

**JOURNAL NO. 54**  
**Monday to Tuesday,**  
**February 4 and 5, 2008**

**CALL TO ORDER**

At 4:00 p.m., Deputy Speaker Ma. Amelita C. Villarosa called the session to order.

**NATIONAL ANTHEM AND PRAYER**

Pursuant to Section 71, Rule XI of the House Rules, the Members sang the National Anthem and thereafter, Rep. Edelmiro A. Amante delivered the following invocation:

*O Lord, our God, as we bow our heads  
in prayer, we raise our hearts to You, seek-  
ing for Thy love and Thy affection, to guide  
us as we discharge our duties. What is want-  
ing in our minds, our hearts must be full, O  
Lord, so that we can serve our people well  
with love and affection.*

*In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

**ROLL CALL**

On motion Representative Roman T. Romulo, the Chair directed the Secretary General to call the Roll and the following Members were present:

Abante  
Abaya  
Agbayani  
Aggabao  
Agyao  
Albano  
Alcala  
Alfelor  
Almario  
Alvarez (A.)  
Alvarez (G.)  
Amante  
Amatong  
Angara  
Angping  
Antonino  
Antonino-Custodio  
Apostol  
Aquino  
Arago  
Arbison  
Arenas  
Arnaiz

Arroyo (D.)  
Asilo  
Bagatsing  
Balindong  
Barzaga  
Bautista  
Belmonte  
Beltran  
Biazon  
Bichara  
Binay  
Biron  
Bonoan-David  
Bravo  
Briones  
Bulut  
Cabilao  
Cagas  
Cajayon  
Cajes  
Cari  
Casiño  
Castelo-Daza  
Castro  
Cayetano  
Celeste  
Cerilles  
Chatto  
Chavez  
Chiongbian  
Chipeco  
Chong  
Chungalao  
Clarete  
Climaco  
Codilla  
Cojuangco  
Coquilla  
Coscolluela  
Crisologo  
Cruz-Gonzales  
Cua (G.)  
Cua (J.)  
Cuenco  
Datumanong  
Dayanghirang  
Daza  
De Venecia  
Defensor (A.)  
Defensor (M.)  
Del Mar

|                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Del Rosario           | Malapitan             |
| Diasnes               | Mandanas              |
| Diaz                  | Mangudadatu           |
| Dilangalen            | Marañon               |
| Dimaporo              | Marcos                |
| Duavit                | Matugas               |
| Dueñas                | Maza                  |
| Dumarpa               | Mendoza               |
| Dumpit                | Mercado               |
| Durano                | Miraflores            |
| Dy                    | Mitra                 |
| Ecleo                 | Nava                  |
| Emano                 | Nicolas               |
| Enverga               | Noel                  |
| Escudero              | Ocampo                |
| Estrella (C.)         | Olaño                 |
| Estrella (R.)         | Ong                   |
| Fabian                | Ortega                |
| Fernandez             | Pablo                 |
| Ferrer                | Padilla               |
| Fua                   | Pancho                |
| Fuentebella           | Pancrudo              |
| Garay                 | Piamonte              |
| Garcia (A.)           | Pichay                |
| Garcia, Pablo John F. | Pingoy                |
| Garcia, Pablo P.      | Piñol                 |
| Garin                 | Plaza                 |
| Gatchalian            | Ponce-Enrile          |
| Gatlabayan            | Prieto-Teodoro        |
| Go                    | Puentevella           |
| Golez                 | Puno                  |
| Gonzales (A.)         | Remulla               |
| Gonzales (N.)         | Reyes (C.)            |
| Gonzalez (R.)         | Reyes (V.)            |
| Gullas                | Robes                 |
| Hataman               | Rodriguez             |
| Hofer                 | Rodriguez-Zaldarriaga |
| Hontiveros-Baraquel   | Roman                 |
| Ilagan                | Romarate              |
| Jaafar                | Romualdez             |
| Jala                  | Romualdo              |
| Jalosjos-Carreon      | Romulo                |
| Javier                | Roxas                 |
| Jikiri                | Salimbangon           |
| Joson                 | Salvacion             |
| Kho                   | San Luis              |
| Lacson                | Santiago (J.)         |
| Lagbas                | Seachon-Lanete        |
| Lagdameo              | Seares-Luna           |
| Lagman                | Silverio              |
| Lapus                 | Singson (R.)          |
| Lazatin               | Solis                 |
| Lim                   | Soon-Ruiz             |
| Locsin                | Suarez                |
| Lopez                 | Susano                |
| Macapagal Arroyo (M.) | Sy-Alvarado           |
| Madrona               | Sy-Limkaichong        |
| Magsaysay             | Syjuco                |

Taliño-Mendoza  
 Tan  
 Tañada  
 Teodoro  
 Tieng  
 Tupas  
 Umali (A.)  
 Umali (C.)  
 Ungab  
 Uy, Reynaldo  
 Uy, Rolando  
 Valdez  
 Vargas  
 Velarde  
 Villafuerte  
 Villanueva  
 Villarosa  
 Vinzons-Chato  
 Violago  
 Yap  
 Yu  
 Zamora (M.)  
 Zamora (R.)  
 Zialcita

Ramiro  
 Sandoval  
 Santiago (N.)  
 Singson (E.)  
 Uy (E.)  
 Villar  
 Zubiri

#### **MOTION OF REP. DEFENSOR (A.)**

Thereupon, Majority Leader Arthur D. Defensor Sr. moved to suspend the session.

#### **MOTION OF REP. MITRA**

Rep. Mitra however restated his previous motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant.

#### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

On an earlier motion of Rep. Defensor (A.), the Chair suspended the session at 4:12 p.m.

#### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 6:27 p.m., the session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Arnulfo P. Fuentebella presiding.

*At this point, Deputy Speaker Villarosa relinquished the Chair to Speaker Jose De Venecia Jr.*

#### **MOTION OF REP. MITRA**

Thereupon, Rep. Abraham Kahlil B. Mitra moved to declare the position of the Speaker vacant.

#### **OBJECTION OF REP. PLAZA**

Rep. Rodolfo “Ompong” G. Plaza however objected to Rep. Mitra’s motion.

#### **ROLL CALL** (Continuation)

With 214 Members present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum. (See Appendix 1)

The following Members appeared before and/or after the Roll Call:

Ablan  
 Dangwa  
 De Guzman  
 Defensor (M.)  
 Domogan  
 Ermita-Buhain  
 Garcia (V.)  
 Gunigundo  
 Ledesma  
 Mamba  
 Nograles

#### **REMARKS OF REP. DEFENSOR (A.)**

Upon request of the Chair, Rep. Defensor (A.) stated that the parliamentary status was that before the suspension of session, Rep. Zamora (R.) sought recognition from the Chair so he could ask some questions. However, before he could do so, Rep. Rodolfo “Ompong” G. Plaza rose on a point of order but after conferring with him, Rep. Defensor (A.) was informed that he no longer wish to pursue his point of order.

#### **REMARKS OF THE CHAIR**

The Chair remarked that the Body go one step at a time and dispose of the pending motion. However, the Chair recognized Rep. Plaza who sought to be recognized.

#### **WITHDRAWAL OF REP. PLAZA’S POINT OF ORDER**

Upon recognition by the Chair, Rep. Plaza first explained that an earlier motion was made by Rep. Mitra to declare the position of the Speaker vacant, which was duly seconded by Rep. Solis. He pointed out that immediately thereafter, Rep. Zamora (R.) stood up and sought recognition from the Chair. Rep. Plaza stated that it was his understanding that the issue of the motion duly seconded is nondebtable.

He then said that if Rep. Zamora's (R.) issue is totally different from the motion, then he was withdrawing his point of order to facilitate and expedite the proceedings.

Thereafter, the Chair recognized Rep. Zamora (R.).

#### **REMARKS OF REP. ZAMORA (R.)**

Rep. Zamora (R.) explained that he was starting to ask questions regarding the motion of Rep. Mitra but since there was an understanding that Speaker Jose De Venecia wanted to stand on a question of personal privilege, he was withdrawing his intervention and was willing to yield the floor to Speaker De Venecia.

#### **MOTION OF REP. MITRA**

Upon recognition by the Chair, with due courtesy to Rep. Zamora (R.) and the Speaker, Rep. Mitra objected thereto and asked that the pending motion be resolved.

#### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

At 6:31 p.m., the Chair *motu proprio* suspended the session.

#### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 6:34 p.m., the session was resumed.

#### **POINT OF ORDER OF REP. CASIÑO**

Upon recognition by the Chair, Rep. Casiño pointed out Section 126 of House Rule XVIII stating that questions of privilege are those which affect the duties, conduct, rights, privileges, dignity and integrity or reputation of the House or of its Members, individually or collectively. Subject to the ten-minute rule, he added, every Member has the right to raise a question of personal or collective privilege. He then explained that prior to availing himself/herself of such right, a Member shall seek the permission of the Chair who, in turn, would allow the Member to proceed on a determination that the request is in order and that on Mondays, a Member who has registered to speak on a specific subject matter in the Privilege Hour cannot rise on a question of personal or collective privilege on the same subject matter.

The Chair interjected that Rep. Casiño was reading from the old Rules because he was citing a different Section.

Rep. Casiño thereafter read that in Section 100 of the new Rules, the same thing is stated under Questions of Privilege so that, he said, it is but proper and decent to allow the Speaker to speak on a Question of Personal Privilege.

#### **REMINDER FROM THE CHAIR**

At this point, the Chair reminded the people in the gallery to refrain from clapping and maintain the solemnity and dignity of the proceedings of the House.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF REPS. GARCIA (P.) AND DILANGALEN**

At this point, Reps. Pablo P. Garcia and Didagen P. Dilangalen simultaneously sought recognition from the Chair.

#### **REMARKS OF THE CHAIR**

The Chair requested that Rep. Casiño complete his point of order.

#### **POINT OF ORDER OF REP. CASIÑO (Continuation)**

Rep. Casiño stated that the objection of Rep. Mitra is not in order because it is the Speaker who has the right and the duty to allow any Member to rise on a question of personal privilege.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF REP. GARCIA (P.)**

Rep. Garcia (P.) again sought recognition from the Chair.

#### **RULING OF THE CHAIR**

At this point, Rep. Defensor (A.) asked for the ruling of the Chair.

#### **REMARKS OF THE CHAIR**

The Chair remarked that it has to rule first on the point of order raised by Rep. Casiño before recognizing Rep. Garcia (P.). However, when asked whether the point of order of Rep. Garcia (P.) was in connection with that of Rep. Casiño, the former replied in the affirmative but said that he was objecting to the latter's point of order.

#### **OBJECTION OF REP. GARCIA (P.)**

Thereafter, upon recognition by the Chair, Rep. Garcia (P.) stated that a question of privilege can be raised at any time by any Member. However, he said

that a limitation can be found in the last sentence of Section 100, to wit: "A Member shall not also rise on a Question of Personal or Collective Privilege to speak on concerns that are the principal subject matter of measures pending in the committee or in plenary."

He then maintained that the motion of Rep. Mitra which was duly seconded, is a matter pending before the Plenary and therefore, no Member can avail of his personal privilege because the motion is something pertaining to a matter before the Body which has not yet been considered.

He explained that since the motion was presented before the Body, the parliamentary situation was that said motion is now subject to debate.

Rep. Garcia (P.) further clarified that if the rule is to allow an exception thereto if only to prevent a Member from preempting the debate on the issue pending before the floor but in the guise of a question of personal privilege, and with the issue filed by Rep. Mitra still pending on the floor and therefore still subject to debate, any Member thus, including the Speaker who would like to speak, can only do so not on a question of personal privilege but in opposing the motion.

Reps. Casiño and Defensor (A.) both sought recognition from the Chair.

#### REMARKS OF THE CHAIR

The Chair clarified that the Body was still in the process of debating the point of order raised by Rep. Garcia (P.), and thereafter recognized Rep. Defensor (A.).

#### REMARKS OF REP. DEFENSOR (A.)

Rep. Defensor (A.) maintained that a question of personal and collective privilege is a privileged motion as the Rules of the House provide that it is number three in the order of precedence on the floor. He stressed that any objection to the delivery by the Speaker of a question of personal and collective privilege is premature because the Members still do not know what he would be talking about. He asked how they could claim that the issue is covered by a subject matter pending on the floor when the Speaker has not even said what he would like to say. He emphasized that even if the subject matter of a question of privilege is also the subject matter pending in plenary, but affects the Speaker's personal integrity and honor, then this takes precedence over any other business such that the Speaker should be given the right to speak on the floor.

Thereafter, the Chair recognized Rep. Teodoro L. Locsin Jr. for his remarks.

#### REMARKS OF REP. LOCSIN

Rep. Locsin stressed that the Members would like to have consistency in the practice of the House. He recalled that during the plenary debates on the Cheaper Medicines Act, Rep. Garcia (P.) delivered a privilege speech with it as the subject matter. He said that the same kind of consistency should be applied on the issue at hand. If Rep. Garcia (P.) was allowed to speak on the Cheaper Medicines Act while it was still on the floor, then the Speaker should also be allowed to speak about his political career.

Thereafter, the Chair recognized Rep. Villafuerte.

However, Rep. Garcia (P.) sought recognition for his rejoinder.

#### REMARKS OF THE CHAIR

The Chair stated that Rep. Villafuerte had already been recognized, unless he would like to withdraw his motion.

#### REMARKS OF REP. VILLAFUERTE

Rep. Villafuerte clarified that he would temporarily concede to Rep. Garcia (P.), with the clarification that he would be allowed to make his own statement thereafter.

#### REMARKS OF THE CHAIR

The Chair stated that he has always been fair to all the Members, and that Rep. Villafuerte would be recognized at the proper time. He thereafter recognized Rep. Garcia (P.) for his remarks.

Rep. Dilangalen however sought recognition from the Chair.

#### REMARKS OF REP. GARCIA (P.)

Rep. Garcia (P.) said that he would like to respond to the statement of Rep. Locsin. He clarified that when he spoke on a question of personal privilege about the Cheaper Medicines Act, it was no longer in plenary as it had already undergone voting on Third Reading. He said that it is incorrect to say that he rose on a question of personal privilege about said measure because it was no longer the subject of

debate and had already been voted upon by the Body. He clarified that any Member can speak against the motion of Rep. Mitra, and this includes the Speaker himself. He added that any Member can speak against the motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant but no longer on a question of personal and collective privilege because the privilege of voting on said motion is still pending before the plenary.

Thereafter, Reps. Locsin and Villafuerte both sought recognition from the Chair.

#### **REMARKS OF THE CHAIR**

The Chair stated that Rep. Villafuerte would first be recognized, to be followed by Rep. Locsin, and thereafter, by Rep. Dilangalen.

#### **REMARKS OF REP. VILLAFUERTE**

While he conceded that the question of personal and collective privilege is a privileged motion, Rep. Villafuerte emphasized that a resolution declaring vacant the Office of the Speaker or removing officials of the House is of high constitutional privilege. Thus, he pointed out that although both are privilege matters, a motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant is higher than a motion to speak on a question of personal and collective privilege. He maintained that as such, the issue on the election of Speaker De Venecia in July 2007 as a matter of high constitutional privilege must also be invoked. Speaking of consistency, he said that this principle should now be applied – whether in removing or electing a Speaker.

Thereafter, Rep. Villafuerte expressed his desire that the proponent of the motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant now allow the latter to deliver his question of privilege. He said that this is notwithstanding the fact that it is not of a higher order, and is subject to the limitations provided by the Rules of the House that the speech should not exceed 10 minutes, with the subject matter relevant to the aforementioned motion and not on matters not germane to the pending issue. He said that after the allotted 10 minutes, the Body could proceed to vote on the motion to declare the Speaker's position vacant.

The Chair thereupon recognized Rep. Locsin for his remarks.

#### **REMARKS OF REP. LOCSIN**

Rep. Locsin referred to the subject of consistency as expanded by Rep. Villafuerte. He pointed out that Rep. Garcia (P.) spoke twice on a question of privi-

lege – when the Cheaper Medicines Act was deliberated on the floor, and when it was presented for Third Reading. As he stressed his desire for consistency in the proceedings, he noted that the question of the highest constitutional privilege was invoked at a time when the House had no Speaker yet and the President was about to deliver her State of the Nation Address, which is the highest constitutional privilege. As the Body presently has a Speaker, he inquired on the issue of privilege and constitutionality.

#### **REMARKS OF REP. GARCIA (P.)**

Rep. Garcia (P.) stated that a reference was made to his humble person.

#### **REMARKS OF THE CHAIR**

The Chair remarked that he had committed to recognize Rep. Dilangalen after Rep. Locsin's turn.

#### **POINT OF ORDER OF REP. DILANGALEN**

Rep. Dilangalen reminded his colleagues that earlier, Rep. Zamora (R.) gave way to the delivery of a speech by the Speaker. He noted that up to the present, the Speaker has not yet requested for recognition on the floor. He said that the Members have been prematurely debating on nonexistent matters such that they are all out of order.

To set the record straight, Rep. Dilangalen inquired whether the Speaker would like to deliver a privilege speech, this as he stressed that if the Speaker so desires, then he should be given the floor because said delivery is a privileged motion.

He emphasized that a motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant is not at all a privileged motion. He added that there is no such thing as a "high constitutional privilege" such that anybody who says this is out of order.

The Chair took note of Rep. Dilangalen's statement.

#### **REMARKS OF REP. DEFENSOR (A.)**

Rep. Defensor (A.), upon recognition by the Chair, clarified that a point of order is not debatable, and sought for a ruling from the latter on the point of order raised by Rep. Dilangalen.

#### **REMARKS OF THE CHAIR**

The Chair clarified that he has allowed a debate on the matter, although it is not debatable because the House is confronted with a very big issue on the lea-

dership of the House. Thus, he said that the issues raised before the Chair should be considered to allow him to make a ruling – whether a question of personal and collective privilege is superior to the motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant.

Even in the previous elections of Speakers, the Chair stressed that the election of a Speaker in each organizational stage should be distinguished, such as in the absence thereof, the Secretary General temporarily presides over the sessions. Even after the election of the Speaker, he said that the Constitution specifically provides in Section 16 (1), Article VI that the Senate shall elect its President and the House of Representatives its Speaker, by a majority vote of all its respective Members, which means 121 votes are needed to elect a Speaker.

After the election of a Speaker, he stressed that this cannot be considered as the same privilege in the organizational stage because of the requirement of a preceding motion. The preliminary stage, he continued, is the declaration that the position of the Speaker is vacant.

The Chair thereupon emphasized that the Rules of the Fourteenth Congress provide that to declare the position of the Speaker vacant, there should be the same absolute majority of the entire Members of the House. As such, he explained that the Body has to go through the first stage before proceeding to the next stage of electing a Speaker, and which many Members consider as the highest constitutional order. To declare the position of a Speaker vacant is subservient to the motion of question of personal and collective privilege because it is a privileged motion.

He reminded the Members that they have the highest authority granted by the Constitution to speak before the Chamber on any topic under the sun without being charged of libel. This is the highest privilege of a Congressman, he emphasized. He maintained that the Members should not diminish nor degrade the privilege or right of a colleague to speak, this as he reminded them that on many occasions, the Chair has been very liberal in allowing them to participate on the floor, especially when the issue affects their personal integrity.

The Chair thereafter ruled that the point of order raised by Rep. Casiño was in order.

At this point, Reps. Mitra and Salvador H. Escudero III both sought recognition from the Chair.

#### REMARKS OF REP. ESCUDERO

Upon recognition by the Chair, Rep. Escudero noted that the Body has been talking about the highest constitutional consideration; however he maintained that the highest consideration is having a sense of fairness, especially in the House.

#### REMARKS OF REP. MITRA

Rep. Mitra said that this was precisely the point that he would like to emphasize.

#### REMARKS OF REP. ESCUDERO

As he noted that both Reps. Zamora (R.) and Vilafuerte had already given way to the Speaker, Rep. Escudero said that the Body should now allow the Speaker to deliver his speech if only to put an end to the issue on the floor.

#### REMARKS OF REP. MITRA

Rep. Mitra stressed that he was also about to make a similar statement, but that the Chair recognized Rep. Escudero ahead of him.

Thereafter, on motion of Rep. Defensor (A.), the Chair recognized Speaker Jose C. De Venecia to deliver his question of privilege.

#### QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE OF SPEAKER DE VENECIA

*I rise tonight on an issue of personal and collective privilege. I am amazed that from such a conventional request from the Speaker of the House, there are persons orchestrating movements in the House, that even the Speaker could not stand up on an issue of personal and collective privilege. Precisely, I am now standing because when I launched our movement for a moral revolution in this country to cleanse our society – our Congress, the Cabinet, Senate, Judiciary, local government units, Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police -- of corruption so that this country can change, I was immediately accused of not even being fit enough to make such a suggestion and call for a moral revolution and renewal in the country. I said, “but I am a sinner, all of us are sinners in this House and country, and the time has now come for us to transform our hearts, because in changing our hearts, we can change the country, and then the world.”*

*One of our colleagues stood up to ask that the seat of the leadership of this House be declared vacant. I asked that I be recognized precisely because I*

want to reply to this motion to declare the seat of the Speaker vacant.

By way of a background, in 1988, then Senator Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo came to my house on Christmas night and requested me if she could run as my vice-presidential candidate. She came with her classmates from Assumption. And with my wife, Gina, present, she said, "Please consider me as your vice-presidential running mate." And I said to her, "I will. Just give me a chance to ask Senator Barbers, then Secretary of the Interior and Local Government, to give way to you. And I will ask Senator Guingona, to give way to you. And I will ask Senator Alvarez to give way to you." And thus, I said to her, "Now, I will call up President Ramos in your presence and I will ask President Ramos to also endorse you to run for Vice-President of the Philippines as my running mate in the 1998 elections."

I lost the presidency. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo won the vice-presidency of the Philippines. And I thank the Lord that she won as Vice-President of the Philippines.

The time came to proclaim Joseph Estrada as President of the Philippines. And I was still sitting there as Speaker of the House even if I lost the presidency of the land. And at a meeting in Manila Bay, proposed by President Ramos, President-elect Estrada and I met with President Ramos. And then I told President-elect Estrada, "When Congress convenes on Monday, unlike President Ramos who was held hostage by Congress for 29 days before he was proclaimed, I will ask that you be proclaimed and I will talk to Senate President Neptali Gonzales that he and I will proclaim you President of the Philippines but," I said, "on one condition. Not for me do I seek any favor but I request you to appoint Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as Secretary of Social Welfare." It was then that I proposed a government of national unity so that the new President of the Philippines can begin on a high note.

From then on, every challenge in the life of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, I was there standing beside her. And when she won the presidency of the land, I was one of her campaign managers. And in the proclamation, in the battle for proclamation of the presidency, I again, as Speaker of the nation, proclaimed Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo after more than 25 days of battle here on the floor of the House. I stood there where you now sit, Mr. Speaker, at three in the morning and we raised the hand of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as President of the Philippines.

From that moment, with all the difficulties of running the President's seat and organizing the gov-

ernment, I always stood by her. And in the various coup attempts against her presidency, I was there with many of you to ensure that she continues and stays in the seat of power of Malacañang. When members of the Cabinet rose to demand her resignation as President of the Philippines, former President Ramos and I joined forces and mobilized many of you who are here today in order that we could come to the rescue and succor of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo; and we succeeded such that in spite of the call of the bishops and call of the archbishops and the call of the Cardinals and the leaders of civil society and many of the leaders of Cabinet who demanded that she resigns from her post, we saved President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Year after year, impeachment complaints were filed against the presidency in this House. And all of us, out of duty, in order to preserve the stability of this nation and in order to ensure that our President continues to rule because she would be more preferable than any military junta that takes over leadership of this country, you and I, all of us together – rallied to her cause three times to dispel and defeat any proposals, initiatives or motions to remove her from the presidency of the land.

I have not sinned even once against President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. And my conscience is clear, with the good Lord listening, that I have not hurt even once the President of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, because I loved her, I invested so much in her. And I want her to continue in power until the year 2010 because I was precisely pushing for constitutional change so that we could install in this country a new government that would approximate the parliamentary governments in Europe and approximate the parliamentary governments in Asia, so that we could put an end to coup attempts and destabilization and EDSA I, II, III, IV and V. These are inherent problems of the presidency.

And so, there came a time a few months ago, when a major crisis exploded in this country, because in spite of the fact that I, as principal author of the Build-Operate-and-Transfer Law that has enabled this government and this nation to build power plants, highways, airports, seaports, hospitals, irrigation projects at no cost to the government and at no cost to the Filipino people, a proposal was made for the Filipino people to incur an indebtedness of \$329 million, when a separate proposal was also equally made to do the same project at less cost and without even one centavo of government expense risked or sovereign risk. Yet, they insisted that this so-called ZTE project from China, which would cost



*you and me and the entire Filipino people an external indebtedness of \$330 million, be approved.*

*And my son who sits there now, they called him. The media called him and the Senate called him. And he stood there in the Senate at great risk to himself, to me, and to his family, and had to denounce this project with an overprice of \$200 million. I said, "Son, please don't do that." And he said to me, "Papa, would you allow that an over-price of \$200 million be foisted on the Filipino people? Would you allow as a Speaker of the land that the appropriations, the budget of the Republic of the Philippines, would you allow an overprice of \$200 million, that each and every Filipino must pay?" I said I cannot in conscience stop you. Right at this moment, I am launching and crafting a movement to launch a moral revolution in this country. And here I am, the Speaker of the land, the first one to stop my son from speaking the truth. And all he is asking is that I allow him to speak the truth.*

*Since that moment, a lawyer came to this House and filed an ethics case against me in the Committee on Ethics where some Members of the House, in collusion with Malacañang, were saying, "Go ahead, proceed with the ethics case against Speaker De Venecia." And the charge was that I led them as Speaker of the House, to give the franchise to my son.*

*Farthest from the truth: when my son's company applied for a franchise, he was not an officer of the company and he was not a shareholder of the company. He only joined the company several years later because they needed his expertise to run this company. Yet, they filed an ethics case against the Speaker, to ridicule the Speaker, to put the Speaker in a bad light.*

*Thank God, before Christmas, the Members of the Committee dismissed the case against me unanimously, overwhelmingly for lack of jurisdiction and, in the language of Congressman Rufus Rodriguez, for utter lack of merit.*

*This same lawyer, hired by the minions of Malacañang, filed also an impeachment case against the President. You know, the impeachment case against the President consists of three pages. It's like a rehash of the ethics case that was filed against me. And in this three-page complaint versus the Suplico complaint of 65 pages, only two pages were an attack against my person, and one page, against the President.*

*And therefore I refused to endorse such a sham, a ridiculous complaint to the Committee on Justice. Why? Because of conflict of interest, because if I pre-*

*sented it to the Committee on Justice, I would be accused of obstruction of justice or be accused of conflict of interest. And so I decided not to make a decision. And I said -- "Raul Del Mar, please do your duty and transmit this sham of an impeachment complaint to the Committee on Justice, "not realizing that it shields the President for one year from impeachment complaint.*

*The following day, this same lawyer hired by Malacañang and by the First Gentleman, filed an Ombudsman case against my son. And in the afternoon, he filed an Ombudsman case against me again on the same basic complaint that the Committee on Ethics later dismissed.*

*Not content with the series of allegations, accusations, and charges, they even revived the case against Landoil Resources Corporation which was the pioneer in the Middle East and North Africa, in infrastructure projects, that led to the employment of millions and millions of Filipinos. They filed again a case and tried to revive it with the PCGG, in spite of the fact that the PCGG dismissed it in 1994, the Ombudsman dismissed it in 1995, the Sandiganbayan dismissed it two years thereafter and the Supreme Court dismissed it two years after the dismissal by the Sandiganbayan. Dismissal by the Ombudsman, PCGG, Sandiganbayan and Supreme Court; now they are trying to revive it once more.*

*I stand here today because there is a new move now to remove me as Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

*Five times I was elected Speaker of the House. I fought in the battle for the speakership in 1992 against my friend, Peping Cojuangco, by a direct vote on the floor of this House in spite of the fact that at that time, his sister was President of the Philippines until June 30, 1992. In 1995, the distinguished Majority Leader Ronnie Zamora and I fought for the highest position in this House. It was not, as being demanded now, that we go on straw voting to go to the A and B Caucus Room of the House. I said, "No, there has to be voting on the floor of the House of Representatives in the same way that I defeated Congressman Cojuangco, in the same way that I contended with Ronnie Zamora in 1999."*

*They are asking that we take this motion to declare the position of Speaker vacant by deciding in caucus to elect my friend, Congressman Nograles, as the new Speaker of the House. They are proposing that we take it up now in caucus, or failing to take it up in caucus, in spite of the agreement by the Pasig River, they want us now to vote on it here on the floor of the House.*

*But before doing so, let me say that in the year after losing the presidency in 1998, I was a private citizen. And in the year 2001, I ran in my own district in Pangasinan and won overwhelmingly. And then I ran again for Speaker of the House and many of you here enabled me to win as Speaker of the House overwhelmingly. In that battle in 2001, again we fought on the floor of the House against my friend, then Congressman Abad of Batanes, who later disengaged. And then I ran in this same Chamber for the speakership of the House against my friend, Carlos Padilla.*

*In the elections of 2004, I was challenged once again by Congressman Chiz Esudero, now Senator of the Republic. And it was not decided in caucus, it was not decided in some shady corridors of the hotels in Manila but here before the blazing search light of public scrutiny, here in the Chamber of the House of Representatives. And again, thank God and with your support, I won and won overwhelmingly.*

*In the year 2007, another challenge was mounted against me by my friend, Congressman Pablo Garcia along with my other friend, Congressman Louie Villafuerte. I won overwhelmingly as the Speaker of the House only a few months ago. But before that voting on the floor, I insisted that we take a vote in caucus in order that we do not bring the battle for the speakership on the floor of the House of Representatives.*

*Or if they want, because many of them are friends of the Palace – I said then, let us hold our caucus in Malacañang, I was turned down; caucus at one of the hotels, turned down; caucus in my house, they turned it down. They insisted that we put it to a vote here on the floor of the House of Representatives. I was worried because it was the day of the opening of Congress and it was also the day that the President of the Philippines would deliver her State of the Nation Address (SONA) at four o'clock in the afternoon. And the voting begun and we would assemble here at ten o'clock in the morning. One o'clock, two o'clock and still we could not decide on the Speaker of the land because there were so many challenges and debates here in the House of Representatives. But when the time came for voting, I won overwhelmingly as Speaker of the House with God's benediction and God's grace for the fifth time and the first and only time in Philippine history for a Speaker to reign five times by your grace, by your vote and by your support because I could not have done it without your blessings, benediction and support.*

*Now, I asked this morning because they were insisting that again we should do the voting in a smoke-filled room and not before the scrutiny of this House and I was insisting that no, we should vote for*

*the new Speaker of the House in full, frank, transparent, fair and democratic voting. No they insisted that it be done in a caucus tomorrow afternoon.*

*Voting by all the member-parties of the Rainbow Coalition which I had the privilege to organize in 1992 and on motion of Deputy Speaker Simeon A. Datumanong, seconded by Majority Leader Arthur D. Defensor Sr. where Reps. Luis R. Villafuerte, Eduardo C. Zialcita and Eduardo R. Gullas were present, where the leaders of the Liberal Party and the Nacionalista Party were all present, the leaders of Kampi led by Rep. Villafuerte, the leaders of the Nationalist People's Coalition led by Reps. Mark O. Cojuangco, Michael John "Jack" R. Duavit and Conrado M. Estrella III, and with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo officiating as referee and broker, we all agreed that there should be a caucus or we would take the vote tomorrow in the afternoon, one or two hours before four o'clock. That was the gentleman's agreement. That was the agreement blessed by the President of the Philippines although we did not want her to bless it because under normal condition, the President of the Philippines should not interfere in any election in the House of Representatives. But because of the invitation, so we came, out of respect for the President of the Philippines.*

*Now, all of a sudden, they came here and they are saying that we take the vote now even though the agreement is that we would take the vote tomorrow. I was supposed to take the floor of Congress tomorrow so that I will have the chance to write my speech, so that I would have the chance to consult with my notes, so that I have the chance to consult my family, I have to consult with other friends in the Rainbow Coalition. But, no, it must be now. It cannot wait, it shall not wait. And so, I came down from my office, I came down from the rostrum where I was presiding a while ago in order that I can stand here before you, before the Filipino people to tell them the story of how this came about. To give them the background of the corruption and the perfidy and the doubled-cross and the triple-cross that you and I, Members of the House of Representatives, entitled to our own share of the Public Works System, entitled to what they call the pork barrel system as they call it in America or in Europe or in Japan, were we have to beg the President of the Philippines for our share of public works in order that we could build our irrigation system, some clinics and airports and mass housing and little hospitals and medicines for our people.*

*We have to beg the President of the Philippines and you have to go through his two sons to ask for your share of the pork barrel system, taking advantage of the innocence of the first-termers, that these*

things cannot be done without the President of the Philippines acting through her two sons. This is painful because Congressman Mikey and Congressman Dato, their godmother in their wedding is my wife Gina, twice they asked that she be their godmother. It pains me to cast aspersions on my friend, Boy Nograles because his two children when they got married, their godmother was also my wife. But my friends, ladies and gentlemen, this pork barrel system now is controlled by the Palace. The Road Users Tax which allows us to build and repair our highways, you must now go to certain agents of the Palace before your Road Users Tax can be released and they already provide the contractors in advance. This Transco project, the brother of Congressman Ronaldo B. Zamora, Mr. Bobbie Zamora, was prepared to bid \$6 billion and it would have been tremendous achievement for the National Power Corporation (NPC). It would have been a big push for economic sufficiency and reduce the external indebtedness of the Philippines and reduce our external borrowings. The winner was a company that is closely affiliated to the Arroyo's. And I make this statement with Congressmen Teofisto DL. Guingona III, Zamora (R.) and Teodoro L. Locsin Jr. making the same allegations earlier.

What is happening to our country? Everything is for sale – bribery and corruption. Is this the Philippines that we want for our country and for our people? Are we going to beg the Palace for everything that is needed by the Members of this House? I was proposing to my own colleagues in the Rainbow Coalition and even to our friends in the Minority that now, we must create a new Majority in this House. Let us create a new Majority in the House that is not beholden like beggars to Malacañang so that we can deal with Malacañang on grounds of mutual respect; so that we could be more like the Senators dealing with equal potency and respect vis-à-vis the Palace in the Pasig River; so that you and I can avail of our entitlement as a matter of right not because we have to beg for our people, not because we have to beg the sons of the President who are here.

My friends, ladies and gentlemen, it pains me to say these things but when will you and I change? When are we going to transform our hearts, our souls, our beings so that we can stand here as proud sovereigns of the Filipino people so that we can build and create laws and institutions that our sons and daughters and our grandchildren can be proud of.

That is why I had launched the movement for moral revolution because I said, this is perhaps the only hope for the Philippines and for the Filipino people. I begged President Macapagal-Arroyo, I said, do it, Madam President, then you will be a

great President, then you will have a great leadership for the Filipino people. Then, all of these accusations will fall aside and we can concentrate now on solving the many problems of the Filipino people. I am so happy that after I had delivered my call for a moral revolution and I said, I will not lead because I am a sinner, I could just provide the idea on the impetus but let the others who are more qualified than I take the lead. And I am happy to report to you that one week after I made the call for a moral revolution, Cardinal Ricardo Vidal of Cebu, one of the most respected senior Cardinals of the nation came to my house at midnight and said, "Speaker Joe, I will support your call for a moral revolution and I will ask my two anti-corruption units in Cebu to join."

I called up Bishop Eddie Villanueva, one of the most respected, one of the honest leaders of religious society in this country. I could not find him but after two days, he called me up as he was in Virginia and he said to me, "Joe, I will join and support your call for a moral revolution." His son is here, one of our ablest Congressman, Emmanuel Joel J. Villanueva.

Three days after, Brother Mike Velarde, head of the El Shaddai, and I, had lunch and he said to me, "Joe, I will support your call for a moral revolution."

Bishop Benny Abante and his brother, Ruben Abante and 29 pastors of the Baptist Church came to my house for lunch five weeks ago and said that they will lead in the movement to push our moral revolution.

Father Intengan, one of the great Jesuits, founder of Social Democracy in the Philippines with Secretary Bert Gonzales said, "I will support your call for a moral revolution."

Diosdado Macapagal Jr., the young brother of the President and Secretary Bert Gonzales and I flew to Vietnam a couple of weeks ago and we wrote the principles and the provisions of our call for a moral revolution.

And the most important of all, Archbishop Lagdameo, President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), at a meeting attended by many of us in the House of Representatives, including Reps. Rufus B. Rodriguez and Eduardo C. Zialcita and Senator Aquilino Pimentel said, "We, the Bishops of the Philippines, are endorsing your call for a moral revolution."

Last week, the National Breakfast Prayer meeting, led by Mr. Joe Tan Ramirez and many of the evangelicals, decided by standing ovation to support

our call for moral revolution. And I am very happy to report to you that last week, Supreme Court Chief Justice Reynato Puno decided to co-lead the moral revolution.

You know, what is surprising about all of these, normally, when we, politicians and Congressmen and Senators, make a proposal to the leaders of the church and the leaders of civil society, the religious leaders would say, "Ibasura natin iyan, walang kala-labasan iyan." But here, it is they who approved it quickly and immediately. It is they who encouraged us to move immediately so that we can change Philippine society, so that we can transform Philippine society and that by transforming the same, we can move from a third world society to a second world society and eventually, we can now transform society like Lee Kuan Yew did when he transformed the corrupt society of Singapore. And in Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew said, "Now, the time has come for us to reform; otherwise, all of us will go to prison." And Singapore changed and today, Singapore is the richest nation in Asia and one of the richest nations in the world.

I mentioned this pork barrel issue, the Transco issue here a few years ago, this hall was converted into a Committee function room. I was in the Netherlands negotiating with Messrs. Jose Ma. Sison and Luis Jalandoni and the other leaders of the New People's Army (NPA). But this was converted into a meeting room on the "Garci tape scandal." I wish I could discuss this in another time because this is a very delicate issue. But I know there were many attempts to tamper with the elections in the year 2004 and I shall speak on this in greater detail at some other opportunity to rise on a call of personal and collective privilege.

When my son spoke in the Senate, three Generals tried to assassinate him and assassinate me. General Santos, Commanding General of the Philippine Army, Commander of the United Nations Forces in East Timor, came to my house, accompanied by Atty. Raul Lambino, who is his friend and who is also my friend said to me, "Mr. Speaker, you and your son keep quiet because they want to kill you and I know they can kill you because I know they have killed other people." My son reported this to the Makati Police and on the same day, General Santos, such a respected general of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), changed his tune and said he never said such a thing. How could he say that he never said such a thing when he came to my house to ask me to listen to his story, accompanied by Atty. Lambino, in the presence of my son Joey and my wife Gina? And you know what he said the following day? "Yes, I went to the house of the Speaker but I went there to

discuss the moral revolution" – a man who testified and confirmed that they were going to assassinate him, my son and me. And so, I wrote a letter to President Macapagal-Arroyo which said: "Dear Madam President, I write to you because General Santos came to see me and confessed to me that they wanted to kill my son and myself and that they have killed other people. I ask you because these three Generals belong to your government, please do something."

That was late October last year. Do you think up to now Malacañang has lifted a finger to investigate these attempts on my life and my son? A simple arrogance, just plain arrogance that Malacañang and the people occupying the Palace are above the law. Someday, this can happen to you.

I chose to ignore Satur Ocampo; I chose to ignore Ted Casiño; I was told to ignore the other Gentlemen from the Left who are with us here in the House of Representatives. But when the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) were going to arrest them, I gave them shelter in my office for three months to show that the Speaker of the House will not allow any Congressman or Congresswoman to be arrested, for which I was criticized extensively by leaders of the AFP, but they could not do anything against me because they know that in my heart, I was with the Armed Forces, and that what I wanted to do was to bring about a peace agreement between the AFP and the New People's Army (NPA) and the National Democratic Front (NDF), because they knew in their hearts that my heart was pure and sincere to bring about peace. But now, the Left has spoken, stood up and said that they are victims of all kinds of killings and abuses of human rights in this country.

We should not allow this wanton killing of our citizens. I ask that the House Committee on Human Rights investigate extensively the findings of the United Nations, the findings of the Melo Commission, the findings of various civil society organizations in this country. In the same way that we have given all our support to the AFP because the AFP too needs support from the Members of Congress.

So, you see, how can the complaint for assassination, how can the complaint on mass killings murders and crimes against person and property be investigated in this country properly, be given due attention in this country properly – when, my own appeal in the President of the Philippines, as the highest official of the land and the AFP Commander-in-Chief, chose to ignore my official letter of complaint against three generals of the AFP and the PNP?

*One of the highest-ranking officials of this Chamber, whose name I will not mention now without his permission, told me: "Mr. Speaker, I cannot go with you," and I asked, "Why?" He said, "Because you are in the target list and if I am near you, I might also be killed." This leader of the House got a note from one of the prisoners in Zamboanga Del Sur, and said, "One of the leaders of the Abu Sayyaf who is in prison was released to go to Manila so that he can kill you and he will be beyond suspicion because he will go back to his cell after they have killed you and your son Joey". So, this message was given to me by a senior official of the House of Representatives whose provincemate was in prison in Zamboanga City and gave him this information to feed to me and for him, as well, so that he should not be seen with me the next few days because I am the target of a serious assassination attempt.*

*Even assuming, for the sake of argument, that the report is an exaggeration, should not the President of the Philippines order an investigation? Should not the President of the Philippines direct the AFP Chief of Staff or the PNP Chief to order an investigation and to render unto me a written report in the same way that I took the initiative and the courage to write to him and expose myself and my son because of a bona fide, serious and genuine assassination attempt?*

*There are so many things I would like to discuss with you, my dear friends. I know and I have fought long and hard before I came down here to present my case to you and to the Filipino people. I have given copies of my letter on the assassination attempt against me to some Members and leaders of the House of Representatives. Many Members of the House have advised me not to cross swords with Malacañang. It pains me. It pains me grievously to hurt the President and to hurt the First Family because I have invested so much more than any of you in this Chamber to have President Macapagal-Arroyo become Vice-president, become President, become many things to us. And I congratulated her as well for achieving a gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 7.3%, one of the great achievements in Southeast Asia; one of the great achievements of this nation after 21 years of languishing. I reminded her that this is precisely what I wrote about when I crafted the "747 economic growth" strategy (seven percent GDP growth for seven years), in order that we can break and make an impact in the battle against poverty so that we can begin to enlarge and expand the frontiers of the Filipino middle class.*

*I am a peacemaker. I have been a coalition-builder all my life. Never have I stood in this Chamber to hurt anyone. Never in my life. Never have I*

*participated in any of the Committee hearings of this House to deliberate against any person or any individual, any institution or unit of government because my idea of being a public official is to build, to nurture. How many Members of Congress have I recommended to the Cabinet to the President of the Philippines – to President Ramos, to President Estrada, and now, to President Macapagal-Arroyo? How many Members of this Congress of the Philippines have I helped build up because we want to build and not to destroy.*

*But, I am full to the brim – here, here, here and here. The time must now come for us to speak out, put an end to bribery and corruption, and abuse of power and arrogance so that perhaps, you and I can still make a difference for our people so that you and I can help bring about moral renewal, moral change and moral revolution; so that we can cleanse our society, our Congress, the Cabinet, Malacañang, the Senate, the House, the local government units, the AFP and the PNP, the media, the academe, and the leaders of civil society, together and not just to find fault with one sector.*

*I repeat, I have been a sinner. I am a sinner. We are all heirs to the normal margins of human error. We are all heirs to the normal margins of mortal sin. But the time has come for us to make a change. All of our neighbors are leaving us by. Vietnam is leaving us by. Laos is beginning to leave us by. Cambodia is beginning to leave us by. Bangladesh is beginning to leave us by. Singapore is too far out. When I first went to Singapore 40 years ago, Singapore was poorer than Cebu. When I first went to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia 40 years ago, Malaysia was poorer than Pangasinan or Davao. Today, they are achieving rates of growth of 8, 9, 10, 11, 12%.*

*China, in the greatest transformation in human history, from the eastern seaboard of China, from Hong Kong, Macau and Shenzhen, going up the eastern seaboard, going beyond Shanghai, going beyond Beijing, going beyond the northeastern part of China, 350 million Chinese rose from poverty to join the ranks of the middle class in the largest economic transformation in human history. Of course, work ethics, discipline, renewal, change – this is what you and I must do if we have to make a difference, if we have to change society, if we have to change the world.*

*And so, with your permission, I ask that I be given opportunities in the future to speak once more because I came here without preparation, without notice because I thought tomorrow would be the day for reckoning and that today, we will agree to vote*

*on a motion to discard – to declare the position of Speaker as vacant and then to elect a new Speaker.*

*Let me just say that when I made all of these charges, there was one man, his name is Ricky Razon, one of the most powerful businessmen in this country, one of the most powerful movers in Philippine society, partner in the corridors of power in Malacañang and part of this control of the pork barrel system, control of the road users' tax, control of public works, and control of many projects in this country.*

*Let me say, if we want to change the House, if we want to change Philippine society, if we want to have reforms in this government, let us begin with ourselves.*

#### **MOTION OF SPEAKER DE VENECIA**

Whereupon, Speaker De Venecia moved to amend the motion of Rep. Mitra by moving to declare all positions in the House vacant.

#### **OBJECTION OF REP. VILLAFUERTE**

Upon recognition by the Chair, Rep. Villafuerte noted that the Speaker was given only 10 minutes but the Body had allowed him to speak for almost an hour. He said that he would agree to grant the Speaker another 10 minutes if the latter so desires. However, he stated for the record his objection to the Speaker's motion to amend the pending motion to declare the seat of the Speaker vacant.

The Chair stated that the Body will act on the matter at the proper time and will put the same to a vote. In the meantime, he said that the Speaker may still proceed if he so desires.

#### **REMARKS OF SPEAKER DE VENECIA**

Speaker De Venecia remarked that he was already through but at the proper time, he would like to rise anew, to speak on issues related to the general statements he had made in the hope that he could bring enlightenment to the country and to the Filipino people.

#### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

The Chair *motu proprio* suspended the session at 7:56 p.m.

#### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 8:15 p.m., the session was resumed.

#### **REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR**

At this point, the Chair requested the Members to take their respective seats and to the people in the gallery to clear the aisle so that they can start with the proceedings. He likewise asked the Sergeant-at-Arms to comply with the order of the Chair.

#### **REMARKS OF REP. DEFENSOR (A.)**

Rep. Defensor (A.) stated that the parliamentary situation was that there was a motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant which was duly seconded. He however added that Speaker De Venecia had subsequently presented a motion to amend such motion to include all other positions also vacant. According to the Rules of the House, he said that the motion presented by Speaker De Venecia should be treated as a separate one because it requires a different quantum of vote.

As such, he stated that the Members should first dispose of the motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant which requires a vote of all the Members of the House and that it shall be done in a nominal voting. In this regard, he moved that the Secretary General be directed to call the roll for nominal voting.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF REP. CASIÑO**

At this juncture, Rep. Casiño sought recognition from the Chair on a point of order.

#### **REMARKS OF THE CHAIR**

Before the Body could proceed with the Roll Call vote, the Chair agreed with the motion of Rep. Defensor (A.) that these two motions should be treated separately and cannot be amended and taken up jointly. He explained that a motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant requires a majority of all the Members while a motion to declare all positions vacant would simply require a simple majority of all the Members present.

In order to abbreviate the proceedings, the Chair asked Rep. Defensor (A.) to proceed with his motion.

#### **VOTING ON REP. MITRA'S MOTION TO DECLARE THE POSITION OF SPEAKER VACANT**

Rep. Defensor (A.) reiterated his motion that the Chair directs the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting on the motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant.

Whereupon, the Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll on the motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant.

Rep. Defensor (A.) clarified that a “Yes” vote means that a Member is in favor of declaring the position of the Speaker vacant, while a “No” vote means that a Member opposes the motion.

The Chair added that in order for the motion “to be carried,” the Body needs 121 “Yes” votes.

Rep. Defensor (A.) likewise pointed out that it is the right of a Member to abstain.

Whereupon, the Chair directed the Secretary General to call the Roll for nominal voting.

### EXPLANATIONS OF VOTE

The following Members thereafter explained their votes:

1. Rep. Bienvenido M. Abante Jr. initially noted that the motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant is anchored on the provision of Section 11 of the Rules of the Fourteenth Congress, which provides that the position of the Speaker may be declared vacant through nominal voting by a majority vote of all the Members. He underscored that the Rules are never intended to destroy, to divide, to create instability or to sow disorder but to build, to unite, to create stability and to provide order.

Rep. Abante maintained that whenever an exposé on irregularities, whether true or perceived, involving multimillion transactions of the government, is bared, there are political maneuverings. He conceded that such maneuverings are detrimental to the economy and political stability and are clearly divisive and thus adversely affecting the country’s standing even in the international community. He claimed that if it were not for this exposé on such questionable transactions, which are now the subject of congressional investigations, the pending motion would not have ever been conceived of, much less filed. He stressed that the motion is purely politically motivated and never an honest desire for genuine change for the better.

Moreover, Rep. Abante claimed that he does not believe in the wisdom of removing a leader just for somebody else to survive. This is the reason why he did not support the impeachment moves against the President as the records would show.

While he is uncertain of what lies ahead of his political career, he stated that he stands today to declare his vigorous but unqualified objection to the motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant. Political maneuverings, he said, have caused many of the Members to change loyalty and this cannot be so. He underscored that he cannot, in conscience, allow himself to be a part of the removal of a leader whom he honestly believes has not wronged the country and the Filipino people. He stated that he cannot be double-minded for the Sacred Book that he believes in since childhood – the very book that has changed his life and brought him to where he is today – has taught him that a man of two minds is unstable in all his ways.

Rep. Abante maintained that double-mindedness has brought the country towards this day. He underscored that he does not have the temerity and audacity to bite the hands of a man who once held the spoon for him. While this much is true, he pleads for sobriety, sincerity, honesty and unity today as the House is at the center stage and the Filipino people is watching all the actuations of the Members.

In this regard, Rep. Abante objected to the motion declaring the position of the Speaker vacant. He affirmed his belief that it is God who ordains leaders.

2. Rep. Edelmiro A. Amante initially stated that if there is anything that does not change, it is change itself. He pointed out that the beautiful sunrise would not be there if they leave it only at the darkness of the night. He added that we all need the sunrise to banish the darkness away and that we have that faith that the newness of leaders can bring out newness also in a man’s life – having stayed so long in the putrid redundancy of being in power. He added that this power must be tempered with a certain degree of repentance. He likened this with the thief hanging on the cross when he said to the Lord: “Lord, please remember me when you shall go to your paradise.” He explained that the word “remember” is taken from the Greek word, which means, “I will return to you and be part of you.” He expressed the hope that this is also the very same sentiment being expressed that day so that the Lord will also answer: “Verily, today, you shall be with me in paradise.” He then voted “Yes” to the motion.

3. Rep. Juan Edgardo M. Angara stated that he is voting “Yes” not because he thinks that Speaker de Venecia has been a bad leader. On the contrary, he maintained that the Fourteenth Congress has been run quite efficiently compared to the Thirteenth Congress when he had first served his constituents. Except for this reason, he is voting “Yes” because it has become apparent that the Speaker has lost the confi-

dence of the majority and he fears that the gains that the House has made may suffer as a result.

While the Members may have turned emotional at that time, he claimed that they should not think that by their affirmative votes they have already done so much because while they might have changed their Speaker, there is still the stark reality of poverty and the lack of basic necessities when they step out of the halls of Congress. The Members, he said, should not forget this.

Rep. Angara thereafter stated that the change in leadership provides a new opportunity for the Members not only to improve the image of the institution, but also to improve the lives of the Filipino people. He asked the Members to use this opportunity well and that he hopes that the new Speaker of the House will make this a reality.

4. Rep. Diosdado Macapagal Arroyo stated that he has known Speaker De Venecia since he was a young man and that he has nothing but respect for the Speaker. He also stated that when the Speaker's son attacked his family without basis and devoid of any truth, he had said nothing; likewise, when the Speaker decided to openly criticize the President, thinking that he had moral authority over her; also when the Speaker's son accused his father of wrongdoing, without proof or evidence, and which put the health of his father at risk.

He claimed that he had taken all of these without rancor or regret because in his thinking, he need not be personal about what has happened. This is so because as a Representative of his constituents, his outlook on things should not be solely personal. He added that when the Speaker went on television relishing his resurrected image as a political king maker, he had said that "perhaps, this too shall pass." He however pointed out that the Speaker did not stop there as political maneuvering and manipulation continued to this very day in the House of Representatives thinking that the House is his own personal kingdom and treats the Members according to class or rank.

Rep. Arroyo likewise pointed out that the Speaker doles out favors but only after much begging and pleading from those who are not as influential in his eyes. Moreover, he stated that the Speaker refuses to open the book of accounts by delaying it as long as he can because of the many secrets that he does not want to reveal. In so doing, he stated that the moral revolution that the Speaker speaks of, the corruption that the Members are supposed to fight, and the transparency that they should have advocated have

not transpired, have not happened and will not occur any time in the near future.

He underscored that if the Members really want change and good governance to happen, they should start right at their own doorstep. He pointed out that debates and investigations of graft and corruption in Congress should not remain only as such; instead, the House leadership should bare the truth about the funds of Congress not only for the sake of the Members but also more importantly for the public.

Rep. Arroyo then asked what keeps holding the House leadership from opening the book of accounts that majority of the Members rightly insists and are supposed to know.

Rep. Arroyo subsequently noted that the Speaker speaks of a merger of political parties provided that he remains as the leader of the House and would not hesitate to remind the Members of what the Speaker has done for them by providing funds and benefits that are long deserved and due to the Members.

Moreover, he pointed out that the Speaker has enjoyed five unprecedented terms. He asked what image does Congress has that has led the Filipino people to distrust Speaker de Venecia and Congress as an institution as it was perceived as a Chamber of deals, illicit transactions, and misused pork barrels. He also asked where this has taken the country and where exactly the Filipino people are headed.

Rep. Arroyo claimed that what the Members hear from the Speaker is that threats to a change in leadership will erode the country's economic gains. This, he said, is ironic because the country has achieved all these inroads despite what the House has recently turned into – all because of one man's narration of his own failed attempt at influence peddling. He added that there is again the proverbial sword of Damocles that will fall on the heads of the Members should they change the Speaker of the House. He however underscored that the Representatives will not be threatened and will not be blackmailed.

In this regard, Rep. Arroyo stated that he stands before the Members not as the President's son but as a duly elected Member of Congress and as a Representative of the First District of Camarines Sur. He claimed that he fights along with like-minded Members not because of revenge but because of the urgent and imperative call for true reform – a change that all of them and the Filipino people longed and thirst for, not reform in words but reform in deeds and real action. He also stated that he is one with the Members in this regard because Congress deserves a new leader who will treat them with dignity and who will ush-



er in a progressive and productive House of Representatives.

Rep. Arroyo stated that the country needs a moral revolution indeed and it should start right at the very doorsteps of Congress. This moral revolution, he said, should be founded on integrity and forged by unity and bound by their commitment to transform Congress into an institution that the Members can all be proud of. This moral revolution, he said, is for the Filipino people. He then voted "Yes."

5. Rep. Pangalilan M. Balindong stated that the Fourteenth Congress existed for only six months and it has just completed its organization. To declare the position of Speaker vacant, he said, is certainly unproductive, divisive and untimely. He then voted "No."

6. Rep. Elpidio F. Barzaga Jr. stated that he is voting in favor of the motion not because he is against the moral revolution being advocated by the Speaker, not because of the alleged ZTE deal, not because of the pressure from Malacañang, but because he wants change. He thereafter adverted to the poll surveys conducted last January 30, 2008 mentioned by no less than Rep. Abante, which says that the House has become more unpopular. He stated that the Members should really care when the House is morally sinking and the integrity of the Members being questioned. He stated that it is also his hope and aspiration that with a new leader in the House, the Members would be able to restore the damage done to it.

7. Initially, Rep. Crispin "Ka Bel" B. Beltran voted "No" to the motion for the following reasons: 1. The speakership is an internal squabble between and within the ruling coalition and that there will not be much difference in terms of policy as the two factions challenging each other for the upper hand in the House are both loyal to the Chief Executive; 2. With regard to the basic sector represented by the Anak-Pawis Party-List, the showdown between the Lakas and Kampi is just a mad competition over the country's economic spoils and shameful display of elite democracy. He added that they are squabbling for the highest position in the House, while the Filipino people have been waiting for the enactment of certain laws for the benefit of the people at large; 3. President Macapagal-Arroyo's blatant interference in the legislative branch is considered as an effort to entrench and prolong her political survival through her two sons and brother-in-law, who do not have the qualms to be obtrusive and are very visible in their campaign against Speaker De Venecia Jr.; and 4. Like a boxing match, he dared both combatants to prove their integrity and independence by acting on

priority bills for the marginalized masses like the Genuine Agrarian Reform Act of 2007, the proposal for the ₱125 legislative wage hike and the ₱3,000 per month for the public employees, the repeal of the Oil Deregulation Law, the repeal of the E-Vat Law and other propoor legislations such as the protest for demolition of squatters without relocation, upgrade of education, health, housing and other social services.

## REMINDER FROM THE CHAIR

At this juncture, the Chair reminded Rep. Beltran to wind up his explanation of vote.

## EXPLANATION OF VOTE (Continuation)

In winding up his explanation of vote, Rep. Beltran further dared both combatants to show respect for human rights and give justice to about 900 extrajudicial killings and about 189 cases of enforced disappearances and for hundreds who have been thrown in jail for speaking out their rights and for criticizing the present administration. In this regard, he voted "No" as a protest against Malacañang's attack on the independence of Congress.

8. In explaining his vote, Rep. Rozzano Rufino B. Biazon stated that at the onset of the House's leadership crisis, he had wished that the Members would not undergo this kind of divisive action that they would have to take at that very moment. Moreover, he had also wished that this issue will not result in a squabble at the top level of the majority coalition and more so, hamper the work of Congress and the fostering of good relations among Members of the House.

Speaking in Filipino, Rep. Biazon pointed out that the moment has come and while the Members have been seeking a change at this instance, what they are seeking is a true change towards a genuine rule. Considering the many events that transpired in the last few days, he stressed that he had not attended any meetings of both parties, this as he opined that when he makes decisions on certain issues it is based on his own conviction and belief. He added that what the Members wanted to see is a clear presentation of certain programs, but due to the sudden turn of events, the same did not materialize. While it is true that the opposing political parties have conducted several caucuses, he pointed out that the Speaker of the House is not only accountable to the Members but also to the public and whatever program he wishes to undertake should be presented to the public so that the people may know whether or not the Speaker is doing his job. However, he said that those who seek for the highest position in the House were not

even given the opportunity to present their programs to the public.

Thereafter, Rep. Biazon stated that since the Members are all set to vote for the speakership, they have to vote according to their own conviction and this, he opined, is the reason why he had not attended any meeting of both parties. He then claimed that he is on his last term as a Member of the House and that during his first term, he was with the Minority and that not once did he give up being a Minority, he added. Despite the fact that he had been invited many times by Speaker De Venecia to join the Majority coalition, he admitted turning them down, thereby expressing his wish for an independent Congress for the first termers Members, a legacy that could only be attained when Members decide on issues based on a strong conviction.

In closing, Rep. Biazon stressed that it is already clear from the very start that the real motive to change the leadership of the House is rooted from the so-called "family feud." Hence, he stated that it is not yet the right time for the Members to elect a new Speaker of the House and voted "No" to the motion.

9. Initially, Rep. Al Francis C. Bichara stated that he was impressed by the speech of Speaker De Venecia and thereafter asked himself, "why just now" considering that he had been the Speaker of the House for many years. He added that he has high respects for the Speaker considering that he had worked with the latter during the Ninth Congress and that both of them belong to one party and have contributed a lot to the country. However, he pointed out that it would be very difficult for the Speaker to push through with his moral recovery advocacy if he still remains the Speaker of the House and that he would be more effective as its advocate if he is no longer the Speaker. He then voted "Yes" to the motion.

10. At the outset, Rep. Ma. Theresa B. Bonoan-David stated that she wants to have changes in the House like the giving of additional six staff to each and every Member of the House to enable them to serve their country with responsibility, integrity and efficiency. She added that she needs more lawyers to help her in her legislative duties and responsibilities to her constituency and to uplift them from poverty and ignorance. Moreover, she stressed that she will do her best to love her people and to have moral renewal in the executive, legislative and judicial branch of government and in the Philippine National Police and the media. She then explained that moral renewal in her mind means to use their PDAF, CDF and pork barrel fund in the upliftment of the people from po-

verty and as such, the Members should work hand-in-hand to help the people and the government.

Thereafter, Rep. Bonoan-David pointed out that President Macapagal-Arroyo won in the 2004 elections, giving her the mandate to rule the country. Stating that the voice of the people is the voice of God, she said that God gave the Filipino people one leader to be respected and that the Members will have to unite for peace and progress for a better Philippines. She then registered her "Yes" vote because she wants to have changes done in the House.

11. In explaining his vote, Rep. Marc Douglas C. Cagas IV voted "Yes" to the motion because it has always been the dream of the people of Mindanao to have a Speaker who hails from Mindanao, to be able to represent not only the Members from Mindanao but the people of Mindanao as well. For this reason, he voted in the affirmative to the motion.

12. Rep. Teodoro. A. Casiño explained that the motion to declare the position of the Speaker as vacant was hatched because the Speaker's son has decided to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about the anomalous NBN-ZTE contract. He added that Speaker De Venecia was being replaced unceremoniously because the Macapagal-Arroyo bloc in the House which includes three Members and the President herself wants to discard a loyal lieutenant whom they suspect to have dipped his hand into the cookie jar once too often, and whose differences with the President and his personal ambition caused Malacañang and the First Family sleepless nights. In this regard, Rep. Casiño challenged the Members to be true to themselves considering that the removal of Rep. De Venecia as Speaker of the House is the work of Malacañang in order to further control the House and that, whatever changes or reforms being pushed by the allies of the President in the House are all for the sake of the President.

Moreover, Rep. Casiño averred that Malacañang does not want the impeachment and congressional investigations and that the First Family does not want somebody to have a share in the NBN-ZTE contract, the primary reasons why they do not like the Speaker anymore, he added.

The issue at hand, he surmised, is not necessarily a grudge fight between the Macapagal-Arroyo and De Venecia families, but a fight for the control of the lower House wherein Malacañang wants absolute control of the House more than what they used to have under the leadership of Speaker De Venecia. Thereafter, she claimed that the Members have been aware that Malacañang had been doing this in order

to get away with murder and all the crimes caused by the present administration. Nevertheless, he said that the removal of Rep. De Venecia as Speaker of the House would not in any way benefit the ordinary people and that only one thing was sure - the one being groomed to replace the Speaker would be incurring a debt of gratitude to Malacañang.

In this light, Rep. Casiño voted “No” to the motion, not because he wants the leadership of Speaker De Venecia, but to show the outrage and opposition of the progressive Party-List to a plot that would make Congress not a only a Malacañang rubber stamp but its partner in crime. In this case, he pointed out that he always believed in the independence of Congress from the Executive branch in order to have a check and balance against its abusers. However, he maintained that at this very moment, the Members are about to bury the integrity of the House as a separate branch of government. He added that this was the reason why he wore a black Barong Tagalog to mourn for this House. He then cast his negative vote to the motion.

13. Speaking in Filipino, Rep. Arthur F. Celeste lamented that this moment has come wherein the Members will have to give a very delicate decision, but despite this issue, he knows that each and every Member would respect the decision of their colleagues. Thereafter, he emphasized that when he first ran for Congress as an independent, his opponent was a Lakas Party candidate and after winning in the election, no less than Speaker De Venecia invited him to join the party, hoping that Lakas Party would help and support him. However, he said that the same had not materialized because he and his entire district has not received any support from the said party. In this regard, he stressed that he decided to leave the party and joined the Kampi where he received much support not only for himself as Representative of the First District of Pangasinan but also for his constituents in terms of social services.

Thereafter, he expressed hope that Speaker De Venecia, his provincemate, would understand his decision considering that he voted for him three times in his bid as Speaker of the House. However, he pointed out that, at this very moment, the leadership of the Kampi Party had decided to vote as one. Hence, he voted “Yes” to the motion.

14. Initially, Rep. Antonio H. Cerilles recalled that at the start of the Fourteenth Congress, the Reform Bloc was formed whose candidates had hoped for a constructive change to keep Congress going.

As correctly observed by Rep. Bagatsing in the Eighth Congress who was then the Chairperson of the Committee on Accounts, no change has been made from that time up to the present Congress. Furthermore, he said that Congress has a very low rating, the problem of which may be because of its leadership.

Seeing that everybody wants a constructive change, a change not according to one’s impression or perception but according to what the people want, Rep. Cerilles expressed hope for Mindanao which has always been a land of promise in considering the change in the House leadership.

He thereafter registered his affirmative vote.

15. In explaining his vote, Rep. Justin Marc SB. Chipeco first stated that since he had always been a consistent Member of the Minority, he had never voted for Speaker De Venecia. Saying that he grew up in the House of Representatives with his father being a four-time Member, and himself being a Member since the Thirteenth Congress up to the present, it had always been his desire to have some changes in the House of Representatives. He added that he had seen what Congress was like since 1987 up to 2004. As he believes in democracy, Rep. Chipeco underscored that the Minority should not be involved in the issue of House leadership since they would always be in the Opposition. He also expressed belief that every Member should be allowed to vote in declaring the seat of the Speaker vacant.

Even if he was willing to have an election for a change in the leadership, Rep. Chipeco stated that he was abstaining in this regard to maintain his alliance with the Minority.

16. Rep. Glenn A. Chong explained his affirmative vote by saying that leaders establish the vision for the future and set the strategy for getting there. Actually, he said that more is demanded from leaders because they are the ones who cause change, motivate and inspire others to go in the right direction and that along with everyone else sacrifice to get there. However, he said, that if leaders lose the trust and confidence of the people, they should also sacrifice themselves to give way for the greater good of everyone, especially the House as an institution.

Rep. Chong expressed belief that the House has reached that point and that as a general rule, people do not risk this change. However, since Speaker De Venecia is a true statesman and a good leader, he believed that the latter would not resist being changed.

17. Rep. Solomon R. Chungalao first stated that that day brings him back to another important date, affecting his political career when on July 8, 2005, the Liberal Party which was solid and vibrant at that time, decided to break and go for the impeachment of the President after pledging allegiance to Malacañang only the week before. He said that some of them decided for a status quo because they believe in the leadership of GMA.

At present, he said that he did not expect to be faced with yet another decision in the change of House leadership and averred that indeed nothing is permanent in this world except change. However, he said that there are two kinds of change - a change for the better or a change for the worse and that as he was not prepared to make a decision, he is once again opting for a status quo considering that their sacrifices are bearing fruit economically and politically. He said that he could find no reason to change the leadership of the House which has been very supportive of the administration.

He then voted "No" on the motion not because it is a challenge or an opposition to the administration but because they are not prepared for the consequences on whether their decision for change would be for the better or for the worse.

18. Rep. Maria Isabelle G. Climaco voted "Yes" on the motion saying that as a neophyte Member of the House, it was her belief that there is a need for a Speaker who will guide, listen and help the new Members of the House.

Rep. Climaco explained that on November 20, 2007, she was honored to have been designated as caretaker of the District of Basilan. However, she said that her pleas to help the district and the unpaid employees fell on deaf ears. She expressed belief that Basilan deserves its share as any district in the country and that it should not be denied of what is due them.

She then reiterated her "Yes" vote.

19. In explaining his vote, Rep. Marc O. Cojuangco said that it was difficult for him to vote on the motion, feeling that he was a bystander caught between two sides who really has nothing to do with what has been happening. He said that since this is his last term as Congressman, it is his desire that he would spend it working for his constituents, finishing whatever he has started and working on legislations he would want to push in the House.

He further explained that at first, he was ready to vote "No" on the motion, thinking that there should be a status quo for the good of the present administration. However, with everything that has been said on the floor, he said that he thought it best to remain with his original position and abstain from voting.

20. Rep. Vincent "Bingbong" P. Crisologo explained that he was ready to vote "No" up to the last moment but because he felt that the leadership of the Speaker is a very vital issue, he was voting "Yes" with a sad heart since he believed that a House leadership which is not in good terms with the President would not be effective at all.

21. Rep. Guillermo P. Cua voted "Yes" and expressed hope that the change will create more dynamism, more opportunities for growth, development and better accountability in the House.

22. Rep. Antonio V. Cuenco voted a vigorous "No" saying that his was a conscience vote and that he had no need to explain the dictates of his conscience.

23. In explaining his vote, Rep. Simeon A. Datumanong stated that in the six months that Speaker De Venecia had served since he was elected in July 2007, he has done well having introduced reforms in the House some of which have been implemented and some which are about to be completed and which, he added, include some fiscal policies.

Knowing Speaker De Venecia as a man of peace, Rep. Datumanong recalled the times when he had to accompany him to the mountains of Mindanao to have a dialogue with secessionist groups to help them have a bigger dialogue with the government to provide peace to the people of Mindanao thus saving the nation millions of pesos. He added that great efforts have been made in facilitating the peace talks between the government and the CPP/NPA indicating his being a man of peace.

Furthermore, Rep. Datumanong expressed belief that Speaker De Venecia has done nothing wrong to any Member especially that which would create hatred to the extent of ousting him as Speaker of the House. Moreover, during his term as Speaker, he has facilitated the enactment of laws directly helping the country to recover economically and providing space for peace so that he said, he does not see any good reason to put him out of his position.

For the record, Rep. Datumanong pointed out that he had no personal objection to the speakership of Rep. Prospero C. Nograles since he, together with other Mindanao solons, should be happy because

Mindanao would have the opportunity to hold the fourth highest position in the land. However, he explained that at the moment, he could find no reason to oust Speaker De Venecia and voted “No” to the motion.

24. Rep. Arthur D. Defensor Sr., in voting “Yes,” stressed that this should not be interpreted as indicative of his vote in the election for the Speaker. He said that he would not want to deny his colleagues the opportunity to decide whether they should change the Speaker or not.

25. Rep. Matias V. Defensor Jr. emphasized that any desire for a change raises the question of whether that change is for the better. Despite the faults of the Speaker, he noted that he has done a good job running the House. He recalled that despite the crisis in the Thirteenth Congress, the country was able to rebound and gain prosperity through the leadership of the House.

Thereafter, he reminded his colleagues that they ran for Congress either as belonging to the Opposition or the Administration. Since the people overwhelmingly voted for an Administration-controlled House, he admitted that the Speaker’s accusation against the presidency was a bombastic attack that he has never heard even from the staunchest member of the Opposition. He thus opined that the Speaker is no longer capable of running an Administration-controlled Congress. He stressed that said accusations are only half-truths as he has been witness to the many occasions when the President had never interfered with the affairs of the House. After underscoring that it was the Majority coalition who requested that, he cast his affirmative vote.

26. Rep. Raul V. Del Mar voted “No” to the motion. He expressed belief that Speaker De Venecia has been a good Speaker; otherwise he would not have voted for him five times in as many times that he ran for the position.

27. Rep. Carlo Oliver D. Diasnes related that when he ran for Congress two years ago, his slogan was “Campaign for Change – C4C” and by which he has since been known.

He expressed belief that when a person votes for a status quo, he gets more of the same. Voting “Yes” with a prayer that he be granted the serenity to accept the things that he cannot change, courage to change the things that he can and wisdom to know the difference, he challenged his colleagues to allow their desire for change trickle even out of Congress.

28. Rep. Didagen P. Dilangalen, speaking in Filipino, admitted that he has never voted for Speaker De Venecia because of mistrust. However, he said that he had a change of heart after hearing the Speaker deliver his speech, and saluted him for admitting that all the Members, including himself, are sinners.

He however noted that during his speech, the Speaker attacked the President, the First Gentleman and their entire family, notwithstanding the fact that they used to be allies. He asked why the Speaker had done this only now. He expressed desire to put off the election for the Speaker if only to allow Speaker De Venecia to explain and make known to the public the alleged graft and corruption being committed by the Administration. He asked why the Members could not give Speaker De Venecia this opportunity, and why there is an urgent need to vote for the speakership.

Thereafter, Rep. Dilangalen disclosed that Speaker De Venecia was linked to the North Railways scam, which case is similar to the ZTE overpricing. Since the Speaker would like to make some statements, he said that this is the best time for him to make explanations and to prove that despite being a sinner, he can speak the truth.

As he restated his disagreement for a voting on the position of the Speaker or the move to remove Speaker De Venecia from his Office, he maintained that any desire for changes in the House would also mean declaring vacant all the other positions including the Committee chairmanships. He asked why Speaker De Venecia was being singled out, and enjoined his colleagues to look into the mirror to see themselves.

He recalled that in the past Congresses, he was aware of the sins of Speaker De Venecia as he was involved in some anomalies. However, he said that he had no evidence to support his claim that he could only lead the move to remove the Speaker from office. He lamented that he was always laughed at by his colleagues because just like Rep. Zamora (R.), he belonged to the Opposition, this as he clarified that the ouster move was his alone.

Noting that the people who then supported Speaker De Venecia are the very same people who would like to remove him from office, he said that they should have unseated the Speaker a long time ago. He stressed that having confessed his sins, the people should now believe in the Speaker – that he had spoken not to blackmail the President and her family but for the sake of the people and the country.

Rep. Dilangalen stressed that the situation in the House poses a challenge to the Speaker, and enjoined his colleagues to defer the voting. He asked the Members to give the Speaker one to two days or at least a week to speak and allow him to speak out the truth. In this manner, he said that there would be no need to remove the Speaker from office as he would be dismissed for disorderly conduct because he is a liar. He added that this is provided in the Constitution.

As he emphasized that this is the best time to show the people that the House really means business, he said that the Members should allow Speaker De Venecia to explain all the charges of corruption, including the alleged "state secrets."

#### REMINDER FROM THE CHAIR

The Chair reminded Rep. Dilangalen that he had already consumed five minutes.

#### EXPLANATIONS OF VOTE (Continuation)

As he cast his negative vote, Rep. Dilangalen challenged his colleagues to defer the voting and allow Speaker De Venecia to speak on the floor.

29. Rep. Abdullah D. Dimaporo initially stated that no one in Malacañang told the Members, including himself how to vote. He disclosed that after meeting with the municipal and provincial leaders as well as other Lakas leaders in Lanao del Norte the previous day, he was advised to vote for what is good for the country. Had his leaders heard the speech delivered by Speaker De Venecia, he said that it would have then been easier for them to decide that he should vote "Yes."

In view of the foregoing, Rep. Dimaporo voted in the affirmative.

30. Rep. Mauricio G. Domogan underscored that in no less than two different occasions, the officials and members of the Northern Alliance where he belongs signed a resolution and a manifesto, expressing their continuous and solid support to the President as well as Speaker De Venecia. Stressing that there can only be progress when there is unity and teamwork, he emphasized that under the present Administration, a 7.3% gross national product was reached. He lamented that it is unfortunate that the House has to resort to the situation that it is now presently in.

He expressed apprehension that the proceedings on the floor might result to a titanic eruption without

being able to predict its repercussion, and prayed that with the Lord's blessing, this will not be the result. Since the Northern Alliance is for unity and status quo, he voted against the motion.

31. Rep. Henry M. Dueñas Jr. explained that his vote does not mean that Speaker De Venecia is not capable or worthy of his office, as he has great respect and admiration for the latter's long years of exemplary service, sense of responsibility and wisdom, understanding and patience. However, he said that he was voting in the affirmative because he belongs to a party of innovation or changes, without forgetting traditions and with the desire to adapt to changing circumstances.

32. Rep. Faysah R.P.M. Dumarpa said that much as she would like to preserve the unity and diversity that the House has, in the interest of the public, particularly her constituency in the First District of Lanao Del Sur, she was voting "Yes" to the motion.

33. Rep. Thomas L. Dumpit Jr. stressed that he was voting in favor of the motion as a member of the Reform Block and an advocate of change.

34. Rep. Conrado M. Estrella III disclosed that after praying hard for guidance on the issue, he learned that the best recourse is to be consistent in the way that he has always been in the past, particularly on his party stand and the recommendation of his constituents with regard to the position of his party.

After going around his district to speak with his constituents, he said that he gathered the following information: 1) it would not be good to go against a provincemate; 2) the Speaker is already old that there is no need to fight against him or remove him from office; 3) the momentum of development in his province might be affected by his opposing vote or views; 4) the Speaker would not feel bad against him because he had already voted for the former four times; and 5) the Speaker should be removed from office because this can be his ticket to the Senate in 2010.

Then saying that it was very painful on his part to vote "Yes" especially as his wife was very close to Mrs. De Venecia, Rep. Estrella explained that he had to be consistent.

35. Rep. Erico Basilio A. Fabian said at the outset that he was neither a member of Lakas nor Kampi but belonged to a party of only three or four Members in the House whose votes might not make a difference.

He then said that although Speaker De Venecia had tried his best to serve all of the Members, one sometimes has to face the realities of politics. He expressed hope that the change will be for the benefit of everyone especially Zamboanga City and then addressed his constituents in the native dialect, after which he registered an affirmative vote

36. Rep. Dan Fernandez said that he had wanted to vote “No” but thought that he had to vote “Yes,” pointing out that he had nothing against the Speaker and that Mrs. De Venecia was his godmother. He opined that Speaker De Venecia was the best Speaker that Congress had ever produced. But he however observed that the 102 new Representatives were being treated like mere spectators in the Chamber.

He subsequently asked whether the Body could produce a Speaker of the same caliber and with the same qualities as Speaker De Venecia. In Filipino, he asked that the neophyte Representatives should not be belittled as he brought forth the possibility that the new Speaker might come from their ranks.

37. Rep. Orlando B. Fua said that Congress has been witness to the growth of the economy, reduction of poverty in the countryside and improvement of relationships with foreign communities – all successes of the government which could not be duly credited to just one Department and which Congress played a vital role in a system of coordinative collaboration.

Rep. Fua thereupon asked why, if all of these successes could be attributed to Congress under the stewardship of Speaker De Venecia, the latter should be removed as House Speaker. He stressed that the latter had practically worked with the President and urged all of the Members to cooperate in the execution of projects by passing vital measures. He said he could not understand why Speaker De Venecia should be rewarded with punitive action such as the removal from his position instead of being praised for what he had done. He concluded that it was in that sense that it was unconscionable to remove the Speaker from his post and that he was voting in the negative.

38. Rep. Pablo P. Garcia said that he was voting “Yes” with sadness and regret.

39. Rep. Pablo John F. Garcia said that he was voting “Yes” with hope in his heart.

40. Rep. Vincent J. Garcia explained that he had to abstain from voting because he was in a quandary and he did not want to ruffle feathers on both sides; he is a Davaoeño, Rep. Nogralles is his third cousin,

and Speaker De Venecia is the father-in-law of his older brother.

41. Rep. Rex Gatchalian said that eight months ago, the people and especially the youth of the First District of Valenzuela gambled on a 29-year old congressional candidate over a political veteran and voted for him because of his platform of change and hope. He explained that he could not fail his constituents at the moment. He opined that the status quo of conforming to traditions and age-old practices does not work and does not sit well with his constituents. To conclude, he said that change was sweeping into the Chamber and the country and voted “Yes.”

42. Saying he was with the Minority, Rep. Roilo S. Golez pointed out that their general position to abstain was understandable because it is the Majority Members who elect the Speaker and who should declare the position of the Speaker vacant. As he cast a vote of abstention, he said that he would have wanted a more lengthy and comprehensive debate on the motion to declare the speakership vacant because it was a very important motion affecting the government and the entire country which was watching the conduct of the House. He rued the fact that the movant did not even explain his motion and opined that the Members deserve such explanation.

Rep. Golez also said that no one had explained what the reform agenda was which according to him is very important that it be experienced by those who are in favor of change so that they would be bound by the same in the event that they get the leadership of the House. He inquired whether said agenda includes fund management, asserting the dignity and power of the House in relation to the Executive Branch, Committee assignments and tackling Charter change. He emphasized that the House could not vote on the motion without the proper debate on all of these issues.

43. Rep. Aurelio “Dong” D. Gonzales Jr. said that he had to explain his vote because the Speaker’s statements that dragged the President’s name and false accusations against his provincemate, hurt him and his constituents in the Third district of Pangasinana. He stressed that he did not believe the half truths and inaccuracies that the Speaker had mentioned. He opined that dragging the President’s name was uncalled for and was meant to divert their attention from the real issue which was the lack of confidence in the Speaker’s leadership.

Whereupon, Rep. Gonzales (A.) said that as a neophyte Congressman, he stood for change and more transparency in running the affairs of the Chamber. He opined that as a member of the Presi-

dent's Party which desired reforms in the House leadership, it was time for the Chamber to have a new leader who would usher in fresh ideas and a new level of zeal and dynamism. He voted "Yes" to declare the seat of the Speaker vacant.

44. Rep. Neptali M. Gonzales II recalled the time when his father, former Senate President Neptali Gonzales was presented by his own party with a resolution signed by eight out of 14 Laban ng Demokratiko (LDP) Senators expressing their loss of confidence in his leadership. He said that without asking anyone for the reason for the same, his father immediately stepped down from his post; and that when some Members told him that non-LDP Senators might still support him, the Senate President said that he would not be able to last even one second as Senate President if his own partymates no longer trusted him. He also said that Rep. Angara told him that former Senate President Edgardo Angara had voluntarily relinquished his post when he was presented a similar resolution by his partymates.

Rep. Gonzales (N.) then pointed out that in almost all parliaments in the world, what counts is "numbers" and that under a party coalition system, a leader's term depends on the support of the majority because he cannot depend on his partymates alone to elect him as head. He stressed that if a leader loses support, no reason had to be given. He opined that Speaker De Venecia did not have the "numbers" anymore and that the coalition would continue regardless of who the Speaker was. In voting in the affirmative, he reminded his colleagues that positions in the House are not given as a matter of vested right and that the positions could be lost any time or when support is gone.

45. Rep. Raul T. Gonzalez Jr. said in Filipino that it was one of the saddest nights in his life as a Member of Congress. He informed his colleagues that he had twice refused the request of Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Macapagal-Arroyo to join their side, telling him that he would remain with Speaker De Venecia even if they already had the "numbers." He said that his support for the Speaker continued until he was reelected in Congress and started with his father, now Justice Secretary; and that he had a debt of gratitude to the Speaker.

He however stated that it was totally unexpected that Speaker De Venecia would burn bridges with Malacañang. As such and even though he had many times refused the offer of Rep. Macapagal-Arroyo and some of his colleagues, he said that he would be voting "Yes" to the motion.

46. At the outset, Rep. Eduardo R. Gullas explained that it is with a heavy heart that he is casting his affirmative vote for two reasons, namely: 1) for what had transpired that day; and 2) for what had transpired 38 years ago.

Rep. Gullas recalled that 38 years ago, Speaker De Venecia and him were neophytes in Congress and that in fact, only four of them were left since the Seventh Congress, namely: Reps. Roque R. Ablan, Jr., Antonio M. Diaz, the Speaker and himself. As Speaker De Venecia had filed a motion amending the motion of Rep. Mitra which was ruled by the Chair to be treated as another motion, he expressed belief that by filing a motion to amend, Speaker De Venecia, in effect, is in favor of the motion to declare the seat of the Speaker vacant as he only wants change. He further recalled that 38 years ago, eight of them, neophyte Congressmen in the Seventh Congress, started a move for reforms and change in the leadership of the House and that other senior Members of the House like Congressman Agurang Kune or Cornelio Villareal had joined them. He added that said movement snowballed and that when they got the numbers, then Speaker Pepito Laurel nominated and raised the hands of Congressman Agurang Kune.

Despite a heavy heart because of his long association with Speaker De Venecia whom he owes many things, Rep. Gullas registered his affirmative vote to the motion.

47. Speaking in Filipino, Rep. Magtanggol T. Gunigundo thanked Speaker De Venecia for giving him the chance to be a member of the Lakas-CMD from 1988 to 2004 aside from being a good Speaker since he was elected in 2001 until the present.

As pointed out by the Speaker himself and Rep. Dilangalen, Rep. Gunigundo stressed that he too was also a sinner and that he wants to ask forgiveness for all his sins and mistakes. Even though he wants to give a negative vote, he expressed belief that the sentiments of the majority of his colleagues should prevail. He then cast his "Yes" vote to the motion.

48. At the outset, Rep. Ana Theresia N. Hontiveros-Baraquel informed the Body that Party-List Akbayan had planned to abstain on said motion because neither retaining Speaker De Venecia nor declaring his position vacant would have transformed the House from an administration-controlled to an independent and opposition Congress. She stressed that Party-List Akbayan's record shows that its Members have been on opposite sides with Speaker De Venecia on almost all the issues. Yet, she opined that said motion is more than an issue about Speaker De Ve-



nenia but about the reasons for his removal like the NBN-ZTE deal, the North Rail and Transco deals, the Garci Tapes and others. She stated that they want to know what had happened to said scandals in the government.

As she wished that the prophetic speech of Speaker De Venecia should have been delivered many months ago, Rep. Hontiveros-Baraquel stated that she still appreciates the same. She however pointed out that the lines are clearly drawn after hearing the explanations of vote of the allies of the Administration because there could be no reforms if the House is still being controlled by Malacañang.

Rep. Hontiveros-Baraquel informed the Body that Party-List Akbayan's vote is against vile cynicism considering that the people already know that the move to change the Speaker has nothing to do with reforms and that the line is between the Administration and the Opposition. In a vote of independence as a Member of the House and as an Opposition and anti-establishment party, she cast her "No" vote to the motion.

49. At the outset, Rep. Luzviminda C. Ilagan stated that in human endeavors for supremacy, whether in an ordinary game of chess or in a pivotal struggle for power, pawns or soldiers are pushed, moved and even sacrificed. She stressed that they are witnesses to an intricate and complicated game, tactical maneuverings played by a hand beyond the walls of the House which is the strong hand of Malacañang.

Rep. Ilagan, together with Party-List Gabriela Women's Party, expressed belief that it is a grand strategy to ensure the survival of the queen, a machination that would cloud and divert the attention from the issues and scandals confronting the country like the ZTE deal, the North and South Rail Projects, Transco and the Hello, Garci issue. She pointed out that it would rock the pillars of governance and ultimately deprive the people of the services that they deserve. She however opined that personality is not the issue but that it is the independence of the House that is being challenged. She stressed that the full control of the House by Malacañang is imminent which is not consistent with the principles that Party-List Gabriela Women's Party stands for. With her conscience, she then cast her "No" vote to the motion.

50. Considering that he is from Mindanao and in the interest of his constituents, Rep. Nur G. Jaafar casts his "Yes" vote to the motion.

51. Since he is a neophyte Representative, Rep. Adam Relson L. Jala stated that for the last seven

months, he had worked hard to learn more about public service since he owes it to his constituents to do so. He however lamented that what he started to learn was about the political ills in the House. He then stressed that he has a dream that one day, the public perception of the House would rise from its depth and would be a beacon of hope and inspiration to the Filipino people, that the House of Representatives would truly be a House that represents the true will of the people, that the political monopoly existing even among fellow Representatives would cease to exist and that the first-term Members would be given the equality they deserve, and that there would be transparency. As he must support a change in the leadership in the hope that his dreams and that of his constituents would be fulfilled, he cast his "Yes" vote to the motion.

52. Rep. Exequiel B. Javier stated that it is with deep regret and with a heavy heart that he is voting "Yes" to the motion.

53. Pointing out that he is an independent and not a member of either the Lakas or Kampi Party, Rep. Eduardo Nonato N. Joson voted "Yes" to the motion because the reputation and integrity of the House are in tatters and have become a house of ill-repute. With the bombing of the House which had resulted in deaths and injuries of the Members and personnel, he stressed that even their physical safety has been compromised. He emphasized that under the principle of command responsibility, the Speaker is the one responsible for the reputation, integrity and safety of the Members. He however lamented that Speaker De Venecia is a failure with said responsibilities and yet, would blame others. He stressed that Speaker De Venecia had only himself to blame.

He pointed out that when Speaker De Venecia had spoken about changes and reforms, Rep. Joson maintained that said changes and reforms must begin now and that the Members must now have a moral revolution if they want the country to survive. He added that a new beginning would only start if Speaker De Venecia vacates the Office of the Speaker.

54. At the outset, Rep. Edcel C. Lagman opined that the issue at hand transcends personal relationships and partisan politics and that what is at stake is the state of the country and the prospect of a better economic growth.

He then enumerated the following reasons for his "No" vote to the motion:

1. There is a critical need for political unity inside and outside the halls of Congress to help sustain the economic growth. This ephemeral is bound to hurt the economy because the Philippines has achieved unprecedented economic growth the previous year and the horizon this year remains bright and promising. He then cited the following statistics:

- a. the country has achieved a gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 7.3% in 2007 which is the highest in 31 years or more than three decades;
- b. the Philippine peso has been consistently robust, with exchange rate ending at ₱40.50 to a dollar last weekend; and is projected to appreciate up to ₱38 to \$1 by midyear this year;
- c. the inflation rate has been contained to 2.5%, a level which is better than some Asian countries like Indonesia and Vietnam;
- d. the country's international reserve has grown to US\$33.75 billion, an increase over that of 2006;
- e. unemployment rate has gone down to 7.3% while underemployment rate has likewise decreased to 18.1%;
- f. the country's credit rating has been recently upgraded to stable by Moody's Investor Service;
- g. surveys conducted by the Social Weather Station (SWS) reveal that nationwide self-rated poverty fell from 57% in December, 2006 to 46% in December 2007;

He surmised that the political strife could continue and thus could jeopardize all these positive economic indicators. He then cautioned his colleagues that the political upheaval to change the House leadership might derail the nation's economic growth and that unwittingly, the Members might throw to the wind their economic gains under the pretext of winds of change.

Moreover, Rep. Lagman saw no overriding reason of national import to change the performing leadership of the House. Even as it has been said that change is the passage to progress and reform is the catalyst of development, he stressed that change for the sake of change or one motivated by less than patriotic intentions could be harmful.

He stated for the record that under the present leadership, the House of Representatives has made concrete achievements during the six months of the Fourteenth Congress and has delivered successfully the executive-legislative agenda. In view of the foregoing, he cast a negative vote, in spite of the emerging, overwhelming affirmative votes to the motion.

55. In explaining his vote, Rep. Julio A. Ledesma IV inquired whether the Chair could still recall what happened in February 2001 during the latter's incumbency as Speaker of the House. He noted that for genuine change to be introduced in an organization, the entire organizational framework has to be changed as well, not only its leader. He pointed out that if there has been a failure in Speaker De Venecia's leadership, then by extension, his subordinates, who are running the various committees of the House, should also be viewed as having also failed to discharge their duties as Committee heads.

Rep. Ledesma remarked that he could not understand the logic of the recent development. He recounted that when the Chair was replaced as Speaker of the House in February 2001, the chairpersons of the various House committees were also replaced. He asked who would stand to benefit if the Body would replace Speaker De Venecia. He commented that the present House Committees were organized in September 2007 and committee work started with the national budget deliberations. He asked how the Body could use these as criteria to assess the performance of Speaker De Venecia as leader of the House.

At this point, Rep. Ledesma mentioned all the opportunities which the Speaker had given him since he became a neophyte legislator in 1995. He admitted to not being able to understand what has been happening in the House and what he has been reading in the newspapers for the past weeks. He inquired whether the House as a whole would benefit from Speaker De Venecia's ouster, adding that he could not see any difference at all if the rest of the organizational structure of the House would be retained, except the incumbent Speaker.

Rep. Ledesma said that it was the second time that the House, as an institution, would see the ouster of its Speaker, which he considered lamentable. He voted against the pending motion on the belief that the matter had nothing to do with the House and should have been tackled in the past. He also expressed hope that the Members should have shown more compassion by handling the case in a gentler way, regardless of the intents and wishes of the advocates for change. He then reiterated his negative vote.

56. As the Members stand on the floor in that great moment, Rep. Reno G. Lim urged his colleagues to remain steadfast with bold determination that they are going to stick together and work together immediately so that history will judge the Members as having been vigilant cavaliers of democracy and had the courage to stand up to give now meaning into the veins of history and civilization. He noted that no Member would rise to defy the Constitution.

Being an engineer by trade, Rep. Lim said that he builds and constructs assemblies and edifices. He stressed that it was in this context that he was taking part in reinventing the spirit and bravado of the House and in wrecking towers of strength that will house a progressive, dynamic and organized alliance of diverse political sensibleness and wisdom. For all these considerations, he voted in favor of the motion.

57. Rep. Jocelyn Sy-Limkaichong remarked that she took the floor as a genuine Representative of the First District of Negros Oriental and her vote was for the benefit of the general welfare of the people to whom her public service was primarily offered. She added that equally important to her was her loyalty and commitment to the Lakas-CMD Party which had believed in her during her candidacy when all the odds were stacked against her and who had continued to support her in public service. She however commented that when her loyalty to her party convicts more than anything else, more equally important to consider is the movement that calls for change and reform.

Rep. Limkaichong underscored that she would respect the outcome of the voting because more important to her is that the voice of the people whom the Members represent in the House must be heard. She thereafter abstained from voting.

58. In explaining his vote, Rep. Teodoro L. Locsin Jr. surmised that the only ones who had acted from a disinterested motive in the current mess were President Macapagal-Arroyo's sons. This, as he said that it would be dishonorable for sons to stand by while their parents were being vilified. He assumed that most of the Members on the sidelines, including those who stuck it out with the present House leadership, saw things this way. He however pointed out that what was happening was a power struggle, plain and simple. He further said that it was mental dishonesty to say that the speakership fight that night had anything to do with the way the House finances had been managed.

He also remarked that the reason the House under Speaker De Venecia had a lower public rating than the Senate was that the De Venecia House had always defended the President from the ceaseless attacks of the Senate. He noted that Mr. Joey De Venecia spoke in the Senate and not in the House.

He then underscored that except for the tyranny of numbers, he saw no reason for change; hence, his "No" vote.

59. Rep. Maria Milagros H. Magsaysay disclosed that she had heard the rumor about the ouster moves against Speaker De Venecia since late 2007 but did not put any meaning into the rumor. She said that instead, she quietly observed how the House would proceed after the rumor broke out and realized that all these talks affected the Chamber.

Rep. Magsaysay maintained that she was voting in favor of the motion to declare the seat of the Speaker vacant not because she does not believe in Speaker De Venecia's competency. She said that the incumbent Speaker was a competent man and that during their interparliamentary conferences abroad, she had seen how other world leaders respected him for his brilliance. She however noted that a man's brilliance is not enough for him to be retained as Speaker of the House. She inferred that there has been a lot of talks about Speaker De Venecia's personal, family problems which she maintained should have been set aside from his professional life as Speaker of the House. She claimed having observed that the Speaker could not keep his personal problems out of the halls of Congress and so his leadership was adversely affected to the point that he could not effectively lead and rule the House anymore according to the desire of the Members.

In addition, Rep. Magsaysay averred that Speaker De Venecia should solve his personal problems first and should not involve all the Members with his personal troubles. She pointed out that the Members come to work to push the legislative agenda and interests of their respective constituents. She averred that they should not be held hostage to whatever dealings that the Speaker's family and the First Family make.

Rep. Magsaysay maintained that the Members of the House should be independent and left alone to do their job. She cast an affirmative vote because she had lost her confidence in the capability of the Speaker to effectively lead the House, he added.

60. Rep. Hermilando I. Mandanas stated that he favors change only if it is done at the right time, for the right reasons, towards the right direction, and done in the right way. He inquired whether it was the

right time for change or whether the Members were just going to open the floodgates of uncontrollable current of political emotions as they have observed that night just as when there were so many more important issues affecting the basic needs of their constituents. He asked whether they were proposing change for the benefit of the common good, whether it will alleviate poverty, and whether the proposed change will do the House any better.

He further inquired whether the Members were doing it in the right way, whether they were preserving the dignity of the House and at the same time, defending the democracy of the nation. With the Executive Branch being implicated the way President Macapagal-Arroyo was implicated in so many issues, he expressed the belief that the decision-making process in the House has irreparably damaged and impaired the necessary advice-and-consent kind of relationship required between Congress and Malacañang. He then voted in favor of the pending motion.

61. Rep. Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. reiterated that the Opposition Members were inclined to abstain from the voting because the conflict was deemed as one merely involving the Majority parties. He stated that the Opposition Members oppose the policies, questionable practices, and corruption allegedly prevalent in the Macapagal-Arroyo Administration, which was why they were glad that Speaker De Venecia told them that night in some detail the background of certain questionable practices, which the Opposition had opposed and criticized for so long.

He however pointed out that one inescapable conclusion to the statements made by Speaker De Venecia that night was that he was a party to everything that he was criticizing. Therefore, even as he would like to join his colleagues from the Minority, his conscience dictates that he vote "Yes" to the motion declaring the position of the Speaker vacant.

62. Speaking in Filipino, Rep. Liza L. Maza stated that the Gabriela Party-List was voting against the pending motion because of its belief that the motive behind the move to oust Speaker De Venecia is not really genuine reform that would benefit the majority of the Filipinos who are outside the halls of the Chamber.

As she pointed out to the issues beyond the confines of the House, such as rampant poverty and hunger, Rep. Maza added that the change in leadership of the House is not about Mindanao nor about the needed reforms or even Congress itself because up to now, the necessary measures for such change have not

been implemented by the proponents of the motion to change the House leadership. She then inquired on the real stand of these advocates for reform on such issues like wage hike, the unresolved cheating in the last election, graft and corruption and bribery. Moreover, she asked whether alternative solutions have been presented regarding the issue of poverty, corruption and cheating and expressed her sadness that there is none because the real motive behind such motion is for Malacañang to heighten its control over Congress. She further disclosed that the real reason behind the proposed change in leadership is to cover up the ZTE scandal, the corruption and bribery and to protect the President whose sons are at the forefront of this brazen act.

She underscored that her "No" vote is not to condone what the Speaker considers as his sins because the Party-List Members have a lot of major and minor disagreements with the Speaker. She maintained that the vote of "No" by the Party-List Gabriela is a protest against the attack of Malacañang against Congress. Stating that this well-funded and Malacañang-organized instigated *coup* is condemnable, she reiterated her "No" vote.

62. Rep. Abraham Kahlil B. Mitra at the outset stated that certain things should be put in its proper perspective, like the Speaker is just the highest paid casual in the House, his tenure is coterminous with the trust reposed upon him by his colleagues, his electorate composed of 240 Members, even for no rhyme nor reason, can withdraw their confidence anytime, and the one installed in the rostrum has no choice but to come down. He pointed out that any Member who rises to become Speaker should not forget even for just one moment that such mandate is temporary and that he occupies said position not by right but by the tolerance of his peers. He added that the Speakership is similar to a legislative franchise that can be withdrawn anytime. He disclosed that longevity in power is no argument for staying in power longer as sometimes it can be an argument against because, for one, complacency and arrogance would set in. He said that the longer one stays in power, and this House has endured the five terms of the present leadership, Congress may become a permanent cellar dweller after surveys taken, as what happened in one instance or that men who enter this institution smelling like roses are soon contaminated by the stink that awaits them and the smell that emanates not from the dump near the building but in a room in this building. Thus, he said that it is no wonder why they have become not only the country's punching bag but they have also become a punch line. He then asked whether there can be an end to the penury of their integrity and said that there is be-

cause the House has a surplus of Speaker-material Congressmen and that anyone of them, given the break, has the potential of surpassing the performance of their predecessors.

Rep. Mitra pointed out that he is not doing this to avenge the wrongs the current Speaker had wrought upon his father. He underscored that he is calling for change because of the wrongs the current Speaker had inflicted on the institution, by cheapening the memory of those who toiled during the long dark nights to have it restored together with the democracy denied the people.

He then recalled that in 2001, he was granted the faith, trust and confidence by the Second District of Palawan. During that time, he said that he had joined the Minority and it lasted for three years but he heard complaints left and right and together with Rep. Dilangalen, he launched several attempts to change the leadership but failed. Luckily, he said that he has been given a second mandate in 2004 and this time he joined the Majority but had a harder time than before. Now that he is on his last term and seventh year in office, he said that he had been hearing complaints from the first and second-term Members who wanted to effect change in the leadership of the House. In his last term in Congress with two more years to go, he said that he would like to favor change. He said that he has one message to the Speaker regarding the moral recovery and bribery charge — look who's talking. He then voted "Yes" to the motion.

64. Rep. JC Rahman A. Nava, M.D. stated at the outset that a call for change is endemic among neophytes and he, being one of them, joins the call. He then voted "Yes" to the motion.

65. Rep. Satur C. Ocampo explained that even before the Members have to confront the issue on change of speakership, this issue has been sufficiently reported and commented on in the mass media and thus only validates what Speaker Joe De Venecia said in his speech that the plan to oust him as Speaker of the House was the administration's retaliation against the revelation of his son in the Senate hearing of the involvement of the First Gentleman in the scandalous ZTE-NBN contract. Moreover, he expressed belief that the purpose of the change in the leadership of the House is for the President to take a strong hold on the leadership of the House because Speaker De Venecia did not yield to the control of the President. Moreover, he said that the Executive Department still wanted to repress whatever objections the Majority have, similar to the objections made by the Speaker in supporting his son over the latter's revelation in the Senate.

For this, he said that he and the Party-List Bayan Muna cannot accept these twin grounds for changing the House leadership. He said that he is not against the need to change the leadership of the House if indeed there is a need to change but in changing the Speaker, the newly installed Speaker must be able to insist and fight for the independence of the House over Malacañang and not to deepen further the control of the latter.

As matters stand now, he noted that the Filipino people do not stand to gain from this initiative to change the leadership of the House. As he voted "No" to the motion, he expressed hope that whatever is the result of the Speaker's greatest challenge in his well-served political career, he would redeem himself from his weaknesses and his admitted sins and join the Opposition by making good to his vow to expose more banalities and corruption in government and to oppose decisively the antidemocratic and anti-people policies like political repression that he has denounced in his speech that night against the Arroyo government.

66. Rep. Victor F. Ortega explained that in this particular issue, a vote of "Yes" would be perceived as a vote against Speaker De Venecia. He stated that he cannot find any reason at all in his heart nor in his mind to vote against the Speaker. However, he disclosed that a vote of "No" would be perceived also as a vote against the Administration, and neither can he find any reason at all in his heart and mind to vote against his good friend, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. He therefore said that he is constrained to abstain from voting.

67. Rep. Ernesto C. Pablo expressed hope that the Majority would have maintained the status quo because he believes that in doing so, there would be continuity in the leadership of the Speaker. Considering that the country, as he had heard from the different speakers, has already been attaining good economic growth, he disclosed that continuity is important in a leadership and that continuity of policies should also be maintained.

He however expressed sadness that this would not happen because his vote is already defeated. He pointed out that the Speaker is a good man and that he knows this to be true because he had been with him in some of his several visits in foreign countries and he had helped a lot of the Members of his party with their advocacies. Considering that this is already his third term, he expressed hope that the Speaker would continue his term as Speaker of the House but as he sees it in the voting being conducted that night, it is imminent that he will no longer be their Speaker.

As he had been keeping tab of the different votes, he said that his vote will no longer matter but his conscience dictates that he had to vote "No" to the motion.

68. Rep. Carlos M. Padilla recalled that when it was not yet fashionable to vote against Speaker Joe De Venecia, he was already agitating for a change in the leadership simply because he thought it was necessary to institute reforms in the House. Therefore, he pointed out that voting "Yes" to the motion does not mean that he is voting for the Administration but simply because he would want to continue what he had been fighting for since day one which is reform within the House of Representatives. He then voted "Yes" to the motion.

69. At the outset, Rep. Candido P. Pancrudo Jr. said that event has its own time and time has its own event. He said that he is happy that the Members have discussed change in this august Body, which is change in totality, and not just change of a person because they sometimes want the person to change but within themselves, it is hard to change. As he again noted that time has its own event, he explained that whatever failure they have done in the past would be addressed by this change the Members are planning to have in the august Body. He then voted in favor of the motion.

70. Rep. Bernardo F. Piñol Jr. recalled that after taking his oath as a neophyte Member of the House, he was looking forward to the realization of his commitment to his beloved people in North Cotabato.

As he stated that he is committed to uplift the quality of life of his people the soonest possible time through sustainable agriculture, he informed the Body that all their efforts are gaining ground because despite utter hopelessness and massive poverty, his province had seen the light at the end of the tunnel and all because of the programs and projects in agriculture that he and the Speaker are trying to introduce in his district.

Despite the work they are trying to do in their respective Committees, he said that he is faced with a sensitive question of whether or not to change the leadership of the House.

Stating that he is from Mindanao and that having a Mindanaoan as Speaker of the House is a great honor to him and his people, he however disclosed that there are far many things to consider in voting for speakership and this outweighs and transcends personal relationship.

Moreover, he said that questions such as whether this change is good for the House and the country must also be considered. He said that he was voting "No" because to his mind the answer to this question is in the negative. Furthermore, he explained that he was voting "No" because he cannot afford to punish a statesman, the leading political figure the country ever had. Above all, he said that he wanted harmony and continuity in the House because in political harmony, they can achieve unity.

He stated that it is only in political harmony that the Members can achieve continuity in the implementation of programs and projects to realize the dream of his constituents. He then voted "No."

71. Rep. Rodolfo "Ompong" G. Plaza expressed his wish to retain the status quo; however, he stated that this is already "water under the bridge." He opined that the motion to replace Speaker De Venecia is no longer an issue because the Members must give a chance to others to serve as Speaker of the House. He thereafter voted "Yes."

72. Rep. Monico O. Puentevella initially stated that by next year he would have spent 20 years of his political life as a loyal foot soldier of the dominant majority party of Lakas, starting as a councilor of Bacolod then as Congressman. Inasmuch as he is in his last term, he stated that he wanted to thank Speaker De Venecia and his wife, Mrs. Gina De Venecia for their friendship, support and love. He explained that he and Speaker De Venecia have known each other from way back then and that he had remained loyal to the Speaker since time immemorial. He claimed that the move to declare the seat of the Speaker vacant is tragic not only for Lakas but for his friendship with De Venecia.

Rep. Puentevella however stated that after listening to the valedictory speech of the Speaker which contained a lot of recriminations and hatred, he does not see anymore the logic in how they can continue together in the House if they wanted to improve the country's economy. Based on the NEDA report of a 7.3% growth rate, he stated that it is only regrettable that these economic gains have not trickled down to the countryside. He then asked how the country would preserve these economic gains if the Members pursue the motion to declare the seat of the Speaker vacant.

In this regard, Rep. Puentevella related that he once told the Speaker his wish that the latter should "have stopped unfortunate events in the past" because of the consequences on the House as an institution. He however stated that by the end of the day, he is sorry to admit that he was proven right. In closing,

he stated in Tagalog: “Walang personalan, trabaho lamang.” He then voted “Yes.”

73. Rep. Rufus B. Rodriguez initially stated that Speaker De Venecia has been good and fair to him and has been a good father of the entire House to both the Members of the Majority and the Minority. He underscored that the Speaker has led the entire Body to the approval of the General Appropriations Bill in record time and has made sure that foreign debt payments would be reduced so that the Budget would adhere to the social justice principle enshrined in the Constitution.

He pointed out that if the Majority decides that there should be a change in the speakership, Mindanao would then be on the verge of securing the speakership position that has been denied it over a hundred years. He emphasized that Mindanao has about 22% of the country's population but it contributes about 23% of the gross domestic product (GDP). In turn, Mindanao is only receiving 10% of the national budget for the last 10 years, he said.

*At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Fuentesbella relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Simeon A. Datumanong.*

Rep. Rodriguez thereafter explained that the Mindanao bloc of 59 Members had been pushing hard for Mindanao to have its rightful share in development so that the country can have peace and security. Thus, if the Majority decides for change, a Mindanaoan, in the person of Rep. Prospero C. Nograles, would possibly become the historical figure of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He however stated that the Minority is a group of people who will have to first gather in a caucus to consider their vote on the speakership. It was agreed, he said, that the retention or the replacement of a Speaker belongs rightly and solely the prerogative of the Majority. He then stated that it was the general consensus then of the Members of the Minority that they abstain from voting to give due deference of the Majority. He then abstained from voting.

74. Rep. Herminia B. Roman stated that she would have voted “No” because she is for the status quo and for her friendship with Mrs. Gina De Venecia and the fact that Speaker De Venecia has close family ties with the Roman family since the time of Don Pablo Roman. Moreover, since she knows that Speaker De Venecia is a very capable Speaker, she said that she had changed her mind about supporting him when he delivered his speech. She then voted “Yes.”

*At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Datumanong relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Arnulfo P. Fuentesbella.*

75. Rep. Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, at the outset, stated that as a Member of the House and the Kampi political party, he is manifesting his loss of confidence in the leadership of Speaker Jose De Venecia because of his alleged inability to push through with urgent priority legislation and failure to institutionalize the policy of regular financial disclosure of the budget of the House of Representatives. It is unfortunate however, he said, that Speaker Jose De Venecia has dragged the names of the First Family and private individuals over mere allegations. He then inquired on the reason why the Speaker has now only hinted on these alleged wrongdoings and thereafter voted “Yes.”

76. Rep. Pedro “Loloy” P. Romualdo related that he was one of the Members invited to Malacañang for consultation regarding the possible change in the House speakership. In fact, he said that it was the Speaker who wanted to undertake this exercise but most of the Members prevailed over this decision as they wanted to have individual caucuses with their respective parties and it was agreed upon that there will be a consultation of all the coalition members the next day. Moreover, he related that inasmuch as the President has told the Members that the process in the change in speakership must proceed and that President Arroyo must remain neutral, he has followed the word of the President because he believes in her. Considering however that the Body has already taken a vote on the issue of change in speakership this afternoon and thus rending their agreement “unenforceable,” he stated that he is constrained to vote “No.”

77 Rep. Roman T. Romulo initially stated that the Fourteenth Congress is something that the Members can be proud of because every session day, the Members have a quorum. Aside from this, he said that the Fourteenth Congress has passed the General Appropriations Bill on time and has approved the Bill revising the UP Charter, among others. He maintained that if these concrete achievements would have to continue, the Members must have a leader who enjoys the confidence of the Majority and that they be given the opportunity to voice out whether or not the incumbent Speaker still enjoys their confidence. He thereafter voted “Yes.”

78. Rep. Jose Antonio F. Roxas voted “Yes” to the motion to declare the position of the Speaker as vacant, in order to finally put to rest once and for all whether or not Speaker De Venecia still has the mandate of his peers.

79. In explaining his vote, Rep. Benhur L. Salimbangon stated that when the controversy involving the leadership of the House came out in the media, his constituencies in the Fourth District of Cebu asked him on what will happen to the coalition and he replied to them that nothing will happen. He then related how he prayed hard that that day will not come when the Members have to decide which way to go and whom to follow between two friends and leaders. He added that he also prayed for unity they once enjoyed way back during the 1998 elections when he first ran for Congress with Speaker De Venecia as President and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as Vice-President. Though both he and the Speaker lost in that election, he stressed that his respect for the Speaker and the President remains strong.

However, Rep. Salimbangon pointed out that the inevitable has come and the Members have to make a decision and that being a neophyte Member and party man, he highly respects the leadership of the Kampi Party. Being an advocate of change, with all humility, he voted "Yes" to the motion.

80. Rep. Andres "Andy" D. Salvacion Jr. stated for the record that he belongs to the PDSP and as such, he was voting "Yes" to the motion.

81. In explaining his vote, Rep. Edgar S. San Luis quoted Proverbs 16:12 from the Bible which states that "Kings have horror of wrongdoing for by righteousness the throne endures." He added that he has been very vocal about the need for reforms in the House of Representatives wherein its credibility has dipped so low in the perception of the people. Quoting further the words of a Jesuit historian, Father Horacio dela Costa, "let us have a change in men and not of men," he explained that the Members need a change both in men and of men, and leaders must show the way as moral betterment proceeds from those above to those below.

Thereafter, Rep. San Luis encouraged the Members to strive and bring back more transparency in the way business is conducted in the House like a proportionate budgetary allotment for all districts, infrastructure projects, greater efficiency in the processing and passage of bills for a more productive Congress; to promote and enable the people's agenda for reform and development as mandated by the Constitution. Moreover, he stressed that the people are already tired and weary of hypocritical protestations of propeople lip-serving, of never-ending scheming and calibrated strategizing for political aggrandizement. He added that what the House needs at the moment is a transforming leader to bring change to this House and restore its shine and luster.

Speaking in Filipino, he then informed the Members that when he first ran as an independent for Congress in the Fourth District of Laguna, he was pitted against the candidate of the Lakas-Kampi coalition and the incumbent opposition under the genuine Opposition (GO). He won in that election because the people of the Fourth District of Laguna want some changes, having been victims of too much politics wherein budgets for certain programs and projects intended for the district were not released.

#### **REMINDER FROM THE CHAIR**

At this juncture, the Chair reminded Rep. San Luis to wind up his explanation.

#### **EXPLANATIONS OF VOTE**

(Continuation)

In closing, Rep. San Luis stated that he carries with him the views and mandate of his constituents to have a change within the hearts and mind of a man and not the man itself. In this case, he said that he was voting "Yes" in order to ascertain if indeed there would be a true change that will bring hope to the nation.

82. Speaking in Filipino, Rep. Alvin S. Sandoval stressed that at this very moment, the nation has been watching the event currently transpiring in the halls of Congress and within the next few days, many of their constituents will ask them about the details of this sad event. He pointed out that before, they were the ones watching the squabbles in the Senate but now, the real political squabble is currently happening in the House. He added that the Members could not escape the inevitable and with that, he was voting "Yes" to the motion in order to shorten this mess so that the Members could go back to their normal work that is, to legislate certain bills badly needed by the people.

83. Initially, Rep. Joseph A. Santiago stated that there were innuendoes as to the reason for a change in the leadership of the House and that since his first term in 2001, he had patiently waited for six years, seven months and twelve days for that change to happen, when they will see a Speaker who can lead and inspire with all sincerity the Members of the august Chamber. Hence, he voted in favor of the motion.

84. In explaining his vote, Rep. Eric D. Singson stated that he was the President of the so-called Northern Alliance in the House of Representatives and therefore, his concern is to look into the welfare of his members. He informed the Members that that



morning, he fetched the Speaker and then told the latter about the inevitable—that he might be replaced as Speaker of the House that evening. Being the President of the group, he said that he did not want to abandon a member of the Northern Alliance. He then voted “No” to the motion.

85. Thereupon, Rep. Ronald V. Singson initially voted in the affirmative to the motion and thereafter, appealed to the apparent new majority that there would be no witch-hunting for those Members who voted in the negative or have abstained just because of their position. Moreover, he expressed hope that there would also be no hatred campaign against those who have spoken their opinion on the matter, more particularly, to the group where he belongs, the Northern Luzon Alliance, to which the current Speaker hails from. Subsequently, he further appealed to the new majority that they retain Rep. Singson (E.) as Deputy Speaker of the House. Thereafter, he voted “Yes” to the motion.

86. In explaining his vote, Rep. Jose G. Solis recalled that 33 years ago, he had met a young man in the person of Minister Jose De Venecia working in the Philippine Consulate in Vietnam and at that time, he was a struggling lieutenant of the Philippine Army. He added that they became friends and in 1992, together with former President Ramos, they founded the Lakas ng Tao Party which later became Lakas-CMD. Subsequently, he stressed that he found Speaker De Venecia as a very good person and a friend, and a very good leader. He surmised that it was Speaker De Venecia’s kindness that pushed him in this situation for he never refused any request from anybody which in military parlance is a “promising officer,” one who always gives promises many of which are not fulfilled.

At this point, Rep. Solis recalled that when he became a Member in 2001, he wanted to do certain reforms to help the government and our country. In this regard, he said that before the election of speakership in 2007, he found an alternative for this position in the person of Rep. Pablo P. Garcia wherein, he campaigned so hard to make him the Speaker of the House, but he failed. He added that he was not even given a chance to nominate the latter. Thereupon, he stated that that very day, he joined the so-called Reform Bloc in the House wherein, they even confronted the Speaker about certain reforms in the House and the latter had promised them that within 100 days, reform shall be initiated in the halls of Congress. However, he said that eight months have already lapsed but no reforms have been undertaken by the leadership of the House, the reason the Reform Bloc decided to unite for the welfare of all.

## REMINDER FROM THE CHAIR

At this point, the Chair reminded Rep. Solis to wind up his explanation.

## EXPLANATIONS OF VOTE (Continuation)

In closing, Rep. Solis voted “Yes” to the motion with a heavy heart.

87. Rep. Nerissa Corazon Soon-Ruiz initially stated that she voted in favor of the motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant, optimistic that a change in the leadership of the House would bring it to higher heights in the service to the people who voted them into office. As she stressed that a change in the House leadership is not intertwined on any other issues as eloquently pictured by the Speaker in his privilege speech, she averred that the pressing issue that must be addressed immediately is the nose dive in the House’s image before the bar of public opinion, which has generated to its worst under the Speaker’s watch. In addition, she pointed out that there are other issues hounding the Speaker’s leadership bordering on transparency and accountability in the disbursement of the Chamber’s funds.

Thereafter, Rep. Soon-Ruiz maintained that she found even more telling reasons to yearn for a change in the leadership of the House not personally against the Speaker, but for the greater good of the House and the country in general. With due respect to the Speaker, she stressed that she honestly believes that a change in the leadership is long overdue as the latter had already served the House for an unprecedented four terms and for him to complete a fifth term would already be too much.

It is now high time she said, that other emerging leaders show their brand of leadership.

She then claimed for the record that she came from the Reform Bloc that pushed for a change in the leadership of the House at the start of the Fourteenth Congress and as such, she wants to be consistent in her personal stand to seek for a fresh leadership in this august Body. She then opined that that evening was another good opportunity to effect the long-overdue change as they have now someone from Mindanao who has the characteristic of a good Speaker, if not even better.

Whereupon, Rep. Soon-Ruiz pointed out that the issue at hand at that very moment was whether or not the Members still have confidence in the leadership of Speaker De Venecia and added that she found

nothing left in her heart even before the Fourteenth Congress, thus she voted "Yes" to the motion.

88. Rep. Danilo E. Suarez explained that outside of his party affiliation, he was named head of the Southern Tagalog Alliance Congressional Districts and that per the discussions and meetings regarding the issue on hand, they were voting as one. He then registered his affirmative vote.

89. Rep. Mary Anne L. Susano said that the fundamental attitudes of a servant leader are humility, trustworthiness and accountability in every way and that sometimes one has to make a little sacrifice to give way for a great change.

As she expressed her gratitude to the De Venecia family and her admission to praying very hard the past few days, she also stated that there were threats from some of her colleagues in the Lakas and added that she has long been afraid already. She stressed that she always plays the game of life fair and square and very independent in many ways but that she has survived because of her faith in God.

Thereafter, she cast a "Yes" vote with all her conscience and heart.

90. In explaining her vote, Rep. Ma. Victoria R. Sy-Alvarado also expressed her thanks to Speaker De Venecia and his wife for all the good things that they have done. In voting "Yes" to the motion, Rep. Sy-Alvarado pointed out that it does not mean that she has a personal grudge against the Speaker and his wife, or that she was voting because of the dictates of some people. She stressed that she was voting according to her conscience for the good of her constituents and country.

Rep. Sy-Alvarado then expressed belief for a new leadership to give chance to other Members who are also dedicated in their work in showing that there can be unity in the House. She then reiterated her "Yes" vote.

91. Rep. Judy J. Syjuco stated that her vote was personal. She explained that being a parent, she knows that one cannot separate a child from a parent nor a parent from a child. The issue on hand is clearly one of the situations and because it involves national welfare, she then voted "Yes" to the motion.

92. Rep. Lorenzo R. Tañada III said that with change comes real challenges. In explaining his vote, he said that he was not challenging those who voted "No" but those who favor the change in the leadership of the House to ensure that the change being advocated becomes a reality.

Thereafter, Rep. Tañada enumerated the following changes, to wit: transparency in the allocation of the budget in the House; a lean professional bureaucracy and permanent secretariat staff devoid of any political debt to any sitting Speaker or any past or incumbent Representative; a more rational basis for choosing and appointing committee chairmanships; and a greater independence from the Executive.

Saying that he has seen the deterioration of the image of the House under the past and current leadership, Rep. Tañada pointed out that every Member had been a part of the decline without question. He then asked whether a status quo should be allowed because the questionable situation persists even if another Member takes his oath as the next Speaker of the House.

Rep. Tañada noted that those who were advocating for change in the leadership of the House are being accused of simply playing into the game of the so-called "elites." He underscored that if one is indeed serious in reforming the House, they should actually change and reform not only the system but themselves.

Thereafter, he made it clear that with regard to party support for the change placed in the agenda at the start of the Fourteenth Congress, Rep. Tañada pointed out that he had supported Rep. Garcia (P.). He said that even if they did not make it, they have to be consistent with their calls. While they cannot simply shun what is unfolding before them, he said that the four concerns enumerated earlier are real changes poised to those who openly support the change but more importantly to the one who would succeed the current leadership.

#### **REMINDER FROM THE CHAIR**

At this point, the Chair reminded Rep. Tañada that his time was over.

#### **EXPLANATIONS OF VOTE** (Continuation)

In ending, Rep. Tañada challenged those who stood up to advocate for change and reform because once there is a change in leadership, their real work to truly reform themselves and the institution begins. Finally, he said that this is a great opportunity for all the Members not to waste to change the image of the institution which has been badly tarnished.

He then registered his affirmative vote.

93. In explaining his vote, Rep. Marcelino “Marcy” R. Teodoro first said that the House should consider at all times what is good for the country. In the matter of speakership, he expressed belief that all the Members should be united since many measures have been suspended because of the issue. He added that it is the obligation of every Member to set aside personal and political matters and focus on what should be done for the betterment of the country.

Considering the aforecited premises, Rep. Teodoro expressed belief that maintaining the status quo is practicable for the House in pursuing, undertaking and completing the legislative measures and agenda that would benefit the Filipino people. He then voted “No” to the motion.

94. Rep. Niel “Junjun” C. Tupas Jr. stated that as a member of the Liberal Party as well as the Reform Bloc advocating changes in the House, he voted “Yes” on the motion.

95. Rep. Isidro T. Ungab stated that he votes “Yes” because like most of the neophyte Members, he believes that they can work better if there is harmonious relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government. He added that he supports the program of the President most especially those that would benefit his district.

He thereafter reiterated his affirmative vote.

96. In explaining his vote, Rep. Edwin C. Uy said that he was having difficulty in making a decision on the matter because he was ready to vote “No” since he could not find a valid reason to oust Speaker De Venecia. He underscored that a status quo would have been for the best interest of the country. However, after hearing the privilege speech of the Speaker, he said that he feared that the respect, cordiality and working relationship between the House and the Executive has been shattered. Thereafter, he said that for the best interest of the country, he was constrained to vote “Yes.”

97. Rep. Rolando “Klarex” A. Uy said that he votes “Yes” because it was his belief that transformation must be pursued vigorously by ending the divisiveness starting with the leadership of the House and that a new era of unity and trust begin to enable them to do their work as legislators and not as political clowns.

98. Rep. Edgar L. Valdez explained that it was painful and difficult for him to make a choice between one whom he respected and considered a father and one whom he considered a brother from Mindanao. He said that when he took the plane that

morning from General Santos to Manila, he could only close his eyes and pray. Thereafter, he voted “Yes” on the motion.

98. Rep. Rene M. Velarde initially stated that his love, respect, admiration and gratitude for Speaker De Venecia remains solidly intact. He added that the matter on hand is not an easy thing to do.

He said that he has worked and prayed long and hard to preserve the status quo not only because he is confident in the leadership of the Speaker but more so because preserving the status quo would avoid further deterioration of an existing political instability. However, he stressed that said instability has evolved into a clamor for change and has overtaken the intervening events and miraculous breakthroughs. As he prayed hard for that moment not to come, he stressed that it is now their obligation to grab the clamor for change and ensure that it will be for the better. He said that his heart sinks to the bottom of the ocean as he casts his affirmative vote.

100. Rep. Villafuerte, at the outset, noted that his affirmative vote represents the 167<sup>th</sup> vote in favor of the motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant. He pointed out that this is more than the majority vote requirement and as the names reach the letter “Z” there will at least be 173 to 175 votes in favor of said motion.

He clarified that the plenary procedure during the night will have two stages: first, the declaration of the position of the Speaker as vacant and second, the Roll Call vote without need for further explanation by the Members.

While he has many things to say to justify his vote as he would like to explain the reforms that he would like to advocate, he said that he would not want to add further hurt to anybody. He said that despite the speech delivered by Speaker De Venecia, the latter would be magnanimous enough at the end of the voting and will rise to the occasion to nominate Rep. Prospero C. Nograles as the new Speaker.

101. Rep. Emmanuel Joel J. Villanueva stated that although the issue is not about being a member of the Majority or the Minority, he still thank God for putting him in the Minority group.

*At this point, Deputy Speaker Fuentesbella relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Eric D. Singson.*

The question, Rep. Villanueva emphasized, is whether the incumbent Speaker is really after the

independence of the House. He said that he has known Speaker De Venecia since he was a child and has learned to idolize him. While he supported the Speaker when he ran for President, he said that he parted ways due to politics. It would thus be easy for him to vote "Yes" to the motion, he added.

As he stressed that he has never harbored any ill feelings against the Speaker despite his belief that certain issues are valid and should have been given attention, he said that the Speaker's speech could not help but remind him of the famous song "Bakit Ngayon Ka Lang." He however expressed belief on the revelations made by the Speaker, as the issues about the ZTE Inc., TRANSCO, pork barrel, moral revolution and institutional entitlements, among others, are no longer new.

He said that records will bear him out that on several occasions, he rose to tell the Speaker that the House should not surrender its sovereignty to Malacañang and allow the Opposition's projects to be put on hold. While he was not given support for any project in the last three years, he stressed that he has proven to the people that projects are not that necessary to become successful in politics, as from a single seat for the CIBAC Party-list, they now have two seats.

Rep. Villanueva thereupon emphasized that he has always reminded the Speaker to fight for the institution, and asked whether the latter had fought for it. He noted that during the day, the Speaker had affirmed everything that the Opposition has been raising in plenary and Committee hearings. He thereafter challenged the Speaker to prove that he is really serious in pursuing a moral revolution, and to show that loyalty should only be to the people and not to Malacañang. He said that it would be a good signal if the Speaker would volunteer as a witness to the ZTE and Transco hearings in the Senate.

#### REMINDER FROM THE CHAIR

The Chair reminded Rep. Villanueva that he had already consumed the allotted three minutes.

#### EXPLANATIONS OF VOTE

(Continuation)

Rep. Villanueva thereafter underscored that lessons should be learned during the day and expressed hope that the Speaker had learned his. He warned his colleagues that they will reap what they sow – the powers that be today will not always be the powers that be in the future.

As his party continues to clamor for reforms that the Speaker has failed to deliver, he opined that Ma-

lacañang will not allow the House to be independent and free. He thereafter manifested his abstention.

102. Rep. Cynthia A. Villar said that she had experienced a similar situation as the wife of a former Speaker. Since the experience was so painful, she stressed that she would not like to be a party to this and voted against the motion.

*At this point, Deputy Speaker Singson relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Fuentebella.*

103. Rep. Liwayway Vinzons-Chato underscored that when she joined Congress as a neophyte Member in July, 2007, she joined the Reform Bloc and has remained a member thereof up to the present.

As a Chinese-Filipino, she said that she has always referred to the Chinese character representation of change – danger and opportunity. She opined that without danger in one's life, the person will remain complacent and will not move. Thus, the day is a great opportunity for the Members when there will be a change in the House. Since the President, the Representatives and the Senators all have term limitations, she said that it is about time to have term limitations for the Speaker of the House. She reminded her colleagues of the very opportune time before them, and with the Chinese New Year just around the corner, she greeted everyone *Kung Hei Fat Choi* and voted in favor of the motion.

104. Rep. Joseph Gilbert F. Violago admitted that as a neophyte Representative and member of the Lakas-CMD, it is difficult for him to make a decision. He disclosed that his family has always supported Speaker De Venecia, way back in the Ninth, Tenth and Thirteenth Congresses. He stressed that the Speaker is a very good and efficient leader, and has made many achievements and reforms during his term, this as he emphasized that he has the trust of the Members and the support of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and former President Fidel V. Ramos.

Then referring to the statements made by most of his colleagues on the need for changes in the House, and believing that the crafting of laws and reform advocacies would become effective if the Members have faith and trust in the leadership, Rep. Violago voted in the affirmative.

105. Rep. Jose V. Yap observed that times are difficult, and his colleagues in Tarlac and himself have agreed to vote as one. With a heavy heart because the Speaker has been his good friend and that politics can really be cruel, he said that he has no choice but to vote in favor of the motion.

106. Rep. Ronaldo B. Zamora initially stated that when the original motion to declare the position of the Speaker vacant was made, he was the first to ask specific questions; however, after two hours, no question was asked nor answered.

He said that he would have raised the following questions: 1) why only the position of the Speaker should be declared vacant; 2) how reforms can be achieved when only one Member would be removed from office; and 3) why should the Members participate in what appears to be a personal and vindictive act and would not change the lives of the ordinary people.

As he underscored that he took the floor not to defend the Speaker because the latter is old enough to do so and that he has never voted for the Speaker for any position in 16 years, Rep. Zamora (R.) admitted that he does not care who the Majority chooses as the leader of the House. He said that he can work with or against any Speaker, but that he deeply cares about the reasons why the House should now be subjected to this latest attack, not only on its leader, but also on its structures and independence.

He asked on the overriding reason of national import that has caused a Member to make such a motion. He said that he could not find any reason, other than the basis of reasons, that he would rather not participate in a sham proceeding. He thereafter offered the words of William Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet* - "a fox on both your houses" - to the leaders of the contending factions within the Majority.

Together with many of his colleagues in the Minority, Rep. Zamora cast his "No" vote.

107. Rep. Eduardo C. Zialcita recalled how he stood with the President during the darkest moments in her Office, not only once but twice, because of his belief in her. However, while he still believes in the President, he stressed that he could not abandon his many years of friendship with Speaker De Venecia.

He added that the Speaker had been his friend, mentor, trainer and inspiration.

Rep. Zialcita stressed that the Members are accountable to find out the truth not only for themselves but most especially to God, and that this must be their covenant as they change their leaders. He then read a letter written by Mother Teresa of Calcutta which he said was a favorite prayer in times of crisis and thereafter voted "No" to the motion.

108. Rep. Jose Maria F. Zubiri III said that he had warned about the outcome of the move to re-

move the Speaker and had asked whether this was in the national or President's interest and possible outcomes had been studied. He expressed support for the President and remarked that she wanted what was happening in the House. He however stressed that he was not going to vote against a member of the Mindanao bloc; that he was a member of Lakas; and that his brother was the Secretary General of Lakas. In abstaining from voting on Rep. Mitra's motion, he added that he was not going to slap Speaker De Venecia on the fact as he was still the Speaker and the president of Lakas.

109. Rep. Roque R. Ablan Jr. changed his vote from a negative vote to an abstention. He recalled that he had been with Speaker De Venecia since 1965 in Vietnam after which they became Members of Congress, and that they had survived a lot of problems ever since. He pointed out that the President had done many things for his province. He remarked that he was caught between two ladies who were both kind and good to him and that he had to be loyal to his district, to Speaker De Venecia who was his good friend, as well as to President Macapagal Arroyo.

110. Rep. Darlene R. Antonino-Custodio observed that what was going on was not a fight between candidates for the speakership but between Speaker De Venecia and the President. Saying that she loved the institution where the Representatives of the people freely gave their opinions and respected each other, she stressed that Congress needed reforms and leaders who would stand up for it., that Speaker De Venecia was one of these leaders, and that no successor to the speakership will ever be so as they would be beholden to the President's will. Noting that the administration's solons were fighting for reform, she said that she had yet to hear what kind of reform they meant and asked whether all of the Members would stand up not only to a reformed leadership but reformed membership in the Chamber.

Rep. Antonino-Custodio then cast a vote of abstention.

111. In abstaining from voting as well, Rep. Mar-Len Abigail S. Binay clarified that it was not because she did not want change in the House but because what was happening was obviously a fight between the Speaker and the First Family. She then expressed sadness that the Body was actually confirming the fact that the House had never really been independent.

Thereafter, Rep. Binay appealed to the next Speaker to try to salvage the reputation of the House. She also asked her colleagues not to lose sight that they were there not to serve just one person who lives

in the Palace but to serve the people who had placed their trust on them because otherwise, they do not deserve to be called Representatives.

112. In Filipino, Rep. Ma. Laarni “Lani” L. Cayetano thanked Speaker De Venecia for divulging the irregularities and anomalies of the current administration, even as he remarked that it happened too late. She stressed that it confirmed that the issues that the Minority had fought for, were legitimate.

She informed the Body that the district of Taugig-Pateros was a victim of the House’s irregularities. As she had espoused principles that contrasted with the Majority’s, she related that her constituency did not receive the allocations and benefits due it for three long years; and the House did not fight for it. She thanked her district-mates because despite the absence of projects, they valued principles more and still voted her into office as their Representative.

Rep. Cayetano then said that even as she desired change in the House leadership, she was anxious on whether the new Speaker would listen to the people or merely follow the dictates of Malacañang and would be ready to respect the principles of each Member. She expressed hope that change would not only be of face or personality but a change that would bring about solutions to the many problems of the country. Likewise abstaining from voting, she asked the new Speaker to be a sincere leader who would help Congress rise anew as an orderly and independent institution.

113. Rep. Cinchona C. Cruz-Gonzalez said that she concurred with her colleagues in the Minority for the reasons they had stated, and also cast a vote of abstention.

114. Rep. Salvador H. Escudero III said that he was hoping that the coalition in the House had allowed the Speaker to finish his term until 2010 because the President had asked to be allowed to also do so. In casting a vote of abstention, he gave the following statements in Filipino:

- a. Of all explanations given, the most unbelievable was that Malacañang had not interfered. Twelve Members who have direct links to Malacañang, had all voted in the affirmative. No explanation is needed for this. The principle of separation of the three branches of government is only for students of politics, is only in theory, and is a fallacy; and there has never been a House of Representatives that has been genuinely independent of Malacañang.

- b. The incoming Speaker must find out why a five-term Speaker could be removed from office, as the new Speaker might not also last long in office and the House might again vote for another Speaker. In particular, the incoming Speaker must read and study the transcripts of the explanations of votes.
- c. Respect is due to those who voted in the affirmative and admiration, to the barely 35 who had voted in the negative. Those who had asked for change -- especially the idealistic first-termers -- must ensure that change would be genuine and hypocrisy would end. Regionalism, which has prevented the country from becoming a nation, must end as regions are immaterial for as long as the Speaker does the job.

115. Rep. Herminia M. Ramiro requested that she be allowed to submit in writing her explanation of her “Yes” vote to the motion.

116. Rep. Lorna C. Silverio maintained that her vote to declare vacant the seat of the Speaker is not anchored on political interest, friendship, profit, personal benefits and personal consideration. She opined that hearing the speech of Speaker De Venecia has drawn a clear line between the latter and President Macapagal-Arroyo and the stability of the country. She expressed sadness over the divisiveness which she thinks would not achieve any good for the country. As she has been agonizing for the past week, she stated that that day is what she fears most since she would be made to choose between two party mates and that she lamented that it is a fight between allies. She then abstained to the motion.

## RESULTS OF THE VOTING

The result of the voting was as follows

*In favor:*

Abaya  
Aggabao  
Agyao  
Albano  
Alcala  
Alfelor  
Almario  
Alvarez (A.)  
Alvarez (G.)  
Amante  
Angara  
Angping  
Antonino

Apostol  
Aquino  
Arago  
Arbison  
Arenas  
Arnaiz  
Arroyo (D.)  
Bagatsing  
Barzaga  
Bautista  
Belmonte  
Bichara  
Bonoan-David  
Bravo  
Briones  
Bulut  
Cagas  
Cajayon  
Cajes  
Cari  
Castelo-Daza  
Castro  
Celeste  
Cerilles  
Chatto  
Chavez  
Chipeco  
Chong  
Clarete  
Climaco  
Codilla  
Coquilla  
Coscolluela  
Crisologo  
Cua (G.)  
Cua (J.)  
Dayanghirang  
Daza  
Defensor (A.)  
Defensor (M.)  
Del Rosario  
Diasnes  
Diaz  
Dimaporo  
Duavit  
Dueñas  
Dumarpa  
Dumpit  
Durano  
Dy  
Emano  
Enverga  
Ermita-Buhain  
Estrella (C.)  
Estrella (R.)  
Fabian  
Fernandez  
Ferrer

Garay  
Garcia (A.)  
Garcia, Pablo P.  
Garcia, Pablo John F.  
Garin  
Gatchalian  
Gatlabayan  
Go  
Gonzales (A.)  
Gonzales (N.)  
Gonzalez (R.)  
Gullas  
Gunigundo  
Hofer  
Jaafar  
Jala  
Jalosjos  
Jalosjos-Carreon  
Javier  
Jikiri  
Joson  
Lacson  
Lagbas  
Lagdameo  
Lapus  
Lazatin  
Lim  
Macapagal-Arroyo (M.)  
Madrona  
Magsaysay  
Malapitan  
Mamba  
Mandanas  
Mangudadatu  
Marañon  
Marcos  
Matugas  
Mendoza  
Mercado  
Miraflores  
Mitra  
Nava  
Nicolas  
Noel  
Olaño  
Ong  
Padilla  
Pancho  
Pancrudo  
Pichay  
Pingoy  
Plaza  
Ponce-Enrile  
Prieto-Teodoro  
Puentevella  
Puno  
Ramiro  
Remulla

Reyes (C.)  
 Reyes (V.)  
 Robes  
 Rodriguez-Zalदारriaga  
 Roman  
 Romarate  
 Romualdez  
 Romulo  
 Roxas  
 Salimbangon  
 Salvacion  
 San Luis  
 Sandoval  
 Santiago (J.)  
 Santiago (N.)  
 Seachon-Lanete  
 Seares-Luna  
 Singson (R.)  
 Solis  
 Soon-Ruiz  
 Suarez  
 Susano  
 Sy-Alvarado  
 Syjuco  
 Taliño-Mendoza  
 Tan  
 Tañada  
 Tieng  
 Tupas  
 Umali (A.)  
 Umali (C.)  
 Ungab  
 Uy, (E.)  
 Uy, Reynaldo  
 Uy, Rolando  
 Valdez  
 Vargas  
 Velarde  
 Villafuerte  
 Villarosa  
 Vinzons-Chato  
 Violago  
 Yap  
 Yu  
 Zamora (M.)

*Against:*

Abante  
 Agbayani  
 Amatong  
 Balindong  
 Beltran  
 Biazon  
 Biron  
 Cabilao  
 Casiño  
 Chiongbian

Chungalao  
 Cuenco  
 Dangwa  
 Datumanong  
 De Guzman  
 Del Mar  
 Dilangalen  
 Domogan  
 Fua  
 Hontiveros-Baraquel  
 Ilagan  
 Lagman  
 Ledesma  
 Locsin  
 Maza  
 Ocampo  
 Pablo  
 Piamonte  
 Piñol  
 Romualdo  
 Singson (E.)  
 Teodoro  
 Villar  
 Zamora (R.)  
 Zialcita

*Abstentions:*

Ablan  
 Antonino-Custodio  
 Asilo  
 Binay  
 Cayetano  
 Cojuangco  
 Cruz-Gonzales  
 Escudero  
 Garcia (V.)  
 Golez  
 Ortega  
 Rodriguez  
 Silverio  
 Sy-Limkaichong  
 Villanueva  
 Zubiri

With 174 affirmative votes, 35 negative votes and 16 abstentions, the motion to declare vacant the position of the Speaker was carried.

**SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

Thereafter, the Chair *motu proprio* suspended the session.

It was 12:43 a.m. Tuesday, February 5, 2008.

**RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 12:45 a.m., the session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Simeon A. Datumanong presiding.



**QUERY OF REP. ESCUDERO**

Upon recognition by the Chair, Rep. Escudero inquired on the vote of Rep. Fuentebella.

The Chair replied that he did not vote.

**MOTION OF REP. DEFENSOR (A.)**

Pursuant to the constitutional duty of the House, on motion of Rep. Defensor (A.), there being no objection, the Body opened the floor for nomination of the Speaker.

Thereafter, on motion of Rep. Defensor (A.), the Chair recognized Rep. De Venecia for his nomination speech.

**NOMINATION SPEECH OF  
REP. DE VENECIA**

*Mr. Speaker, in concert with high tradition and in order to set an example for Philippine democracy so that we can move rapidly to unite this divided House and in order to give primacy to the neglected region of the nation, the man I will nominate today for the position of the Speaker of the House is a man whom I proposed to become Chairperson of the Committee on Housing and we unanimously elected him as Chairperson thereof. The man whom we elected as Chairperson of the Committee on Rules and Majority Leader of the last Congress. And after the last elections and upon consultations because of his outstanding qualities, we moved and I personally recommended him, to become Chairperson of the House contingent to the powerful Commission on Appointments, my colleague in the 1998 elections when he ran for mayor and who, like your humble servant, failed in the elections of that year.*

*I just hope and I am certain that he will continue the reforms that we have set in motion in this House. In the next 10 days, this House will be among the first parliaments in Southeast Asia to have electronic voting and we have completed this process by lifting the flooring of this plenary hall by at least six inches and two electronic signboards are already in place. In a few days, all of us will have our fingerprints taken so that when we press the button, the lights will go up for either yes, no or abstain. And therefore, voting such as what happened now, will not take hours or perhaps even a day as in the last impeachment battle but rather, voting can be completed in one minute.*

*It came out in the newspapers that this electronic vote facility would cost ₱15 billion. It would only cost ₱15 million or slightly above \$300,000 to put this process in place which we are able to achieve because of the savings of this House. And I am happy*

*to report to you that I hope our new Speaker would complete the transmittal of computers and laptop machines for each and everyone of you because we have already acquired these laptop machines for distribution to each and everyone of you in the next few days.*

*Further, as you remember, this House returned to the National Treasury more than ₱60 million, the first House of Representatives to return such amount to the national government and to the National Treasury to set an example for all the units of government.*

*And finally, the additional ₱70 million that we saved, the Committee on Bidding in this House has now approved to begin the construction of a new building because now we have run out of space. And I would like to thank as well Rep. Edcel C. Lagman, Chairperson of the Committee on Appropriations, for succeeding in allocating ₱300 million in order that we can move towards the construction of a new building, in addition to the ₱70 million in savings that we have achieved, including the new gymnasium that we built out of our savings of ₱28 million last year, considered by the Commission on Audit (COA) as one of the most beautiful gymnasiums and constructed at the least cost.*

*I am sure that our dear friend and colleague, one of the outstanding leaders of this country and of this House, and I nominate him to become our next Speaker, Rep. Prospero C. Nograles of Davao City.*

**TERMINATION OF THE  
PERIOD FOR NOMINATIONS**

On motion of Rep. Cuenco, there being no objection the Chair closed the period of nominations.

**ELECTION OF REP. NOGRALES  
AS SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES**

Thereafter, there being only one nomination, on motion of Rep. Defensor (A.), there being no objection, the Body unanimously elected Rep. Nograles as Speaker of the House of Representatives.

**SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

Subsequently, on motion of Rep. Defensor (A.), the session was suspended at 12:55 a.m.

**RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 1:01 a.m., the session was resumed.

**MOTION OF REP. DEFENSOR (A.)**

Whereupon, on motion of Rep. Defensor (A.), there being no objection, the Body constituted a committee composed of the following Members to officially notify Rep. Prospero C. Nograles of his election as Speaker of the House of Representatives and to escort the Speaker-elect to the rostrum for his oath-taking: Reps. Luis R. Villafuerte, Rodolfo W. Antonino, Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Monico O. Puentevella, Rufus B. Rodriguez and Rene M. Velarde.

**SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

On motion of Rep. Defensor (A.), the session was suspended at 1:03 a.m.

**RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 1:07 a.m., the session was resumed.

**CONSIDERATION OF THE  
BICAMERAL CONFERENCE  
COMMITTEE REPORT ON  
HOUSE BILL NO. 3156**

While the Members were still awaiting the arrival of Speaker-elect Nograles and the members of his family for the oath-taking ceremony, Rep. Defensor (A.) moved that the Body consider the Bicameral Conference Committee Report on the disagreeing votes on House Bill No. 3156, regarding the creation of the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines.

There being no objection, the Body approved the motion.

**APPROVAL OF THE BICAMERAL  
CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT  
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 3156**

On motion of Rep. Defensor (A.), there being no objection, the Body approved the Bicameral Conference Committee Report on the disagreeing votes on House Bill No. 3156.

**SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

On motion of Rep. Defensor (A.), the session was suspended at 1:07 a.m.

**RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 1:10 a.m., the session was resumed.

**OATH-TAKING OF REP. NOGRALES**

Upon resumption of session, Rep. Prospero C. Nograles ascended the rostrum, together with the members of his family, and took his oath of office before Rep. Pablo P. Garcia as Speaker of the House of Representatives and in the presence of the Members of the House.

Subsequently, Deputy Speaker Datumanong relinquished the Chair to Speaker Nograles.

**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH OF  
SPEAKER NOGRALES**

*My esteemed colleagues, I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for this vote of confidence. I stand here with mixed personal feelings.*

*In the many years that I have also served the House of Representatives, I have known only two Speakers – Speaker Ramon V. Mitra and Speaker Jose C. De Venecia Jr.*

*Tonight, I would like to thank Speaker De Venecia for nominating me to this position. I also wish to thank Speaker De Venecia for all the years of service that he has done in the House of Representatives. I accept this position with all humility. I asked myself: “What am I doing here?” And I tell myself: “It is God’s will. It’s probably destiny.”*

*The voting we had today was both public and transparent. I ask everyone to respect the vote we have taken today. There were some harsh words and some controversial issues that were raised. They will all be addressed and answered at the proper time. Not now, not tonight. I accept the challenge to continue reforms in this Chamber and to improve the image of the House. But I will never make promises that I cannot keep.*

*It has been a long, tiring and emotional day for all of us. Now, the issue is finally settled. It is time to get back to work.*

*From the bottom of my heart, thank you very much.*

**SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

Whereupon, on motion of Rep. Defensor (A.), the session was suspended to enable the Members to greet the newly elected Speaker of the House of Representatives.

It was 1:20 a.m.

**RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 1:27 a.m., the session was resumed.

**SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

Inasmuch as it was already early morning, on motion of Rep. Defensor (A.), there being no objection, the session was suspended until four o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday, February 5, 2008.

It was 1:27 a.m., Tuesday, February 5, 2008.

**RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 4:00 p.m., Tuesday, February 5, 2008 the session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Ma. Amelita C. Villarosa presiding.

**SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

On motion of Rep. Roman T. Romulo, the Chair suspended the session.

It was 4:00 p.m.

**RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 4:29 p.m., the session was resumed.

**ROLL CALL**

Subsequently, on motion of Rep. Roman T. Romulo, the Body proceeded to the Roll Call.

Upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General called the Roll and the following Members were present:

Abaya  
Agbayani  
Agyao  
Albano  
Alcala  
Alfelor  
Almario  
Alvarez (G.)  
Amante  
Amatong  
Angara  
Antonino  
Antonino-Custodio  
Apostol  
Aquino  
Arago  
Arenas  
Arnaiz  
Arroyo (D.)

Asilo  
Bagatsing  
Balindong  
Barzaga  
Bautista  
Belmonte  
Binay  
Biron  
Bravo  
Briones  
Cabilao  
Cagas  
Cajayon  
Cajes  
Cari  
Castelo-Daza  
Castro  
Cayetano  
Celeste  
Cerilles  
Chatto  
Chavez  
Chiongbian  
Chipeco  
Clarete  
Climaco  
Codilla  
Coquilla  
Coscolluela  
Crisologo  
Cua (G.)  
Cua (J.)  
Dangwa  
Datumanong  
Dayanghirang  
Daza  
De Guzman  
Del Mar  
Del Rosario  
Diaz  
Dilangalen  
Domogan  
Dumarpa  
Dumpit  
Durano  
Ecleo  
Emano  
Enverga  
Escudero  
Estrella (C.)  
Estrella (R.)  
Fabian  
Fernandez  
Ferrer  
Fua  
Fuentebella  
Garay  
Garcia (A.)

Garcia, Pablo John F.  
 Garcia, Pablo P.  
 Garcia (V.)  
 Garin  
 Gatchalian  
 Gatlabayan  
 Go  
 Golez  
 Gonzales (A.)  
 Gonzales (N.)  
 Guingona  
 Gullas  
 Hataman  
 Hofer  
 Hontiveros-Baraquel  
 Ilagan  
 Jaafar  
 Jala  
 Jalosjos  
 Jalosjos-Carreon  
 Javier  
 Jikiri  
 Joson  
 Lagbas  
 Lagdameo  
 Lagman  
 Lapus  
 Lazatin  
 Lim  
 Macapagal Arroyo (M.)  
 Madrona  
 Magsaysay  
 Malapitan  
 Mamba  
 Mandanas  
 Mangudadatu  
 Marañon  
 Marcos  
 Matugas  
 Maza  
 Mendoza  
 Mercado  
 Miraflores  
 Nava  
 Nicolas  
 Noel  
 Nograles  
 Ocampo  
 Olaño  
 Ong  
 Ortega  
 Pablo  
 Padilla  
 Pancho  
 Pancrudo  
 Piamonte  
 Pichay  
 Pingoy

Piñol  
 Ponce-Enrile  
 Prieto-Teodoro  
 Puentevella  
 Puno  
 Remulla  
 Reyes (C.)  
 Reyes (V.)  
 Robes  
 Rodriguez  
 Rodriguez-Zaladarriaga  
 Roman  
 Romarate  
 Romualdez  
 Romualdo  
 Romulo  
 Roxas  
 Salimbangon  
 Salvacion  
 San Luis  
 Sandoval  
 Santiago (J.)  
 Seachon-Lanete  
 Seares-Luna  
 Silverio  
 Singson (E.)  
 Singson (R.)  
 Soon-Ruiz  
 Suarez  
 Sy-Alvarado  
 Sy-Limkaichong  
 Syjuco  
 Tañada  
 Teodoro  
 Tieng  
 Tupas  
 Umali (A.)  
 Umali (C.)  
 Ungab  
 Uy, Reynaldo  
 Uy, Rolando  
 Valencia  
 Vargas  
 Velarde  
 Villafuerte  
 Villanueva  
 Villar  
 Villarosa  
 Vinzons-Chato  
 Violago  
 Yap  
 Zamora (M.)  
 Zamora (R.)  
 Zubiri

With 190 Members present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum.

The following Members appeared before and/or after the Roll Call:

Abante  
Ablan  
Bonoan-David  
Bulut  
Cojuangco  
Cruz-Gonzales  
Cuenco  
De Venecia  
Defensor (A.)  
Defensor (M.)  
Diasnes  
Dimaporo  
Dy  
Kho  
Lopez  
Mitra  
Solis  
Susano  
Taliño-Mendoza  
Tan  
Uy (E.)  
Valdez

Thereafter, on motion of Rep. Romulo, there being no objection, the Chair recognized Deputy Speaker Arnulfo P. Fuentebella for some clarificatory remarks before proceeding to the Business for the Day.

#### **CLARIFICATORY REMARKS OF REP. FUENTEBELLA**

Initially, Rep. Fuentebella recalled that the previous day, Rep. Salvador H. Escudero III asked why the Presiding Officer did not vote on the motion to declare the position of Speaker vacant. He pointed out that the Rules of the House explicitly and categorically prohibits a presiding officer to cast his vote on any matter submitted under debate. He then quoted Section 113 of Rule XV on the manner of voting, to wit: "The Speaker shall rise and state the motion or question that is being put to a vote in clear, precise and simple language." Rep. Fuentebella stated that the Speaker clearly refers to the presiding officer. He thereafter quoted Section 118 with regard to a "tie vote", to wit: "The Speaker shall vote only in case of a tie. A tie on an appeal from a ruling of the Chair so sustains the decision of the Chair."

Rep. Fuentebella further clarified that when the provision says, "The Speaker shall vote only", it presupposes that the Speaker, at any point in time while presiding in the session on any matter submitted for determination by the Body on a vote, cannot participate. He said that the rationale for this is to prevent

any presiding officer to unduly influence the outcome of the vote. He added that this is the reason for the particular provision. He then pointed out that whoever sits as presiding officer on any motion to be voted upon by the Body is prohibited from voting except when it comes to election of officers, particularly the election of Speaker as a member of the Body. In this case, the presiding officer would have to participate by manifesting his vote.

#### **REMARKS OF REP. ESCUDERO**

Rep. Escudero expressed his appreciation for Rep. Fuentebella's clarification since he did not get a satisfactory answer from any of the Majority Floor Leaders on the floor the previous day.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GUESTS**

On motion of Rep. Romulo, the Body acknowledged the presence in the Session Hall of the following guests: 1) Misamis Oriental Board Member Jimmy Caiña and wife, and Arsenio Khu, who were guests of Reps. Danilo P. Lagbas and Yevgeny Vincente B. Emano; and 2) Councilor Francisco "Boy" Calalay of the First District of Quezon City, guest of Rep. Vincent "Bingbong" P. Crisologo.

#### **ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS**

Whereupon, on motion of Rep. Romulo, there being no objection, the Body proceeded to the Additional Reference of Business.

Thereafter, upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General read on First Reading the titles of the following Bills and Resolution, including the Communications which were referred to the appropriate Committees hereunder indicated:

#### **BILLS ON FIRST READING**

House Bill No. 3439, entitled:

"AN ACT CONVERTING THE ASUNCION, DAVAO DEL NORTE – SAN ISIDRO, DAVAO DEL NORTE – LAAK, COMPOSTELA VALLEY – VERUELA, AGU-SAN DEL SUR ROAD SECTION TO A NATIONAL SECONDARY ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR"

By Representatives Amatong, Olaño and Plaza

TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS  
AND HIGHWAYS AND THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 3440, entitled:

“AN ACT EXEMPTING THE SALE OF ELECTRICITY TO MARGINALIZED CONSUMERS FROM THE VALUE-ADDED TAX, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 109 (1) OF THE NATIONAL INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1997, AS AMENDED, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Javier

TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

House Bill No. 3441, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING TWO (2) ADDITIONAL BRANCHES OF REGIONAL TRIAL COURTS IN THE PROVINCE OF ILOILO WITH SEATS AT THE COMPONENT CITY OF PASSI, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 14, PARAGRAPH (G) OF BATAS PAMBANSA BLG. 129, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7154, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘JUDICIARY REORGANIZATION ACT OF 1980’, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Biron

TO THE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 3442, entitled:

“AN ACT CLASSIFYING THE SALE OR IMPORTATION OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AND RAW MATERIALS IN THE MANUFACTURE THEREOF AS VALUE-ADDED TAX EXEMPT TRANSACTIONS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 109 (1) OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8424, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE TAX REFORM ACT OF 1997, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9337, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representatives Casiño and Ocampo

TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

House Bill No. 3443, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE ALIWAG-WAG FALLS LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF BOSTON AND CATEEL, PROVINCE OF DAVAO ORIENTAL AND THE MUNICIPALITY OF COMPOSTELA, PROVINCE OF COMPOSTELA VALLEY AS A PROTECTED AREA UNDER THE CATEGORY OF PROTECTED LANDSCAPE AND ITS PERIPHERAL AREAS AS BUFFER ZONE, PROVIDING FOR ITS MANAGEMENT AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Dayanghirang

TO THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

House Bill No. 3444, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE BAGANGA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – LAMBAYON ANNEX IN BARANGAY LAMBAYON, MUNICIPALITY OF BAGANGA, PROVINCE OF DAVAO ORIENTAL FROM THE BAGANGA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS THE CRISPIN E. ROJAS NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Dayanghirang

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE AND THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 3445, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE CARAGA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL - ANNEX IN BARANGAY P.M. SOBRECAREY, MUNICIPALITY OF CARAGA, PROVINCE OF DAVAO ORIENTAL FROM THE CARAGA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS THE PANTUYAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Dayanghirang

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE AND THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 3446, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE INTEGRATION OF AN ADDITIONAL SUBJECT ON CULTURE, PEACE AND SOLIDARITY IN THE CURRICULA OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Rodriguez

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 3447, entitled:

“AN ACT ALLOWING ANY PERSON DOING BUSINESS AS IMPORTER OR EXPORTER TO REPRESENT HIMSELF OR HERSELF AS CUSTOMS BROKER, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9280, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE CUSTOMS BROKERS ACT OF 2004”

By Representative Rodriguez

TO THE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

House Bill No. 3448, entitled:

“AN ACT INCREASING THE CAPITAL OUTLAY ALLOCATION OF LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS WITH CLASSROOM SHORTAGE, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7880, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘FAIR AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EDUCATION ACT’ ”

By Representative Rodriguez

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE AND THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 3449, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE INTEGRATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE AS A SUBJECT IN THE ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY AND COLLEGIATE CURRICULA

AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE AND THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

House Bill No. 3450, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE SPECIAL HEALTH FUND FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez

TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 3451, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL EDUCATION COORDINATING COUNCIL, DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez

TO THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION AND THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 3452, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING A SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE IN THE PROVINCE OF TAWI-TAWI, CREATING FOR THIS PURPOSE THE TAWI-TAWI SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Jaafar

TO THE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND INDUSTRY, THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS AND THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 3453, entitled:

“AN ACT OFFICIALLY NAMING THE POLICE REGIONAL OFFICE 11 HEAD-QUARTERS, CATITIPAN, DAVAO CITY TO BE KNOWN AS CAMP P/SGT. QUINTIN M. MERECIDO”

By Representative Bautista

TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ORDER AND SAFETY

House Bill No. 3454, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE CALABANGA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CALABANGA, PROVINCE OF CAMARINES SUR, INTO A NATIONAL SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Villafuerte

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE AND THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 3455, entitled:

“AN ACT INCREASING AND EXPANDING THE BENEFITS GRANTED TO SENIOR CITIZENS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NOS. 7432 AND 9257, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Abante

TO THE COMMITTEE ON POPULATION AND FAMILY RELATIONS AND THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

### RESOLUTION

House Resolution No. 430, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT TO CONDUCT AN URGENT OMNIBUS INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE PREVAILING HEALTH AND SAFETY CONDITIONS OF THE WORKERS EMPLOYED AT THE HANJIN HEAVY INDUSTRIES CORPORATION-PHILIPPINES INCORPORATED (HHIC-PHIL INC.) SHIPYARD FACILITY AT

BARANGAY CAWAG, SUBIC, ZAMBALES”

By Representative Hontiveros-Baraquel

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

### ADDITIONAL COAUTHORS

With the permission of the Body, the following Members were made coauthors of the Bills and Resolutions hereunder indicated:

Rep. Joseph Emilio A. Abaya for House Bill No. 15;

Rep. Teofisto DL. Guingona III for House Bill No. 318;

Rep. Raul V. Del Mar for House Bill No. 411;

Rep. Datu Pax S. Mangudadatu for House Bill No. 417;

Rep. Nur G. Jaafar for House Bill No. 421;

Rep. Lorenzo R. Tañada III for House Bill No. 1199;

Rep. Marcelino “Marcy” R. Teodoro for House Bills No.731 and 1948;

Reps. Jose G. Solis and Salvador H. Escudero III for House Bill No. 2765;

Reps. Juan Edgardo M. Angara and Philip A. Pichay for House Bill No. 3110;

Rep. Edgar M. Chatto for House Bills No. 35, 40, 51, 62, 65, 98, 113, 125, 129, 133, 135, 136, 138, 139, 140, 143, 147, 156, 157, 165, 181, 182, 184, 185, 190, 191, 194, 195, 197, 237, 318, 941, 950 and House Resolution No. 1;

Rep. Eduardo C. Zialcita for House Bill No. 2488;

Rep. Ma. Amelita C. Villarosa for House Bill No. 3293;

Reps. Philip A. Pichay, Del R. De Guzman, Pangalanan M. Balindong, Magtanggol T. Gunigundo and Florencio C. Garay for House Bill No. 1257; and

Rep. Thelma Z. Almario for House Bills No. 3462, 3468 and 3469 and House Resolution No. 432.

### WITHDRAWAL OF COAUTHORSHIP



With the permission of the Body, Rep. Liza Largoza Maza withdrew her coauthorship of House Bill No. 3156.

### COMMUNICATIONS

Letter dated January 16, 2008 of Juan De Zuñiga, Jr., Assistant Governor and General Counsel, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, furnishing the House of Representatives with certified copies of BSP Circulars Numbered 593 and 594, Series of 2008 both dated January 8, 2008

#### TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

Letter dated January 18, 2008 of Juan De Zuñiga, Jr., Assistant Governor and General Counsel, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, furnishing the House of Representatives with certified copies of the following, to wit:

- a) BSP Circular No. 595, Series of 2008 dated January 11, 2008;
- b) BSP Circular No. 596, Series of 2008 dated January 11, 2008;
- c) BSP Circular No. 597, Series of 2008 dated January 11, 2008;
- d) BSP Circular No. 598, Series of 2008 dated January 11, 2008; and
- e) Circular Letter No. CL-2008-003 dated January 11, 2008

#### TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

2006 Annual Report of the Department of Health

#### TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

2006 Annual Report of the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons

#### TO THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES

Annual Audit Reports on the Government Service Insurance System; Employees' Compensation Commission; Home Development Mutual Fund; Home Guaranty Corporation; National Development Company; National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation; Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation; Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation; Philippine Health Insurance Corporation; Small Business Guarantee and Finance

Corporation and Social Security System for the year ended December 31, 2006

#### TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Annual Audit Reports on the Alabang-Sto. Tomas Development Inc. (A Wholly-owned Subsidiary of the National Development Company); Batangas Land Company, Inc. (A Subsidiary of the National Development Company); GY Real Estate, Inc. (A Subsidiary of the National Development Company); Kamayan Realty Corporation (A Subsidiary of the National Development Company); Pinagkaisa Realty Corporation (A Subsidiary of the National Development Company); NDC – Philippine Infrastructure Corporation (A Wholly-owned Subsidiary of the National Development Company); Trade and Investment Development Corporation of the Philippines, Philippine Export-Import Credit Agency; NDC – Maritime Leasing Corporation (formerly NDC – Maritime Equity Corporation – A Wholly-owned Subsidiary of the National Development Company); Social Housing Finance Corporation (A Wholly-owned Subsidiary of the National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation); PHIVIDECA Industrial Authority (A Subsidiary of the Philippine Veterans Investment Development Corporation); GSIS Family Bank (Formerly Comsavings Bank) and (a Subsidiary of the Government Service Insurance System); Meat Packing Corporation of the Philippines (A Wholly-owned Subsidiary of the Government Service Insurance System) and GSIS Mutual Fund, Inc. (An Open-End Investment Company and a Subsidiary of the Government Service Insurance System) for the year ended December 31, 2006

#### TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

### MANIFESTATION OF REP. BALINDONG

At this point, Rep. Pangalisan M. Balindong sought recognition on a question of personal and collective privilege.

### SUSPENSION OF SESSION

On motion of Rep. Romulo, the Chair suspended the session at 4:53 p.m.

### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:54 p.m., the session was resumed.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GUESTS

On motion of Rep. Romulo, the Body acknowledged the presence in the Session Hall of Mayor Ignacio Bandal and Atty. Ma. Teresa Bandal of the Municipality of Capul, Northern Samar, who were guests of Rep. Paul Ruiz Daza.

Thereafter, on motion of Rep. Romulo, the Chair recognized Rep. Luzviminda C. Ilagan for a manifestation.

## MANIFESTATION OF REP. ILAGAN

Upon recognition by the Chair, Rep. Ilagan stated that she was making her manifestation in the light of the Balikatan Military exercises which officially opened on February 3, 2008, under the cloak of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA).

Rep. Ilagan manifested her personal and the Gabriela Women's Party's strong opposition to the military exercises and the agreements that led to the permanent stay of 500 to 1,000 US Special Forces in Mindanao. She pointed out that according to reports, among the recent display of arrogance, misconduct and utter disregard of the rights of the people of Mindanao, said soldiers have interfered with the operations of a district hospital in Sulu causing the hospital to close down and deny people their much needed health services.

Rep. Ilagan related that Dr. Silak Lakkian, chief of the Panamao District Hospital, had said that upon orders of a certain Master Sergeant Ronburg of the U.S. Military Forces based in Camp Teodulo Bautista in Jolo, a team of U.S. soldiers barged into the hospital on November 30, 2007 and told the chief nurse to close the hospital not later than 6:00 p.m. and threatened to shoot anybody seen at the hospital premises after such time.

As of the present, she said that no proper probe has been made and officials merely sat down on complaints, accepting a verbal denial of the incident from a certain Lt. Cdr. Melissa Schuermann. Said incident, she explained, goes down in the list of violations committed by US troops during their stay in the country and which have remained unresolved.

Rep. Ilagan maintained that House Resolution No. 417 was filed to allow Congress to investigate on

the incident, many of which betray the lopsided provisions of the US-RP VFA. She then reiterated the Gabriela Women's Party's opposition to the VFA, the MLSA and the Balikatan Exercises which bring US troops above the country's law and beyond apprehension in the country.

## APPROVAL ON THIRD READING OF HOUSE BILL NO. 100

Thereafter, on motion of Rep. Gonzales (N.), there being no objection, the Body proceeded to the approval on Third Reading of House Bill No. 100, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on January 28, 2008, pursuant to Section 57, Rule X of the Rules of the House.

Upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General read the title of the Bill, to wit:

“AN ACT PROHIBITING THE USE OF THE WORDS ‘MUSLIM’ AND ‘CHRISTIAN’ IN MASS MEDIA TO DESCRIBE ANY PERSON SUSPECTED OF OR CONVICTED FOR HAVING COMMITTED CRIMINAL OR UNLAWFUL ACTS, AND PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION THEREOF.”

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.

## RESULT OF THE VOTING

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor:*

Abaya  
Abante  
Agbayani  
Agyao  
Albano  
Alcala  
Alfelor  
Almario  
Alvarez (G.)  
Amante  
Amatong  
Angara  
Antonino  
Antonino-Custodio  
Apostol  
Aquino  
Arago  
Arenas  
Arnaiz

|               |                       |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| Arroyo (D.)   | Fernandez             |
| Asilo         | Ferrer                |
| Bagatsing     | Fua                   |
| Balindong     | Fuentebella           |
| Barzaga       | Garay                 |
| Bautista      | Garcia (A.)           |
| Belmonte      | Garcia, Pablo John F. |
| Binay         | Garcia, Pablo P.      |
| Biron         | Garcia (V.)           |
| Bonoan-David  | Garin                 |
| Bravo         | Gatchalian            |
| Briones       | Gatlabayan            |
| Bulut         | Go                    |
| Cabilao       | Golez                 |
| Cagas         | Gonzales (A.)         |
| Cajayon       | Gonzales (N.)         |
| Cajes         | Guingona              |
| Cari          | Gullas                |
| Castelo-Daza  | Hataman               |
| Castro        | Hofer                 |
| Cayetano      | Hontiveros-Baraquel   |
| Celeste       | Ilagan                |
| Cerilles      | Jaafar                |
| Chatto        | Jala                  |
| Chavez        | Jalosjos              |
| Chiongbian    | Jalosjos-Carreon      |
| Chipeco       | Javier                |
| Clarete       | Jikiri                |
| Climaco       | Joson                 |
| Codilla       | Lagbas                |
| Coquilla      | Lagdameo              |
| Coscolluela   | Lagman                |
| Crisologo     | Lapus                 |
| Cua (G.)      | Lazatin               |
| Cua (J.)      | Lim                   |
| Cuenco        | Locsin                |
| Dangwa        | Lopez                 |
| Datumanong    | Macapagal Arroyo (M.) |
| Dayanghirang  | Madrona               |
| Daza          | Magsaysay             |
| De Guzman     | Malapitan             |
| Del Mar       | Mamba                 |
| Del Rosario   | Mandanas              |
| Diaz          | Mangudadatu           |
| Dilangalen    | Marañon               |
| Dimaporo      | Marcos                |
| Domogan       | Matugas               |
| Dumarpa       | Maza                  |
| Dumpit        | Mendoza               |
| Durano        | Mercado               |
| Dy            | Miraflores            |
| Ecleo         | Mitra                 |
| Emano         | Nava                  |
| Enverga       | Nicolas               |
| Escudero      | Noel                  |
| Estrella (C.) | Nogralas              |
| Estrella (R.) | Ocampo                |
| Fabian        | Olaño                 |

Ong  
 Ortega  
 Pablo  
 Padilla  
 Pancho  
 Pancrudo  
 Piamonte  
 Pichay  
 Pingoy  
 Piñol  
 Ponce-Enrile  
 Prieto-Teodoro  
 Puentevella  
 Puno  
 Remulla  
 Reyes (C.)  
 Reyes (V.)  
 Robes  
 Rodriguez  
 Rodriguez-Zalzarriaga  
 Roman  
 Romarate  
 Romualdez  
 Romualdo  
 Romulo  
 Roxas  
 Salimbangon  
 Salvacion  
 San Luis  
 Sandoval  
 Santiago (J.)  
 Seachon-Lanete  
 Seares-Luna  
 Silverio  
 Singson (E.)  
 Singson (R.)  
 Soon-Ruiz  
 Suarez  
 Sy-Alvarado  
 Sy-Limkaichong  
 Syjuco  
 Taliño-Mendoza  
 Tañada  
 Teodoro  
 Tieng  
 Tupas  
 Umali (A.)  
 Umali (C.)  
 Ungab  
 Uy, Reynaldo  
 Uy, Rolando  
 Valdez  
 Valencia  
 Vargas  
 Velarde  
 Villafuerte  
 Villanueva  
 Villar

Villarosa  
 Vinzons-Chato  
 Violago  
 Yap  
 Zamora (M.)  
 Zamora (R.)  
 Zubiri

*Against:*

None

*Abstention:*

None

With 200 affirmative votes, no negative votes and no abstentions, the Body approved on Third Reading House bill No. 100.

#### **PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY OF REP. AMANTE**

At this point, Rep. Amante inquired how his vote was recorded.

#### **REMARKS OF THE CHAIR**

The Chair however stated that with 200 affirmative votes, no negative votes and no abstentions, House Bill No. 100 was approved on Third Reading.

#### **PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY OF REP. AMANTE**

(Continuation)

Rep. Amante restated anew his query as to how his vote was recorded. He explained that he was outside the Session Hall as he was called by one of his constituents. He maintained that House Bill No. 100 is a very important measure as it involves the naming of a Christian and a Muslim, and expressed agreement that there should be no distinction in identifying a person. He added that he would not mind if his name was included as one of those who voted in favor of the measure.

#### **MOTION OF REP. GONZALES (N.)**

Rep. Gonzales (N.) thereupon moved to suspend the session.

#### **REMARKS OF REP. AMANTE**

Rep. Amante said that he has not yet made a vote on House Bill No. 100.

### SUSPENSION OF SESSION

On a previous motion of Rep. Gonzales (N.), the session was suspended at 5:05 p.m.

### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:06 p.m., the session was resumed.

### REMARKS OF REP. AMANTE

Rep. Amante stated that old age might have caught up with me. He quoted the Majority Leader that his voted was recorded as “Yes.” He stressed that with all his heart, he does not want any distinction between a Muslim and a Christian, this as he disclosed that his daughter is married to a Muslim. He added that his heart is married to the Muslims in Mindanao.

### APPROVAL ON THIRD READING OF HOUSE BILL NO. 2420

On motion of Rep. Gonzales (N.), there being no objection, the Body proceeded to the approval on Third Reading of House Bill No. 2420, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on January 28, 2008, pursuant to Section 57, Rule X of the Rules of the House.

Upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General read the title of the Bill, to wit:

“AN ACT AMENDING ARTICLE 75 OF TITLE IV OF EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 209, AS AMENDED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 227, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE FAMILY CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES.”

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.

### RESULT OF THE VOTING

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor:*

Abaya  
Abante  
Agbayani  
Agyao  
Albano

Alcala  
Alfelor  
Almario  
Alvarez (G.)  
Amante  
Amatong  
Angara  
Antonino  
Antonino-Custodio  
Apostol  
Aquino  
Arago  
Arenas  
Arnaiz  
Arroyo (D.)  
Asilo  
Bagatsing  
Balindong  
Barzaga  
Bautista  
Belmonte  
Binay  
Biron  
Bonoan-David  
Bravo  
Briones  
Bulut  
Cabilao  
Cagas  
Cajayon  
Cajes  
Cari  
Castelo-Daza  
Castro  
Cayetano  
Celeste  
Cerilles  
Chatto  
Chavez  
Chiongbian  
Chipeco  
Clarete  
Climaco  
Codilla  
Coquilla  
Coscolluela  
Crisologo  
Cua (G.)  
Cua (J.)  
Cuenco  
Dangwa  
Datumanong  
Dayanghirang  
Daza  
Defensor (A.)  
Defensor (M.)  
De Guzman  
Del Mar

Del Rosario  
Diaz  
Dilangalen  
Dimaporo  
Domogan  
Dumarpa  
Dumpit  
Durano  
Dy  
Ecleo  
Emano  
Enverga  
Escudero  
Estrella (C.)  
Estrella (R.)  
Fabian  
Fernandez  
Ferrer  
Fua  
Fuentebella  
Garay  
Garcia (A.)  
Garcia, Pablo John F.  
Garcia, Pablo P.  
Garcia (V.)  
Garin  
Gatchalian  
Gatlabayan  
Go  
Golez  
Gonzales (A.)  
Gonzales (N.)  
Guingona  
Gullas  
Hataman  
Hofer  
Hontiveros-Baraquel  
Ilagan  
Jaafar  
Jala  
Jalosjos  
Jalosjos-Carreon  
Javier  
Jikiri  
Joson  
Lagbas  
Lagdameo  
Lagman  
Lapus  
Lazatin  
Lim  
Locsin  
Lopez  
Macapagal Arroyo (M.)  
Madrona  
Magsaysay  
Malapitan  
Mamba

Mandanas  
Mangudadatu  
Marañon  
Marcos  
Matugas  
Maza  
Mendoza  
Mercado  
Miraflores  
Mitra  
Nava  
Nicolas  
Noel  
Nograles  
Ocampo  
Olaño  
Ong  
Ortega  
Pablo  
Padilla  
Pancho  
Pancrudo  
Piamonte  
Pichay  
Pingoy  
Piñol  
Ponce-Enrile  
Prieto-Teodoro  
Puentevella  
Puno  
Remulla  
Reyes (C.)  
Reyes (V.)  
Robes  
Rodriguez  
Rodriguez-Zaldarriaga  
Roman  
Romarate  
Romualdez  
Romualdo  
Romulo  
Roxas  
Salimbangon  
Salvacion  
San Luis  
Sandoval  
Santiago (J.)  
Seachon-Lanete  
Seares-Luna  
Silverio  
Singson (E.)  
Singson (R.)  
Solis  
Soon-Ruiz  
Suarez  
Sy-Alvarado  
Sy-Limkaichong  
Syjuco

Taliño-Mendoza  
 Tañada  
 Teodoro  
 Tieng  
 Tupas  
 Umali (A.)  
 Umali (C.)  
 Ungab  
 Uy, Reynaldo  
 Uy, Rolando  
 Valdez  
 Valencia  
 Vargas  
 Velarde  
 Villafuerte  
 Villanueva  
 Villar  
 Villarosa  
 Vinzons-Chato  
 Violago  
 Yap  
 Zamora (M.)  
 Zamora (R.)  
 Zubiri

*Against:*

None

*Abstention:*

None

With 203 affirmative votes, no negative votes and no abstentions, the Body approved on Third Reading House Bill No. 2420.

#### **PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY OF REP. CERILLES**

Rep. Cerilles inquired as to what the Body was voting about.

#### **REMARKS OF REP. GONZALES (N.)**

Rep. Gonzales asked for the result of the voting, this as he emphasized that the voting on Third Reading cannot be interrupted.

#### **REMARKS OF REP. CERILLES**

Rep. Cerilles emphasized that the Body was in the process of voting, and while he would like to make a vote, he said that he did not know what the Members were voting about.

#### **REMARKS OF REP. GONZALES (N.)**

Rep. Gonzales (N.) however sought from the Chair the result of the voting.

#### **REMARKS OF REP. CERILLES**

Rep. Cerilles said that he was trying to understand the Secretary General, this as he emphasized that the latter was talking in something like Latin. He maintained that the Members and the Secretariat are supposed to speak in English.

#### **REMARKS OF THE CHAIR**

The Chair thereafter read the following title of House Bill No. 2420: "AN ACT AMENDING ARTICLE 75 OF TITLE IV OF EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 209, AS AMENDED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 227, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE FAMILY CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES."

She thereafter clarified that there were 203 affirmative votes.

#### **REMARKS OF REP. CERILLES**

Rep. Cerilles said that the Members now know that the measure pending before the floor has something to do with the Family Code, and thanked the Chair for the information.

#### **REMARKS OF THE CHAIR**

The Chair stated that with 203 affirmative votes, no negative votes and no abstentions, the Body approved on Third Reading House Bill No. 2420.

#### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

The Chair thereafter *motu proprio* suspended the session at 5:12 p.m.

#### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 5:12 p.m., the session was resumed.

#### **APPROVAL ON THIRD READING OF HOUSE BILL NO. 2811**

On motion of Rep. Gonzales (N.), there being no objection, the Body proceeded to the approval on Third Reading of House Bill No. 2811, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on January 28, 2008, pursuant to Section 57, Rule X of the Rules of the House.

Upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General read the title of the Bill, to wit:

“AN ACT PENALIZING ANY ADVERTISING AGENCY, TELEVISION OR RADIO STATION AND PUBLICATION WHICH EXPLOIT WOMEN AND GLORIFY SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ITS ADVERTISEMENTS.”

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.

## RESULT OF THE VOTING

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor:*

Abaya  
Abante  
Agbayani  
Agyao  
Albano  
Alcala  
Alfelor  
Almario  
Alvarez (G.)  
Amante  
Amatong  
Angara  
Antonino  
Antonino-Custodio  
Apostol  
Aquino  
Arago  
Arenas  
Arnaiz  
Arroyo (D.)  
Asilo  
Bagatsing  
Balindong  
Barzaga  
Bautista  
Belmonte  
Binay  
Biron  
Bonoan-David  
Bravo  
Briones  
Bulut  
Cabilao  
Cagas  
Cajayon  
Cajes  
Cari  
Castelo-Daza

Castro  
Cayetano  
Celeste  
Cerilles  
Chatto  
Chavez  
Chiongbian  
Chipeco  
Clarete  
Climaco  
Codilla  
Coquilla  
Coscolluela  
Crisologo  
Cruz-Gonzales  
Cua (G.)  
Cua (J.)  
Cuenco  
Dangwa  
Datumanong  
Dayanghirang  
Daza  
Defensor (A.)  
Defensor (M.)  
De Guzman  
Del Mar  
Del Rosario  
Diaz  
Dilangalen  
Dimaporo  
Domogan  
Dumarpa  
Dumpit  
Durano  
Dy  
Ecleo  
Emano  
Enverga  
Escudero  
Estrella (C.)  
Estrella (R.)  
Fabian  
Fernandez  
Ferrer  
Fua  
Fuentebella  
Garay  
Garcia (A.)  
Garcia, Pablo John F.  
Garcia, Pablo P.  
Garcia (V.)  
Garin  
Gatchalian  
Gatlabayan  
Go  
Golez  
Gonzales (A.)  
Gonzales (N.)



|                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Guingona              | Reyes (V.)            |
| Gullas                | Robes                 |
| Hataman               | Rodriguez             |
| Hofer                 | Rodriguez-Zaldarriaga |
| Hontiveros-Baraquel   | Roman                 |
| Ilagan                | Romarate              |
| Jaafar                | Romualdez             |
| Jala                  | Romualdo              |
| Jalosjos              | Romulo                |
| Jalosjos-Carreon      | Roxas                 |
| Javier                | Salimbangon           |
| Jikiri                | Salvacion             |
| Joson                 | San Luis              |
| Lagbas                | Sandoval              |
| Lagdameo              | Santiago (J.)         |
| Lagman                | Seachon-Lanete        |
| Lapus                 | Seares-Luna           |
| Lazatin               | Silverio              |
| Lim                   | Singson (E.)          |
| Locsin                | Singson (R.)          |
| Lopez                 | Solis                 |
| Macapagal Arroyo (M.) | Soon-Ruiz             |
| Madrona               | Suarez                |
| Magsaysay             | Sy-Alvarado           |
| Malapitan             | Sy-Limkaichong        |
| Mamba                 | Syjuco                |
| Mandanas              | Taliño-Mendoza        |
| Mangudadatu           | Tan                   |
| Marañon               | Tañada                |
| Marcos                | Teodoro               |
| Matugas               | Tieng                 |
| Maza                  | Tupas                 |
| Mendoza               | Umali (A.)            |
| Mercado               | Umali (C.)            |
| Miraflores            | Ungab                 |
| Mitra                 | Uy, Reynaldo          |
| Nava                  | Uy, Rolando           |
| Nicolas               | Valdez                |
| Noel                  | Valencia              |
| Nogales               | Vargas                |
| Ocampo                | Velarde               |
| Olaño                 | Villafuerte           |
| Ong                   | Villanueva            |
| Ortega                | Villar                |
| Pablo                 | Villarosa             |
| Padilla               | Vinzons-Chato         |
| Pancho                | Violago               |
| Pancrudo              | Yap                   |
| Piamonte              | Zamora (M.)           |
| Pichay                | Zamora (R.)           |
| Pingoy                | Zubiri                |
| Piñol                 |                       |
| Ponce-Enrile          | <i>Against:</i>       |
| Prieto-Teodoro        |                       |
| Puentevella           | None                  |
| Puno                  |                       |
| Remulla               | <i>Abstention:</i>    |
| Reyes (C.)            |                       |

None

With 205 affirmative votes, no negative votes and no abstentions, the Body approved on Third Reading House Bill No. 2811.

Thereafter, the Chair recognized Rep. Pangalian M. Balindong to rise on a question of personal and collective privilege.

#### **QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE OF REP. BALINDONG**

*Madam Speaker, distinguished colleagues:*

*Previously, I talked on the massing of troops by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). They were putting themselves on war footing. I suggested a return instead to the negotiation table.*

*Now, the talk of the town is the Balikatan 2008. My office is flooded with questions, such as, why have the war game participants chosen, of all places, Lanao Del Sur, the heart of Muslim land, as the situs of the joint Balikatan exercises. Why are they toying with our cultural sensibilities? Why are they trying to remind us of the exploits of the US Armed Forces in the battle of Bayang in the 1900s which claimed the lives of thousands of Bangsamoros including the sultan of Bayang; and in the Battle of Bacolod Grande where our forbears fell under the weight of the .45 caliber invented by Browning solely for the Moro? Or are they simply saber-rattling to cow us down to submission?*

*The American experience of 9/11 makes every Muslim a suspected terrorist. This Balikatan exercises will not deter terrorism but will instead fan the fire of discontent among victims of human rights violations in the previous Balikatan exercises. In that light, I advised through phone patch, student activists, Islamic militants who are now holding demonstrations in Marawi City at this very moment, to approach the Balikatan problem with caution and sobriety.*

*No matter what the real intention of the Balikatan exercise is, whether to conduct medical mission or to repair roads and school buildings, the better part of judgment is to spare the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) area in accordance with the essence of autonomy. Let us not allow the merchants of death to peddle their wares among the natives. It is dangerous to all of us -- protagonists as well as onlookers.*

*Thank you, Madam Speaker.*

#### **INTERPELLATION OF REP. OCAMPO**

On motion of Rep. Gonzales (N.), the Chair recognized Rep. Saturnino C. Ocampo who first commended Rep. Balindong for raising the issue of Balikatan exercises in Muslim areas. He then inquired whether the exercises have enabled American troops to have permanent presence in certain areas in Mindanao regardless of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) which provides that they should stay in the Philippines only for a short period of time and for specific joint military exercises.

He pointed out that the first of these exercises was held in Basilan in 2002 when former Congressman Wahab Akbar was governor; and that the intention thereof was to train Filipino soldiers in actual combat operations purportedly to flush out terrorist activities in said province. He recalled that he was involved in an international fact-finding mission in July 2002 as regards the involvement of three American soldiers in the shooting of a suspected murderer in Tipo-Tipo; and that this became a big issue because American troops were not supposed to be engaged in combat activities. Saying that American soldiers are supposed to be advisers and trainers only, he relayed reports of their involvement in actual military operations in Sulu.

Rep. Balindong affirmed Rep. Ocampo's observation, saying that the soldiers under the military exercise are armed and could always be involved in encounters especially in Lanao Del Sur which is predominantly Muslim and culturally sensitive. He added that an armed American soldier will fire back if he is fired upon.

#### **MOTION OF REP. OCAMPO**

Rep. Ocampo said that American soldiers under the Balikatan exercises follow the rule to fire back as well as to initiate fire if they think that they would be fired upon. He moved that Rep. Balindong's speech be referred to the appropriate Committee so that the latter can study whether current and previous Balikatan exercises were justified and violated terms of agreement, the VFA, and the Constitutional provision against the presence of foreign troops and facilities in the Philippines unless allowed under a Senate-ratified treaty. He appealed to the Body to give priority to an on site investigation and actual observation of the exercises as he stressed the issues of national sovereignty and potential armed conflict involving foreigners.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF REP. ALFELOR**

Upon recognition by the Chair, Rep. Felix R. Alfelor Jr. inquired whether local officials could have invited the foreign troops to their area who also help in infrastructure projects.

Rep. Balindong said that all leaders from the governor to the barangay officials in Lanao Del Sur opposed the exercises and were not consulted thereon as should have been done in keeping with the policy of autonomy. He asked why the same was happening in the ARMM of all places, stressing that this was against the essence of autonomy. He pointed out that Americans have always implemented the so-called policy of attraction in all aspects including public works and education so that they could dominate and rule Muslim areas, and that their troops were in Lanao del Sur for a deeper agenda.

Rep. Alfelor then asked whether it could have been the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) which had invited the Americans to help in the drive against the Abu Sayyaf or some lawless elements in the area.

Rep. Balindong replied that he did not know whether this was true but was sure that no Muslim of sound mind would accept the presence of any American soldier in his area and especially in the heart of Muslim land.

Saying that he sympathized with his colleague, Rep. Alfelor suggested that the military be asked on the matter especially in the course of the proposed investigation. He opined that Americans were in the area because the local government, AFP, or high government officials invited them.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF REP. CLIMACO**

Upon recognition by the Chair, Rep. Maria Isabelle G. Climaco asked on Rep. Balindong's plan of action inasmuch as his constituents had not been consulted in the conduct of the exercises.

Rep. Balindong said that he was considering the referral of the matter to the proper House Committee for investigation.

Rep. Climaco said that Zamboanga City has welcomed American troops since 2002 who have conducted different Balikatan exercises and participated in training courses in cultural sensitivity. She opined that in line with the revelations of the Gabriela Party-

List Representatives and Rep. Balindong, the Body should ask the VFA Committee, US Government and AFP to give their plans of action on the conduct of Balikatan exercises. In doing so, she said, matters will be clarified and local governments and their constituencies will be guided accordingly. She remarked that Zamboanga City itself, as a host city, did not really know the great intention of America in the cities of Mindanao.

#### **REFERRAL OF REP. BALINDONG'S SPEECH**

On motion of Rep. Gonzales, there being no objection, Rep. Balindong's speech and all interpellations thereon were referred to the Committee on Rules for eventual referral to the appropriate Committee.

#### **REMARKS OF REP. MITRA**

The Chair then recognized Rep. Mitra to speak on the recent removal of Speaker De Venecia from the Speakership. Rep. Mitra clarified that he had objected to the motion to allow Speaker De Venecia to speak thereon because he considered the declaration of the position of Speaker as vacant to be a higher Constitutional duty. He also clarified that when he then rose anew in order to withdraw his objection to allow the Speaker to make a statement, the Chair had already made a ruling. He lamented that he was not even given a chance to explain his side because right after the ruling of the Chair, the Majority Leader recognized former Speaker De Venecia on a question of personal and collective privilege. He stressed that he wanted to protect the former Speaker from self-destruction saying things that may be harmful to him or the House as a whole and that he just wanted to give the latter a graceful way out.

Considering that he has been accused left and right in connection with the previous day's events, Rep. Mitra clarified that in no way did he want to muzzle former Speaker De Venecia and added that he only wanted to clear his name and his intentions regarding his objection to the motion.

The Chair thereafter noted the Rep. Mitra's manifestation.

#### **APPROVAL ON THIRD READING OF HOUSE BILL NO. 3305**

On motion of Rep. Gonzales (N.), there being no objection, the Body proceeded to the approval on Third Reading of House Bill No. 3305, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on January 28, 2008, pursuant to Section 57, Rule X of the Rules of the House.

Upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General read the title of the Bill, to wit:

“AN ACT PROHIBITING AND PENALIZING THE PRODUCTION, PRINTING, PUBLICATION, IMPORTATION, SALE, DISTRIBUTION AND EXHIBITION OF OBSCENE AND PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIALS, AND THE EXHIBITION OF LIVE SEXUAL ACTS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE ARTICLE 201 OF THE REVISED PENAL CODE, AS AMENDED.”

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.

### RESULT OF THE VOTING

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor:*

Abaya  
Abante  
Ablan  
Agbayani  
Agyao  
Albano  
Alcala  
Alfelor  
Almario  
Alvarez (G.)  
Amante  
Amatong  
Angara  
Antonino  
Antonino-Custodio  
Apostol  
Aquino  
Arago  
Arenas  
Arnaiz  
Arroyo (D.)  
Asilo  
Bagatsing  
Balindong  
Barzaga  
Bautista  
Belmonte  
Binay  
Biron  
Bonoan-David  
Bravo  
Briones  
Bulut  
Cabilao

Cagas  
Cajayon  
Cajes  
Cari  
Castelo-Daza  
Castro  
Cayetano  
Celeste  
Cerilles  
Chatto  
Chavez  
Chiongbian  
Chipeco  
Clarete  
Climaco  
Codilla  
Coquilla  
Coscolluela  
Crisologo  
Cruz-Gonzales  
Cua (G.)  
Cua (J.)  
Cuenco  
Dangwa  
Datumanong  
Dayanghirang  
Daza  
Defensor (A.)  
Defensor (M.)  
De Guzman  
Del Mar  
Del Rosario  
Diaz  
Dilangalen  
Dimaporo  
Domogan  
Dumarpa  
Dumpit  
Durano  
Dy  
Ecleo  
Emano  
Enverga  
Escudero  
Estrella (C.)  
Estrella (R.)  
Fabian  
Fernandez  
Ferrer  
Fua  
Fuentebella  
Garay  
Garcia (A.)  
Garcia, Pablo John F.  
Garcia, Pablo P.  
Garcia (V.)  
Garin  
Gatchalian

|                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Gatlabayan            | Prieto-Teodoro        |
| Go                    | Puentevella           |
| Golez                 | Puno                  |
| Gonzales (A.)         | Remulla               |
| Gonzales (N.)         | Reyes (C.)            |
| Guingona              | Reyes (V.)            |
| Gullas                | Robes                 |
| Hataman               | Rodriguez             |
| Hofer                 | Rodriguez-Zalzarriaga |
| Hontiveros-Baraquel   | Roman                 |
| Ilagan                | Romarate              |
| Jaafar                | Romualdez             |
| Jala                  | Romualdo              |
| Jalosjos              | Romulo                |
| Jalosjos-Carreon      | Roxas                 |
| Javier                | Salimbangon           |
| Jikiri                | Salvacion             |
| Joson                 | San Luis              |
| Lagbas                | Sandoval              |
| Lagdameo              | Santiago (J.)         |
| Lagman                | Seachon-Lanete        |
| Lapus                 | Seares-Luna           |
| Lazatin               | Silverio              |
| Lim                   | Singson (E.)          |
| Locsin                | Singson (R.)          |
| Lopez                 | Solis                 |
| Macapagal Arroyo (M.) | Soon-Ruiz             |
| Madrona               | Suarez                |
| Magsaysay             | Sy-Alvarado           |
| Malapitan             | Sy-Limkaichong        |
| Mamba                 | Syjuco                |
| Mandanas              | Taliño-Mendoza        |
| Mangudadatu           | Tan                   |
| Marañon               | Tañada                |
| Marcos                | Teodoro               |
| Matugas               | Tieng                 |
| Maza                  | Tupas                 |
| Mendoza               | Umali (A.)            |
| Mercado               | Umali (C.)            |
| Miraflores            | Ungab                 |
| Mitra                 | Uy (E.)               |
| Nava                  | Uy, Reynaldo          |
| Nicolas               | Uy, Rolando           |
| Noel                  | Valdez                |
| Nograles              | Valencia              |
| Ocampo                | Vargas                |
| Olaño                 | Velarde               |
| Ong                   | Villafuerte           |
| Ortega                | Villanueva            |
| Pablo                 | Villar                |
| Padilla               | Villarosa             |
| Pancho                | Vinzons-Chato         |
| Pancrudo              | Violago               |
| Piamonte              | Yap                   |
| Pichay                | Zamora (M.)           |
| Pingoy                | Zamora (R.)           |
| Piñol                 | Zubiri                |
| Ponce-Enrile          |                       |

*Against:*

None

*Abstention:*

None

With 207 affirmative votes, no negative votes and no abstentions, the Body approved on Third Reading House Bill No. 3305.

### **APPROVAL ON THIRD READING OF HOUSE BILL NO. 3323**

On motion of Rep. Gonzales (N.), there being no objection, the Body proceeded to the approval on Third Reading of House Bill No. 3323, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on January 28, 2008, pursuant to Section 57, Rule X of the Rules of the House.

Upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General read the title of the Bill, to wit:

“AN ACT ALLOWING FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERANS TO CONTINUE RECEIVING PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT PENSIONS AND BENEFITS NOTWITHSTANDING SIMILAR PENSIONS AND BENEFITS PROVIDED BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, THEREBY AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6948, AS AMENDED.”

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.

### **RESULT OF THE VOTING**

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor:*

Abaya  
Abante  
Ablan  
Agbayani  
Agyao  
Albano  
Alcala  
Alfelor  
Almario  
Alvarez (G.)  
Amante

Amatong  
Angara  
Antonino  
Antonino-Custodio  
Apostol  
Aquino  
Arago  
Arenas  
Arnaiz  
Arroyo (D.)  
Asilo  
Bagatsing  
Balindong  
Barzaga  
Bautista  
Belmonte  
Binay  
Biron  
Bonoan-David  
Bravo  
Briones  
Bulut  
Cabilao  
Cagas  
Cajayon  
Cajes  
Cari  
Castelo-Daza  
Castro  
Cayetano  
Celeste  
Cerilles  
Chatto  
Chavez  
Chiongbian  
Chipeco  
Clarete  
Climaco  
Codilla  
Coquilla  
Coscolluela  
Crisologo  
Cruz-Gonzales  
Cua (G.)  
Cua (J.)  
Cuenco  
Dangwa  
Datumanong  
Dayanghirang  
Daza  
Defensor (A.)  
Defensor (M.)  
De Guzman  
Del Mar  
Del Rosario  
Diaz  
Dilangalen  
Dimaporo

|                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Domogan               | Matugas               |
| Dumarpa               | Maza                  |
| Dumpit                | Mendoza               |
| Durano                | Mercado               |
| Dy                    | Miraflores            |
| Ecleo                 | Mitra                 |
| Emano                 | Nava                  |
| Enverga               | Nicolas               |
| Escudero              | Noel                  |
| Estrella (C.)         | Nogales               |
| Estrella (R.)         | Ocampo                |
| Fabian                | Olaño                 |
| Fernandez             | Ong                   |
| Ferrer                | Ortega                |
| Fua                   | Pablo                 |
| Fuentebella           | Padilla               |
| Garay                 | Pancho                |
| Garcia (A.)           | Pancrudo              |
| Garcia, Pablo John F. | Piamonte              |
| Garcia, Pablo P.      | Pichay                |
| Garcia (V.)           | Pingoy                |
| Garin                 | Piñol                 |
| Gatchalian            | Ponce-Enrile          |
| Gatlabayan            | Prieto-Teodoro        |
| Go                    | Puentevella           |
| Golez                 | Puno                  |
| Gonzales (A.)         | Remulla               |
| Gonzales (N.)         | Reyes (C.)            |
| Guingona              | Reyes (V.)            |
| Gullas                | Robes                 |
| Hataman               | Rodriguez             |
| Hofer                 | Rodriguez-Zalzarriaga |
| Hontiveros-Baraquel   | Roman                 |
| Ilagan                | Romarate              |
| Jaafar                | Romualdez             |
| Jala                  | Romualdo              |
| Jalosjos              | Romulo                |
| Jalosjos-Carreon      | Roxas                 |
| Javier                | Salimbangon           |
| Jikiri                | Salvacion             |
| Joson                 | San Luis              |
| Lagbas                | Sandoval              |
| Lagdameo              | Santiago (J.)         |
| Lagman                | Seachon-Lanete        |
| Lapus                 | Seares-Luna           |
| Lazatin               | Silverio              |
| Lim                   | Singson (E.)          |
| Locsin                | Singson (R.)          |
| Lopez                 | Solis                 |
| Macapagal Arroyo (M.) | Soon-Ruiz             |
| Madrona               | Suarez                |
| Magsaysay             | Sy-Alvarado           |
| Malapitan             | Sy-Limkaichong        |
| Mamba                 | Syjuco                |
| Mandanas              | Taliño-Mendoza        |
| Mangudadatu           | Tan                   |
| Marañon               | Tañada                |
| Marcos                | Teodoro               |

Tieng  
 Tupas  
 Umali (A.)  
 Umali (C.)  
 Ungab  
 Uy (E.)  
 Uy, Reynaldo  
 Uy, Rolando  
 Valdez  
 Valencia  
 Vargas  
 Velarde  
 Villafuerte  
 Villanueva  
 Villar  
 Villarosa  
 Vinzons-Chato  
 Violago  
 Yap  
 Zamora (M.)  
 Zamora (R.)  
 Zubiri

*Against:*

None

*Abstention:*

None

With 207 affirmative votes, no negative votes and no abstentions, the Body approved on Third Reading House Bill No. 3323.

#### **OMNIBUS APPROVAL ON SECOND READING OF CERTAIN BILLS**

On an omnibus motion of Rep. Gonzales (N.), there being no objection, the Body considered on Second Reading the following Bills calendared under the Bills for Thursday and Friday, as contained in various Committee Reports submitted by the Committees concerned; dispensed with the reading of the texts thereof without prejudice to their insertion into the Record of the House; upon authority/request of the respective authors, inserted the Explanatory Notes thereof as the sponsorship remarks on the measure; terminated the period of sponsorship and debate thereon; approved the amendments as contained in the Committee Reports, if any; terminated the period of amendments thereon; and approved the same on Second Reading:

1. House Bill No. 1592 as contained in Committee Report No. 214, submitted by the Committee on Basic Education and Culture, changing the name of Paglaum National

High School in Barangay Paglaum, Municipality of Binalbagan, Province of Negros Occidental, to the Binalbagan National High School;

2. House Bill No. 3327 as contained in Committee Report No. 215, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education and Culture and Appropriations, establishing a national high school in Barangay Jupi, Municipality of Gubat, Province of Sorsogon to be known as the Jupi National High School;
3. House Bill No. 3328 as contained in Committee Report No. 216, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education and Culture and Appropriations, establishing a national high school in Barangay Gate, Municipality of Bulan, Province of Sorsogon to be known as the Gate National High School;
4. House Bill No. 3329 as contained in Committee Report No. 217, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education and Culture and Appropriations, establishing a national high school in Barangay San Juan Bag-o, Municipality of Bulan, Province of Sorsogon to be known as the San Juan Bag-o National High School;
5. House Bill No. 3330 as contained in Committee Report No. 218, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education and Culture and Appropriations, establishing a national high school in Barangay Cogon, Municipality of Juban, Province of Sorsogon to be known as the Juban National High School;
6. House Bill No. 3331 as contained in Committee Report No. 219, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education and Culture and Appropriations, establishing a national high school in Barangay Recodo, City of Zamboanga, to be known as Recodo National High School;
7. House Bill No. 3332 as contained in Committee Report No. 220, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education and Culture and Appropriations, establishing a national high school in Barangay Capisan, City of Zamboanga, to be known as the Capisan National High School;
8. House Bill No. 3333 as contained in Committee Report No. 221, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education and Culture and Appropriations, establishing a national



- high school in Barangay Beguin, Municipality of Bulan, Province of Sorsogon to be known as the Beguin Agro-Industrial High School;
9. House Bill No. 3334 as contained in Committee Report No. 222, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education and Culture and Appropriations, establishing a national high school in Barangay Minoyan, Municipality of Murcia, Province of Negros Occidental, to be known as the Barangay Minoyan National High School;
  10. House Bill No. 3335 as contained in Committee Report No. 223, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education and Culture and Appropriations, establishing a national high school in Barangay Salawao, Sto. Niño, Municipality of Talaingod, Province of Davao del Norte, to be known as Datu Jose A. Libayao Memorial National High School;
  11. House Bill No. 3336 as contained in Committee Report No. 224, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education and Culture and Appropriations, establishing a national high school in Barangay Mesaoy, Municipality of New Corella, Province of Davao del Norte, to be known as the Mesaoy National High School;
  12. House Bill No. 3337 as contained in Committee Report No. 225, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education and Culture and Appropriations, establishing a national high school in Barangay Sagayen, Municipality of Asuncion, Province of Davao del Norte, to be known as Sagayen National High School;
  13. House Bill No. 3338 as contained in Committee Report No. 226, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education and Culture and Appropriations, establishing a national high school in Barangay Sua, Municipality of Matnog, Province of Sorsogon to be known as the Sua National High School;
  14. House Bill No. 3339 as contained in Committee Report No. 227, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education and Culture and Appropriations, establishing a national high school in Barangay Macabari, Municipality of Barcelona, Province of Sorsogon to be known as the Macabari National High School;
  15. House Bill No. 3340 as contained in Committee Report No. 228, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education and Culture and Appropriations, establishing a national high school in Barangay Otavi, Municipality of Bulan, Province of Sorsogon to be known as the Faustino G. Glua National High School; and
  16. House Bill No. 3341 as contained in Committee Report No. 229, submitted by the Committees on Basic Education and Culture and Appropriations, establishing a national high school in Barangay Semong, Municipality of Kapalong, Province of Davao del Norte, to be known as Semong National High School.

#### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

Thereafter, on motion of Rep. Gonzales (N.), the session was suspended at 5:51 p.m.

#### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 6:05 p.m., the session was resumed.

#### **ELECTION OF REP. PINGOY AS ADDITIONAL CONFEREE TO THE BICAMERAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE BILL NO. 2844 AND ITS SENATE COUNTERPART BILL**

On motion of Rep. Del R. De Guzman, there being no objection, the Body designated Rep. Arthur "Dodo" Y. Pingoy Jr., chairperson of the Committee on Health, as additional conferee to the Bicameral Conference Committee on the disagreeing provisions of House Bill No. 2844 and its Senate counterpart bill, or the Affordable Medicines Bill.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS: COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 203 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 3293**

On further motion of Rep. De Guzman, there being no objection, the Body resumed the consideration on Second Reading of House Bill No. 3293, as contained in Committee Report No. 203 and submitted by the Committees on Health and Appropriations.

Upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General read the title of the Bill, to wit:

“AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE REGULATORY CAPACITY OF THE BUREAU OF FOOD AND DRUGS (BFAD) BY ESTABLISHING ADEQUATE TESTING LABORATORIES AND FIELD OFFICES, UPGRADING ITS EQUIPMENT, AUGMENTING ITS HUMAN RESOURCE COMPLEMENT, GIVING AUTHORITY TO RETAIN ITS INCOME, RENAMING IT AS THE FOOD AND DRUGS ADMINISTRATION (FDA) AND AMENDING CERTAIN SECTIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT 3720, AS AMENDED AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREOF.”

Rep. De Guzman informed the Body that the Bill was in the period of sponsorship and debate and for this purpose, the Chair recognized Rep. Pingoy to sponsor the measure and Rep. Salvador H. Escudero III to interpellate thereon.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF REP. ESCUDERO**

To the initial query of Rep. Escudero regarding the current manpower complement and budget of the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD), Rep. Pingoy replied that at present, the Bureau is authorized to have 393 plantilla positions but only 318 thereof are filled up. He said that if given the necessary budget, BFAD proposes to increase its personnel complement to 1,625.

Anticipating the approval of the Affordable Medicines Bill, Rep. Escudero inquired whether the proposed manpower complement would be enough to cater to the additional demands for the services of the proposed Food and Drugs Administration (FDA).

In response, Rep. Pingoy enumerated the corresponding size of the various personnel positions of the proposed FDA for each proposed office and stated that they would be enough to implement the regulatory powers of the proposed FDA. He also assured Rep. Escudero that as proposed, the FDA people would man all FDA regional offices in the future unlike at present, wherein FDA personnel are available only in selected urban areas.

Given the foregoing assurance of the Sponsor, Rep. Escudero stressed that as per earlier agreement, the House was supposed to approve House Bill No. 3293 in conjunction with the Cheaper Medicines Bill. He expressed hope that under the new leadership and the expected changes to be introduced, the Chamber would be able to make up for lost time. He expressed belief that the instant measure would give muscle to the proper implementation of the Cheaper Medicines Bill once enacted into a law.

Subsequently, on motion of Rep. De Guzman, the Chair recognized Rep. Roilo Golez to interpellate Rep. Pingoy.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF REP. GOLEZ**

As regards the proposal to change the name of BFAD to FDA, Rep. Golez noted that in the local food and drug industry, the term FDA usually refers to the U.S. FDA while BFAD refers to its local counterpart. Considering that the U.S. is a big source of food, cosmetic and pharmaceutical products, he expressed apprehension that confusion might arise whenever interested parties would use the term “FDA” in their communications.

Rep. Pingoy replied that BFAD was originally named FDA until an executive order changed it to BFAD. He disclosed that the proposed change in name aims to conform the Philippine food and drug regulatory agency to the practice being done in other ASEAN countries, which had also named their regulatory agencies as FDA.

Rep. Golez inquired whether the only reason behind the proposal to change the name of BFAD was to internationalize the term. He asked what could be the problem with the name BFAD. He also asked whether the new name would be perceived as an agency higher than a bureau and further asked if an administration like FDA is considered equal to or higher than a bureau like BFAD, in terms of administrative hierarchy.

In reply, Rep. Pingoy reiterated that the intention was to put BFAD at par with its foreign counterparts. He underscored that a bureau is deemed lower than its foreign FDA equivalent.

Rep. Golez noted that the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs are examples of high-powered agencies even if they are referred to as bureaus.

Pursuing his point, the Sponsor said that the proposed change in name was in preparation for the harmonization of the ASEAN countries, which was set to take place in January 2009.

Rep. Golez then observed that Section 6 of the instant Bill seeks the creation of the following centers per major product category: Center for Drugs Regulation and Research; Center for Food Regulation and Research; Center for Cosmetics Regulation and Research; and Center for Devices Regulation and Research. He also noted that each center was to be

headed by a director and would be comprised of certain divisions.

On queries relating to the head of the proposed FDA, Rep. Pingoy stated that a director-general would head the proposed agency and in effect, the incumbent head of BFAD would be promoted to the proposed position and accordingly receive a higher salary. He clarified that the reorganization of BFAD would not affect its incumbent director.

Going back to his previous question, Rep. Golez inquired whether the proposed centers would each be headed by a director and comprised of various divisions.

Rep. Pingoy replied in the affirmative thereto.

Rep. Golez next inquired on the funding requirements of the Bill, considering the magnitude of the required personnel contingent of the proposed FDA.

The Sponsor answered that BFAD or the proposed FDA will continue to operate with its regular budget under the 2008 General Appropriations Act but it was proposed that the agency would retain its income for five years.

As a rejoinder, Rep. Golez inquired which portion of the Bill contains the proposed income retention provision.

Rep. Golez asked where said provision is in the Bill because this would normally be included as a special provision in the budget. However, in this particular case, he said that this would be included in the new Charter of the FDA.

Rep. Pingoy replied that said provision is included in Section 20 of the Bill.

Rep. Golez asked whether Section 20 would be sufficient. He also asked what projected income is intended to be retained. Stating that he fully appreciates the objective of enhancing the organization of the proposed FDA, he however expressed apprehension that the proposed measure would be treated like the other bills enacted into law with appropriations that have not been actually funded and the intended enhancement of the organization would not be implemented because of lack of fund. He then inquired on the amount this reorganization would entail and the FDA's expected income to make sure that there is a good match between additional expenses, addition-

al funding requirement, and the revenue expected to be generated by the FDA.

Rep. Pingoy replied that the expected income is about ₱150 million a year, in addition to the budget that FDA will be receiving from the General Appropriations Act (GAA) every year. The ₱150 million is over and above the budget to be received by FDA from the GAA, he added.

Rep. Golez however inquired on the amount needed to enable the proposed expansion of the organization of the FDA to succeed.

#### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

On motion of Rep. Pingoy, the session was suspended at 6:23 p.m.

#### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 6:24 p.m., the session was resumed.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF REP. GOLEZ** (Continuation)

Rep. Pingoy replied that the ballpark estimate is about a billion pesos in five years for the capital outlay and Personal Service (PS).

Rep. Golez said that the amount of ₱ billion in five years for the expanded organization may not be sufficient because aside from capital outlay and PS they would be needing a lot of new equipment also since the thrust of the Bill is to establish adequate testing laboratories and field offices, to upgrade its equipment, to augment its human resource complement, and others.

Rep. Pingoy informed Rep. Golez that at present, BFAD has only one laboratory office in Luzon and the proposal would include the establishment of additional two laboratory offices, one each in Mindanao and Cebu.

Rep. Golez said that he does not want this Bill, if enacted into law, to be part of the dormant laws that are not being implemented because at present there are so many bills, almost a trillion pesos worth of laws that are unfunded and have been lying dormant because of lack of funding. He said that he would like to ensure that the Committee had made a good financial study wherein the expected additional expenditures, either capital outlay or additional personnel, would be matched by the additional revenue to be generated by the FDA. He pointed out that the

₱150 million a year revenue in five years would be ₱750 million and part of the ₱ billion - appropriation may be recurring appropriations requirements.

Rep. Pingoy said that he was informed that the FDA can improve their collection by five times if Congress will be passing this law.

If FDA would increase its revenue by five times, Rep. Golez asked who will pay for the additional revenue. He inquired whether this would be an additional burden to the Food and Drug industry or would be the result of better collection.

Rep. Pingoy replied that the BFAD has not increased their fees for the last five years and that the pharmaceutical industry will shoulder the cost of such increase.

On whether this would eventually be passed on to the consumers, Rep. Pingoy replied in the affirmative, adding that the fees in our country are much lower as compared to other countries.

Rep. Golez expressed apprehension that the increase will be passed on to the end-users and this might somehow neutralize the benefits that would accrue from the Cheaper Medicines Act that would eventually be enacted into law. However, he said that Rep. Pingoy is in a better position to evaluate this matter, considering that he is an expert on pharmaceutical products.

At this point, Rep. Golez observed that lately, several bills are covered by Congressional Oversight Committees. He however said that by institutionalizing a congressional oversight committee, instead of individual Members of the House or the Committee on Health of the House exercising oversight, Congress may institutionalize regular, periodic, legislated intervention which might work against the FDA.

At this point, Rep. Pingoy inquired on the specific proposal of Rep. Golez regarding this matter.

In response, Rep. Golez inquired whether the Congressional Oversight Committee for FDA can be handled by both the standing Committees of the House and the Senate inasmuch as this agency has already been in existence for quite a long time. He cited for instance that this is not the VFA which may need oversight, or the EPIRA which is temporary in nature and may need temporary oversight also on the part of Congress. He pointed out that the FDA is an agency which has existed for as far as he can remember. He then asked why there is a need to create an oversight committee.

In reply, Rep. Pingoy explained that an Oversight Committee is needed because the FDA will be retaining its income for five years and any extension of this period will depend on the Oversight Committee. He however said that if there is no need for this Committee, then it will exist for five years only.

In his rejoinder, Rep. Golez manifested that at the proper time, he would like to propose to delete the provision for the creation of an Oversight Committee unless he can be convinced that the oversight function of the standing Committees of the House would not be sufficient.

Rep. Pingoy replied that the Committee would be amenable to the proposal; however, he stated that the Committee would still have to review its proposal for the FDA to retain its income for a period of five years.

Whereupon, Rep. Golez asked what will happen to the FDA after a period of five years considering the possibility that the next Congress could withhold the annual appropriation for the FDA after the income retention period. This, he said, could render the FDA financially unviable to the detriment of the pharmaceutical industry and the public.

In response, Rep. Pingoy explained that the main purpose for the retention of the FDA's income is for the purchase of laboratory equipment, motor vehicles, and upgrading of current facilities and equipment, including maintenance and other operating expenses for the Central Office Laboratory Division and satellite laboratories in Davao and Cebu. He added that after the five-year income retention period, the FDA would become financially independent so much that it can come up with its own financial contingency plan in case of obsolescence of its equipment and facilities.

While he believes in the functions of an Oversight Committee, Rep. Golez expressed his concern that the Oversight Committee might be actually performing as a "board" and may not perform the desired oversight functions that Congress wanted.

Rep. Pingoy replied that the Committee could review the pertinent provision of the Bill at the proper time.

On the matter of packaging and labeling, Rep. Golez noted that the BFAD requires the bottle or the container labels indicating the volume or weight of food and medical ingredients. He however observed that in many bottled products wherein the labels are printed on the "front" and back" of the bottle itself

there are no labels indicating the list of product ingredients.

In response, Rep. Pingoy explained that the list of ingredients is found in the “caps” of the bottled products.

Rep. Golez however replied that the letters in the caps are too small to be read, suggesting the need for food supplements such as “carrots” to improve the eyesight of the consumers.

Rep. Golez thereafter inquired on the rationale for allowing labels containing a list of ingredients only on canned products but not on bottled products. He pointed out that while this proposal entails huge investment on the part of companies that use bottles with painted labels, the law however must be applied equally to all kinds of products. He said that as long as the BFAD is not going to apply the law equally then there is no need for the instant measure.

In reply, Rep. Pingoy stated that the concerns of Rep. Golez can be addressed insofar as the standardization of BFAD-approved products is concerned.

In his rejoinder, Rep. Golez stressed that the BFAD could be held liable by the courts for not equally applying the law. He then asked for an adequate answer for this particular concern.

#### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

On motion of Rep. Pingoy, the Chair suspended the session.

It was 6:43 p.m.

#### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 6:51 p.m., the session was resumed.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF REP. GOLEZ** (Continuation)

Upon resumption of session and after consultation with the Sponsor, Rep. Golez stated that the explanation regarding his concerns provided to him suffices at the moment considering that this will be attended not only by the Committee but also by a panel from the BFAD. He thereafter thanked the Sponsor for answering his queries.

Whereupon, on motion of Rep. Angara, the Chair recognized Rep. Rufus B. Rodriguez for his interpellation.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF REP. RODRIGUEZ**

Rep. Rodriguez initially inquired on the action of BFAD pertaining to the regulation or promotion of the use of indigenous plants and herbs as medicines. He specially cited the use of “ampalaya” as a possible cure for diabetes.

Rep. Pingoy stated that “ampalaya” is already included as a medicinal alternative by the BFAD.

Whereupon, Rep. Rodriguez inquired whether the BFAD has a specific office that specifically conducts research and development and promotion of indigenous plants and herbs for use as drugs or medicines.

Rep. Pingoy replied in the affirmative. He informed Rep. Rodriguez that the aforementioned office of the BFAD has already developed “sambong” and “lagundi” as pharmaceutical alternatives while “ampalaya” is used as a food supplement. Moreover, he stated that the Philippine Institute of Alternative Health Care helps BFAD in formulating standards and in promoting the use of herbal and traditional medicines.

Noting that the Bill seeks to amend a specific provision of RA No. 3720 by increasing the penalties thereof, Rep. Rodriguez inquired whether indeed after the conviction of a person who represents a corporation the courts will dissolve the corporation.

#### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

Whereupon, on motion of Rep. Pingoy, the Chair suspended the session.

It was 6:59 p.m.

#### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 7:02 p.m., the session was resumed.

#### **INTERPELLATION OF REP. RODRIGUEZ** (Continuation)

In continuing with his interpellation, Rep. Rodriguez clarified that under the Corporation Code of the Philippines, a licensed corporation can only be dissolved by a direct attack in the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) and accordingly, a corporation could not be collaterally attacked in a criminal case involving its directors, president and corporate officials because only natural persons are the subject of a criminal case, just like in the case of *People of the Philippines vs. XYZ Corporation*. Hence, he stressed that the findings of the court in a criminal case does not dissolve the corporation because the

stockholders were not privy to the actions of corporate directors and if indeed the directors would be found guilty in a criminal case, the stockholders can replace their erring directors and the corporation would continue to operate. In this case, he proposed that the entire paragraph of Section 13 be deleted because it goes against the provisions of the Constitution, more particularly under the due process clause considering that a corporation, being a juridical personality, has the right to property, existence and due process.

Agreeing therewith, Rep. Pingoy stated that Rep. Rodriguez' proposal would be considered at the proper time.

With regard to the powers of the Director General of the BFAD on pages 13 to 17, paragraph 7, lines 44 to 46 which states that "VII. PERMANENT DISQUALIFICATION FROM OWNING, OPERATING OR HAVING ANY OTHER INTEREST IN AN ESTABLISHMENT WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF THE FDA," Rep. Rodriguez explained that said provision would deprive a person of his/her right to invest and operate an establishment just because in one instance, he has been found to have probably produced low quality drugs. He added that this matter is clearly within the ambit of the court because, aside from depriving a person of his right, the same would give the Director General the power to prevent anyone from further investing in other corporations due to the commission of a particular offense. In this regard, he proposed that said provision be deleted at the proper time during the period of amendments.

Rep. Pingoy however contended that the reason the Committee included this provision is to address the problem of recidivists or notorious violators of the law. He added that the Agency can do this by not renewing the license of such persons.

Rep. Rodriguez maintained that this could not be done administratively, but through proper court proceedings. While it may be true that the Director General can impose administrative penalties, the latter, who may not even be a lawyer, would have the power to absolutely disqualify a person permanently from owning a property despite the fact that such power belongs solely to the court. He added that at the proper time, he will propose the deletion of the abovementioned provision.

With regard to page 14, paragraph (I), lines 2 to 5, which states that "I) HOLD IN DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONTEMPT ANY PERSON WHO DISREGARDS ORDERS OR WRITS HE OR SHE ISSUES AND IMPOSE THE APPROPRIATE PE-

NALTIES FOLLOWING THE SAME PROCEDURES AND PENALTIES PROVIDED IN THE RULES OF COURT," Rep. Rodriguez noted that under this provision, the Director General has the power to imprison persons by holding him or her in direct or indirect contempt. In this case, he pointed out that usually, administrative agencies have no such power and only courts have this power otherwise, the Director General would be acting like a judge who, under the Constitution, has the sole power to determine probable cause and to issue a warrant of arrest.

Rep. Pingoy however argued that this provision will hold ground as long as such power is expressly delegated to the Director General in the exercise of his/her quasi-judicial functions.

Rep. Rodriguez disagreed therewith and maintained that under the Constitution, only the judge can issue a warrant of arrest because the same entails imprisonment. In the event that the validity of this provision would be challenged in court, he stressed that the House will not be able to support the Director General holding a person in contempt because the Constitution is very clear on this matter that only a judge can issue a warrant of arrest, more particularly under the Bill of Rights. In this case, he proposed to delete said provision. He then explained that if the Director General wants to hold a person in contempt he could just file it in court which will conduct a hearing and then, hold the person in contempt for not attending the hearing of the Director General. He added that it is very dangerous to give the Director General the power of contempt as it can be easily abused.

*At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Villarosa relinquished the Chair to Rep. Gonzales (N.)*

Thereafter, Rep. Pingoy agreed that the Committee would consider Rep. Rodriguez' proposal at the proper time.

Adverting to Section 2 of the Bill which provides that "Sec. 1 of Republic Act No. 3720, as amended, is hereby further amended to read as follows: Section 1. This Act shall be known as the COMPREHENSIVE Food(s), Drugs, COSMETICS, (and) Devices, AND HEALTH PRODUCTS ACT OF 2007 (Cosmetics Act)," Rep. Rodriguez pointed out that the House has a comprehensive Act but it is not in one comprehensive Act.

In other words, he explained that instead of having a law that provides everything, this comprehensive law will have to refer to the previous law which

is R.A. No. 3720. While it is true that the benefit of the Bill once it is enacted is to provide coherence in the FDA regulatory system on all products under its jurisdiction, he noted however that this Act merely provides for certain amendatory sections but still refers to a previous Act. Thereafter, he suggested that the Body craft an entire Bill which covers everything and should be known as the new comprehensive law, instead of amending the title of the law. He further explained that changing or amending the title of the law would destroy the law itself. In this case, he suggested that the Body come up with a new Comprehensive Food and Drugs Act that will include provisions that were not amended for the guidance of everybody otherwise, they will still go back to the old law.

#### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

At this point, on motion of Rep. Pingoy, the Chair suspended the session.

It was 7:13 p.m.

#### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 7:16 p.m., the session was resumed.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF REP. RODRIGUEZ**

Thereafter, Rep. Rodriguez manifested that after conferring with the sponsoring Committee, they have agreed to defer the consideration of the Bill so that at the proper time, they could systematically go through the whole comprehensive law regarding food, drugs and cosmetics.

#### **SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 3293**

Thereupon, on motion of Rep. Angara, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of House Bill No. 3293.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF REP. COJUANGCO**

Upon recognition by the Chair, Rep. Mark O. Cojuangco recalled that on January 29, 2008, he delivered a privilege speech regarding the BT corn wherein the Secretary General had asked him to submit a written copy of his speech. In this regard, he manifested that at the bottom of the written copy, he explained under the footnote the computational basis for some numbers in his speech. Thereafter, he read a few lines of the footnote as follows:

“Computational basis for the cost per hectare in 2007 and 2008:

<sup>1</sup> Php 2,300 per 9.5 kg. Bag x 2.5 bags/hectare=  
P5,750/ha.

<sup>2</sup> Php 3,800 per 9.5 kg. Bag x 2.5 bags/hectare=  
P9,500/ha.”

#### **MOTION OF REP. COJUANGCO**

Subsequently, Rep. Cojuangco moved that the said footnote be inserted into the records, and there being no objection thereto, the Body approved the same.

#### **ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION**

Thereupon, on motion of Rep. Angara, there being no objection, the Chair declared the session adjourned until four o'clock in the afternoon of Wednesday, February 6, 2008.

It was 7:18 p.m.

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I hereby certify to the correctness of the foregoing.

(Sgd.) **ROBERTO P. NAZARENO**  
Secretary General