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RESUMPTION OF SESSION

The session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Conrado M. Estrella III presiding.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Ladies and Gentlemen, may I have your attention. May I have everybody's attention.

There are more than six Deputy Speakers who are present in today's session, but I thank the Majority for designating me as the Presiding Officer for today's historical event. And, therefore, in the pursuit of our highest constitutional mandate and in the truest service to the Filipino nation, this session is hereby resumed.

The Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, good morning. Dear colleagues, good morning.

Our parliamentary status, Mr. Speaker, is that we have resumed the session. The session, having called the roll previously, has established a quorum. And being suspended and now resumed, we are in order to conduct our business as we have a quorum since session was merely suspended. We can conduct our business. Mr. Speaker, similar to previous sessions conducted outside of the Session Hall, such as what the Plenary has done in Batangas, we are holding a session today to fulfill our obligations to the Filipino people. With that established, Mr. Speaker, that we are in session and that we have a quorum, and that we can conduct our business further, to show our legality and constitutionality, I move to recognize our esteemed colleague, the Gentleman from Cagayan de Oro, the Hon. Rufus Rodriguez, who has joined us

via Zoom, as allowed by the Rules of the House of Representatives.

I move to recognize the Hon. Rufus Rodriguez.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Mr. Majority Floor Leader, with your indulgence, we will recognize the Hon. Rufus Rodriguez later, but I wish to remind everybody that what is more important is that we seek the Lord's guidance. So before everything, may I ask each and every Member to please rise, and the distinguished Majority Floor Leader, please lead the prayer.

Everybody rose for the invocation.

INVOCATION

REP. BONDOC. Let us bow our heads and put ourselves in the presence of the Lord.

Lord, please guide us today to make decisions to benefit our countrymen and our nation. Help us to think of our district-mates, their hope and zeal, that Your love and the hope that You bring may be brought to light by the actions we take in this Congress. May their needs guide our every decision. May their hopes resonate in our hearts, so that we can choose wisely, not only for us but for generations to come.

Bless our actions today. We approach You in all humility. While others have asked for power to do much, You have shown us our weakness to show us our need for You. While others boast of strength, we implore You to lend us Your might so that we can do much for the Filipino nation.

All these we pray in Jesus' name, O Lord. Amen.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. Amen.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Please.

REP. BONDOC. ... I reiterate my former motion to recognize our esteemed colleague from Cagayan de Oro, the Hon. Rufus Rodriguez, to elucidate further on the conduct of our session today.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Gentleman from Cagayan de Oro is hereby recognized. The Gentleman from Cagayan de Oro is hereby recognized. Please proceed.

REP. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker. Can you hear me, Mr. Speaker?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Proceed. We can hear you clearly. Please proceed, Gentleman from Cagayan de Oro.

REP. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, our Majority Leader.

This is Cong. Rufus Rodriguez from the Second District of Cagayan de Oro City.

I would like to discuss briefly the legal points in today's session.

First question: Can a majority of the House of Representatives' Members, constituting a quorum, resume the session to do business? The answer is "Yes," pursuant to Section 16(2), Article VI of the Constitution which provides that, "A majority of each House shall constitute a quorum to do business." And second, in support of this session this morning, is Section 75, Rule XI of the House of Representatives which provides that, "A majority of all the Members of the House shall constitute a quorum. The House shall not transact business without a quorum." That is the first question and the first answer.

The second legal point, Mr. Speaker, Majority Leader, my dear colleagues: Is it constitutional to hold sessions by a House of Congress not in the Session Hall? The answer

again is "yes." A majority of Members of the House of Congress in attendance can hold sessions outside the regularly designated session hall. Pursuant to Section 16(2), Article VI of the Constitution and Section 75, Rule XI of the House of Representatives, a majority of each House shall constitute a quorum to do business and it can do legislative business not necessarily inside the regularly designated session hall only.

It will be recalled that the House of Representatives held a plenary session on January 22, 2020 at the Batangas Convention Center. Further, Congressional Committees regularly conduct committee hearings in pursuit of legislative action outside the halls of Congress. There is absolutely nothing in the Constitution or in the House of Representatives that states that a House of Congress can only hold sessions to do legislative business inside the regularly designated session hall. In fact, Section 89 of Rule XII of the House of Representatives expressly allows the conduct of sessions through electronic platforms when there is urgent necessity to act on any measure like this immediate and most expeditious passage of the General Appropriations Act.

Third issue, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Speaker: Can a House of Congress constitutionally hold sessions without the mace? As long as the majority of the Members are present, yes, pursuant to Section 16(2), Article VI of the Constitution, and Section 75, Rule XI of the House of Representatives. A majority of the members of each House shall constitute a quorum to do business. Pursuant to Section 165, Rule XXVII of the House of Representatives, "The mace shall be the symbol of authority of the House and shall be displayed at the Speaker's rostrum when the House is in session." This Rule is not absolute. The true manifestation of the authority of each House is the Plenary, when there is a majority present and in attendance, conformably with Section 16(2) of Article VI. Thus, we now have a plenary session, Mr. Speaker. Thus, whenever there is a majority of the members of each House, such a majority constitutes a quorum with full constitutional authority to do legislative business, with or without the mace at the rostrum of the Presiding Officer.

There is absolutely nothing in the Constitution or in the House of Representatives or in any Supreme Court ruling which declares or rules directly, indirectly or by inference that any session of the House of Congress and all matters taken thereat are invalid or null and void in the absence of the mace at the rostrum during such session. After all, Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, the mace is merely a symbol of authority and it, the mace, cannot take precedence or acquire a higher legal authority over the physical warm bodies and those attending through electronic platforms constituting a majority of the Members of each House present and in attendance representing the very authority of each House.

Next question and the last one: Was the suspension of the HOR session on October 6, 2020 until November 16, 2020 constitutional? The answer is "No," such suspension is unconstitutional as well as an indirect violation of the Legislative Calendar for the Second Regular Session of the Eighteenth Congress. Section 16(3) of Article VI of the Constitution provides that each House may determine the rules of its proceedings. Pursuant to each House's Rules of Proceedings, the Senate adopted on September 2, 2020 Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 13 and the House, we, adopted on September 2, 2020 House Concurrent Resolution No. 11, both providing for the Legislative Calendar for the Second Regular Session of the Eighteenth Congress of the Philippines as follows:

Calendar of Session
Second Regular Session

1. Commencement of Session
 - July 27, 2020 to October 16, 2020;
2. Suspension of Session
 - October 17, 2020 to November 15, 2020;
3. Resumption of Session
 - November 16, 2020 to December 18, 2020

Therefore, in the Calendar, clearly, the suspension of session should start on October 17, 2020 up to November 15, 2020. This was agreed upon by both Houses of Congress, in accordance with the Constitution. From this Legislative

Calendar of both Houses, the suspension of session of each House shall take effect only on October 17, 2020, but at the session of the House of Representatives on October 6, 2020, the House of Representatives, presided by Deputy Speaker Raneo Abu and upon motion of Rep. Xavier Romualdo, declared the suspension of the session until November 16, at three o'clock in the afternoon or 11 days in advance of the October 17, 2020 regular suspension of session, expressly provided for by the Legislative Calendar approved by both houses of Congress.

Mr. Speaker, my distinguished colleagues, such suspension of session 11 days in advance of October 17, 2020 regular suspension of session, as expressly provided by the Calendar, is obviously a flagrant violation of the Legislative Calendar, and consequently also a brazen violation of the House Rules of Proceedings. And a violation of the House of Congress of its own Rules of Proceedings, such as the one presently in question is a direct violation of Section 16(3), Article VI of the Constitution, providing that each House may determine the rules of its proceedings. Therefore, the House of Representatives' present suspension of session 11 days in advance of October 17, 2020 regular suspension of session expressly provided by both Chambers, was clearly unconstitutional.

From another legal point of view, such suspension of session by Congress, 11 days in advance of October 17, 2020 regular session expressly provided for by the Calendar was, for all intents and purposes, equivalent to or at least akin to the adjournment of session by the House of Representatives for more than three days without the consent of the Senate and is in direct violation of Section 16(5), Article VI of the Constitution.

With all of these, Mr. Speaker, it is my humble opinion that this session is constitutional, valid, necessary and will correct the unconstitutional suspension of the session. We shall, therefore, now continue with our business and let us now change the leadership and we shall all now be able to install the proper Speaker of our House, Speaker Lord Allan Velasco.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (*Applause*)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). We thank the distinguished Gentleman from Cagayan de Oro City for sharing his wisdom. Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, it has been proven without a doubt, that we are in session and we have a quorum, we are in order to conduct our business. And with that, Mr. Speaker, regarding Rule III, Section 14 of our Rules, we must now elect for ourselves our Secretary General whose duties are found in the Rules of our House of Representatives, keeping in mind, of course, Section 167 of Rule XXVIII of the House of Representatives, and may I read the Amendment to the Rules: "Any provision of these Rules, except those that are also embodied in the Constitution, may be amended by a majority vote of all the Members of the House."

ELECTION OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

Mr. Speaker, our parliamentary status, is that we have no SecGen at present; we will now elect for ourselves a Secretary General. That is our parliamentary status, Mr. Speaker.

May I now solicit a nomination due to the absence of a Secretary General who shall perform these functions for our session. May I now solicit a motion to nominate for election a Secretary General for our session.

I move to recognize Hon. Kristine Singson-Meehan.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Honorable Lady from Ilocos Sur is hereby recognized.

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to nominate Atty. Jocelia Bighani Sipin, Mr. Speaker, as SecGen.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Are there any other nominations? Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, there being no other nominees, may I solicit a motion to close the nominations for the position of Secretary General.

REP. AGABAS. I move to close the nominations.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, we have a motion to close the nominations for the position of Secretary General.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection to the—or perhaps the House should put into a vote the nomination of Atty. Jocelia Bighani Sipin as Secretary General of the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Those who are in favor, say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Those who are against, say "*Nay*." *(Silence)* The *ayes* have it. Congratulations, Attorney Sipin, for being the new Secretary General of the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session for a few minutes so that our new Secretary General can take her oath before the Presiding Officer.

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

Atty. Jocelia Bighani C. Sipin took her oath as the Secretary General of the House of Representatives.

The session was suspended.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

The session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The session is resumed. Majority Floor Leader.

ELECTION OF THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, the Plenary, having elected our new Secretary General, will now proceed, in accordance with Section 14, Rule III of the Rules of the House of Representatives, to elect our Sergeant-at-Arms, there being no Sergeant-at-Arms present at today's session.

May I solicit a motion to nominate for the position of Sergeant-at-Arms. I move to recognize the Hon. Mike Aglipay of the Party-List DIWA.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Gentleman from the Party-List DIWA, my good friend, is hereby recognized.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, I move to nominate Maj. Gen. Mao Aplasca (Ret.) as Sergeant-at-Arms.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Are there any other nominations? *(Silence)*
Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. There being no other nominees for the position of Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Speaker, I move to elect ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). I think they want to close...

REP. BONDOC. Okay. Mr. Speaker.

REP. JIMENEZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to close the nominations for the position of Sergeant-at-Arms.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? *(Silence)* There being none, nominations for the position of Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives is hereby closed.

Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. With that, Mr. Speaker, having closed the period of nomination for the position of Sergeant-at-Arms, I move that we now vote on the election of Brig. Gen. Mao Aplasca (Ret.) as our new Sergeant-at-Arms.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Those who are in favor of Gen. Mao Ranada Aplasca (Ret.) to be the Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives, say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Those who are against, say *Nay*. *(Silence)*

Congratulations to the new Sergeant-at-Arms. *(Applause)*

May we call on the newly elected Sergeant-at-Arms in the person of General Aplasca.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, before the new Sergeant-at-Arms, our elected Sergeant-at-Arms, takes his oath, could we recognize, in accordance with Section 165, Rule XXVII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, our mace? I move that the mace displayed before the Speaker be the symbol of authority of the House and be displayed at the Speaker's rostrum when the House is in session. It shall serve as the warrant of the Sergeant-at-Arms in enforcing order in the House.

I so move to declare this our official House mace.

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

Majority Floor Leader. *(Applause)*

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session so that our Sergeant-at-Arms can take his oath of office before our Speaker.

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

The session was suspended.

Major General Mao R. Aplasca (Ret.) took his oath as the Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

The session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella).
The session is resumed.
Majority Floor Leader.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, we move to recognize our esteemed colleague, Hon. Lito Atienza.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella).
The distinguished Gentleman from the Party-List BUHAY and the City of Manila is hereby recognized.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker, at this point and juncture of our very historic meeting, and accepting the fact that we have developed many internal problems in Congress necessitating our restoring of public trust and confidence, we are moving that we declare the position of Speaker vacant and ready for occupation by the next Speaker. *(Applause)*

REP. ROMERO. Mr. Speaker, I second the motion.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any — the session is suspended.

The session was suspended.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

The session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella).
The session is resumed.
Yes, Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, our

parliamentary status is that the Hon. Lito Atienza has a pending motion on the floor. He has moved to declare the position of Speaker vacant.

According to Section 13, Rule III of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the position of Speaker may only be declared vacant through nominal voting by a majority vote of all Members. Mr. Speaker, the motion of the Honorable Atienza is in order. We are in session, we have a quorum and, therefore, let us put his motion to a nominal vote and may the Speaker direct the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting on the motion of the Honorable Atienza to declare the position of Speaker vacant. And may I remind our colleagues, a “Yes” vote supports the motion of the Honorable Atienza declaring the position of Speaker of the House of Representatives vacant.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella).
Is there any objection to the motion? *(Silence)*
The Chair would like to make it clear that the motion presented by the Gentleman from BUHAY Party-List and the City of Manila is a motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant.

Is there any objection to the motion? *(Silence)*
The Chair hears none; the motion is hereby approved. The Secretary General is hereby designated to proceed with the nominal voting and call the roll.

Please proceed.

The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. Thereafter, pursuant to the Rules of the House, a second roll call was made. The result of the voting on the aforesaid motion is reflected in Journal No. 9, dated October 12, 2020.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella).
While the tally is still being processed, I wish to recognize the Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, as explained to me by the Secretary General previously, the voting is being tallied in accordance with Section 91 of Rule XII, Conduct of Plenary Sessions Through Electronic Platforms, and may I read Section 91:

Notwithstanding the provisions of Sections 58, 119 and 120 hereof, Members shall register their votes through virtual conference or through their respective mobile phone numbers or other electronic accounts previously submitted to and verified by the Secretary General.

Mr. Speaker, all of us in attendance here have participated in the almost-daily nominal voting conducted through electronic platforms, through Zoom or through Viber by texting our accounts. We have used our numbers and our electronic accounts previously and our votes have been recorded. Therefore, our votes today, as registered through Section 91, Rule XII, are in order and we await the Secretary General's count of our valid votes on the motion to declare the position of Speaker vacant.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Before the Chair announces the figures, I believe, with the permission of the Majority Floor Leader, the distinguished Gentleman from the BUHAY Party-List and the City of Manila has something to say.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of voting which may not be interrupted. I beg the indulgence of the esteemed Rep. Atienza that after the results of the voting are announced, we will definitely and gladly yield the floor to him.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Chair submits to the suggestion of the Majority Floor Leader.

The Chair announces that with 186 voting in the affirmative, the Chair, therefore, declares the position of the Speaker of the House of Representatives vacant. *(Applause)*

Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. At this juncture, Mr. Speaker, the position of Speaker having been declared vacant by majority of the Members of the House of Representatives, the number of votes, one hundred ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). One hundred eighty-six.

REP. BONDOC. ... eighty-six, being far above the 151 required for a majority of all Members of the House, it is now our duty to elect a new Speaker of the House of Representatives. I solicit now a motion to nominate candidates for the position of Speaker of the House of Representatives.

I move to recognize our esteemed colleague, the Hon. Mikee Romero, from the Party-List 1-PACMAN.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Gentleman from the 1-PACMAN Party-List is hereby recognized.

REP. ROMERO. Mr. Speaker, on this historic day, it is my honor and privilege to nominate a distinguished and most qualified man to the position of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, a gentleman of the highest order, for God and our country, 15/21, I respectfully nominate Rep. Lord Allan Velasco for the position of Speaker of the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

MALE VOICE. Mabuhay!

REP. ROMERO. I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, Gentleman from 1-PACMAN Party-List.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Majority Floor Leader.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Lito Atienza of the Party-List BUHAY.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Gentleman from the BUHAY Party-List and the City of Manila is hereby recognized.

REP. ATIENZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Firstly, we would like to second the motion as it is our personal feeling that the House, indeed, needs a change of leadership, but with the clarification that the nominee, Congressman Velasco, has already been elected on July of 2019.

If you will remember, Gentlemen and Ladies, when we agreed to the term-sharing agreement, brokered by no less than the President himself, we voted for two Speakers at that time. The first one to occupy the 15-month period, as volunteered by him, is the present or the past Speaker, Congressman Cayetano. But at the same time when we voted for him and agreed on him, we voted for the alternate, second in command, in the person of Congressman Velasco. Kaya kung tayo po ay iboboto natin siya uli ngayon, pangalawa na po iyan. And I would like to mention also that a nomination and endorsement for Congressman Velasco has been sent around and the undersigned is a witness to it. We have voted for Congressman Velasco for the second time. So, when we vote today for the nominee, Cong. Lord Allan Velasco, we are voting for him actually for the third time. It is about time that he takes over the helm and the leadership of this august Body. *(Applause)*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, honorable Gentleman from the BUHAY Party-List and the City of Manila.

Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, contained in the nomination and manifestation of the esteemed Gentleman from the Party-List BUHAY, he mentioned that indeed he has signed, in accordance with Section 91 of Rule XII, and has registered his vote in accordance with the Rules through electronic platforms which, he says, is his second time to be voting and today will be the third, similar to all of us who have signed our vote and have registered our vote in accordance with Section 91, on Nominal Voting on the Conduct of Plenary Sessions through Electronic Platforms.

Mr. Speaker, now, for his nomination, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from the First District of Rizal, the Hon. Jack Duavit.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The honorable Gentleman from the First District of Rizal is hereby recognized. *(Applause)*

Please proceed.

REP. DUAVIT. Mr. Speaker, for peace and productivity for our country, I nominate Cong. Lord Allan Velasco.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, Gentleman from Rizal. *(Applause)* Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, for his nomination, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from the First District of Oriental Mindoro, the Hon. Doy Leachon.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Gentleman from the First District of Oriental Mindoro is hereby recognized.

REP. LEACHON. Mr. Presiding Officer, Mr. Speaker, honorable colleagues of this august Chamber, a good day to all of you.

I take pride and privilege in nominating an honorable Member of this Body as the next Speaker of the House of Representatives. One must realize that, I must say also, this has been a hell of a ride for over a year. I thought this day would not come. There were lowly moments and, of course, high moments, happy moments because along this journey, we actually met some friends. As we realized today, this is actually historic, historic in the sense that the House of Representatives would stick. Today, as we gather, I would like to recognize and appreciate the great men and women of this august Chamber for coming in. All of you are brave, and fraught, even sometimes doubtful of what lies ahead, even thinking that there is everything to lose; but I know, believing in the virtues of integrity and honor, there is everything to gain for all the Members of this House of Representatives.

As I said, the problem, I thought, was just actually very simple: noncompliance with an agreement. But a simple violation of an agreement actually became blown out of proportion. As a lawyer, I was thinking of

myself, kaya pala maraming nagkakagulo sa bansa dahil ang tao ay walang salita. Nadadamay pa ang ating Pambansang Badyet pati na ang maraming Pilipinong naghihirap na dahil sa pandemyang ating nararanasan. We are the Representatives of the people. The growing resentment of our Members is rooted on or definitely comes from the unfair distribution of budget allocation among Representatives, and later on when we came out and told before the public the stripping of positions, removal of House leaders from key positions—we are not blind followers. As I said, the House of Representatives is actually an effective partner of the Executive Department. This is a historic time for our country under the presidency of President Duterte in whom, as we all know, for so many years, we have seen a different outlook on how he cares for the Filipinos. We can see people-centered governance as we passed the Free Tuition Fee Act, Universal Health Law, augmentation for salaries of certain government employees and TRAIN Laws.

Now, in order to continue our navigation for effective governance, as we promised, we will pass the 2021 Annual Budget starting tomorrow preceding, of course, with a change of leadership because we cannot (*Applause*), we cannot go passing a budget with a leadership that is tainted. It cannot be equitable for all of us.

Now, I am telling you, my dear colleagues, today, as we navigate in creating a budget to create new opportunities for lost opportunities of our people, we need to have a new leader in this august Chamber, a leader who inspires, not discourages; a leader who can unite and who will not divide; a leader with a heart of a public servant and not of a tyrant; a leader who listens and empowers Members; and a leader who is committed to serving the people rather than serving his own interests. We need a wise leader who makes Congress significant, that is why I am nominating an honorable Member who is young, idealistic, a lawyer, a multi-term Congressman, having made a difference in the lives of our people, a respectable colleague and has made a name for himself.

Honorable Presiding Officer, our dear colleagues, great men and Gentlemen of this august Chamber, I would like to take

this privilege to nominate an unassuming, intelligent, competent friend, Hon. Lord Allan Velasco, Congressman from the Lone District of Marinduque, as the next Speaker of the House of Representatives. (*Applause*)

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Majority Floor Leader. (*Gavel*)

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Kristine Singson-Meehan.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The honorable Lady from Ilocos Sur is hereby recognized.

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Northern Luzon Alliance and in honoring the term-sharing agreement, I nominate my good friend, a person with integrity, and an honorable public servant. I nominate Lord Allan Velasco as Speaker of the House of Representatives. (*Applause*)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, Lady from Ilocos Sur. Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BENITEZ. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Yes, the Gentleman ...

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, I move for the recognition of our esteemed colleague, the Hon. Kiko Benitez.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Yes, the distinguished Gentleman from the Visayan bloc is hereby recognized.

REP. BENITEZ. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Visayan bloc and the Third District of Negros Occidental, it is my privilege to nominate a man who shall return us all to the deserving title of "Honorable," a man who understands the word of honor upon which this House must function. Mr. Speaker, I would like to nominate for the position of Speaker, Cong. Lord Allan Velasco. (*Applause*)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, distinguished Gentleman from the Visayan bloc.

Majority Floor Leader.

The session is suspended. The session is suspended for ...

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move for the recognition of the esteemed Lady from the Mindanao bloc, Hon. Divine Yu.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The honorable Lady from the Mindanao bloc is hereby recognized.

Please proceed.

REP. YU. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On behalf of the Mindanao bloc, I respectfully nominate Cong. Lord Allan Velasco for Speaker.

Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, I move for the recognition of the Hon. John Rey Tiangco.

REP. TIANGCO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Yes, the Gentleman is hereby recognized.

REP. TIANGCO. Thank you.

On behalf of the Metro Manila bloc, I would like to nominate Cong. Lord Allan Velasco as Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you. *(Applause)*

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. For his region and for the country, I move to recognize the esteemed economist of the House and the nation, the Hon. Joey Salceda. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella).

The much-admired statesman from Bicolandia is hereby recognized.

REP. SALCEDA. Mr. Speaker, I am nominating Lord Allan Velasco not because he is from La Salle. I am nominating him because it is now time for Congress, under his leadership, to perform its modernizing task. It is not just because of his age, not because of what he chairs right now, the Committee on Energy, and I therefore presume that he has all the energy, but because I, for one, I have seen what he stands for and he stands for honor. And I think if there is any institution in this country that must stand for honor, for honoring our word, it must be Congress.

So, on behalf of Bicolandia, I would like to nominate Lord Allan Velasco, especially for his platform of government which I cannot enumerate right now but definitely, I have seen what he has explained to me for almost two hours, what he wants to do when he becomes the leader of Congress and what he wants Congress to be as a modernizing agent of the Philippines into the 21st century.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, the honorable Gentleman from the Bicol Region.

REP. BONDOC. On behalf of the BARMM, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, I move to recognize the esteemed Hon. Esmael Mangudadatu. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Gentleman from Bangsa ...

REP. MANGUDADATU. Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). ... Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Please proceed.

REP. MANGUDADATU. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the eight Legislators of the BARMM, we would like to nominate Cong.

Lord Allan Velasco as Speaker of the House.
(Applause)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella).
Thank you.
Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, as there are no other Members who wish to nominate other candidates, may I solicit a motion to close the period of nomination.

REP. AGLIPAY. Mr. Speaker, I move to close the nominations for the position of Speaker.

I so move, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). There is a motion to close the nominations for the position of Speaker. Is there any objection? (Silence) The Chair hears none; the motion is hereby approved.

The Chair would like to designate the Secretary General to please proceed with the roll call for nominal voting.

The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. Thereafter, pursuant to the Rules of the House, a second roll call was made. The result of the voting on the aforesaid motion is reflected in Journal No. 9, dated October 12, 2020.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Ladies and Gentlemen, with only one person nominated as the new Speaker of the House, duly seconded by many of our colleagues, and garnering a majority vote of 186 (Applause), the House of the People has now spoken and has a new Speaker of the House of the People (Applause) in the person of Hon. Lord Allan Velasco.

Congratulations! (Applause)

The Chair would like to invite the newly elected Speaker to please take his oath.
(Applause)

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, ...

THE DEPUTY Speaker (Rep Estrella). Together with the members of his family.

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, could we ask that the ...

THE DEPUTY Speaker (Rep Estrella). Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. Could we ask that the various party leaders and the leaders of the various blocs in the House join the Speaker in taking his oath before the Presiding Officer, Dep. Speaker Conrad Estrella, and before the Barangay Chairman of Barangay Matandang Balara, Barangay Chairman Allan Franza.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep Estrella). Yes. The leaders mentioned by the distinguished Majority Floor Leader are hereby invited to come forward and join the newly elected Speaker, Speaker Velasco, to take his oath before the Members of the House of Representatives.

REP. BONDOC. Likewise, could we invite Barangay Chairman Allan Franza ?

Mr. Speaker, could I also put on record that we thank the Members of the Minority for being present at today's session? In particular, we have three Deputy Minority Floor Leaders, the Hon. Caraps Paduano, the Hon. Bonito Singson and the Hon. Bayani Fernando, as well as many other Members of the Minority. Could we invite the Deputy Minority Leaders to the stage as well to witness the oath-taking of the Speaker? (Applause)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep Estrella). The leaders of the Minority are hereby invited to the front. Please come forward.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep Estrella). Majority Floor Leader.

REP. BONDOC. Could we invite all those who nominated our Speaker to join him on stage? Congressman Joey, please.

At this juncture, Speaker Lord Allan Jay Q. Velasco, with the members of his family, together with various party leaders and the leaders of various blocs in the House – Deputy Speaker Conrado M. Estrella III, Honorable Joey Salceda, Deputy Minority Leaders Caraps Paduano, Bonito

Singson and Bayani Fernando, as well as many other Members of the Minority – ascended the rostrum and took his oath of office as Speaker of the House of Representatives before Barangay Captain of Matandang Balara, Barangay Captain Allan Franza.

OATH-TAKING OF THE HONORABLE SPEAKER

CHAIRMAN FRANZA. Please, raise your right hand and repeat after me.

“I, Lord Allan Jay Quinto Velasco of Marinduque, having been elected Speaker of the House of Representatives, hereby solemnly swear that I will well and faithfully discharge to the best of my abilities the duties of my present position and of all others I may hereafter hold under the Republic of the Philippines; that I will support and defend the Constitution of the Philippines; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey all the laws, legal orders and decrees promulgated by duly constituted authorities of the Republic of the Philippines; and that I impose this obligation upon myself, voluntarily, without mental reservation or purpose of evasion.

So help me God.” (*Applause*)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Chair declares – session...

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session so that the Speaker, newly elected Speaker Lord Allan Velasco, could begin to preside over the House of Representatives.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The session was suspended.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

The session was resumed with Speaker Lord Allan Jay Q. Velasco presiding.

THE SPEAKER. The session is resumed.

ADDRESS OF SPEAKER VELASCO

THE SPEAKER. My esteemed colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, aking pinakamamahal na mga kababayang Pilipino, isang magandang araw po.

I was asked why I would want to lead the House of Representatives during the worst possible time, in the midst of a global pandemic that has crippled governments and upended our lives. But, why not? The true measure of leadership comes not when things are easy but especially when things are most difficult. Whether famine or feast, poverty or plenty, a leader will always rise to the challenge and respond to the call of service. It has been a difficult journey to get to where we are. One fraught with many frustrations and complications. But then, we are all here and this is a testament to our indomitable spirit, in our collective commitment to honoring our word. For what are we, who are we, if we cannot live up to our word. This is not the triumph of one. This is the triumph of everyone who believes that a promise is a promise.

To my esteemed colleagues, this is Day One of another chapter in this House when we renew and strengthen our commitment to support the President’s legislative agenda and contribute to the shining legacy that the Duterte administration will leave behind.

We commit to pass laws that are responsive to the needs of our fellow Filipinos here and abroad, laws focused on jobs, the economy, health care, food on the table, peace and order, and clean sustainable energy. And most of all, today’s events would ensure that the President’s call for a timely, legal, and constitutional approval of the 2021 Budget will be complied with.

Nais ko pong pasalamatan ang mga parties – PDP-Laban, Nationalist People’s Coalition, the Party-List Coalition, the Visayan bloc, the Northern Luzon Alliance bloc, the Mindanaoan bloc, the Metro Manila bloc, the Bicolandia, BARMM, including the NUP and NP parties – party leaders at Mambabatas, naniniwala at sumusuporta sa ating kawsa at adhikain para sa isang Kongreso na tunay na para sa tao, hindi sa iilan lang.

Nagpapasalamat rin ako sa tiwala at moral support ni Mayor Inday Sara Duterte, Deputy Speaker Pulong Duterte, at Senator Bong Go.

Higit sa lahat, ako'y nagpapasalamat sa ating mahal na Pangulo—a man of his word, may isang salita—sa mabuting halimbawa and for inspiring young government servants like me na hindi hadlang ang pagiging probinsyano para tayo ay makapagserbisyo; that a young probinsyano Congressman from a small province like Marinduque can be elected Speaker of the House of Representatives. This can only happen in the age of Duterte, when anything is possible for the benefit of the Filipino people.

With this compelling proof that has installed me as the Speaker of the House, I would like to extend my hand to Speaker Cayetano and hope that he would be amenable to sit down with me as we comply with the term-sharing agreement for a peaceful transition for the benefit of our Members and the country.

Today, history is made once again in these august halls at ako po, ang inyong abang lingkod, Lord Allan Jay Velasco, ay taos-pusong tumatanggap sa hamon na maging Speaker ng Kamara de Representante. I accept this once-in-a-lifetime challenge to serve as Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Eighteenth Congress.

To my fellow Filipinos, I will not let you down. You have my word.

Maraming salamat po.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

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

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER. The session is suspended.

The session was suspended.

