to the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution or 4IR. Imagine developing skills for assembly line jobs, only to realize that the available jobs already goes beyond mere competing with robots to doing robotics—that is to say, controlling, programming, and yes, even designing and constructing robots?

In 2011, the famous John Seely Brown of the Xerox PARC Laboratory in Palo Alto, California proposed the idea that the half-life of a skill is only five years. This means that half of what our students learn today will become obsolete five years from now.

As your chairperson of the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, please allow me to share what else I have in mind

to reform our education and training systems so that we can respond to the changing world of work.

First, we believe that we must link training with industries especially on qualifications pertaining to the use of innovative or additive technologies. This is also a call to our tertiary education institutions to prioritize offering courses responsive to 4IR.

Most disciplines available around the country are largely the easy-to-offer and inexpensive programs that do not require much investment. As a result, we have an oversupply of graduates who cannot pass their respective licensure exams or get immediate employment.

But access to "quality" is more troublesome. In the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) alone, for instance, the passing rate averages only 30% in the last ten years, which means that only three out of the ten examinees would pass the LET.

Second, apprenticeship or enterprise-based training is the preferred training model in many parts of the world and we need to press hard to make it the norm in TVET and in higher learning.

Lack of sufficient in-company or on-the-job training is partly blamed why some K-12 graduates are not satisfactorily geared up for work. According to Jobstreet.com's 2018 Fresh Graduate Report, only 24% of employers from manufacturing, professional services, retail machinery and equipment and BPO industries in the Philippines are ready to hire K-12 graduates.

Data on work-based training from TESDA reinforce the observation that lack of training in authentic work environments deepen job-skills mismatch in the country. TESDA's Apprenticeship Program and Dual Training System or DTS produced only 620,199 graduates or only 5.12% of the 12,110,210 graduates of TVET from 2010-1018.

In this regard, we would file a measure called "Training sa Kumpanya para sa Garantisadong Trabaho Act of 2019," to incorporate the existing enterprise-based training programs administered by TESDA and expand the provision of training programs being implemented within companies which can be a mix of workplace training and classroom-based learning.

Along this line of thinking, we must also attract the best and the brightest Filipino students to TVET. It is our belief that not all young Filipinos should go to college. TVET is an excellent career option nowadays as evident



in the 25 success stories being showcased in the exhibit just outside the Session Hall.

Third, we must focus training on science and innovation so that our graduates can keep up with workplace changes. We can do this by creating more or helping our best TESDA Technology Institutions morph into centers of excellence and by recruiting trainors who understand industry, business and the workplace.

Last but not the least, we must increase our commitment to web-based training. It will not only widen access or resolve the perennial problem of absorptive capacity in TVET, but will also instill independent learning among Filipinos—the foundation of lifelong learning. Moreover, it will develop the skills required in our fast-becoming “uber-economy” as manifested by the call center jobs and telecommuting or work-from-home setups.

We are pushing for the Freelancers Protection Bill or Senate Bill No. 155 precisely to help our people deal with the changing world of work or on a more varied types of work.

There are pockets of success that indicate that these actionable points this Representation raised are doable. For example, the Concepcion Vocational School in Tarlac was recently awarded with a Gold Accreditation by the Asia Pacific Accreditation and Certification Commission (APACC). It ranked fourth among all accredited institutions in the Asia Pacific.

I saw with my two eyes the transformative power of Technical Vocational Education and Training. This is the reason why I repeat the success stories of our graduates over and over again, to the point of being repetitious until it becomes part of our people’s consciousness.

Hence, I challenge our TVET workers, especially our TESDA employees and officials who are present here today: continue to pour your hearts out to the cause of TVET. I always believe that it all starts from aspiring higher and striving harder. We should take part in the struggle—all of us. Let us applaud the success of our Tech-Voc graduates because they bring us hope. Listen to the message they give to every Filipino youth: “If we overcome our obstacles, so you can.”

Happy National Technical-Vocational Education and Training Day to everyone!

REMARKS OF THE CHAIR

Senate President Sotto placed on record that the principal author of the TESDA law in the Ninth

Congress was former Senator Ernesto “Boy” Herrera, while Senator Drilon was the Secretary of the Department of Labor around that time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

At this juncture, Senator Zubiri acknowledged the presence in the gallery of the following guests:

- Mayor Maria Theresa D. Constantino and the barangay officials of Malungon, Sarangani Province;
- Gov. Roel Ragay Degamo of Negros Oriental;
- Mayor Gloria P. Ronquillo of Santo Tomas, Batangas; and
- Mayor Edralyn Joy Salvame of Ibaan, Batangas.

Senate President Sotto welcomed the guests to the Senate.

REFERRAL OF SPEECH TO COMMITTEE

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Chair referred the speech of Senator Villanueva to the Committee on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development as the primary committee, and to the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education as the secondary committee.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR GO

At the outset, Senator Go said that he would avail of the privilege hour and deliver a speech not only to answer a personal attack against him but also to defend the interest of the Filipino people against accusations that the *Malasakit* Center was being politicized. He said that he would reserve his right not to be interpellated after his speech as it would only squander away the precious time of the institution.

Following is the full text of his speech:

Ang tunay na epektibong burukrasya ay nagsisilbing tulay ng mga tao sa mga serbisyo ng gobyerno. Hindi ito dapat parang EDSA na maliban sa traffic na, napakarami pa nitong pasikut-sikot na nakakahilo, nakapang-iinit ng ulo, at lumulustay sa buwis na binabayaran ng mga Pilipino.

Halimbawa, noong assistant pa lamang ako ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte noong mayor

pa lamang siya ng Davao, saksi na po ako sa lahat ng paghihirap at sakripisyo na kailangang harapin ng mga Pilipino para lamang makaavail ng medical assistance mula sa gobyerno.

Nag-umpisa po ito sa Davao City. Pumipila sila sa labas ng city hall.

Alam po ninyo, doon ko natutunan na ang daming mga lumalapit sa kanya na mga taga-Surigao, taga-Bukidnon, na hindi taga-Davao. Ang parating sinasabi ng COA, bawal daw gamitin iyong pera ng taga-Davao.

Alam ninyo, sinabihan ako ni Mayor Duterte, "Bong, kung uupo ako dito as mayor at hindi ako makakatulong sa aking kapwa Pilipino, hindi na ako babalik dito bukas."

Sabi niya, "Hanapan mo ng paraan, bayaran mo iyan, bahala ka kung saan mo kukunin iyong pera, basta bayaran mo iyan. Hindi ko matis na hindi ko matutulungan iyong mga Pilipino."

So, noong naging pangulo po si Pangulong Duterte, ang sabi ko, "Ano ba ang puwede nating itulong sa ating kapwa na mapabilis iyong serbisyo at huwag natin silang pahirapan?"

Dahil wala pang iisang opisina noon kung saan maaaring dumulog ng tulong ang ating mga kababayan, kailangan pa nilang pumila sa napakahaba at magkakahiwalay na ahensiya ng gobyerno — minsan ay aabutin pa ng ilang oras sa ilalim ng init ng araw, iiwanan pa ang kanilang probinsiya at pupunta sa siyudad para lamang mabigyan ng tulong mula sa gobyerno.

Gabundok na forms ang kailangan din nilang sagutan at sangkatutak na requirements ang dapat ipasa para lamang sa mumunting tulong mula sa gobyerno na ang totoo ay pera naman talaga nila.

Sa pagsunod pa lamang ng napakahabang proseso ng pag-request ng medical assistance sa magkakahiwalay na ahensiya, ubos na ang oras at pera sa pamasahe, sa kakapila habang pumapatak po ang bill nila.

Ang ilan pa sa mga epal na pulitiko, ginagamit ang paghihirap ng mga tao sa kanilang pansariling interes sa pamamagitan ng endorsement letters na nagki-claim ng credit sa mga tulong na ibinibigay ng gobyerno sa mga tao. Kapag kulang ang naipong assistance mula sa ahensiya ng gobyerno katulad ng PCSO, DSWD, at discount mula sa PhilHealth, pupunta naman sila sa mga opisina o bahay ng mga public officials.

Tingnan po ninyo iyong PAC diyan sa baba mismo ng Senado. Tingnan ninyo kung

gaano kahaba ang pila ng humihingi ng tulong sa pagpapagamot diyan sa labas ng Senado. Nakakaawa.... Kaya noong nag-usap kami ni Senator Gatchalian, Majority Leader Senator Zubiri, Senate President Sotto, sila Senator Villar, Senator Dela Rosa, Senator Tolentino, Senator Angara, at iba pang mga kasamahan natin dito sa Senado, sumang-ayon sila na dapat maisaayos ang Public Assistance Center ng Senado. In fact, ongoing na po ang planong renovation sa gusaling ito at nag-request na po ang Senate PAC kung puwedeng i-adopt ang konsepto ng Malasakit Center dito — isang konsepto na nais kong ikuwento sa inyo ngayon.

Uulitin ko po para sa ating mga kababayang nakikinig — pera po ninyo ito. Hindi ito pera ng sinumang opisyales. Pera ito ng gobyerno na dapat lamang ibalik sa inyo sa pamamagitan ng maayos na serbisyo.

Hindi ko mapigilang mahabag ang puso ko sa mga kababayan nating nagdurusa dahil may karamdaman silang pinapasam na hindi nila mapagamot dahil sa kakulangan ng pera. Tulad niyan po sa iba't ibang ospital. Noong maging special assistant po ako ng Pangulo, ganoon pa rin. Araw-araw, napakaraming Pilipino ang lumalapit sa aming opisina, pumipila sa ilalim ng init ng araw, nagmamakaawa dahil hirap na hirap silang humanap ng tulong mula sa gobyerno.

Sa mga kadahilanang ito kaya nabuo ang konsepto ng Malasakit Center. The program was designed to streamline and expedite the delivery of medical services to Filipinos, especially to those who need them the most. Hindi po ito logo ng pulitiko, wala pong Bong Go na logo riyan. It is one of the solutions of the Duterte administration to provide quick and quality access to healthcare to all Filipinos, regardless of their age, sex, ethnic background, religion — and let me emphasize this — regardless of their political affiliation.

In fact, sa Valenzuela, isa po sila Mayor Gatchalian ang gumawa rin po ng Malasakit Center doon mismo sa ospital nila. It serves as a one-stop shop where Filipinos can seek aggregated financial assistance provided by various government agencies.

With the installation of a proper queuing system and express lanes for senior citizens and people with disabilities (PWD) in these offices, Filipinos will no longer have to endure long lines and fill out piles and piles of forms just to get medical assistance from the government.

Currently, there are 41 successfully established and fully operational Malasakit Centers

across the country—18 in Luzon, including two in Bicol region, 13 in Visayas, and 10 in Mindanao—and the Duterte administration plans to establish more in the months to come, pending the legislation and institutionalization of the centers.

Kung maisabatas na po ito, magkakaroon na po ng Malasakit Center sa bawat public hospital, sa bawat probinsya ng bansa. Inuulit ko, isa lang po ang layunin ng opisinang ito: ang mapabilis ang pagbibigay ng medical assistance ng gobyerno sa mga Pilipinong nangangailangan nito kahit saan man sila sa bansa. Walang labis, walang kulang. Pera n'yo po ito, ibinabalik lamang po sa inyo.

If only our politicians will start paying attention, they will see how the *Malasakit* Center Program has assisted so many of our countrymen and women.

Isa rin po sa kanila si Prince Thyrone. Isa po siyang 11-month old na sanggol na ipinanganak na premature at kinakailangang ma-confine sa Intensive Care Unit (ICU) ng isang ospital sa Pasay. Dahil sa napakalaking hospital expenses, dumulog po sa Malasakit Center ang ama ni Prince Thyrone para makakuha ng medical assistance sa gobyerno. Hindi po natin siya binigo. Dahil po sa Malasakit Center, naibsan po ang napakalaking gastusin nila sa ospital.

Kaya naman po nakakalungkot isipin na sa kabilang hangarin ng programa, kamakailan po lamang ay nakarinig po tayo ng mga "mema" na politiko na tila kailangan ng tulong ng Malasakit Center para mapagamot ang madumi nilang utak. Kesyo partisan daw ang Malasakit Center, kesyo ginagamit daw natin ang opisinang ito para sa pulitika. Malaking kasinungalingan po ang mga ito.

Una po sa lahat, hindi po pamumulitika ang pagmamalasakit sa ating mga kababayan, hindi po pamumulitika ang kagustuhan nating mapadali ang pagbibigay natin ng tulong sa mga Pilipino. Hindi po pamumulitika ang pagbabalik natin sa mga kababayan natin ang pera na sa kanila naman talaga. Pera po ng tao iyan. Sa kanila iyan. Bakit ba natin ipag-kakait ang kanilang buwis para mapagamot ang kanilang karamdaman?

Ikalawa, magbigay kayo ng isang kasuotan na pinagkaitan ng tulong ng Malasakit Center dahil salungat ang kanilang posisyon o pulitika sa kanilang gobyerno. Wala pong pinipiling benepisyaryo ang Malasakit Center. Ito ay serbisyo para sa lahat. Kahit na sino,

basta Pilipino, qualified ka. Maari kang lumapit sa opisinang ito para maibigay ng gobyerno ang tulong na kailangan mo. Matagal na rin pong ipinaghawal ang maglagay ng mukha ng sino mang pulitiko sa programa. Hindi po namin ito gawain. Para sa kaalaman ng iba, matagal na po naming ipinaghawal ito sa Davao. Pinapagalitan at pinagsasabihan pa nga po ako ni Pangulo noon kung may makita siyang kahit ano mang pangalan ng pulitiko sa tabi ng programa o serbisyon pampubliko. Ang mga proyekto po ng Pangulo sa Davao nang siya ay mayor at congressman noon, walang "through the initiative of Mayor Duterte."

Gusto ni Presidente na mabilis ang tugon sa lahat ng mga nangangailangan. Ito rin po ang hangarin ko. Hindi rin po ito Bong Go Center. Nagkataon lamang po na brainchild ko po ang programang ito. Ako lamang po ang naatasan ng ating Pangulo para pangunahan ang programang ito.

Inuulit ko, hindi akin iyan at hindi para sa akin iyan. Iyan ay para sa lahat ng Pilipino.

Hindi ko pa rin po maintindihan, sa hinaba-haba ng panahon at sa dinami-dami ng nagmamagaling at nagmamatatalino sa gobyerno, hindi man lamang nila naisip na kailangan ito ng taong bayan. Kailangan pa ng isang probinsiyanoong katulad ni Pangulong Duterte, nila Secretary Mike Dino, at Bong Go para maibigay ang simpleng solusyon na ito sa taong bayan.

Hindi po gaya ng pulitikong bumabatikos sa Malasakit Center, wala po tayong balak maging epal. In fact, wala ngang titulong "Honorable" ang pangalan ko. Tingnan ninyo po ang pintuan ko sa opisina. Pagkaupo ko, sabi nila bawal daw iyan, bakit ganoon lamang. Kasi po, pansinin ninyo, ang kay Pangulong Duterte, wala pong "His Excellency." Pinapatanggal niya po iyan. Ako po wala pong titulong "Honorable" na nakalagay sa opisina ko. Tingnan ninyo ang pintuan na iyan. Ayaw kong sumikat at magpasikat. Tapos na po ang eleksyon. Panalo na ako. Gusto ko lamang magtrabaho. Ginagawa lamang natin nang maayos ang trabaho ng gobyerno.

Kaya nga po isinusulong kong maisabatas ito sa tulong po ninyo para hindi lamang nakadepende ang pondo sa mga pulitiko at kung sinuman ang nakaupo sa Malacañang.

Ikatlo, ang Malasakit Center program ay isang mekanismo lamang ng gobyerno upang pabilisin ang pagbibigay ng assistance sa mga



Pilipino. Isa itong one-stop shop para sa mga humihingi ng tulong mula sa PCSO, PhilHealth, DSWD and other agencies (these agencies do not fund its operations). It is the public hospitals with the help of LGUs that finance its establishment.

In Malasakit Centers, the concerned government agencies retain and run their own medical assistance programs. The Center only simplifies the process and eases the burden of the patients. At ang nag-a-assess ay ang qualified social worker. Walang kinalaman ang Malasakit Center sa desisyon ng agencies na tumutulong.

Ang kaibahan lamang, hindi na mahihirapan ang mga kababayan natin dahil sa iisang opisina na lamang sila pupunta, nasa isang bubong para sa government assistance at hindi na po sila lalayo sa mga ospital para makakuha ng tulong dito.

Panghuli, may mga nagsasabi po na hindi raw epektibo ang Malasakit Center dahil may mga nagrereklemo raw na hindi sapat ang assistance na naibibigay.

This is, in fact, the very reason why we would like to institutionalize the *Malasakit* Center program through a proposed measure we filed just last month. *Ito po iyong Senate Bill No. 199, the "Malasakit Center Act of 2019."*

We acknowledge that the program may be a work in progress. While there may have been birth pains in its operations, *mas marami po itong natutulongan kaysa nagrereklemo.*

Kaysa dumada lamang po tayo at sayangin ang buwis na ibinabayad sa atin ng mga Pilipino, magtulungan na lamang sana tayo para maipasa ang Malasakit Center Act, gawing mas maayos ang proseso at mas marami pang Pilipino ang makinabang dito.

Nais ko rin pong humingi ng paumanhin sa isang congressman diyan at sa iba pang bumabatikos sa inisyatibong ito ng gobyerno. Kung plano po ninyong humingi ng tulong para magpa-pogi, hindi po ito (ang PCSO at Malasakit Center) nagbibigay ng tulong sa pagpapaganda at sa pagpapagawa ng mukha.

Under PCSO's program, the agency accepts requests for hospitalizations, dialysis, medicines, except maintenance and cosmetic purposes. *Kaklaruhin ko lamang po, hindi tinatanggap ng PCSO ang mga requests to fund aesthetic enhancements or any cosmetic purposes.*

Gusto man namin kayong tulungan, hindi po iyan parte ng medical concerns na gina-

gawaran ng assistance ng PCSO. Wala rin pong legal basis ang pagtulong sa pag-repair ng inyong mukha. At paprangkahin ko na rin po kayo, your image is beyond repair.

Hindi po ikaayos ng pagmumukha ninyo ang pagkontra ninyo sa interes ng mga Pilipino.

Gusto kong sabihin kay Congressman Edcel Lagman, naturingan pa man din siyang public servant pero hindi niya pinag-aaralang mabuti ang mga sinasabi niya. Ni hindi n'ya man lang naisip na isa ang kanyang probinsiya sa mga kauna-unahang nakinabang sa programang ito ng gobyerno. Nandoon pa ang anak niya na si Vice Governor Grex Lagman sa launching ng Malasakit Center sa Albay para mag-witness sa proyektong ito.

Ano na lamang ang sasabihin ng mga Bicolano kapag nalaman nilang ang mismong congressman nila ang bumabatikos sa programang tumutulong sa kanila upang malunasan ang kanilang karamdaram? Ano na lamang ang sasabihin ng mga Bicolano kapag nalaman nilang walang malasakit sa kanila ang mismong representative nila sa gobyerno?

Congressman Lagman, do not be anti-poor. *Ang pera ng tao, nararapat lamang na ibalik sa tao.*

Mahiya kayo sa mga constituents ninyo. Mahiya kayo sa mga milyun-milyong Pilipinong natutulungan ng programang ito.

Congressman Lagman, *balita ko pinapapunta mo sa bahay mo ang mga tao para magavail ng benefits at assistance. Andoon sa loob ng ospital ang pasyente, papupuntahan mo sa iyo para ipamukha sa kanila na ikaw mismo ang tumutulong. Nasa ospital na, pinapahirapan mo pa. Pasensiya na, pero hindi ganyan ang asal ng isang totoong lingkod-bayan. Hindi dapat ganyan ang serbisyo sa tao.*

Tingnan ninyo iyan. Iyan iyong referral ng kanyang staff. Bakit kailangan pa nating mag-referral, pumunta pa sa bahay at humingi ng tulong, eh pera nila iyan? Pumunta na lamang kayo sa Malasakit Center.

May iba ring mga pulitiko riyan tulad niya na nagbibigay ng endorsement at humihingi ng endorsement galing sa barangay leaders bago pa tumulong. Now, that is partisan politics! Never po ako nagri-require ng ganyan! Never kong pinipili ang taong tutulungan ko.

Ang Malasakit Center, nasa ospital na mismo, bakit pa gustong pinapahirapan at pinapapunta sa iba't ibang lugar na malalayo ang mga maysakit nating kababayan? Dadag-

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dagan pa ba natin ang pasakit sa kanila? Hindi iyan ang trabaho natin. Ang trabaho natin ay matulungan sila, alagaan sila at magpakita ng tunay na malasakit.

Kaya sobrang nakakalungkot na ako pa ang inaakusahan ng partisan political activity eh ni minsan hindi ako humingi ng kahit anong endorsement, identification or privilege card or ID para sa mga taong tinutulungan ko. Lahat ng puwedeng matulungan, handa akong tumulong. Ang hirap kasi sa iba, hahanapan pa ng mali ang isang bagay na nakakatulong para lamang sa pansarili nilang pulitika. Basta ikaw ay Pilipino, qualified ka sa Malasakit Center.

Congressman Lagman, ganyan ba ang naga-gawa kapag matagal na sa pulitika? Dahil po ba iyan sa tagal na ninyo sa pulitika kaya manhid na kayo para maramdaman ang isang dekada ng problema ng inyong kababayan at ng Pilipino ukol sa tulong medikal?

Kung gusto mo, palitan mo na lamang ito ng sarili mong programa. Pangalanan mo ito ng "Manhid Center" o "Maramot Center," bagay na bagay iyan sa kawalan mo ng malasakit sa ating mga kababayan.

Ako ay isang simpleng probinsiyano lamang po, isang hamak na taga-Davao at taga-Mindanao na binigyan ng pagkakataon na magserbisyo. Pero para sa lahat ng Pilipino, kahit sinuman, iniintindi at tinutulungan ko. Minsan lamang po ako dadaan sa mundong ito kaya gagawin ko ang tama, gagawin ko ang aking trabaho, ipaglaban ko na maisabatas ang panukalang ito, maisaayos ang mga programa ng gobyerno, at mas makatulong tayo sa lahat ng Pilipino.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR GATCHALIAN

At the outset, Senator Gatchalian thanked Senator Go and other government agencies like DOH, DSWD, PCSO, PAGCOR, among others, for establishing the Malasakit Center in Valenzuela City. He stated that like Davao City, the city hospital of Valenzuela City also experienced receiving constituents from Obando and Meycauayan, Bulacan and as far as Caloocan and Malabon City requesting for medical assistance; however, since the city funds could not be spent on constituents outside of the city jurisdiction, and the city officials could not refuse such patients, they had to find ways to help, sometimes using their personal funds. He confirmed that the *Malasakit* Center was indeed a great help not only to the constituents of Valenzuela City but also to the residents of nearby communities.

He likewise thanked Senator Go for his initiative to renovate the Senate's Public Assistance Center (PAC). He lamented the sight of the long queue of people who would line up as early as four o'clock in front of the Senate gates on Monday mornings just to ask for medical assistance from the PAC which operates on a first-come, first-served policy.

Senator Gatchalian also thanked Senator Villar for her assistance in securing the services of the DPWH to undertake the renovation of the PAC. He said that the renovation of the PAC would be in the form of an institutional assistance to be given to the Senate for the benefit of its constituents who come from various places in the country.

Senate President Sotto pointed out that the statement of Senator Gatchalian about people from different places seeking help in Valenzuela City and, as mentioned by Senator Go, in Davao City, does not speak well of the local officials of the concerned LGUs.

Senator Gatchalian said that because of the COA restriction that the funds of Valenzuela City should be used exclusively for its constituents, he, along with other local officials, had to extend help to non-Valenzuela residents in their personal capacity. However, he lamented that much as they would want to accommodate all of them, the funds are just not enough.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Preliminarily, Senator Hontiveros said that she respects the preference of Senator Go not to be interpellated regarding his privilege speech. However, she said that in the spirit of interparliamentary courtesy, even if one may agree or disagree with Congressman Lagman, he is one who studies the issues before he makes any statement. She believed that Congressman Lagman is not anti-poor but was, in fact, pro-poor as she recalled working with him relative to their common advocacies and important legislative efforts such as the extension of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program with reforms (E-CARP) and the Reproductive Health Law, among others.

In closing, she said that she was looking forward to working with Senator Go, chair of the Senate Committee on Health and Demography, when his bill that seeks to institutionalize the *Malasakit* Centers especially in the context of the implementation of the Universal Health Care Law is considered.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PIMENTEL

Senator Pimentel manifested his support for Senator Go and identified himself with the argument of his speech, saying that the *Malasakit* Center — a one-stop-shop for health concerns, would have birth pains associated with the concept and that it would not be proper to attack or criticize the person who conceptualized the idea. He said that Senator Go should be praised, not blamed, for operationalizing the idea. He congratulated Senator Go for his privilege speech but dissociated himself from the portion of the speech which said that Congressman Lagman could no longer be saved by a cosmetic surgery. He advised Senator Go to keep his cool.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DELA ROSA

Senator Dela Rosa manifested his support to the substance of the privilege speech of Senator Go.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR TOLENTINO

Senator Tolentino expressed sympathy and empathy with Senator Go, as he shared Senator Pimentel's observation that a person, even with the best intentions in mind, could still be criticized and blamed for conceptualizing a noble idea.

Taking note of the words "integrated" and "efficient" that he heard from the speech, he said that he has seen how Senator Go works, serving like a firefighter dousing a fire and acting like a traffic enforcer, ensuring that the various agencies related to health services would have an integrated delivery of services.

At this point, he called the attention of the Body to Article XIII, Section 2 of the Philippine Constitution which provides that "The State shall adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health development." He said that he has seen the *Malasakit* Center from its inception in Cebu City until it has grown in number and became 41 and he has yet to hear complaints about it. He hoped that the next *Malasakit* Center would soon be launched in his home province of Cavite. He recalled that during the campaign, he visited a Mayor's office in Moncada, Tarlac and instead of having a bookshelf or a wall mounted with plaques, it has a cabinet filled with medicines since the Mayor's secretary was a pharmacist. He said that it was an affirmation that

the local officials are concerned and focused on providing health services to their constituents, and that the *Malasakit* Center seeks to integrate the services provided by different government agencies into a one-stop-shop.

In closing, he believed that the concept behind the *Malasakit* Center was right and proper, especially as the Senate was about to create a Committee on Sustainable Development Goals, one goal of which is SDG 3 — "Good health and well-being: Ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being for all ages is essential to sustainable development." He noted that SDG 3 is one of the prime missions and visions of Senator Go in espousing the *Malasakit* Center bill.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PACQUIAO

Senator Pacquiao lamented that pro-poor programs are being criticized by some people simply because they belong to the opposition. He said that he could not understand the mindset of some politicians who oppose projects which are beneficial to the people. He noted that there can never be progress or development because whenever there is a change in leadership, the new administration would stop the programs and projects of its predecessor, even if such are beneficial to the people.

He said that if a politician's heart truly is for the people, he or she should support efficient, effective and beneficial projects and programs so as not to hinder progress and development.

Senator Pacquiao stated that it does not matter to him how far he has gone and how much money he has, but that what is important to him is to be able to help his fellowmen even if it means becoming poor again just so he could be one with them. Saying that he is not the greedy kind who would hide his wealth from the people, he believed that it would be a shame to keep one's money hidden in a vault and not use it to help a fellowman since all wealth is useless when one dies.

Reacting to politicians who never fail to criticize the government's advocacy and programs for the poor, Senator Pacquiao challenged them to quit public office if they do not serve the people. In the case of Congressman Lagman, he stated that he would attest to the Congressman's perennial stance against the President's pro-poor programs. He then wondered whether Congressman Lagman was anti-poor, was



against the government or simply wants to be in the limelight. He said that on his part, he would readily fight for the rights of the poor but that it was not necessary for him to enumerate how he has helped the less fortunate. He expressed hope that the rich would pool their resources to help those who have less in life.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR LACSON

Senator Lacson expressed concern that the proposed construction of the Senate's Public Assistance Center (PAC)/*Malasakit Center* by the DPWH could be violative of Section 25(5), Article VI of the Constitution. He recalled that not long ago, the Supreme Court ruled that there should be no cross-border alignment of funds outside of the Offices of the President, Chief Justice, Senate President and Speaker of the House.

Agreeing with Senator Lacson, Senator Sotto stated that the proposal would have to be studied. He said that to avoid transgressing the Constitution, the Senate could use its savings to construct the facility instead of relying on the DPWH to provide the funds.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLAR

Senator Villar clarified that she was requested by Senator Gatchalian to inquire from the DPWH if it has available budget for the construction of the PAC. She said that Secretary Villar informed her that the agency has a budget for the project and volunteered to help the Senate. She supposed that the matter could be clarified in due time.

At this juncture, Senate President Sotto requested the Secretariat to review the points raised by Senator Lacson on cross-border expenditures which could pose a problem with COA.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR GORDON

As regards the statements of Senator Gatchalian and Senate President Sotto that local government units are forced to deny medical assistance to patients from other LGUs due to COA regulations prohibiting such, Senator Gordon opined that it is unconstitutional to deny help and that, in fact, it should not be tolerated. He stated that a doctor or a hospital should not be allowed to say "no" to a patient, and that such policy of the COA should be shot down and the law amended. He believed that it is illegal to use the COA dictum if lives are at stake.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

For his part, Senator Zubiri welcomed the initiative of Senator Go to establish a *Malasakit Center* in the Senate because as a one-stop-shop, it would be able to cater to the needs of the constituents from all parts of the country who come to the Senate. However, he said that Senator Go has yet to put up a *Malasakit Center* in Bukidnon and expressed hope that one could be put up soon.

To Senator Pacquiao's concern about the difficulty of implementing programs, Senator Zubiri agreed that whenever a good program is implemented by elected officials, they would oftentimes be called "*epal*." In this regard, he cited the investigation conducted by Senator Lacson on the death of Atio Castillo, through which the Committee was able to ferret out the truth. He said that the DOJ likewise gave a lot of weight on the hearings of the committee which led to the filing of charges against the people involved in the incident.

Despite the results of the investigation, Senator Zubiri said that he overheard a radio commentator refer to the senators as "*epal*." But he stressed that it was because of the hearings that the people involved were put to jail and a stronger Anti-Hazing law was enacted. He said that he sent a strong message to the commentator that it is not grandstanding for senators to be legislating since it is their job. He lamented how difficult it is to be a public servant given the thin line between being a public servant and being "*epal*." He said that he was comforted by the thought that everything that the Members do within the halls of the Senate is for the betterment of the country.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATE PRESIDENT SOTTO

Senate President Sotto informed the Body that the Public Assistance Center was put up in September 2001 during the incumbency of then Senate President Drilon. He said that the PAC would retain its name but it may also carry the words "*Malasakit Center*." He said that the renovation would upgrade the PAC to show shades of the *Malasakit Center*.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON

Senator Drilon expressed support to the proposition of Senator Lacson that under the Constitution, a department head cannot realign the agency's savings in order to spend for infrastructure of a

different department as it could cause problems with the COA. He said that while the DPWH may have the funds, certain constitutional boundaries have to be observed. He said that pursuant to the Supreme Court ruling that savings could only be realigned for projects within the department, the DPWH could realign its savings for projects not only within the department but even within the Executive branch, but not to other branches of government such as the Senate.

Senator Drilon suggested that the Senate President examine the possibility of realigning the savings of the Senate or of appropriating funds in the 2020 budget in order to enhance the services of the PAC rather than relying on the savings of the DPWH which could put the Senate into trouble.

Responding thereto, Senate President Sotto gave the assurance that the concern of Senators Lacson and Drilon would be taken into consideration.

REMARKS OF THE CHAIR

On the matter of inter-parliamentary courtesy, Senate President Sotto noted that it was Congressman Lagman who picked on Senator Go and the latter was merely reacting to the criticisms hurled his way. Senator Zubiri agreed, saying that other Members would have reacted the same way.

REFERRAL OF SPEECH TO COMMITTEE

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Chair referred the privilege speech of Senator Go and the manifestations thereon to the Committee on Health and Demography.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Senator Zubiri informed the Body that there would be an all-senators' caucus the following day, August 29, after the roll call. He stated that the agenda would be the short LEDAC report that Senate President Sotto would deliver as well as the request of Senator Cayetano to discuss several bills referred to the Committee on Ways and Means and the letters from different sectors.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR GORDON

Likewise availing himself of the privilege hour, Senator Gordon recalled the disturbing reports that

Mr. Antonio Sanchez would be released by virtue of RA 10592 which triggered a public outrage.

Senator Gordon stated that Mr. Sanchez was convicted of nine counts of *reclusion perpetua* – seven counts for the rape-slay of Eileen Sarmenta and murder of Allan Gomez, and two counts for the murder of Nelson and Rickson Peñalosa. He supposed that the new law must have slipped through the cracks, thus necessitating the need for a budget for effective communication in the justice system. He said that if people are not informed, they would be hoodwinked by the abusive conduct of the people involved in the crime.

Senator Gordon believed that the Good Conduct Time Allowance (GCTA) law has many shortcomings because despite the provision in the law's implementing rules and regulations that the penology system should computerize its records, it still has not been done. Had the records been computerized, he said that it would have been easy to look into the number of years served by the inmate during incarceration. He added that without such record, there would be no way for people to find out if good conduct was served.

He underscored the need to amend the law to ensure that the inmates in various national penitentiaries, including those in municipal, city and provincial jails, would be recorded properly. He said that with the computerization and proper recording of inmates, it would likewise be easy to detect and separate minors who are being placed in jails along with adults or hardened criminals.

Senator Gordon also stressed the importance of digitizing all records of the national penitentiaries and detention cells, believing that in so doing, it becomes difficult for capricious criminals to get what they want. He clarified that he was not making a generalization that all jail and corrections superintendents have been corrupted, but that because of their interactions with inmates, some superintendents and jail officers might have enriched themselves by granting the inmates certain allowances or by allowing them to have access to mobile phones, flat televisions, and airconditions, among others. He said that many lawyers and lawmakers were overwhelmed and emotionally challenged by the thought that the intent of the law has been set aside by the selfish, greedy, and corrupt.

Senator Gordon said that it is important to address the matter as soon as possible by demanding that all

prison records be digitalized and, if necessary, to allocate a budget for the purpose.

Senator Gordon also commended President Duterte for coming up with a statement that he would not allow the GCTA law to be applied to Mr. Sanchez amid numerous comments that certain people lawyered for him.

Senator Gordon, however, pointed out that while the GCTA law speaks about preventive imprisonment in the case of heinous crimes, the law does not talk about the actual serving of sentence; thus, a hiatus exists. He stressed the need for clarification as to the application of the law to an offender who is found guilty while serving an intermittent sentence.

On another matter, Senator Gordon stated that the superintendent of the National Bilibid Prison should not be allowed to decide alone as to who has served good conduct because the matter must be subject to review by the Board of Pardons and Parole. He said that there are some cases in city or provincial jails where the inmates had served beyond their prison sentences because of slow action on their pending cases. Thus, he said that if all the cases are stored in a databank, it would be easier to monitor and process them in order to prevent injustice to people.

With respect to the injustice done to Eileen Sarmenta and Allan Gomez, Senator Gordon wondered if Mr. Sanchez could still be rehabilitated. He said that while he could not say that Mr. Sanchez should not be given a second chance, his sincerity and repentance should first be proven beyond any doubt in order to assuage and alleviate the suffering of the victims' families. He recalled that despite Mr. Sanchez's appearance of piousness, he was blurting out expletives at the time his conviction was being read. He said that Mr. Sanchez and his cohorts should not be allowed to be set free because they owe the people justice. If not for the vigilance of the people, he said that the convicts would have been released. He reiterated his satisfaction with the President's statement and action which only showed that the country is a government of rules.

At this point, Senator Gordon disclosed that he had lobbied with the Judicial and Bar Council for the continued hearing of cases since many inmates have been over-serving their sentences.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATE PRESIDENT SOTTO

Senate President Sotto placed on record that both he and Senator Drilon were in the Senate when the GCTA law, authored by Senator Defensor Santiago, was passed into law. He explained that the law not only meant to reduce the population in the New Bilibid Prison but also to remove the aging convicts who have served their sentences with good behavior and conduct.

Senate President Sotto concurred with Senator Gordon on the need to automate prison records for easy retrieval and in order that the Bureau of Corrections keeps its hands off the listings. For such purpose, he informed the Body that he has filed Proposed Senate Resolution No. 107 so that amendments could be introduced into the law.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ANGARA

Preliminarily, Senator Angara commended Senator Gordon and expressed his support for the move to review the GCTA law. He agreed with Senator Gordon that there was inconsistency in Section 1 of the law. He disclosed that in 2013, it was he who authored Section 1 of the law (*Preventive Imprisonment*) by virtue of House Bill No. 417 that he filed. But he clarified that the provision was not meant to apply to the case of Mr. Sanchez because he has already been convicted by final judgment. He said that it is strange that a person who is entitled to the presumption of innocence would be given good conduct allowances while exempting those who are recidivists or the repeat offenders. He believed that there is philosophical inconsistency if a convict or someone who has already been convicted by final judgment is allowed to avail of the GCTA. He again commended Senator Gordon for filing a bill that would exempt those who had been convicted of heinous crimes from the GCTA law. But he also called the Body's attention to the Uniform Manual on Time Allowances and Service of Sentence that was formulated by a joint DILG-DOJ Committee which defined "good conduct" as a non-violation of prison rules, that if the prisoner would violate any law, he would not be entitled to the good conduct allowances for the said month, which means he would only forfeit his allowances for that particular month. Thus, he said that in the case of Mr. Sanchez who was accused of grave violations like placing drugs inside the statue of the Virgin



Mary, he would only forfeit his GCTA for the said month. He opined that such an interpretation is totally against the spirit of the Constitution and the philosophy behind the Penal law. He reiterated the need to study the provision because if the rules are interpreted technically, it allows the offender to commit all kinds of crime.

Senate President Sotto said that another interpretation would be that after a violation, one could start anew. Senator Angara agreed, saying that such matter should be enshrined in the law to prevent any absurd interpretations.

Senator Angara pointed out that as a great man once said that "the life of the law is experience, not logic," a recidivist would tend to repeat violations. He believed that someone who has been convicted of seven life sentences does not deserve to lose his good conduct allowances for just one month; if the offender deserves to lose it, he deserves to start from zero or even from negative.

Senator Gordon thanked Senator Angara for his comments and explanations. He said that although he does not want to challenge the purpose of the law, he also wanted to make sure that a solution could be found on the lapses of the law, whether intended or unintended.

At this point, Senator Gordon asked on the practice of tattooing in prison cells. He suggested its prevention for the sake of the young convicts as it would practically make them look like hardened criminals.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DRILON

At the outset, Senator Drilon said that he has a personal attachment to the case of Mr. Sanchez because it was he, as the Secretary of Justice, who prosecuted and had Mr. Sanchez convicted and sentenced to seven life terms, the theory being that there were seven of them who conspired to do the crime and in conspiracy the act of one is the act of all. He, however, pointed out that the Revised Penal Code provides that a penalty cannot exceed 40 years.

Senator Drilon believed that the positions taken by Senators Angara and Gordon on the issue were valid. However, he cautioned that an amendment to the law to make it clear that those guilty of henious

crime are not covered may imply that those who are at the present time guilty of henious crimes, such as Mr. Sanchez and his cohorts, are entitled to it because it would have the nature of an *ex post facto* legislation.

Senator Drilon urged the Body to study the provision carefully without being blindsided by their sympathies to the Sarmenta and Gomez families. He said that on record, he was the first one who sympathized with the families given that it was he who personally prosecuted Mr. Sanchez. He reiterated that amending the law to make it clear that it is not applicable to Mr. Sanchez would create the presumption that giving him the GCTA at present is applicable to him. He said that he would rather attack the factual basis for Mr. Sanchez's availment.

Senator Drilon said that Senator Angara alluded to the manual which enumerates 45 violations that would prevent someone from availing of the GCTA, and he asked how Mr. Sanchez became entitled to it. He also questioned how the Bureau of Corrections' spokesperson came out with the statement that Mr. Sanchez had already served an equivalent of 49 years even if he was convicted by the RTC only in 1999, or barely 20 years ago. To the spokesperson's claim that Mr. Sanchez had not violated the rules, Senator Drilon pointed out that Mr. Sanchez's photos in the newspapers showing that he was not wearing the appropriate prison uniform was already a violation pursuant to the manual cited by Senator Angara. He wondered how Mr. Sanchez was getting credits for the computation of GCTA when his violations, among which is violating the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, would deprive him of the benefits.

Senator Drilon stressed the need to be cautious in introducing the amendment as it could be taken advantage of by the lawyers, including the lawyers of Mr. Sanchez.

Senator Gordon lauded Senator Drilon for his astute interpretation of the Constitution as it, in fact, would create a situation where there is an *ex post facto* law which the Constitution abhors. He concurred with Senator Drilon that the amendment would be subject to abuse, capricious conduct and corruption, which Congress should try to prevent from happening. He stated that the Committee on Justice intends to look into the fact that many prisoners are overstaying in the penitentiary not because of the *carpeta* being hidden or the rampant corruption but because of fear

that once they get out of the jail, their safety would be at stake because, naturally, the aggrieved parties would always want to know the status of the person who had offended them.

Senate President Sotto agreed with Senator Gordon that some of the prisoners are overstaying because they themselves do not want to leave. He cited former Cong. Baby Asistio who was afraid to go out of Muntinlupa even if he was already pardoned, thus staying for almost a year more. He agreed with Senator Gordon that overstaying prisoners should be prohibited from staying there further.

Senator Zubiri expressed support to the call of Senator Drilon for the Body to carefully study the issue and plug the loopholes in the law as he cited the loopholes in the Anti-Hazing Law which were exploited by the defendants in the *Atio Castillo* case. He admitted that he was appalled by the move of the Bureau of Corrections allowing Mr. Sanchez to avail of the GCTA. He stated that he was a student of UPLB and the victims were his co-alumni. He recalled that the place where the victims were kidnapped was the place where he used to hang out and that it could have been him or his friends who were victimized if the crime happened four years earlier because he graduated in 1990 and the crime happened in 1993. He said that he and the entire UPLB community were saddened by the incident. He said that there are lots of things that need to be looked into especially in the light of the statement of Senator Lacson that there are several kidnap-for-ransom convicts who are applying for the GCTA. He expressed concern on the safety of the persons and the families who testified against the convicts, and who might be thinking all the while that justice has been served and that the perpetrators are in jail for life.

Senator Zubiri also supported the call of Senator Gordon to review the law. For instance, he pointed out that it is the head of the Bureau of Corrections who can decide on who to give privileges to pursuant to the GCTA Law. He suggested that the system be amended by putting another layer — the DOJ — to review the recommendation of the BUCOR, and find out if there are violations in the terms or conditions stipulated in the law. He said that his suggestion was not only meant for Mayor Sanchez but also for the other convicts. He expressed concern that people might refuse to testify in court knowing fully well that the perpetrators could pretend to do good inside the penitentiary so that after 10 years they could already

come out of it, and if such time comes, might hunt or seek out the people who were responsible for putting them in jail and terminate their lives, or go on a criminal rampage. He said that such actually happened in the United States because their justice and penal system allowed the parole of psychotic gunmen, rapists and other sexual offenders. He noted that some of those who are in parole move from one state to another where they commit more crimes. He said that he was happy that the Chamber has legal luminaries like Senator Drilon, a former DOJ Secretary, the Senate President, and Senators Gordon and Angara, and former PNP Chief Senator Lacson who divulged that there are over 83 convicted kidnap-for-ransom convicts who are supposed to rot in jail but are applying for the GCTA privilege.

Senate President Sotto pointed out that the problem with the term “second chance” is that it is like giving them a second chance to commit the same crime. Even as he expressed trust that the Committee would do what is worth, he suggested instead that the law be repealed and that the power be given back to the President through presidential pardon.

Senator Gordon noted that the privilege speech has opened a lot of things. He believed that justice is absolutely violated when the victims of injustice finally give up on their cause. He lamented that his father survived three assassination attempts but none of the masterminds were captured. Although some of them were put to jail, he said that their life sentence was commuted, as he surmised that someone must have asked for it from President Marcos. He said that he cannot speak for his family, but that the sad fact really hit his chest like a battering ram because he felt then that there was no justice in the country. He stated that he later realized that the ultimate punishment was for criminals to rot in jail until the end of their life sentences which, to him, was the more difficult penalty not only for the convicts but for their families as well.

As to the case of Mayor Sanchez, Senator Gordon said that he was elated that there are efforts to make justice work. He said that “no second chance” is a valid point and it must be put to work. He stated that he could not accept that some of the prisoners sleep in luxurious beds and get to play in tennis courts inside the penitentiaries.

Senator Gordon stated that there is something wrong at the National Penitentiary, the reason why

he has always proposed to regionalize the Bureau of Corrections.

As regards his earlier statement on tattooing, Senator Gordon said that he has asked Senator dela Rosa if the proposal was feasible and that the latter's reply was that the problem boils down to fraternity affiliations as identified in the tattoos of the prisoners starting in lower prison cells. He said that aside from putting more penitentiaries in the countryside, the prisoners could also be put to use by engaging them into such activities as planting or studying some skills.

REFERRAL OF SPEECH TO COMMITTEE

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the privilege speech of Senator Gordon and the manifestations thereon were referred to the Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

INQUIRY OF SENATOR ZUBIRI

Asked by Senator Zubiri whether the bill that he filed seeking to establish a national penitentiary for high-level drug traffickers was already with the Committee, Senator Gordon replied that he would check on the matter.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, the session was suspended.

It was 4:55 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:51 p.m., the session was resumed.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary of the Senate read the following matters and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

BILLS ON FIRST READING

Senate Bill No. 931, entitled

**AN ACT PROVIDING BURIAL ASSIST-
ANCE FOR UNCLAIMED REMAINS
AND FOR INDIGENT DECEDENTS,**

APPROPRIATING FUNDS THERE- FOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 932, entitled

AN ACT FURTHER STRENGTHENING THE SYSTEM OF BIRTH REGIS- TRATION OF CHILDREN IN NEED OF SPECIAL PROTECTION (CNSP) IN THE PHILIPPINES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 933, entitled

AN ACT GRANTING SENIOR CITIZENS A MINIMUM OF FIVE PERCENT (5%) DISCOUNT ON THE FIRST 150 KILOWATT HOURS OF ELEC- TRICITY CONSUMPTION AND ON THE FIRST 50 CUBIC METERS OF WATER CONSUMPTION, AND EXEMPTION FROM THE VALUE- ADDED TAX (VAT), AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9994, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "EXPANDED SENIOR CITIZENS' ACT OF 2010"

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; and Ways and Means

Senate Bill No. 934, entitled

AN ACT MANDATING THE PRO- VISION OF FREE ON-SITE LIVING QUARTERS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES



Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Basic Education, Arts and Culture; Public Works; and Finance

CHANGE OF REFERRAL

At this juncture, Senator Tolentino requested that Senate Bill No. 934, which was referred to the Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture, Committee on Public Works, and Committee on Finance, be also referred to the Committee on Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement considering that several bills relative to teachers' housing had already been previously filed.

For his part, Senator Drilon opined that the primary committee should be the Committee on Finance because based on its title, the bill would require funding. He believed that the referral to the Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture does not jibe with the intent of the bill.

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body reconsidered and changed the previous referral to the Committee on Finance as the primary committee and to the Committees on Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement, and Public Works as the secondary committees.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

(Continuation)

The Secretary of the Senate read the following matters and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

Senate Bill No. 935, entitled

AN ACT TO PROVIDE FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO ALL INDIGENT FILIPINOS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE CHAPTER 5, TITLE III, BOOK IV OF EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 292, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "ADMINISTRATIVE CODE OF 1987," APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Justice and Human

Rights; Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 936, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE PHILIPPINE GERIATRIC CENTER – RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE, DEFINING ITS OBJECTIVES, POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREOF, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Health and Demography; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 937, entitled

AN ACT TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS AND WELFARE OF FILIPINO SEAMEN AND SEA-BASED MIGRANT WORKERS, ESTABLISHING FOR THE PURPOSE A NATIONAL SEAFARERS ADMINISTRATION, APPROPRIATING FUNDS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development; Foreign Relations; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 938, entitled

AN ACT MANDATING ALL EMPLOYERS IN THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS, INCLUDING ALL GOVERNMENT OFFICES, AGENCIES AND INSTRUMENTALITIES, TO PROVIDE, FREE OF CHARGE, CLEAN, HEALTHY, SUFFICIENT AND ACCESSIBLE DRINKING-WATER TO ALL ITS EMPLOYEES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development; and Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation

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Senate Bill No. 939, entitled

AN ACT PRESCRIBING SCHOOL BUS SAFETY STANDARDS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Public Services; and Basic Education, Arts and Culture

Senate Bill No. 940, entitled

AN ACT INTEGRATING BASIC ROAD SAFETY AND COMPREHENSIVE DRIVER'S EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM OF THE ENHANCED BASIC EDUCATION (K TO 12) PROGRAM

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Basic Education, Arts and Culture; Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 941, entitled

AN ACT ENHANCING THE CAPABILITIES, MANDATE, AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MOVIE AND TELEVISION REVIEW AND CLASSIFICATION BOARD (MTRCB), AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE PRESIDENTIAL DECREE 1986

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Public Information and Mass Media; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 942, entitled

AN ACT FOR THE PROTECTION, CONSERVATION AND REHABILITATION OF WATERSHEDS SUPPORTING THE NATIONAL IRRIGATION SYSTEM (NIS) TO ENSURE CONTINUOUS SUPPLY OF WATER FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN FOOD AND PROVIDING FUNDS FOR THE PURPOSE

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Public Works; Environment and Natural Resources; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 943, entitled

AN ACT PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Justice and Human Rights; Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 944, entitled

AN ACT ORDAINING THE BILL OF RIGHTS OF TAXI PASSENGERS

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Public Services; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 945, entitled

AN ACT TO ENHANCE GENUINE FILIPINO CULTURE, PROMOTE NATIONALISM, AND RECOGNIZE WRITERS AND ARTISTS, BY SUPPORTING THE PHILIPPINE KOMIKS INDUSTRY THROUGH ITS MANDATED USE IN INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, PROVIDING FINANCIAL INCENTIVES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Public Information and Mass Media; Basic Education, Arts and Culture; and Ways and Means

Senate Bill No. 946, entitled

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES TO AID VICTIMS OF ELDER ABUSE, AND PROVIDE

TRAINING TO HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS IN THE ASSISTANCE OF SUCH VICTIMS

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committees on Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 947, entitled

AN ACT MODERNIZING THE BUREAU OF FIRE PROTECTION (BFP), AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT 6975, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT OF 1990," PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Sotto III

To the Committees on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 948, entitled

AN ACT PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE AND ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION AND OTHER MOBILITY OPTIONS

Introduced by Senator Binay

To the Committees on Public Services; and Environment and Natural Resources

Senate Bill No. 949, entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE HEALTH-CARE SYSTEM IN CULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES BY INSTITUTIONALIZING THE TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT OF TRIBAL HEALTH WORKERS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Binay

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Cultural Communities

Senate Bill No. 950, entitled

AN ACT PENALIZING THE DISSEMINATION OF FALSE INFORMATION AS TO THE PRESENCE OF BOMBS, EXPLOSIVES AND OTHER INCENDIARY DEVICES IN HIGH DENSITY OR SENSITIVE PLACES AND PROVIDING PENALTIES THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Poe

To the Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs

Senate Bill No. 951, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8972, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE 'SOLO PARENTS WELFARE ACT OF 2000', PROVIDING ADDITIONAL BENEFITS FOR SOLO PARENTS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Revilla, Jr.

To the Committees on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality; Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development; and Ways and Means

Senate Bill No. 952, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7743, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CONGRESSIONAL, CITY, AND MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES AND BARANGAY READING CENTERS THROUGHOUT THE PHILIPPINES," AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Revilla, Jr.

To the Committees on Basic Education, Arts and Culture; Local Government; and Finance

RESOLUTIONS

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 102, entitled

RESOLUTION HONORING AND COMMENDING THE METROBANK

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FOUNDATION OUTSTANDING FILIPINOS OF 2019

Introduced by Senator Villanueva

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 103, entitled

RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING THE PHILIPPINE TEAM TO THE 15TH INTERNATIONAL MATHEMATICS CONTEST

Introduced by Senator Pacquiao

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 104, entitled

A RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING THE OUTSTANDING FILIPINOS OF 2019 AWARDED BY THE METROBANK FOUNDATION

Introduced by Senator Pacquiao

To the Committee on Rules

COMMUNICATIONS

Letters from the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas*, transmitting to the Senate copies of the following certified and authenticated BSP issuances, in compliance with Section 15(a) of Republic Act No. 7653 (The New Central Bank Act):

Circular Letter Nos. CL-2019-053, 054, 055, dated 5, 1 August and 29 July, 2019; and

Circular Nos. 1043, 1044, dated 26 August 2019.

To the Committee on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Letter from the House of Representatives, informing the Senate that on 20 August 2019, the House

of Representatives passed House Bill No. 1026, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING SECTIONS 141, 142, 143, 144, 147 150, 152, 263, 265, AND 288-A, AND ADDING A NEW SECTION 290-A TO REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8424, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE NATIONAL INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1997,

in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committee on Ways and Means

RESOLUTIONS

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 106, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY IN AID OF LEGISLATION INTO THE REPORTED ELIGIBILITY OF ANTONIO SANCHEZ FOR AN EARLY RELEASE FROM PRISON WITH THE END IN VIEW OF ENSURING THE PROPER IMPLEMENTATION OF, AND ENACTING REMEDIAL LEGISLATION TO, REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10592

Introduced by Senator Drilon

To the Committees on Justice and Human Rights; and Constitutional Amendments and Revision of Codes

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 107, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS; CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS AND REVISION OF CODES; AND OTHER APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES TO REVIEW, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REPUBLIC ACT NUMBER 10592 ON GOOD CONDUCT TIME ALLOWANCE (GCTA) WITH THE END IN VIEW OF AMENDING THE SAME IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT



THOSE PRISONERS WHO TRULY
DESERVE THE LAW'S BENEFITS
SHALL BE GRANTED OF THE SAME

I hereby certify to the correctness of the
foregoing.

Introduced by Senator Sotto III

**To the Committees on Justice and Human
Rights; and Constitutional Amendments and
Revision of Codes**

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, there being no objection, the Chair declared the session adjourned until three o'clock in the afternoon of the following day.

It was 6:02 p.m.

Approved on September 2, 2019

M. Zubiri
ATTY. MYRA MARIE D. VILLARICA

Secretary of the Senate

MP *MMV*