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BUDGET BRIEFINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Appropriations	<p>Briefing on the proposed FY 2022 budget, plans, programs, and accomplishments of the Department of Energy (DOE), Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC), and the Department of Health (DOH)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Energy Energy Regulatory Commission 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Eric Go Yap (Party-List, ACT-CIS), listened to the presentations of the DOE, ERC, and DOH on their respective proposed FY 2022 budget, plans and programs, and major accomplishments.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Manuel Jose "Mannix" Dalipe (2nd District, Zamboanga City), sat as the presiding officer during the deliberations on the proposed budget of the DOE and ERC.</p> <p>Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi led the DOE in the presentation of its proposed FY 2022 budget. He said that through this budget, the DOE will strive to attain its goals of energy security, equity, access, affordability, and sustainability amid the challenges of the pandemic.</p> <p>Under the FY 2022 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the DOE is set to receive an amount of P2.13 billion, which is 3.2% lower than its current budget of P2.20 billion. By expense class, the DOE's 2022 proposed budget will be distributed as follows: maintenance and other operating expenses, P1.03 billion (MOOE); personnel services (PS), P721.61 million; and capital outlay (CO), P379.20 million.</p> <p>Reps. Carlos Isagani Zarate (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA), Edcel Lagman (1st District, Albay), Arlene Brosas (Party-List, GABRIELA), and Alfredo Garbin Jr. (Party-List, AKO BICOL) raised concerns on recurring power outages in certain parts of the country, as well their implication on the upcoming 2022 national elections.</p> <p>DOE Undersecretary Felix William Fuentebella informed the Committee that based on the simulation done by the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP), the energy supply in Luzon grid is sufficient for the entire election period.</p> <p>The Committee directed the DOE to present the factors that made the NGCP arrive at such forecast.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Deputy Speaker Jose Atienza Jr. (Party-List, BUHAY) proposed that the Committee look into the status and disbursements of the Malampaya fund or the income generated from the Malampaya Deep Water Gas-to-Power project. This is in reaction to the statement of DOE Assistant Secretary Gerardo Erguiza that the fund is currently "parked" or has been lying idle in the National Treasury. Erguiza said that even the DOE cannot use the funds at its discretion.</p> <p>Chair Agnes Devanadera informed the Committee that the Department of Budget and Management (DBM)-approved budget for the ERC in 2022 amounts to only P586.52 million which is 41.74% lower than its current year's budget of P1.01 billion. Devanadera added that the DBM-approved budget is also 41% lower than the Commission's original proposed budget of P987.46 million. She pointed out that such reduction</p>

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- Department of Health

in the budget of the ERC will significantly affect its delivery of services. Hence, she appealed to Congress to consider appropriating an additional amount of P68.69 million to the ERC.

With regard to ERC's accomplishments, Devanadera reported that ERC's rules for the Interim Reliability Performance Indices and Equivalent Outage Days per year of generating units enabled the ERC to closely monitor the performance of generation companies. In addition, through the intervention of the ERC, lifeline electric consumers, or low-income households that consume very low electricity, were granted discount in their electric bill, resulting in total discounts amounting to about P200 million. Devanadera also reported that ERC has penalized electric cooperatives for overcharging its consumers, and ordered them to refund the overcharged amount to their consumers.

DBM Budget and Management Bureau-E Director Cristina Clasara explained that the DBM-approved budget of the ERC was computed based on the ERC's absorptive capacity. She said that in 2019, the ERC has an obligation rate of 69%, while its obligation rate as of June 30, 2021 is 28%. However, Clasara manifested that the DBM will submit to the wisdom of Congress on whatever changes in the ERC's budget will be decided upon.

In response, Devanadera attributed the low fund utilization rate of ERC to the delayed release of its budget in 2019, which did not give the ERC enough time to complete the process of procurement of goods and services. However, she reported that as of August 2021, the ERC's utilization rate is at 40.1% and is expected to increase further in the coming months.

Deputy Speaker Loren Legarda (Antique), Rep. Sergio Dagooc (Party-List, APEC), and Rep. Godofredo Guya (Party-List, RECOBODA) manifested their support for an increase in the budget of ERC.

Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Vincent Franco "Duke" Frasco (5th District, Cebu), presided over the DOH's budget briefing.

Under the FY 2022 NEP, Health Secretary Francisco Duque said that the DOH and its attached agencies are set to receive P242 billion, which is 14% higher than its current budget of P212 billion. The DOH-Office of the Secretary will get the biggest portion of the DOH's proposed budget at P157 billion (65%), followed by the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), with a budget of P80 billion (33%).

Responding to the query of Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo (2nd District, Marikina City), Duque said that the DOH originally requested P73.99 billion for the government's COVID-19 response programs but the DBM only approved P19.68 billion. According to Duque, the requested amount would have included, among others, the P50.41 billion funding for the healthcare workers' (HCWs) life insurance, special risk allowance, and meals, accommodation, and transportation allowances, but the DBM excluded these items in its proposed budget.

Nevertheless, Duque said that the funding for the HCW's benefits in 2022 will be provided for under the proposed Bayanihan 3 law, which was already approved in the House but is still pending approval by the Senate. He added that the DOH also proposed P104 billion for COVID-19 vaccine

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booster shots but this amount was reduced by the DBM to P45 billion and was lodged under the unprogrammed funds in as much as there is no official decision yet on the need for booster doses.

Rep. Quimbo stressed that the 2022 budget of the DOH for COVID-19 response is insufficient, pointing out that from March 24, 2020 up to June 30 of this year alone, the DBM already released P160 billion to the DOH for this purpose or roughly P11 billion per month. She added that according to recent projections and by looking at the surge of COVID-19 cases in the country, the virus will continue to pose serious threats to the people in 2022 and even up to 2023.

Duque explained that the DBM might have slashed the proposed budget of the DOH due to the presumption that the country will soon reach the herd immunity once 77 million Filipinos will be vaccinated before the end of this year.

Rep. Janette Garin (1st District, Iloilo), who was the Health Secretary during the previous administration, countered that Duque should not speak of herd immunity without considering the administration of the third dose or booster shots, adding that even those fully vaccinated may still be infected with the COVID-19 virus.

Reps. Garin and Quimbo, along with Deputy Speaker Rufus Rodriguez (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City), concurred that funds for the COVID-19 booster doses should be a line item under the DOH budget and not under unprogrammed funds, wherein funds are not guaranteed.

Department of Finance (DOF) Undersecretary Mario Villaverde committed to provide the funding for the booster shots once the Department of Science and Technology's (DOST) Vaccine Expert Panel recommends the need for such.

Replying to the query of Rep. France Castro (Party-List, ACT TEACHERS), PhilHealth President and CEO Dante Gierran said that diagnostic tests for teachers nationwide will be done free of charge as these will be covered under PhilHealth's Konsultasyong Sulit at Tama (KonSulTa) package. (KonSulTa covers a set of primary care health services based on life stage, health risks, and needs for which Filipinos are entitled to. (Source: *PhilHealth website*)

Rep. Sergio Dagooc (Party-List, APEC) suggested the extension of the employment period of medical personnel hired through the DOH's Emergency Hiring Program, including COVID-19 vaccinators. The Health Secretary agreed with the suggestion of Rep. Dagooc.

Asked by Rep. Ferdinand Gaité (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA) on the shortage of HCWs in the country, Duque admitted that there are unfilled plantilla positions mostly for doctors in government hospitals. Duque already suggested the conversion of these unfilled plantilla positions to levels which will make them more "attractive" to doctors and encourage them to serve in the government.

Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA) inquired about the P170 million cut from the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine's (RITM) 2022 budget despite its significant role as the national reference laboratory and biggest COVID-19 testing center. RITM Director Celia Carlos

Continuation... Appropriations		<p>affirmed that the FY 2022 budget of the RITM was slashed, which will adversely affect the performance of its functions.</p> <p>Responding to the query of Deputy Speaker Rodriguez, Duque gave assurance that the DOH will no longer transfer funds to the DBM's Procurement Service (PS) for the purchase of COVID-19 related supplies. This, after the DOH's transfer to PS of around P42 billion in 2020 for the procurement of COVID-19 supplies was roundly questioned by Congress.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Rep. Edcel Lagman (1st District, Albay) reiterated that despite the non-disclosure agreement (NDA) tied to the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines, the Commission on Audit (COA) should still scrutinize these contracts entered into by the Philippine government with the vaccine manufacturers. This, he asserted, is for transparency and accountability in government transactions pursuant to the Government Procurement Reform Act (RA 9184) and the COVID-19 Vaccination Program Act of 2021 (RA 11525).</p> <p>Upon the request of Rep. Castro, DOH OIC-Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire promised to submit the details of the P20 billion allocation under the proposed budget for the purchase of drugs, medicines, vaccines, and medical and dental supplies.</p> <p>Several Members of the Committee manifested their support for an increase in the budget of the DOH.</p>
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COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Agriculture and Food	HR 522	Rep. Roman	Inquiry into the complaints of farmers against the steep prices of fertilizers and pesticides	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga (1st District, Quezon), will continue its inquiry relative to House Resolutions 522, 786, 1965, and 2103.</p> <p>Rep. Enverga remarked at the start of the meeting that fertilizers and pesticides are important inputs in increasing agricultural production. Thus, he said, if prices of these farm inputs will continue to rise, farmers will be unable to purchase them which may lead to decreased crop yield, and will consequently affect the rice and food self-sufficiency program of the government. Likewise, the rise in prices of fertilizers and pesticides will also increase the cost of production to the detriment of farmers and consumers. In this regard, he said it is important to know the plans and strategies of concerned agencies to regulate the prices of fertilizers and pesticides as well as the programs that can be implemented to assist the farmers.</p> <p>Party-List Reps. Argel Joseph Cabatbat (MAGSASAKA) and Eufemia "Ka Fernia" Cullamat (BAYAN MUNA), respective authors of HR 1965 and HR 2103, emphasized the need to determine the reasons behind the</p>
	HR 786	Rep. Violago	Inquiry into the liberalization of fertilizer importation as part of the efforts in continuing to cut the cost of producing rice in the country	
	HR 1965	Rep. Cabatbat	Inquiry into the inability of the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA) in regulating the high prices of fertilizers	
	HR 2103	Rep. Cullamat	Investigation into the steadily increasing prices of fertilizer	

<p>Continuation... Agriculture and Food</p>				<p>increase in the prices of fertilizers and pesticides, and what the concerned agencies, particularly the FPA, are doing to address the issue at hand. Rep. Cullamat added that the steep prices of fertilizers will make it more difficult for local farmers to compete against the low-priced imported rice that are flooding the market.</p> <p>FPA Executive Director Wilfredo Roldan replied that the continued rise in fertilizer prices is due to the disrupted global supply network because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased demand for fertilizers in other countries at this time. He said through the years, the FPA continues to fulfill its mandate of assuring the agricultural sector of adequate supply of fertilizer and pesticide at reasonable prices.</p> <p>Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretary for Operations and Agri-Fisheries Mechanization Ariel Cayanan confirmed the reasons for the price increases cited by Roldan. He added that the country's reliance on imported fertilizers and pesticides makes it susceptible to price changes in the market.</p> <p>Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) Consumer Protection and Advocacy Bureau Assistant Director Cherryl Carbonell explained that fertilizers are essential farm inputs in the production of agricultural products. Hence, high prices of farm inputs constrain food self-sufficiency, and have direct impact on the cost of production resulting in higher prices of rice and other agricultural products.</p> <p>On the query of several Members relative to producing urea fertilizer locally, the DA and FPA officials said the country cannot produce it locally as the components of urea can only be sourced from oil producing countries, which is why the Philippines continues to import this fertilizer.</p> <p>DA Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and Research Fermin Adriano posited that the quickest way to help the farmers is through the grant of fertilizer subsidy, but which requires an additional budget.</p> <p>Federation of Free Farmers President Leonardo Montemayor agreed with the suggestion of Adriano to provide fertilizer subsidy to rice farmers. He also recommended that the government search for alternative fertilizers, other than urea, to lessen the production cost of rice.</p> <p>Reps. Cabatbat and Francisco "Kiko" Benitez (3rd District, Negros Occidental) emphasized the importance of tracing and monitoring the traders/importers' inventory of fertilizers and pesticides, as well as the prices of such</p>
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Continuation... Agriculture and Food				<p>products in the last six to eight months to ensure that there is no profiteering from the fluctuating fertilizer and pesticide prices.</p> <p>On the proposal to allow the FPA to import fertilizers, which is within its powers and functions under Presidential Decree 1144, Roldan said that he is open to such a proposal. However, he said a study should be made to determine the logistical requirements for the FPA to carry out this function, considering that it has no experience as an importer of fertilizers.</p> <p>Rep. Abdullah Dimaporo (2nd District, Lanao del Norte) manifested his support for the conduct of this inquiry, adding that the plight of the rice farmers can be addressed through proper interventions from the DA.</p> <p>The DA and FPA were requested to submit to the Committee their recommendations to address the rising prices of fertilizers and pesticides. The DA was also requested to present its FY 2022 proposed budget in the next meeting of the Committee prior to the deliberations on its budget by the Committee on Appropriations.</p> <p>Rep. Enverga also informed the body that two resolutions, HRs 992 and 974, with subject matters similar to the four HRs in the agenda, will be included in the deliberations of the Committee once these are referred to the Committee. He explained that the two HRs were earlier referred to the Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability, but a request for change of referral was already filed with the Committee on Rules.</p>
Creative Industry and Performing Arts (Special Committee)	HR 1549	Deputy Speaker Legarda	Inquiry into the issue of counterfeit garments appropriating weave patterns from the Cordillera coming into the local markets from abroad, with the end in view of strengthening protection of the intellectual property rights and cultural heritage of our indigenous peoples and communities	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Christopher de Venecia (4 th District, Pangasinan) approved the Committee Report on House Resolution 1549.
	HR 2035	Rep. De Venecia	Inquiry into the state of the Philippine visual arts and other related industries	<p>The Committee will continue its inquiry relative to HR 2035.</p> <p>Rep. De Venecia stated that visual art is a fundamental component of human experiences as it reflects the history and culture of people, shapes ideas, and provides deeper understanding of human emotions.</p> <p>According to the Chair, the visual arts sector was able to contribute P2.8 billion to the country's Gross Domestic Product in 2012, based on a study conducted by the World Intellectual Property Organization that was published in 2014. However, he said numerous museums and galleries in the country have closed down, and employees were likewise</p>

<p>Continuation... Creative Industry and Performing Arts (Special Committee)</p>				<p>laid off, due to loss of revenues because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, he articulated that now is the opportune time for the government and the stakeholders to reassess the visual arts sector in the country for swift recovery and development.</p> <p>The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and Artinformal Gallery gave their respective presentations on the ecosystem and value chain of the visual arts.</p> <p>NCCA head of Visual Arts Committee Geraldine Araneta said the NCCA is currently conducting a road mapping of the visual arts sector and is using four models of art ecosystem from abroad that are applicable to the country's visual arts. She added that the art ecosystem model in Cebu is also being considered as one of the references for the road map.</p> <p>DTI Undersecretary Rafaelita Aldaba informed the body that the visual art process comprises the following: creation; production; and dissemination/trade/exhibition. She also defined visual arts as art forms or creation of works which appeal primarily to the visual sense or are multidimensional objects. Visual arts include antiques, painting, sculpture, and photography, as well as other miscellaneous items consisting of engravings, carvings, lithographs, collages, and other ornaments. According to Aldaba, the country retains a positive trade performance for visual arts since 2015 which is highly driven by the sale or exchange of sculptures.</p> <p>Artinformal Gallery owner and Creative Director Tina Fernandez underscored the important role of galleries as the first repository for art, which provide a space for artistic groundwork and development and a bridge between the artist and the public. She said art galleries are involved in all the processes of visual arts including creation, production, and distribution.</p> <p>On the query of Rep. De Venecia if galleries in the provinces are frequently visited like those in Manila, Rep. Sharon Garin (Party-List, AAMBIS-OWA) shared that museum or galleries that are located in the capital of provinces such as in Iloilo have a good number of visitors each day. However, she said buyers of arts usually come from Manila.</p> <p>Fernandez agreed that most art buyers are from Manila which is why artists from different regions of the country hold their exhibits in Manila (or in Metro Manila). In terms of viewership or appreciation of arts, she admitted that there are still people who feel intimidated by visiting galleries because of the misconception that they are expected to buy</p>
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<p>Continuation... Creative Industry and Performing Arts (Special Committee)</p>				<p>art pieces. She then asked for support for the promotion of public art which should be part of everyday life.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Department of Education (DepEd), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts (UP-CFA), among others, gave their insights on the state of visual art education in the country.</p> <p>CHED Technical Committee Chair for Multimedia Arts Robert Besana stated that there are factors that must be considered to further develop art and design in the higher education sector.</p> <p>First, there is a need to equip faculty members teaching art and design with knowledge on new modes of instruction to adapt to the new normal and with the necessary digital tools and equipment. Second, scholarships and grants as well as incentives for teachers should be made available; and third, facilities and laboratories for visual art education also need to be established or improved. Besana added that it is also important to continue reevaluating, developing, and monitoring the quality of curriculums and programs for arts and design to adapt to the current practices and standards.</p> <p>UP-CFA Professor Lisa Ito-Tapang presented the history of visual arts education in the country and discussed the various formal and non-formal courses, short courses, trainings, workshops, internships, and scholarships/grants in relation to arts and design. She agreed that the pandemic has altered the modes of learning and cited the critical role that technology, mass media, and other online platforms must play in furthering art education in the country. She underscored the need to develop learning systems that are geared towards nurturing younger generations who will shape the contemporary Philippine arts and society.</p> <p>DepEd Senior Education Program Specialist Christine Graza-Magboo discussed the arts and design programs in the K to 12 Curriculum. She informed the body of the Special Program in the Arts (SPA), which is a program for high school students with potential or talents in the arts, namely, music, visual arts, theater arts, media arts, creative writing, and dance.</p> <p>Graza-Magboo also highlighted the DepEd Action Plan 2021-2022 which aims to develop a career advocacy program for creative industries and the arts in the communities; provide an interface of arts and design track and technical-vocational track in senior high</p>
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<p><i>Continuation...</i> Creative Industry and Performing Arts (Special Committee)</p>				<p>school; create a support fund for SPA and Special Program in Technical-Vocational Education (SPTVE); implement SPA in the elementary; and establish partnerships with creative industries located near the schools.</p> <p>On the part of TESDA, Policy and Planning Division Acting Chief Ma. Linda Andrade reported that TESDA currently has three courses under the Visual Arts category: illustration, photography, and visual graphic design. However, she said most of the skills being taught need further updating which is why the policy direction of TESDA now is to increase its collaborations with industries in order to know the in-demand skills and requirements.</p> <p>As for the latest trends in visual arts, non-fungible token (NFT) artist Luis Buenaventura explained the concept of crypto art/NFT which involves the selling of digital artworks online with buyers using crypto currency.</p> <p>NFT is a unique digital identifier that cannot be copied, substituted, or subdivided, that is recorded in a blockchain, and that is used to certify authenticity and ownership (as of a specific digital asset and specific rights relating to it). (Source: Merriam-Webster website)</p> <p>In reply to the query of Rep. De Venecia on the challenges faced by NFT artists, Buenaventura said there are still a limited number of buyers as many people are still skeptical of investing in or using crypto currency.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the resource persons for their valuable inputs and assured them that these will be integrated in the Visual Arts roadmapping currently being conducted by the NCCA.</p>
<p>Justice</p>	<p>HB 8460</p>	<p>Rep. Pineda</p>	<p>Granting Philippine citizenship to Zhengyu Zhu</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Vicente "Ching" Veloso III (3rd District, Leyte), approved the Committee Report on House Bill 8460.</p> <p>Rep. Veloso informed the body that Mr. Zhengyu Zhu has already complied with all the requirements of the Committee.</p>
	<p>HB 9376</p>	<p>Majority Leader Romualdez</p>	<p>Granting Philippine citizenship to Elizabeth Eder Zobel de Ayala</p>	<p>The Committee approved HB 9376 and the corresponding Committee Report.</p> <p>Majority Leader Ferdinand Martin Romualdez (1st District, Leyte), author of HB 9376, highlighted Ms. Elizabeth Eder Zobel de Ayala's accomplishments and work experiences during her 34 years of residency in the country which involve being part of organizations and foundations that establish civic oriented programs for the upliftment of women and children.</p>

<p>Continuation... Justice</p>				<p>Rep. Romualdez said Zobel de Ayala is an advocate of education, women's health, and responsible family planning who actively supported and contributed to the passage of the Reproductive Health Bill in 2012. At present, he said Zobel de Ayala is the co-founder and Chair of the Board of Trustees of Teach for the Philippines (TFP), a country partner of <i>Teach for All</i>.</p> <p>According to its website, <i>Teach for All</i> is a global network which recruits and develops promising future leaders to teach in their nations' under-resourced schools and communities in order to improve education and expand opportunity for all children.</p> <p>Expressing their support for the bill were the Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Foreign Affairs, Office of the Solicitor General, National Bureau of Investigation, and Bureau of Immigration.</p> <p>Zobel de Ayala expressed her gratitude to the Committee and said that her extraordinary experiences while living in the Philippines led her to love the country and its people.</p>
	<p>HBs 1664, 2347, 3916, 4660 & 5347</p>	<p>Rep. Cabochan, Deputy Speaker Escudero, Reps. Cagas, Campos, and Suntay</p>	<p>Amending certain sections of Republic Act 7309 or the law creating a Board of Claims under the Department of Justice for victims of unjust imprisonment or detention and victims of violent crimes (by increasing the compensation for persons wrongfully convicted of a crime, among others)</p>	<p>The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to harmonize the five bills and come up with a substitute bill.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Jonathan Keith Flores (2nd District, Bukidnon), was designated as TWG Chair.</p> <p>Rep. Manuel Cabochan III (Party-List, MAGDALO), author of HB 1664, said that RA 7309 is an outdated law which needs to be amended as the prescribed compensation for victims of unjust imprisonment or detention is no longer realistic. He said his bill seeks to increase the compensation from the maximum of P10,000 to P60,000 for every year of detention or imprisonment in order to compensate wrongfully detained persons who have been declared innocent in a full-blown trial.</p> <p>The author of HB 2347, Deputy Speaker Evelina Escudero (1st District, Sorsogon), said that in addition to increasing the compensation of wrongfully detained persons, her bill also provides that persons unjustly convicted and subsequently imprisoned for one or more crimes which he did not commit, may file a civil action and claim for damages before any court of competent jurisdiction.</p> <p>HB 2347 also provides that the subsequent annual funding of the proposed law shall partly come from 3% of the net income of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) and 3% of the proceeds in the sale and other forms of disposition of military camps in Metro Manila</p>

Continuation... Justice				<p>by the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA). Under RA 7309, such subsequent annual funding shall come from 1% of the net income of PAGCOR and 1% of the proceeds, sales, and other dispositions of military camps by the BCDA.</p> <p>Expressing their support for the bills were the DOJ, PAGCOR, Department of Budget and Management, and Commission on Human Rights.</p> <p>The DOJ proposed that those who have been unjustly accused and acquitted before the lower courts to likewise receive compensation. He said that under the present law, only those who have been unjustly accused, convicted, imprisoned, and subsequently acquitted by a higher court are given compensation.</p> <p>On the other hand, the BCDA objected to the proposed increase in the funding allocation for the proposed law that will come from the proceeds in the sale or disposition of military camps. The BCDA stated that such increase would result in a distortion of the total funds that the BCDA gives to the National Government based on existing laws.</p>
Revision of Laws	Substitute Bill to HB 6934	Rep. Mariño	Granting the Members of the House of Representatives the authority to solemnize marriage, amending for the purpose Title I, Chapter 1, Article 7 of EO 209	<p>The Committee, presided by Rep. Lawrence "Law" Fortun (1st District, Agusan del Norte), approved the Substitute Bill to HB 6934, subject to style and amendment.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Fortun underscored the importance of revisiting and amending the Family Code to make it more responsive to the demands of the times. He added that at present, the Family Code has provisions that are inconsistent with the Magna Carta of Women and the principle of gender equality.</p> <p>Rep. Mario Vittorio "Marvey" Mariño (5th District, Batangas), author of HB 6934, said that the proposed law authorizes the Members of the House of Representatives to solemnize a marriage, giving the public more options in choosing a solemnizing officer who is available and more accessible to them.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to amend the substitute bill to include incumbent members of the Senate in the list of solemnizing officers.</p>
	Substitute Bill to HB 7042	Rep. Salo	Amending Articles 2, 3, 6 and 10 of Executive Order 209, or the Family Code of the Philippines (by allowing a marriage ceremony to take place with the physical or virtual appearance of the contracting parties before a solemnizing officer)	<p>The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to House Bill 7042.</p> <p>Rep. Ron Salo (Party-List, KABAYAN), author of HB 7042 and head of the technical working group (TWG) that crafted the substitute bill, presented the salient features of the proposed law. He said that his bill provides an option for couples to be married through virtual appearance before the solemnizing officer. However, the couple must be physically present together in the same location.</p>

<p>Continuation... Revision of Laws</p>				<p>Under the substitute bill, the term “virtual” refers to “the use of video, audio, and data transmission devices that allow people from different physical locations to simultaneously communicate, see, and hear each other.”</p> <p>Bishop Reuben Abante of the Lighthouse Bible Baptist Church asked if the use of electronic signature (e-signature) in signing the Certificate of Marriage will be allowed or if there will be a period within which the contracting parties and witnesses will physically sign the Certificate of Marriage before the solemnizing officer.</p> <p>Rep. Salo said that the proposed law does not have provisions on the use of e-signature, but the matter can be discussed further in the crafting of the proposed law’s Implementing Rules and Regulations. Nevertheless, he clarified that the proposed law does not have any provision which limits the solemnizing officer from requiring that the Certificate of Marriage be signed either electronically or physically.</p> <p>Department of Information and Communications Technology’s Legislative Liaison Office Division Chief Omar Sana suggested that the jurisdiction of the solemnizing officer be established in the bill to avoid confusion in the interpretation of the law. He said it is important to clarify if, for example, a judge in a particular city is allowed to solemnize a marriage in another city.</p> <p>Rep. Salo said that location does not matter as long as the solemnizing officer has the authority to solemnize a marriage.</p>
	<p>Substitute Bill to HB 7849</p>	<p>Deputy Speaker Garcia</p>	<p>Authorizing provincial governors to solemnize marriages within their territorial jurisdictions</p>	<p>The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to HB 7849.</p> <p>League of Provinces of the Philippines Executive Director Sandra Tablan-Paredes sought clarification on the jurisdiction of the governors as solemnizing officers if the proposed law allowing virtual marriages will be passed.</p> <p>Rep. Salo said that a governor can solemnize the marriage of a couple if one of them is residing within the governor’s territorial jurisdiction.</p> <p>Family Law expert Atty. Katrina Legarda agreed with Rep. Salo, adding that the Family Code provides for such requirement in applying for a marriage license.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Pablo John Garcia (3rd District, Cebu), author of HB 7849, said that the substitute bill already states that the governor can only solemnize marriages within its territorial jurisdiction and in accordance with existing laws.</p>

<p>Continuation... Revision of Laws</p>	<p>Substitute Bill to HB 8672</p>	<p>Deputy Speaker Rodriguez</p>	<p>Providing for the regime of conjugal partnership of gains as the governing regime in the absence of a marriage settlement or when the regime agreed upon is void, amending for the purpose Articles 75 and 147 of Title IV of EO 209, as amended</p>	<p>The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to HB 8672 subject to style and amendment.</p> <p>Rep Salo, head of the TWG that crafted the substitute bill, said that the proposed law seeks to make the Conjugal Partnership of Gains (CGP) as the default property regime in the absence of a marriage settlement or when the regime agreed upon is void, instead of the current Absolute Community of Property (ACP) regime.</p> <p>Based on EO 209, the ACP is a property regime wherein the spouses become co-owners of properties they each individually owned before marriage and those acquired after. On the other hand, the CGP provides that each spouse retains ownership of the property they had before the marriage, and it is only the income, fruits or proceeds from said individually-owned property that are co-owned by the spouses.</p> <p>Among the agreements reached during the meeting were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To delete the provision in the substitute bill which states that: “when a man and a woman are capacitated to marry each other live exclusively with each other as husband and wife without the benefit of a marriage or under a void marriage, their respective wages and salaries earned in their individual capacity shall be owned by them under the regime of CGP and the property acquired by both of them through their work or industry shall be governed by the rules of co-ownership;” • To require a contracting party, whose marriage has been dissolved abroad and would like to remarry in the Philippines, to submit a foreign decree of dissolution of marriage duly apostilled (authenticated) by the country where the foreign decree was issued, and attach the foreign decree duly apostilled to prove that the contracting party is allowed to remarry; and • To include in the substitute bill a provision which will state that a decree of dissolution of marriage may also be sought and obtained by any married person when the other spouse has obtained the final decree of absolute divorce from a foreign country.
<p>Suffrage and Electoral Reforms</p>	<p>HRs 2128 & 2139</p>	<p>Reps. Elago and Erice</p>	<p>Urging the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to extend the deadline for voter registration to deter massive voter disenfranchisement amid COVID-19 pandemic</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Juliet Marie de Leon Ferrer (4th District, Negros Occidental), adopted House Resolutions 2128, 2139, and 2054.</p>

<p>Continuation... Suffrage and Electoral Reforms</p>	<p>HR 2054</p>	<p>Rep. Castelo</p>	<p>Inquiry into the preparations being made by the COMELEC for the 2022 elections considering the risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to the electorate</p>	<p>The Secretariat will draft a Substitute Resolution to HRs 2128 and 2139, and another Substitute Resolution to HR 2054.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Ferrer said that the Committee would like to know the progress of COMELEC's preparations for the 2022 national and local elections. She offered the Committee's assistance should there be problems along the way considering the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is not expected to be over anytime soon.</p> <p>Party-List Reps. Ferdinand Gaité (BAYAN MUNA) and France Castro (ACT-TEACHERS), co-authors of HR 2128, urged the COMELEC to reconsider its initial decision not to extend the voters registration. Rep. Gaité expressed serious concern that the September 30 deadline is fast-approaching and many potential voters have yet to register mainly because of the repeated suspensions of the registration due to the quarantine restrictions.</p> <p>Rep. Castro reiterated the people's right to vote as guaranteed by the Constitution. She asked the COMELEC to afford the electorate, particularly the new voters, ample time to register. Rep. Castro noted that the extension of voting registration has been done several times in recent years. Thus, she wondered why the COMELEC continues to ignore the clamor to extend the period of registration for only a month to at least partly compensate for the registration days lost due to the pandemic.</p> <p>The authors of HRs 2128 and 1239 call for the extension of the voter registration period from September 30 to October 31, 2021.</p> <p>COMELEC Commissioner Rowena Guanzon informed the Committee that the COMELEC <i>En Banc</i> has already denied a similar request from the Senate. The Commission instead extended the registration hours from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday to Friday; and from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays, aside from being open during holidays.</p> <p>Guanzon went on to say that the registration cannot be extended because doing so will affect the other activities and preparations of the COMELEC for next year's polls, such as completing the Project of Precincts (POP) by December 2021 and starting the printing of ballots by January 2022. She also said that from October 1 until October 8, election officers will be very busy with the receipt and verification of the certificates of candidacy (COC), as well as in attending to numerous cases that declared nuisance candidates are expected to file before the offices of the Commissioners.</p> <p>Rep. Gaité opined that merely extending the hours for voter registration may be inadequate</p>
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<p>Continuation... Suffrage and Electoral Reforms</p>				<p>and have little impact, if any, because of the curfew and other restrictions imposed due to COVID-19.</p> <p>Minority Leader Joseph Stephen Paduano (Party-List, ABANG LINGKOD) echoed the suggestion of Deputy Speaker Rufus Rodriguez (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City) made during the Committee's previous meeting that online registration be allowed for new registrant-voters, especially the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and the youth who are already eligible to vote. The validation and capturing of biometric data, which is part of the voter's registration process, can follow later.</p> <p>COMELEC Chairman Sheriff Abas said that the COMELEC is now studying the viability of the proposal. However, as of now, the biometric scanning of new registrants has to be done in person at the Office of the Election Officer.</p> <p>Rep. Edgar Erice (2nd District, Caloocan City), author of HR 2139, suggested that voter registration can be suspended from October 1 to 15, 2021 and will resume on October 16 until October 31, to allow the COMELEC to attend to the filing of the COCs.</p> <p>On the query of Rep. Elpidio Barzaga Jr. (4th District, Cavite), COMELEC's Election and Barangay Affairs Department Director Divina Blas-Perez reported that as of July 19, 2021, there are already 4.80 million newly registered voters, exceeding the target of 4.04 million new registrants for May 2022 elections.</p> <p>Rep. Gaité questioned the accuracy of the COMELEC's target, stating that it may not have accounted for those formerly registered as voters but were delisted for failing to vote in two consecutive elections, and the overseas Filipinos wishing to register.</p> <p>COMELEC Executive Director Bartolome Sinocruz Jr. confirmed that the figures provided by COMELEC do not include yet the Filipino overseas voters. Meanwhile, Abas insisted that COMELEC has already met its target for new registrants. He explained that based on the Commission's estimates, there are only about two million new registrants per three years, while based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, only four million new registrants per three years.</p>
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TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING ON HOUSE MEASURES				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Public Order and Safety (Technical Working Group)	Substitute Bill to HBs 3527 & 4914	Rep. Fariñas (Ria Christina) and Deputy Speaker Santos-Recto	Establishing the Philippine Legislative Marshall Service and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Jorge Antonio Bustos (Party-List, PATROL), approved the substitute bill subject to style and amendment.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Bustos informed the body that the substitute bill, incorporates the comments and recommendations of the Committee Members and stakeholders present during the initial deliberations of the bills.</p> <p>The proposed law seeks to create a Philippine Legislative Marshall Service (PLMS) mandated to maintain peace and order, safety, and security in Congress, and to perform tasks essential for Congress to carry out its legislative mandate.</p> <p>Rep. Jericho Jonas Nograles (Party-List, PBA) manifested that there is no need to pass a law creating a PLMS as it can be established upon the authorization of the House Speaker pursuant to the Rules of the House of Representatives, citing as an example the creation of the Legislative Honor Guards in 2014.</p> <p>However, Rep. Narciso Bravo Jr. (1st District, Masbate), Chair of the Committee on Public Order and Safety, said that the intention of the Committee is to make PLMS a permanent organization, hence the need for the passage of a law on the matter. He added that the Rules of the House is approved every Congress which may render the status of PLMS temporary in nature.</p> <p>Resource persons from the Government Service Insurance System and the Civil Service Commission will submit their additional comments and inputs on certain sections of the substitute bill for the mother Committee's consideration in its next meeting.</p>

AGENCY BRIEFING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Suffrage and Electoral Reforms	Report of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) on its preparations, budgetary requirements, and guidelines for the conduct of the 2022 national and local elections, including overseas voting preparations and health protocols to be established	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Juliet Marie de Leon Ferrer (4th District, Negros Occidental), listened to the COMELEC's report on its preparations, budgetary requirements, and guidelines for the conduct of the 2022 national and local elections.</p> <p>COMELEC Finance Director Martin Nieto said that under the FY 2022 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the COMELEC is set to receive P26.73 billion, which is 65.68% higher than its current year's budget of P16.13 billion. However, this is lower than the COMELEC's original budget proposal of P42.22 billion. COMELEC Commissioner Rowena Guanzon requested</p>

<p>Continuation... Suffrage and Electoral Reforms</p>		<p>Congress to increase its budget under the NEP to help the Commission fulfill its mandate fully, especially in the coming elections.</p> <p>Minority Leader Joseph Stephen Paduano (Party-List, ABANG LINGKOD) and other lawmakers support COMELEC's request.</p> <p>On overseas voting preparations, COMELEC's Office for Overseas Voting Director Sonia Bea Wee-Lozada said that the August 31 deadline for the transfer of overseas voters' registration record has been extended, and aligned with the September 30 deadline for voter registration. She added that overseas Filipino voters already in the Philippines wanting to transfer their voting records in the city or municipality where they intend to vote in 2022 may do so by filing their application directly with the concerned Office of the Election Officer.</p> <p>With regard to the postal voting return stamps, Wee-Lozada said that the COMELEC has requested in its 2022 budget about P160 million to cover the cost of prepaid return postage from the voter back to the foreign service post. However, the Department of Budget and Management only approved P6 million for this expense item. Wee-Lozada also informed the Committee that COMELEC has mobile satellite registration areas abroad and conducts field registration to allow more overseas Filipinos to register.</p> <p>Migrante International Chairperson Joanna Concepcion raised the following concerns: the number of mobile satellites is insufficient because there are many overseas Filipinos who are still having difficulty accessing these facilities; the P6 million allocation for postal voting return stamps is too low; and overseas Filipinos awaiting repatriation may not have the time to transfer their voting records before the deadline.</p> <p>Rep. Elpidio Barzaga Jr. (4th District, Cavite) asked about the possibility for eligible overseas Filipino voters to register and vote online.</p> <p>Guanzon said that for online voting to materialize, Congress should pass a law authorizing overseas online voting through the use of a mobile application. She also said that overseas online registration and voting may be possible if there will be data sharing between COMELEC and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). She added that through the data sharing, COMELEC will be able to use the biometric data captured by the DFA during the processing of passports of overseas Filipinos eligible to vote.</p> <p>DFA Overseas Voting Secretariat representative Zoilo Velasco mentioned that talks with COMELEC on the data sharing is already underway. But, on the part of DFA, he said it will have to consult first with its provider if it is technically feasible.</p> <p>Rep. Barzaga requested the COMELEC and the FDA to submit their official positions on data sharing and the progress of their discussions on the matter for the purpose of online overseas voting and registration.</p>
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