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CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEETING

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Conference Committee	HB 7406 and SB 1832	Rep. Cabochan and Sen. Go	Strengthening and modernizing the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Conference Committee, co-chaired by Rep. Narciso Bravo Jr. (1st District, Masbate), Chair of the House Committee on Public Order and Safety, and Sen. Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa, Chair of the Senate Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs, approved the Conference Committee Report on the harmonized version of House Bill 7406 and Senate Bill 1832, subject to amendment.</p> <p>In today's meeting, the Conference Committee focused its discussion on Section 4 (d) of the harmonized version, which provides for the establishment of the BFP's Security and Protection Unit (SPU).</p> <p>Rep. Bravo said that under the harmonized version, the members of the SPU shall be allowed to carry short firearms to protect the firefighters while in the performance of their duties such as fire suppression; containment of hazardous materials and chemical, biological, radiological nuclear and explosive materials; and fire investigation.</p> <p>On his part, Sen. Dela Rosa explained that the need to secure firefighters while doing their job cannot be denied given the fact that looting and other wrongdoings are committed not only against fire victims but also against firefighters themselves.</p> <p>However, Sen. Risa Hontiveros averred that allowing the members of the proposed SPU to carry firearms is not necessary. She further said that such provision is not included in SB 1832.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the Conference Committee agreed that the SPU personnel shall be allowed to carry firearms to protect the firefighters while in the performance of their duty.</p> <p>Other agreements reached during the meeting were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of SPU personnel in each BFP regional and city station shall be limited to 14; • All members of the SPU shall be required to undergo neuropsychological examination and periodic trainings; and • The BFP personnel with the rank of

Continuation... Conference Committee				<p>Senior Fire Officer III shall be given priority in the appointment as an SPU member.</p> <p>Sen. Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go, author of SB 1832, said that strengthening and modernizing the BFP will ensure that it will have the much-needed firefighting and rescue equipment to be able to efficiently and effectively perform its mandate. The bill also aims to empower and capacitate local communities in preventing fire incidents by mandating BFP to conduct monthly information and education campaign on fire prevention at the local level.</p> <p>House Members who were also present in the meeting were the following: Minority Leader Joseph Stephen "Caraps" Paduano (Party-List, ABANG LINGKOD), as well as Reps. Michael Edgar Aglipay (Party-List, DIWA), Manuel Cabochan III (Party-List, MAGDALO), Joey Sarte Salceda (2nd District, Albay), and Yedda Marie Romualdez (Party-List, TINGOG SINIRANGAN).</p> <p>From the Senate, also present were Senators Francis Tolentino and Win Gatchalian.</p>
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COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Agrarian Reform	HB 9133	Rep. Villafuerte	Requiring the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) to submit an annual report to Congress on statistics relating to conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses including a review of existing policies and procedures	<p>The Committee, presided by its Vice Chair, Rep. Tyrone Agabas (6th District, Pangasinan), approved House Bill 9133.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Agabas underscored the importance of the proposed law which ultimately seeks to protect the country's agricultural land by limiting its conversion to non-agricultural uses.</p> <p>Based on the explanatory note of the bill, large areas of agricultural land are unnecessarily being converted to non-agricultural uses each year which is further aggravated by conflicting government programs and policies regarding land use and development. This decreases the agricultural land base of the country which threatens the ability of the country to produce food and fiber in sufficient quantities to meet domestic needs.</p> <p>Thus, Rep. Agabas said the bill's requirement for the DAR and DA to report to Congress the rate at which agricultural lands are being converted to non-agricultural uses will help determine whether national government programs and policies on land conversion are truly being implemented for the protection of agricultural lands.</p>

<p>Continuation... Agrarian Reform</p>				<p>Under the proposed law, the DA and DAR shall also come up with criteria to identify the effects of government programs on the conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses and conduct a review of existing laws, administrative rules and regulations, policies, and procedures on land use development. The goal is to develop measures that will make these national laws, rules, and regulations on land conversion compatible with the development plans at the local level.</p> <p>Expressing support for the bill were the DAR, DA, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD), Land Registration Authority (LRA), National Housing Authority (NHA), National Irrigation Administration (NIA), and Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC).</p> <p>Farmer groups such as the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) and Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and groups representing owners of agricultural lands also expressed support for the bill.</p> <p>DAR OIC-Assistant Secretary, Legal Affairs Office, Jim Coleto apprised the body that the DAR is investigating cases involving illegal land conversion and adjudicating protests or complaints against such conversions. He cited as basis DAR Administrative Order No. 3, series of 2017, which provides the Rules of Procedure for the adjudication of cases involving agrarian law implementation. He said the DAR is in the process of collating data on these cases for submission to the Committee.</p> <p>PARC Secretariat Director James Arsenio Ponce proposed the reactivation of the Congressional Oversight Committee on Agrarian Reform (COCAR) to undertake the review of existing policies on land conversion. The COCAR was created by virtue of Republic Act (RA) 9700, or the law strengthening the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), to oversee and monitor the implementation of this law.</p> <p>Moreover, Ponce suggested that Congress fast track the passage of the proposed National Land Use Act which is still pending in the Special Committee on Land Use. He said this bill seeks to provide the overall framework for the rational allocation, disposition, sustainable use, and management of land resources for a variety of ecological and economic uses. It also aims to prevent premature conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses.</p> <p>PARC is the highest policy making body of the CARP. It is chaired by the President and the</p>
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Continuation... Agrarian Reform				<p>DAR Secretary serves as one of its Vice Chairpersons.</p> <p>Meanwhile, FFF Chairman of the Board Leonardo Montemayor recommended that illegal land conversion be slapped with stiffer penalties under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law.</p> <p>Rep. Vicente "Ching" Veloso III (3rd District, Leyte) commented that the DAR has been remiss in its mandate of monitoring agricultural land conversions. Coletto maintained that the DAR closely monitors land conversions and continues to investigate cases involving illegal land conversions. He also said that the DAR submits annually to Congress data on land conversions during budget deliberations.</p> <p>Replying to the query of Rep. Noel Villanueva (3rd District, Tarlac) regarding the policy on land conversion in local government units, Coletto explained that this is governed by Section 20 (Reclassification of Lands) of RA 7160 or the Local Government Code of 1991.</p> <p>Under RA 7160, Coletto said a city or municipality may, through an ordinance passed by the Sanggunian after conducting public hearings for the purpose, authorize the reclassification of agricultural lands and provide for the manner of their utilization or disposition in the following cases: (1) when the land ceases to be economically feasible and sound for agricultural purposes as determined by the DA; or (2) where the land shall have substantially greater economic value for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes, as determined by the Sanggunian concerned.</p>
	HR 226	Rep. Geron	Investigation into the proliferation of irrigated and irrigable land converted into non-agricultural purpose in violation of Section 65 of RA 6657, otherwise known as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988, as amended	<p>The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to discuss further the issues raised in House Resolution 226.</p> <p>The author of HR 226, Rep. Rico Geron (Party-List, AGAP), said that the measure calls for an inquiry to address the rampant conversion of irrigated and irrigable lands to non-agricultural uses which is clearly a violation of Section 22 of RA 9700, the amendatory law of RA 6657. Section 22 provides that irrigated and irrigable lands shall not be subject to conversion. Rep. Geron said the extensive conversion of these lands to other uses such as the establishment of subdivisions, commercial centers, golf courses, and export processing zones, has caused the displacement of farmers and led to the decline in rice production.</p> <p>Rep. Villanueva concurred with the statement of the author regarding the rampant conversion of agricultural land. This, he said, despite the limit on the percentage of total</p>

Continuation... Agrarian Reform				<p>agricultural land area that may be allowed for land reclassification as provided for in the Local Government Code. He underscored the need for an extensive review of existing laws and policies on land conversion to avert further challenges to food security.</p> <p>Expressing support for the conduct of an investigation pursuant to the resolution were the DAR, DA, DENR, DHSUD, LRA, NHA, NIA, PARC, FFF, and KMP.</p>
Appropriations	Substitute Bill to HBs 206 & 2246	Reps. Garcia (J.E) and Cabochan	Philippine Self-Reliant Defense Posture Program Act	<p>The Committee, presided by its Vice Chair Rep. Ruwel Peter Gonzaga (2nd District, Davao de Oro), approved the Substitute Bill to House Bills 206 and 2246 with amendments.</p> <p>Rep. Raul "Boboy" Tupas (5th District, Iloilo), chair of the Committee on National Defense and Security from which the bill originated, sponsored the bill. He said that the proposed law seeks to strengthen and revitalize the country's capabilities to support the development of the defense industry through research and development and promotion of local defense manufacturers and enterprises.</p>
	Substitute Bill to HBs 4692, 6476 & 8101	Reps. Yap (V.), Cojuangco, and De Venecia	Philippine Creative Industries Development Act	<p>The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to HBs 4692, 6476 and 8101 with amendments.</p> <p>Rep. Christopher de Venecia (4th District, Pangasinan) manifested the need to appropriate an initial funding of P5 billion to start the implementation of the proposed law. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the law's continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.</p> <p>Rep. De Venecia is the author of HB 8101 and the Chair of the Special Committee on Creative Industry and Performing Arts which referred the bill to the Committee on Appropriations for the review of the funding provision.</p>
	Substitute Bill to HBs 4461, 4655 & 4683	Reps. Haresco, Villafuerte, and Majority Leader Romualdez	Separate Facility for Heinous Crimes Inmates Act	<p>The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to HBs 4461, 4655 and 4683 with amendments.</p> <p>Rep. Joy Myra Tambunting (2nd District, Parañaque City), who sponsored the bill on behalf of the Committee on Justice from which the bill originated, explained the objective of the proposed law. She said that the establishment of a maximum security facility for prisoners who are convicted of heinous crimes separate from the general population of prisoners will prevent them from influencing other prisoners to join their nefarious activities.</p>
	Substitute Bill to HBs 2075 & 2732	Rep. Sy-Alvarado and Deputy Speaker Rodriguez	Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act	<p>The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to HBs 2075 and 2732.</p> <p>Pasig City Rep. Roman Romulo, chair of the Committee on Basic Education and Culture</p>

Continuation... Appropriations				from which the bill originated, said that the bill will provide the needed support for the 1,200 guidance counselors with plantilla positions in the Department of Education (DepEd) who have no career path and with entry level of only Salary Grade 11. The bill also provides additional compensation to guidance counselors to entice them to stay or seek employment in the government and to encourage students to take up psychology, Rep. Romulo added.
	Substitute Bill to HBs 73, 2248 & 3233	Reps. Barbers, Cabochan, and Sarmiento	Magna Carta of the Drug Enforcement Officers and other personnel of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA)	The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to the HBs 73, 2248 and 3233 with amendments. Rep. Edgar Mary Sarmiento (1 st District, Western Samar), author of HB 3233, underscored the importance of the bill in strengthening the government's fight against illegal drugs.
	Substitute Bill to HBs 1025, 6435, 7193 & 7453	Reps. Salceda, Vargas, Garin (S.), and Delos Santos	Science for Change Program (SC4P) Act	The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to HBs 1025, 6435, 7193 and 7453 with amendments. Rep. De Venecia, who sponsored the bill, highlighted the importance of the proposed law as a national strategy to accelerate the development of science, technology and innovation in the country.
	Substitute Bill to HBs 3030 & 6130	Reps. Palma and Yap (V.)	Barangay Integrated Development Approach for Nutrition Improvement (BIDANI) Act	The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to HBs 3030 and 6130 with amendments. Rep. Elisa "Olga" Kho (2 nd District, Masbate), chair of the Committee on Rural Development from which the bill originated, sponsored the bill. Rep. Kho recalled the success of the BIDANI program which started in the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) in 1984. Rep. Kho said the bill institutionalizes the BIDANI program and enjoins all state college and universities (SUCs) to assist the national government in addressing malnutrition in the country.
Civil Service and Professional Regulation	HB 2621	Rep. Mendoza	Strengthening the constitutional rights of government employees to self-organization, collective negotiation and peaceful concerted activities, and use of voluntary modes of dispute settlement	The Committee, presided by Rep. Manuel Cabochan III (Party-List, MAGDALO), agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to deliberate further on House Bill 2621 and come up with a substitute bill. Reps. Gabriel Bordado Jr. (3rd District, Camarines Sur) and John Marvin "Yul Servo" Nieto (3rd District, Manila) were designated to head the TWG. Rep. Cabochan said that the proposed law was based on the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention No. 151, or the Labor Relations (Public Service) Convention 1978, to which the country is a signatory. According to Rep. Cabochan, the ILO Convention guarantees the rights of public employees to organize and the procedures for

<p>Continuation... Civil Service and Professional Regulation</p>				<p>determining the terms and conditions of their employment.</p> <p>Rep. Cabochan pointed out the need to revisit Executive Order (EO) 180 series of 1987, which provides the guidelines for the exercise of the right of government employees to organize. The EO also created the Public Sector Labor Management Council (PSLMC) which is tasked to promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to govern the exercise of the right to self-organization of all government employees, and determine whether its underlying guidelines still cater to the needs of public servants.</p> <p>Rep. Raymond Democrito Mendoza (Party-List, TUCP), author of HB 2621, said that the Philippines' ratification of the ILO Convention 151 aims to mobilize the public sector employees in reforming the bureaucracy and in addressing corruption and widespread end of contract (Endo) engagement in the public sector through job orders, contract of service, casuals, and other forms of contractual work. In his explanatory note attached to the bill, Rep. Mendoza stated that there is a need to upgrade Philippine laws and practices on freedom of association and collective bargaining in the public sector.</p> <p>Party-List Reps. Ferdinand Gaité (BAYAN MUNA) and France Castro (ACT-TEACHERS) expressed support for the proposed measure.</p> <p>Rep. Castro suggested the deletion of Section 12 (e) to prevent stereotyping the members of public sector unions as subversive.</p> <p>Section 12 (e) states that "no employees' organization, federation or confederation shall knowingly admit as members or continue in membership any individual who belongs to a subversive organization or who is engaged directly or indirectly in any subversive activity."</p> <p>Rep. Cabochan informed the Committee that during an informal meeting among the Committee Chair, Iligan City Rep. Frederick Siao, Rep. Mendoza, and the Civil Service Commission (CSC), the CSC pointed out that some of the provisions in the bill run contrary to the functions of other agencies such as the CSC and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), as well as to some provisions of the 1987 Constitution.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the CSC gave its inputs and recommendations to make the proposed law more acceptable to all concerned. One of which is to make the CSC the lead implementing agency of the proposed law. CSC Human Resource Relations Office Assistant Director Krunimar Antonio Escudero III said that the jurisdiction of the proposed</p>
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Continuation... Civil Service and Professional Regulation				<p>Public Sector Labor Relations Board (PSLRB) can already be assumed by the CSC.</p> <p>Under Section 13 of the bill, the CSC's Personnel Relations Office and the PSLMC shall be abolished and reconstituted as the PSLRB, which will be attached to the Office of the President.</p> <p>Among those who manifested their support for the bill were the following: the Philippine Government Employees' Association, DOLE-Bureau of Labor Relations, Confederation of Independent Unions in Public Sector, Public Services International, Manila Water Employees Union, Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees, and Alliance of Concerned Teachers.</p> <p>The Commission on Audit, Department of Budget and Management, and Public Services Labor Independent Confederation have yet to submit their position paper on the bill.</p>
Labor and Employment	HB 2633	Rep. Mendoza	Protecting employees in cases of merger or consolidation, sale, or transfer of all or substantially all assets or businesses of their employers	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Enrico Pineda (Party-List, 1-PACMAN), approved House Bill 2633, subject to style.</p> <p>Rep. Raymond Democrito Mendoza (Party-List, TUCP), author of HB 2633, said that his bill seeks to oblige the acquiring or transferee employers to continue the employment of the transferor employer's employees during cases of merger, consolidation, and transfer or sale of all assets or businesses. The wages, benefits and other employment terms and conditions of the affected employees shall also not be diminished during such instances, according to Rep. Mendoza.</p> <p>Baguio City Rep. Mark Go expressed support for the bill. He said the proposed law reinforces the basic principle of the Labor Code which is the protection of the rights and welfare of workers.</p> <p>Also expressing their support for the bill were the National Anti-Poverty Commission - Formal Labor and Migrant Workers Sector and the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP).</p> <p>The Department of Labor and Employment - Bureau of Local Employment (DOLE-BLE) will be submitting its official position paper on the bill at the soonest possible time.</p>
	HB 5086	Rep. Bordado	Mandating every barangay in the country to promote full employment and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee approved HB 5086, subject to style.</p> <p>The proposed law seeks to designate a Barangay Employment Officer (BEO) in every barangay in the country to perform the task of keeping, maintaining, and updating a list of</p>

<p>Continuation... Labor and Employment</p>				<p>skilled workers and all current business enterprises in the barangay. The BEO shall also coordinate with other government agencies in providing skills training for residents in order to facilitate their employment.</p> <p>Rep. Pineda said the bill complements the mandate of the Public Employment Service Offices (PESOs) in all provinces, cities, and municipalities of promoting full employment and equality of employment opportunities for all, and providing employment facilitation services at the local levels. PESOs were established in provinces, cities, and municipalities by virtue of Republic Act 8759 or the Public Employment Service Office Act of 1999, as amended by RA 10691.</p> <p>Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Deputy Director General Aniceto Bertiz III expressed his support for the bill.</p> <p>The TUCP and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) recommended to just strengthen RA 10691, instead of enacting a law creating the BEO position.</p> <p>DILG Legal Officer Cynthia Laureano-Pulido opined that the proposed functions of the BEO are similar to the existing functions of the PESO. She also said that cities, municipalities, and provinces have more financial and technical resources to promote the employability of their constituents.</p> <p>Rep. Gabriel Bordado Jr. (3rd District, Camarines Sur), author of HB 5086, maintained that the bill does not intend to duplicate the functions of the PESO, but to also make barangays as part of the employment facilitation service machinery of the government at the local levels. He explained that the BEO will link up with the DILG, DOLE, TESDA, and other concerned agencies to ensure that the unemployment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic can be addressed effectively.</p> <p>Rep. Go expressed support for the bill, agreeing that the BEO will actually complement the functions and duties of the PESO. He added that the PESO has limited personnel which prevents it from effectively addressing the problem of unemployment in various barangays under its jurisdiction.</p>
	<p>HBs 275, 1259 & 2045</p>	<p>Reps. Aglipay, Villafuerte, and Vargas</p>	<p>Providing for a revised apprenticeship program, repealing for the purpose Chapters I and II of Title II, Book II of PD 442, as amended, otherwise known as the Labor Code of the Philippines</p>	<p>The Committee agreed to refer the three bills to the Subcommittee on Human Resources for further deliberation and consolidation.</p> <p>The Subcommittee on Human Resources is headed by Committee Vice Chair Rep. Ma. Theresa Collantes (3rd District, Batangas).</p>

Continuation... Labor and Employment				<p>The proposed law seeks to institute reforms in the apprenticeship program, as provided for in the Labor Code, to make it more attractive to both the enterprises and the prospective apprentices, in a bid to promote skills acquisition and youth employment.</p> <p>Expressing support for the proposed law were the TESDA, TUCP, and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).</p> <p>DTI Regional Operations Group Assistant Secretary Domingo Tolentino Jr. said the International Labour Organization has recognized quality apprenticeship programs as a strategy to help reduce job-skills mismatch.</p> <p>TUCP Vice President Arthur Juego recommended that the contract of apprenticeship shall indicate that the compensation or allowance of the apprentice must not be below the minimum wage. He also suggested that graduates of the apprenticeship program should be eligible or qualified as a regular worker. Further, he recommended that there should be a periodic review of the competency standards of the apprenticeship program to improve the competency of Filipinos.</p> <p>TESDA suggested that employers should be given incentives to encourage them to voluntarily implement the apprenticeship program.</p> <p>The Commission on Higher Education asked to be given more time to submit its position paper on the bills.</p>
Sustainable Development Goals	HB 6790	Rep. Tutor	Establishing the Sustainable Development Goals and Ambisyon Natin 2040 (SDG AN2040) Fund	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Anna Marie Villaraza-Suarez (3rd District, Quezon), will deliberate further on House Bill 6790. The Secretariat was directed to prepare the substitute bill, taking into consideration the comments and suggestions of the resource persons during the meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Kristine Alexie Tutor (3rd District, Bohol), author of HB 6790, said her bill seeks to create the SDG AN2040 Fund to ensure that the Philippines meets its commitments related to the SDGs as a member-state of the United Nations, as well as to realize the visions under the AN2040.</p> <p>The AN2040 represents the collective long-term vision and aspirations of the Filipino people for themselves and for the country in the next 25 years. It describes the kind of life that people want to live and how the country will be by 2040. As such, it is an anchor for development planning across at least four administrations. [Source: <i>National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) website</i>]</p>

<p>Continuation... Sustainable Development Goals</p>				<p>Expressing support for the bill were the Departments of Education, Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources, and Interior and Local Government (DILG), and the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation.</p> <p>NEDA Chief Economic Development Specialist Girlie Casimiro-Igtiben expressed reservation on the bill. She explained that the respective SDG programs of national government agencies (NGAs) are already being funded and integrated in the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022.</p> <p>Casimiro-Igtiben added that the local government units (LGUs) will also be able to fund their own SDG programs by 2022 upon the effectivity of the Supreme Court ruling on the Mandanas-Garcia petitions in 2018, which increases the Internal Revenue Allotment, now called National Tax Allotment, of LGUs. Further, she said the proposed allocation of 1% of the proceeds from the total excise tax on alcohol and cigarette products for health programs is a huge amount to be included as one of the funding sources of the SDG AN2040 Fund.</p> <p>Department of Social Welfare and Development External Affairs Division Chief Victoria Navida concurred with the position of NEDA. She added that the creation of the SDG AN2040 Fund which would involve the implementation of new projects on SDGs may be counterproductive to the already existing SDG programs and projects of NGAs.</p> <p>Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) Legislative Liaison Officer Gay Nadine Alvor explained that it will be difficult for the PCSO to be one of the funding sources of the proposed law at this time since its charity fund, which is the source of PCSO's numerous mandatory contributions to government agencies, has been significantly reduced. She said PCSO's income from its lottery operations has been adversely affected by the pandemic, including the imposition of various forms of community quarantines. She proposed the inclusion of a clause in the bill which would state that the PCSO shall only start to provide contributions to the SDG AN2040 Fund one to three years after the effectivity of the proposed law.</p> <p>Likewise, Department of Health Planning Officer Joanna Marie Lim recommended that the bill be studied further. She said there are issues that need to be clarified in the bill such as the issue of possible double compensation for the Executive Director of the Board of Trustees of the SDG AN2040 Fund, who will also be designated as the head of the Secretariat of the SDG AN2040 Fund which will be created within the DILG.</p>
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Continuation... Sustainable Development Goals				<p>Reps. Tutor and David “Jay-Jay” Suarez (2nd District, Quezon) asked the PCSO to keep an open mind on the proposed measure, considering that the pandemic is only temporary while the achievement of the SDGs is a target that the whole world is aiming for at a set period.</p> <p>The Committee will solicit the comments of the LGUs on the bill upon the request of Rep. Tutor.</p>
Trade and Industry	Draft Substitute Bill to HBs 1597, 8062 & 8620	Deputy Speaker Romero, Rep. Garin (S.), and Deputy Speaker Gatchalian	Providing for the Revised Intellectual Property (IP) Code of the Philippines	<p>The Committee, chaired by Navotas City Rep. John Reynald Tiangco, will deliberate further on the draft substitute bill in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Tiangco noted the importance of the proposed law which seeks to revise the IP Code of the Philippines. He said a modernized IP Code will help the country keep up with the global trends, making the country more competitive and attractive to investors.</p> <p>Rep. Sharon Garin (Party-List, AAMBIS-OWA), Chair of the technical working group (TWG) that was tasked to craft the substitute bill to the three bills, presented the salient features of the proposed Revised IP Code. Among the key provisions are the following: immediate protection for new inventions; protection of partial designs; protection for creative works/designs; recognition of non-visible marks; enhanced dispute resolution mechanisms; stricter administrative fines and penalties; and stronger enforcement of the policy on the seizure of products which are subject of the offense or violation under the Revised IP Code.</p> <p>According to Rep. Garin, there is a need to revise the IP Code noting that it has been 24 years since the law was enacted and much has changed in terms of technology, business practices, and international legal framework, standards, and best practices in the protection of intellectual property rights. She said the proposed Revised IP Code will create an enabling environment that will promote and steer creativity, innovation, and development both for large companies and small and medium enterprises, including start-ups. She added that this will encourage Filipino talents in the creative sector to produce more work thereby boosting the productivity of the sector and contributing to the economy as a whole.</p> <p>However, Rep. Garin mentioned two major issues that have not been resolved by the TWG – the proposal of the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHL) to be exempted from the coverage of the Salary Standardization Law (SSL) and also from the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018 (Republic Act 11032).</p>

<p>Continuation... Trade and Industry</p>				<p>IPOPHL Director General Rowel Barba explained that the exclusion from the SSL would allow the agency to hire highly qualified experts and technical people which normally will require bigger salaries. He informed the body that some positions in IPOPHL have higher salaries compared to similar positions in other government agencies, which had the approval of the Department of Budget and Management.</p> <p>On the proposed exemption from the coverage of RA 11032, Barba explained that it will be difficult for IPOPHL to comply with the required 20-day processing time for applications and requests. He explained that the initial processing of the application for patents alone would already take a minimum of 18 months.</p> <p>The IP Code requires that from the filing date of the application, an 18-month formality and confidentiality stage should precede the first publication of an Invention Patent application. After the first publication, another six months is given to the applicants for the filing of Request for Substantive Examination. In total, the Formality Examination Stage accounts for about 24 months or two years from the filing date of the application process.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Wes Gatchalian (1st District, Valenzuela City), author of House Bill 8620, and Baguio City Rep. Mark Go remarked that there should be a single standard for the salaries of government employees which include the employees of IPOPHL. Both said the IPOPHL should not be exempted from the SSL as this might set a precedent for other government agencies to also seek exemption from this law in order to get higher salaries.</p> <p>As for the proposed exclusion from RA 11032, Rep. Go suggested that the bill may just provide that the 20-day processing time for applications and requests as prescribed in RA 11032 will only be applied to the IPOPHL after all the stages of patent application have been completed or when all the requirements for patent application have been submitted. Rep. Tiangco agreed with the suggestion of Rep. Go.</p> <p>Asked whether the IPOPHL has the power to seize counterfeit goods while in transit to the country, Barba answered in the negative. He averred that the IPOPHL can only seize counterfeit goods when these are already in the stores.</p> <p>Expressing support for the proposed law were the Department of Education, Department of Science and Technology, and Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines. The IPOPHL was requested to submit the current salary rates of its employees.</p> <p>The resource persons were requested to</p>
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Continuation... Trade and Industry				submit their additional recommendations on the substitute bill.
Women and Gender Equality	Substitute Bill to HBs 9059 & 9465	Reps. Acosta-Alba and Villafuerte	Gender Responsive and Inclusive Public Health Concern and Disaster Management Act	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Ma. Lourdes Acosta-Alba (1st District, Bukidnon), approved the substitute bill, subject to style and amendment. The corresponding Committee report was likewise approved.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Acosta-Alba expressed the hope that the proposed law will be approved the soonest considering its importance during this time of pandemic. She said that the substitute bill incorporated the views, comments, and suggestions raised by the resource persons from government agencies and non-government organizations during the Committee's previous deliberations on the bills.</p> <p>The proposed law aims to "ensure that there is adequate statutory power for government agencies to act, pursuant to their respective mandates, upon a declaration of an emergency by the President by reason of a pandemic and guided by the policies issued by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases" and the principles stated in the proposed law.</p> <p>Expressing support for the proposed law were representatives from the National Council on Disability Affairs and the Democratic Socialist Women of the Philippines.</p> <p>Some of the recommendations made during the meeting were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify the provisions in the bill that were written in complex sentences to avoid confusion or ambiguity in the crafting of the implementing rules and regulations (IRR), as well as in the implementation of the proposed law; • Include in the bill programs that will benefit women workers in the informal economy; and • Include a catch-all provision that will cover women in other vulnerable situations who are not specifically mentioned in the definition of "At-risk individuals and groups."

SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Subcommittee on National Territory, Regional and International	Draft Substitute Bill to HBs 809, 816, 4194,	Reps. Cabochan, Biazon, Hofer, Deputy Speaker Rodriguez, and	Establishing the archipelagic sea lanes in Philippine waters	The Subcommittee on National Territory, Regional and International Peace and Security, chaired by Rep. Cyrille "Beng" Abueg-Zaldivar (2 nd District, Palawan), approved the draft substitute bill to the five

<p>Peace and Security (Foreign Affairs)</p>	<p>4877&8018</p>	<p>Rep. Villafuerte</p>	<p>bills. The draft substitute bill will be presented to the mother Committee for its consideration and approval.</p> <p>The Subcommittee agreed to use HB 4194, authored by Rep. Ann Hofer (2nd District, Zamboanga Sibugay), as the lead bill.</p> <p>In today's meeting, the Subcommittee extensively discussed and thereafter adopted the following provisions of the bill relative to the exercise of the right of archipelagic sea lanes (ASLs) passage: rights and obligations; prohibition to conduct research and surveillance activities; prohibition on fishing, loading, unloading of persons, goods or currency; compliance with navigational regulations, procedures and traffic schemes; prohibition on maritime pollution; and protective measures.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Abueg-Zaldivar underscored the importance of the proposed measure in enhancing the country's national security, protecting the natural resources, improving the safety of navigation, and promoting international maritime understanding.</p> <p>Rep. Abueg-Zaldivar likewise apprised the body of the three designated ASLs and their coordinates for the right of ASL passage of foreign vessels and aircraft that were agreed upon during the Subcommittee's previous meeting, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea Lane I: Philippine Sea - Balintang Channel - West Philippine Sea (WPS); • Sea Lane II: WPS - Mindoro Strait - Cuyo East Pass - Sulu Sea - Sibutu Passage - Celebes Sea; and • Sea Lane III: Celebes Sea-Basilan Strait - Sulu Sea - Nasubata Channel - Balabac Strait - WPS. <p>The Subcommittee concurred with the suggestion of University of the Philippines' Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea (UPIMLOS) Director Jay Batongbacal that all rules and regulations relating to the management and security of the ASLs and adjacent archipelagic waters shall be promulgated by the President through an executive issuance.</p> <p>On the bill's provision regarding the liability for damage, Department of Justice (DOJ) State Counsel Fretti Ganchoon suggested the imposition of penalties, including fines and imprisonment, for violation of the proposed law. Batongbacal added that penalties imposed on foreign ships and aircraft shall be in accordance with the Rules of Procedure on Admiralty Cases or by diplomatic representations with the flag State, as may be appropriate.</p>
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Continuation... Subcommittee on National Territory, Regional and International Peace and Security (Foreign Affairs)				<p>Rep. Hofer and Deputy Speaker Rufus Rodriguez (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City), author of HB 4877, agreed with the DOJ and Department of National Defense (DND) to delete the provision designating the National Coast Watch Center (NCWC) as the coordinating mechanism for the implementation of the proposed law. Deputy Speaker Rodriguez opined that designating the NCWC may not yet be necessary since the bill only seeks to establish the ASLs in Philippine waters.</p> <p>NCWC is an inter-agency maritime surveillance and coordinated response facility established through Executive Order 57 signed by the late President Benigno Simeon Aquino III last 06 September 2011 which serves as a coordinating and implementing mechanism in a whole-of-government approach to address current and future maritime safety, security, and environmental protection challenges in the Philippines. <i>(Source: Official Gazette website)</i></p> <p>Representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippine Coast Guard, and National Mapping and Resource Information Authority likewise presented their respective comments and suggestions on the bill.</p>
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AGENCY BRIEFING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Health	<p>Briefing by concerned government agencies on the present COVID-19 situation in the country</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases of COVID-19 Delta variant in the country 	<p>The Committee, presided by Rep. Estrellita Suansing (1st District, Nueva Ecija), listened to the presentations of concerned government agencies on the present COVID-19 situation in the country.</p> <p>Rep. Suansing said that the Committee, with the support of Speaker Lord Allan Jay Velasco (Marinduque), is conducting this meeting two days before Metro Manila will be placed again under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) – the government’s strictest community quarantine classification. This, after Southeast Asia has recorded considerable increases in COVID-19 cases amidst shortfall in vaccines and dramatic spread of highly contagious variants.</p> <p>She went on to say that while the country has yet to make a dent in the drive against COVID-19, the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention has made the announcement that the war against COVID-19 has changed with the emergence of the COVID-19 Delta variant which is highly transmissible, likening it to chicken pox in terms of virulence or communicability. Hence, she said, the Committee would like to be informed of what the government has done so far and its plans to stem the transmission of this highly transmissible disease.</p> <p>Health Secretary Francisco Duque III, who is also the chairperson of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management</p>

Continuation...
Health

of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF), reported on the various measures that the Department of Health (DOH) has undertaken to prepare and capacitate the country's healthcare system to counter the increasing number of Delta variant cases.

He mentioned that the DOH will be providing more high-flow nasal cannula machines and mechanical ventilators to better equip the intensive care units of government hospitals in various regions. An amount of P775 million was also allocated for the upgrade of oxygen generating plants in DOH hospitals. Modular hospitals were established at the Lung Center of the Philippines, East Avenue Medical Center, National Center for Mental Health, and Southern Philippines Medical Center. The DOH also increased its partner telemedicine service providers to give primary care and coordination services while the NCR is in ECQ.

Duque added that the DOH will ensure the continuous implementation of the country's vaccination program despite the ECQ, but under strict observance of the government's health and safety protocols. For this month, Duque said that 20 million vaccines are expected to arrive in the country, which will help achieve the full vaccination of all healthcare workers, senior citizens, and persons with comorbidities.

Department of Health Epidemiology Bureau Director Alethea de Guzman reported that as of August 3, the total reported COVID-19 cases is about 1.61 million. She said that a sharp increase in cases was observed by the end of July and sustained until August 3. On a national scale, the country has a moderate risk classification. However, NCR, Cordillera Autonomous Region, Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Visayas, and Northern Mindanao are under a high risk classification with the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in these areas.

De Guzman said that for the period July 28 to August 3, the average daily reported cases of COVID-19 in NCR jumped to 1,596 which is 65% higher than last week's 967. As of August 2, out of the 17 local governments in NCR, 9 have Delta variant cases with Las Piñas registering 13 cases, followed by Manila with 12, and Pasig with 6. Outside NCR, the provinces of Bulacan, Laguna, Cavite, and Rizal also registered Delta variant cases with Laguna having the highest at 18 cases. Other areas affected by the Delta variant are the cities of Iloilo, Cebu, Lapulapu, Mandaue, Davao, and Cagayan de Oro. She added that at present, there are 216 reported cases of Delta variant in the country.

According to De Guzman, the implementation of the ECQ in NCR from August 6 to 20 is seen as a preemptive measure to mitigate the further spread of the Delta variant which has been observed to have a higher transmissibility by 60% compared with the Alpha variant (first observed in the United Kingdom). Based on the projections of DOH, if the government implements a four-week ECQ in NCR, active COVID-19 cases will only be around 19,584 until September 30. This could go up to 31,928 if the NCR will be placed in one week general community quarantine (GCQ) with heightened restrictions and three weeks of ECQ. However, the figures will shoot up to 510,268 if only GCQ with heightened restrictions will be declared for four weeks.

DOH Technical Advisory Group Dr. Edsel Maurice Salvana stressed that the Delta variant is the "fastest and fittest" virus which is three times more contagious than the original Sars-CoV-2 virus. It is also deadlier especially if the healthcare system becomes overwhelmed and could not accommodate the

<p>Continuation... Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declaration of enhanced community quarantine in various parts of the country and its impact on the economy • Progress of the vaccination program of the government 	<p>increasing number of COVID-19 infected persons. With the Delta variant, even younger ones also develop severe ailment.</p> <p>Despite this, Salvana is optimistic that the country can contain the spread of the virus by wearing face mask and face shield; observing social distancing; ensuring appropriate ventilation especially in closed areas; having good border control; and getting vaccinated. He stressed that in countries with high vaccination rates, the mortality rates are decreasing even if the number of cases is increasing.</p> <p>Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Undersecretary Epimaco Densing discussed the various community quarantine classifications that will be imposed in the country from August 1-31. He said that for the NCR, the decision to impose ECQ was consulted with all the Metro Manila mayors and the reason for such imposition was primarily to prevent the spread of the Delta variant in the metropolis.</p> <p>Densing explained that in placing areas under certain community quarantine classifications, the DILG primarily takes into consideration the following: epidemiological surveillance, contact tracing, and isolation facilities and capacities of the local government units (LGUs); and their healthcare and intensive care unit (ICU) utilization rates. He said that the ICU utilization rates and the corresponding risk classifications are as follows: 50% and below ICU utilization rate – low risk; 51 to 70% – moderate risk; 71 to 85% – high risk; and above 85% – critical.</p> <p>National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Undersecretary Mercedita Sombillo explained that as the community quarantine becomes stricter, the impact to the economy becomes worse. NEDA estimates that by August 6, the openness of the economy will only be 82% with 6.45 million affected workers. She added that under the ECQ, the NCR's weekly nominal impact on the gross value added (GVA) is P105.53 billion. Likewise, it will affect 118,000 to 177,000 poor individuals and displace 444,000 workers. (GVA is the contribution made to the economy by a sector, province, or region.)</p> <p>Vaccine Czar Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., who is also the chief implementer of the National Task Force Against COVID-19, said that as of August 4, the Philippines has already administered 21.88 million vaccines. This means that 12.5 million Filipinos have already taken their first dose and 9.82 million Filipinos have been fully vaccinated. He reported that the Philippines has increased its vaccination capacity noting that for the period July 28 to August 3, the country has registered a daily average of 529,911 jabs.</p> <p>Galvez further informed the Committee that the country has received 37.27 million doses of the vaccine. For August, the country is expecting to receive 22 million doses. He said that in order to meet the monthly demand for the vaccination program, the country needs at least 25 million doses monthly.</p> <p>In addition to what Galvez reported, DOH Undersecretary Myrna Cabotaje said that moving forward, the government targets to accomplish the following by the end of August: administer 3 million jabs per week; sustain average daily jabs of 600,000 to 700,000 (if supply is available); provide full vaccination to all healthcare workers; and administer 5 million doses (second dose) to senior citizens.</p>
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<p>Continuation... Health</p>	<p>ECQ as its way of preventing the spread of the COVID-19. She averred that based on the data presented by NEDA, the economy and many Filipinos are adversely affected by the restrictive community quarantine measures.</p> <p>Duque and Galvez stressed the importance of imposing ECQ in NCR as a preemptive measure. Galvez added that if the government will not do so, the Philippines might end up like India or Indonesia, which struggled in their fight against the highly transmissible Delta variant. Nevertheless, Duque said that the IATF will look into the suggestion of Rep. Quimbo to make some modifications in the guidelines for ECQ to make it less restrictive.</p> <p>Reps. Dahlia Loyola (5th District, Cavite), Micaela Violago (2nd District, Nueva Ecija), and Janette Garin (1st District, Iloilo) brought up their concerns regarding the distribution of vaccines.</p> <p>Reps. Loyola and Violago said that the delay and inequitable distribution in the vaccine rollout for areas not red-flagged or less vulnerable for COVID 19 positive cases is putting to great risk the efforts of the concerned LGUs to protect their people and borders from COVID-19, especially the Delta variant. They fear that since their areas are not being prioritized in the rollout of the vaccines, infections may increase to a level that may become alarming.</p> <p>Rep. Garin suggested that vaccines should be proportionally distributed based on the population of the LGUs.</p> <p>KABAYAN Party-List Rep. Sarah Jane Elago suggested that teachers, students, and non-teaching personnel be included in the priority list for vaccination in view of the government's plan to gradually return to face-to-face mode of learning.</p> <p>Galvez said that the government is doing its best to equitably distribute the vaccines to all LGUs. However, because of scarcity of supply, the government gave priority to areas which have a significant increase in the number of COVID-19 cases.</p> <p>Batanes Rep. Ciriaco Gato Jr. asked about data on those who were fully vaccinated and yet still contracted COVID-19 and later succumb to the disease.</p> <p>DOH Undersecretary Maria Rosario Singh-Vergeire said that the DOH is still in the process of compiling data about the matter, which she called as "breakthrough" infections.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Rufus Rodriguez (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City) thanked the DOH and Secretary Galvez for their immediate response in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in Cagayan de Oro City. The Deputy Speaker also asked about the status of his other requests in line with Cagayan de Oro's COVID-19 response. In reply, Duque informed him of the actions taken by the DOH on his requests.</p>
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