



Committee Daily Bulletin

18th Congress
Third Regular Session

A publication of the Committee Affairs Department

Vol. III No. 11
June 17, 2021

COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Creative Industry and Performing Arts (Special Committee)	HR 1801	Rep. De Venecia	Inquiry into the state of the Philippine fashion and textile industries and other related industries	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Christopher de Venecia (4th District, Pangasinan), will continue its inquiry relative to HR 1801.</p> <p>Rep. De Venecia, who is also the author of the resolution, informed the body that a series of meetings will be conducted in relation to HR 1801. He said today's meeting will focus on the state of the Philippine fashion and textile industries amid the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Rep. De Venecia, the country's fashion and textile industries have been struggling for the past two decades, let alone at this time of the pandemic. Thus, he said, there is a need to come up with strategies or policies that will boost the productivity of these industries.</p> <p>Philippine Fashion Coalition (PFC) Chairperson Carissa Evangelista discussed the current state of the fashion industry. She said the industry was also hit hard by the pandemic resulting in huge financial losses and the displacement of many employees. She asked for the Committee's support in the development of a masterplan for the industry to achieve the following: intensify the promotion of Filipino brands; protect the exporters and subcontractors of the industry; and fully implement laws that encourage the use of locally manufactured goods utilizing local resources, such as RA 9242 or the law prescribing the use of Philippine tropical fabrics for uniforms of public officials and employees.</p> <p>PFC Member Michael Claparols recommended to the Civil Service Commission (CSC), the implementing agency of RA 9242, to consider other sources of fiber and not just abaca, pineapple, and banana in the textile composition of government uniforms. He said this will allow the participation of other players which could generate jobs in the fiber and textile industry.</p> <p>CSC's representative Atty. Monette Bucatcat admitted that there are problems in the implementation of RA 9242. She said suppliers are complaining about the certification process of the Philippine Textile Research Institute (PTRI) which is reported to be costly and too rigid. She said only two textile mills have been certified by the PTRI thus far. She said the CSC is open to</p>

<p><i>Continuation...</i> Creative Industry and Performing Arts (Special Committee)</p>				<p>proposals that would amend the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 9242.</p> <p>Rep. Sharon Garin (Party-List, AAMBIS-OWA) stated that the Department of Agriculture (DA), particularly its Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA), should be strengthened further and provided adequate funds in order to effectively implement programs towards the development of the fiber and textile industries. She underscored the need for innovation and to intensify research and development in order to produce top quality fiber products that can either be exported or supplied to local manufacturers.</p> <p>The Chair agreed, adding that there should be better collaboration among the DA, PhilFIDA, PTRI, and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in implementing programs that support the textile and fashion industries.</p> <p>Meanwhile, PFC Members Esme Palaganas and Gina Ty raised the importance of “branding” or what makes products distinguishable or instantly recognizable in a consumer’s mind, in further promoting Philippine fashion abroad. Rep. De Venecia agreed and suggested that this should be considered in developing the roadmap or masterplan for the fashion industry.</p> <p>Accessory designer Neil Felipp and footwear designer Buddy Tan raised the issue of aging craftsmen and suggested the improvement of the curriculum of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to entice young people to engage in arts and crafts. They said TESDA’s training programs should involve the entire process of craft-making and not only on certain parts of the process.</p> <p>The Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines gave a brief presentation on the intellectual property protection applicable to textiles, while the DTI briefly discussed the value chain of the textile and fashion industries.</p> <p>Rep. De Venecia thanked the resource persons for their valuable insights and asked for their continuous participation in the succeeding meetings.</p>
<p>Suffrage and Electoral Reforms</p>	<p>HR 1583</p>	<p>Rep. Mariño</p>	<p>Calling for the conduct of a risk assessment and study on health safety measures, procedures, and protocols to be implemented in preparation for the 2022 presidential, national, and local elections</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Juliet Marie de Leon Ferrer (4th District, Negros Occidental), adopted HR 1583.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Ferrer said that the Committee expects the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to present its plans and preparations for the May 2022 local and national elections, particularly on the health and safety aspects, knowing that majority of the Filipinos are yet to be vaccinated against COVID-19 by that time.</p>

<p>Continuation... Suffrage and Electoral Reforms</p>				<p>Rep. Mario Vittorio "Marvey" Mariño (5th District, Batangas), author of HR 1583, also believes that with the current vaccination rate, most of the voters may not have been inoculated yet by election time. This, he said, may cause a surge in COVID-19 cases in the country with a lot of people going to the polling centers to vote. Rep. Mariño also raised his concern on the limitations in campaigning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which may be disadvantageous to some candidates.</p> <p>COMELEC Commissioner Marlon Casquejo said that the COMELEC acknowledges the concerns raised by the Members. He assured them that the COMELEC is setting down options in the event that the country has not yet achieved herd immunity by May 2022. For one, Casquejo said that the COMELEC eyes the conduct of hybrid political campaign which will be a combination of limited face-to-face rallies or conventions of political parties and online campaigning using social media and other online platforms.</p> <p>The COMELEC intends to prohibit face-to-face or house-to-house campaigning as people might disregard the health and safety protocols.</p> <p>As for the filing of the certificate of candidacy (COC), Casquejo explained that although the COMELEC prefers to limit face-to-face or personal filing of COC, the law does not allow online filing, hence personal or representative filing of COCs will still be undertaken. The period of filing COCs for next year's polls is from October 1 to 8 depending on the electoral position. The COMELEC has yet to issue a resolution identifying which positions will be scheduled for the filing of COCs on what date.</p> <p>According to COMELEC Director for Operations Teopisto Elnas Jr., there are legal impediments to the implementation of an online registration system because the law requires voters to personally file their registration before an election officer. At the moment, applicants may utilize iRehistro online which shortens the period of registration because relevant data are inputted online prior to appearing at the COMELEC office for the capture of the registrants' biometrics. For those who have no access to the internet, an offline mobile application for the same purpose is available.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Rufus Rodriguez (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City) suggested that voters be allowed to input their data and register online and their biometric data be collected at a later time before the elections. He also suggested that the COMELEC allow the online filing of candidacy and do away with requiring personal appearance of the candidate or his representative.</p>
--	--	--	--	---

Continuation... Suffrage and Electoral Reforms				<p>Commissioner Casquejo said he agrees that registration and reactivation online will streamline the process and limit the people going to the COMELEC offices. He explained, however, that allowing online filing and data capturing at a later time will affect the current budget of COMELEC as there is no budget allocated for online registration. The matter has yet to be discussed with the Commission en banc but the upgrading of the systems and processes, he assures, is ongoing.</p>
	HR 1796	Minority Leader Paduano	Urging the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to establish more satellite registration centers to accommodate more constituents who want to register as voters	<p>The Committee adopted HR 1796 subject to amendment.</p> <p>Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA), co-author of HR 1796, said that the resolution, which was filed by the minority bloc of the House of Representatives, calls for the immediate establishment of additional satellite registration centers to accommodate more people who want to register as voters.</p> <p>Elnas reported that at present, there are only 18,945 satellite registration centers nationwide, which is significantly lesser in number compared to 52,482 satellite registration centers established before the national and local elections in 2019. This huge decrease is due to the difficulties brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>While COMELEC supports the establishment of more satellite registration centers, Elnas said that such is difficult to undertake at present as it requires coordination with local government authorities, particularly local health officials, to secure clearance and ensure that satellite registration centers will be compliant with health and safety protocols. If COVID-19 cases are reported in a certain barangay, the COMELEC advises its election officer not to establish a satellite registration center in the area. Elnas, nonetheless, assured that efforts are being undertaken to boost satellite registration and plans are underway to cater to disadvantaged groups which include senior citizens, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, pregnant women, and persons deprived of liberty.</p> <p>On the query of Rep. Ferrer with regard to the recent mobile registration app deployed by the COMELEC, Casquejo assured the security of the data to be collected through the mobile platform. Casquejo said that the mobile registration app is still in the pilot stage, but the COMELEC intends to expand its coverage to other areas in Metro Manila and other parts of the country. He added that the app was launched on June 15 but will be utilized starting July.</p> <p>Rep. Ferrer also expressed doubt on the usefulness of the app which was supposedly designed for those without internet, when she learned from COMELEC that the applicant still</p>

<p>Continuation... Suffrage and Electoral Reforms</p>				<p>has to go to a registration site to download the app. She stressed that therefore the app does not help limit face-to-face interaction between the registrants and the COMELEC people.</p> <p>Minority Leader Joseph Stephen “Caraps” Paduano (Party-List, ABANG LINGKOD), principal author of HR 1796, inquired how the app will help with the issues of registration in the provinces where sites are limited to at most 200 registrants per day. He believes that the solution is to establish more satellite registration sites and for COMELEC to relax some of its rules on the establishment of such sites.</p> <p>Commenting on the process of deactivation of a voter’s registration, Reps. Mariño and Lawrence “Law” Fortun (1st District, Agusan del Norte) opined that deactivating the registration of a voter who did not or was not able to vote in previous elections goes against a voter’s right to not vote.</p> <p>COMELEC Executive Director Bartolome Sinocruz Jr. cited Section 87 of RA 8189 which sets the grounds for the deactivation of voter’s registration. He also explained that records of voters who died are cancelled and not deactivated.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the Committee adopted the suggestion of the Center for Migrant Advocacy for the establishment of satellite registration centers not only in the country but also abroad to cater to overseas voters.</p> <p>The Committee directed the COMELEC, Department of Health, and Department of the Interior and Local Government to submit their concrete plans and status reports relative to the upcoming national and local elections amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee also requested the presence of the COMELEC Chair and the Commissioners in its next meeting.</p>
---	--	--	--	--

DISCUSSION WITH AGENCIES/ENTITIES		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
<p>Overseas Workers Affairs</p>	<p>Discussion/updates on the following issues/concerns affecting overseas Filipino workers (OFWs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current situation of OFWs affected by the COVID-19 pandemic 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Raymond Democrito Mendoza (Party-List, TUCP), continued its discussion with concerned government agencies on various issues affecting the OFWs especially during this time of pandemic.</p> <p>Rep. Mendoza said that the Committee wants to get updates on what the government has done so far to assist the OFWs, including the repatriated workers and those who are still abroad, given the difficulties they are currently experiencing.</p> <p>On the current situation of OFWs affected by the pandemic, Department of Foreign Affairs - Office for Migrant Workers Affairs (DFA-OMWA) Director Iric Arribas said that the DFA is</p>

<p>Continuation... Overseas Workers Affairs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New quarantine procedure for returning OFWs 	<p>committed to bring home OFWs who were affected by the pandemic, including those who were displaced from work or infected by the disease. He added that to date, DFA has repatriated more than 400,000 OFWs already.</p> <p>Department of Labor and Employment - International Labor Affairs Bureau (DOLE-ILAB) Director John Rio Bautista reported that a total of 696,616 OFWs have been affected by COVID-19 pandemic. Out of this number, 569,159 have been repatriated to their hometowns, 48,936 are yet to be repatriated, while 78,521 opted to stay on-site.</p> <p>In terms of financial assistance, 9,667 OFWs have received P10,000 pesos each, while 125,131 OFWs have received food and medical assistance. Likewise, through the DOLE Abot Kamay ang Pagtulong sa OFWs Program (AKAP), financial assistance amounting to P5.31 billion was extended to a total of 523,923 OFWs, according to Bautista</p> <p>Focusing on the quarantine procedure being observed by the Province of Cebu, the Committee sought the comment of Cebu Governor Gwendolyn Garcia and other government officials on the matter.</p> <p>The Governor explained that the COVID-19 health protocols and quarantine procedure that the provincial government of Cebu imposes on returning OFWs and returning residents of Cebu are all scientific and data-based.</p> <p>Under the policy of the provincial government of Cebu, all OFWs and residents returning to Cebu will be tested upon arrival at the Cebu-Mactan Airport, contrary to the protocol set by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) that requires testing for COVID-19 a week after their arrival in the country.</p> <p>Department of Health (DOH) Region 7 chief pathologist Dr. Mary Jean Loreche reported that the Cebu Provincial Government has revised its guidelines to comply with the IATF protocols by imposing another swab test on the seventh day, apart from the first swab test on the day of the arrival of the OFW at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport. She said that based on its data, the Cebu government has been effective in reducing the transmission rate of COVID-19 among its residents through containment and community response.</p> <p>Rep. Mendoza inquired on whether Cebu's health protocols have been presented to the IATF.</p> <p>Loreche replied in the affirmative, adding that President Rodrigo Duterte, who was present in the briefing, even gave instructions to Health Secretary Francisco Duque III to study Cebu Province's COVID-19 management and see if it can be applied nationwide.</p> <p>However, Loreche said that upon Secretary Francisco Duque's assessment, he recommended that Cebu's health protocols should adhere to the IATF guidelines.</p> <p>DOH Epidemiology Bureau OIC-Director Alethea de Guzman explained that it is important that returning OFWs and all other international travelers be tested on the seventh day upon arrival in the country as data will show that majority of the COVID-19 cases are detected on the fifth to seventh day of the quarantine period.</p>
---	---	--

<p>Continuation... Overseas Workers Affairs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion on the cases of the stranded seafarers in China 	<p>Blas F. Ople Policy Center, a non-profit organization that assists distressed overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) headed by Susan Ople, hailed the efforts of the POEA and vowed to work closely with the TWG.</p> <p>United Nations International Organization for Migration Program Head Troy Dolley and International Labor Organization Project Manager Alyssa Dacasin expressed their support for the creation of the TWG and its given tasks.</p> <p>In the Committee's previous meeting, Ople discussed the key features of the proposed Ethical Recruitment Incentives Act, which seeks to develop a code of ethics for licensed recruitment agencies. The objective is to protect all migrant workers against all forms of exploitation and abuse in order to guarantee decent work and maximize the socio-economic contributions of migrants in both their countries of origin and destination. The legislative proposal also seeks to provide an incentives and recognition program to reward those that practice ethical recruitment standards, including the development of a "white list" or list of outstanding recruitment agencies.</p> <p>Meanwhile, seafarer Leonardo Lansang Jr. informed the Committee that he and 12 other crew of M/V Angelic Power were abandoned and left stranded by the ship owner off the coast of China. Lansang, who joined the virtual meeting through the Zoom app, said that they have been onboard the vessel for the past 17 months, and they are desperately praying for their repatriation as soon as possible. He also claimed that he and his co-workers have not received their salaries for the past five months.</p> <p>Upon hearing this, the Chair called on the DFA, POEA, and OWWA to immediately act on their case and to bring them home at the soonest time possible.</p> <p>The DFA-OMWA Director said that that he will immediately coordinate with the Philippine embassy and consulate officials in China to get all details of the case, and to work for their repatriation.</p> <p>The POEA Administrator told the body that his office has summoned the manning agency, Magsaysay Maritime, to assist the stranded seafarers and to address their complaints. He, however, said that there might be legal issues involving the vessel and the ship owner, and the seafarers' testimonies are needed in the case – which prevents their immediate repatriation.</p> <p>For his part, the OWWA Administrator said that he will look into the seafarers' physical and mental well-being pending their repatriation.</p> <p>The Chair enjoined the concerned agencies to act with dispatch on this case considering that the seafarers have been staying onboard the vessel for a long time already.</p>
---	--	--