



# Congressional Record

PLENARY PROCEEDINGS OF THE 18<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST REGULAR SESSION

## House of Representatives

Vol. 4

Tuesday, May 19, 2020

No. 57a

### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 3:00 p.m., the session was resumed.*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The session is resumed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we proceed to the Reference of Business.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the Secretary General is hereby directed to read the Reference of Business.

### ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

*Upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General read the following House Bills and Resolution on First Reading and Committee Reports which were referred to the appropriate Committees hereunder indicated:*

### BILLS ON FIRST READING

House Bill No. 6749, entitled:

“AN ACT PROMOTING LIFELONG LEARNING, PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Benitez

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

House Bill No. 6750, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING HAZARD DUTY PAY TO FRONTLINERS AND OTHER ESSENTIAL WORKERS DURING PANDEMICS, EPIDEMICS, OUTBREAKS, AND OTHER PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES”

By Representative Crisologo

TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 *AD HOC* COMMITTEE

House Bill No. 6751, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR FIXED SALARIES OF BARANGAY OFFICIALS AND SUCH OTHER BENEFITS BEING RECEIVED BY REGULAR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES”

By Representative Tallado

TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 6752, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE RATE FOR PRIVATE SECTOR WORKERS AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 442, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LABOR CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES, AS AMENDED”

By Representative Tallado

TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

House Bill No. 6754, entitled:

“AN ACT DECLARING FUYOT SPRINGS NATIONAL PARK IN BARANGAY STA. VICTORIA, CITY OF ILAGAN, PROVINCE OF ISABELA AN ECO-TOURISM SITE, PROVIDING FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Albano

TO THE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM

House Bill No. 6755, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING HAZARD PAY TO PRIVATE AND PUBLIC HEALTHCARE WORKERS DURING THE 2019 CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) PANDEMIC”

By Representative Yap (Eric)

TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 *AD HOC* COMMITTEE

### RESOLUTION

House Resolution No. 881, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION CALLING UPON THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY TO CREATE AN

OVERSIGHT SUBCOMMITTEE ON TOTAL RURAL ELECTRIFICATION”

By Representatives Dagooc, De Jesus, Ebcas and Guya  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report of the Committee on Health and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 308), re H.B. No. 6753, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE MEDINA EXTENSION HOSPITAL IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF MEDINA, PROVINCE OF MISAMIS ORIENTAL INTO A GENERAL HOSPITAL TO BE KNOWN AS THE FIRST MISAMIS ORIENTAL GENERAL HOSPITAL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 2605

Sponsors: Representatives Tan (Angelina), Ungab and Unabia

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Higher and Technical Education and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 309), re H.B. No. 6756, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MEDICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RETURN SERVICE PROGRAM FOR DESERVING STUDENTS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bills Numbered 878, 1626, 2139, 2881, 3445, 3745, 3847, 3865, 4205, 4315, 4364, 4471, 4659, 4889, 4974, 5197, 5243, 5343 and 6347

Sponsors: Representatives Go (Mark), Yap (Eric) and Tan (Angelina)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session.

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

*It was 3:02 p.m.*

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 4:06 p.m., the session was resumed.*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The session is resumed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). Mr. Speaker, for the information of the Body, we have just concluded the Majority caucus and before the caucus, we presented a number of issues that have been raised yesterday and last week, particularly on House Bill No. 6732 that has been reconsidered and now pending before us. The parliamentary status of the said measure is that we are still in the period of sponsorship and debate. The consideration of this Bill is now suspended.

The issues raised yesterday by a number of interpellators were quite credible and important, and we believe that these issues would be best ventilated and threshed out in the Committee on Legislative Franchises considering the nature of its jurisdiction and expertise. The said Committee is in a superior position to meticulously and comprehensively deliberate on the numerous concerns raised by the Members.

Several measures have been referred to the Committee seeking the renewal of the franchise, as well as the grant of a new franchise due to the expiration of its franchise last May 4, 2020. The Committee had already conducted preliminary hearings on the said bills before Congress went on a break last March 2020. Subsequent hearings were already scheduled during the break and the applicant has already submitted documentary requirements, and most stakeholders also have submitted their respective position papers.

Mr. Speaker, we also have equally, if not more important measures, to take before us. A number of them, of course, focused on how the country would address the COVID-19 pandemic. Among other measures facing the House are the emergency food subsidy for poor families, hazard pay for workers, special compensation and survivorship assistance to health personnel, special risk allowances for frontliners, and basically, the extension of the Social Amelioration Program.

We have filed the CURES Act, establishing of the COVID-19 Unemployment Reduction Economic Stimulus; the Philippine Economic Stimulus Act that is already being presented in the Upper House or in the Senate; we have the New Normal Bill; we have the establishment of the new Epidemics and Preparedness Plan; the establishment of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention; the establishment of the isolation and quarantine facilities in all government hospitals. These are very urgent matters pending before the DCC or the Defeat COVID Committee, the Ad Hoc Committee to meet the exigencies of this pandemic. All these matters are very well-known to all Members of Congress.

The Majority caucus that we just had has overwhelmingly given its support to the House leadership's prerogative. When I say "overwhelming," we have heard from the leaders of the various parties, from the PDP, from the Lakas, from the NP, from the NUP, all unanimously giving support to the House leadership's prerogatives and initiatives on this matter, particularly to Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano's decision on how do we move forward. We will also have a member of the NPC, an NPC's tower in the person of Cong. Weslie Gatchalian, who echoed his support although he was unable to mention or to utter it during the Zoom caucus meeting that we just had.

Before we recognize Speaker Alan Cayetano for his address to the Body, may we recognize the leader of the National People's Coalition Party, Cong. Weslie Gatchalian.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Hon. Wes Gatchalian from Valenzuela City is recognized for his manifestation.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Mr. Speaker, maraming salamat po. Maraming salamat din po sa ating Majority Leader.

On behalf of the National People's Coalition, after po ng pagkonsulta sa mga miyembro namin, nakita na marami pang mga katanungan ang kailangang linawin tungkol po sa ABS-CBN franchise, kaya nagdesisyon po ang aming partido na ang mas magandang venue kung saan malilinan ang lahat ng bagay ay through the Committee on Legislative Franchises. Kaya po on behalf of the National People's Coalition, we support the move of the good Speaker, and we support the Majority.

Maraming salamat po.

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). We would like to similarly recognize Cong. Jonathan Sy-Alvarado from Bulacan, representing the NUP.

#### SUSPENSION OF SESSION

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

*It was 4:12 p.m.*

#### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 4:12 p.m., the session was resumed.*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The session is resumed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6732

##### *Continuation*

#### PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). Mr. Speaker, I move that we continue the consideration of House Bill No. 6732, resume the period of sponsorship and debate, and may we request that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). There is a motion to continue the consideration of House Bill No. 6732 and resume the period of sponsorship and debate. Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the Secretary General is hereby directed to read only the title of House Bill No. 6732.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL, House Bill No. 6732, entitled: AN ACT GRANTING THE ABS-CBN CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). Mr. Speaker, I move to recognize the NUP stalwart in the person of Cong. "Kuya" Jose Antonio R. Sy-Alvarado.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Hon. "Kuya" Jonathan Sy-Alvarado is recognized.

REP. SY-ALVARADO. Maraming salamat po, Mr Speaker.

Sa atin pong mga kasama, maraming salamat.

Ako po si "Kuya" Jonathan Sy-Alvarado, mula sa lalawigan ng Bulacan, miyembro ng NUP, at bilang isang miyembro po ng NUP, kinakatawan ko po ang aming partido sa aming suporta sa House leadership, lalung-lalo na sa usapin ng ABS-CBN, at kami po ay umaasa na mabibigyan ng patas na pagtingin ang mga pro at ang mga anti sa ABS-CBN.

Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION  
OF H.B. NO. 6732

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 6732.

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

The consideration of House Bill No. 6732 is suspended.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Speaker Alan Peter “Companero” S. Cayetano.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The honorable Speaker of the House of Representatives is recognized to address the Body.

REMARKS OF THE SPEAKER

REP. CAYETANO (A.). My dear colleagues, mga kababayan, in discerning and praying about the decisions that we have to make, ito po ang pumasok sa isip ko, itong John 3:30, and regardless po kung ano ang ating religion, “He must increase, and I must decrease.” Ibig sabihin, ang Diyos ang dapat mag-increase at tayo naman ang mawala in leading people.

Jeremiah 17:9 tells us that “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” Uulitin ko po, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” It is with the understanding that while we seek to do what is right, human nature gives us a deceitful heart that I would like to address the nation today.

We are in the midst of a great crisis fighting a terrible virus, working towards saving lives and livelihood, keeping our kababayan safe while endeavoring to bring our struggling economy back to life. Klaro po sa atin iyan. Napakahirap pong i-implement iyong ECQ. Noong nag-modify naman po, napakarami ring violation. Noong una, maraming hindi nakakaintindi, or hindi naaabot ng impormasyon kung bakit importante to stay at home. Hindi lang po sa Pilipinas iyan, kahit anong channel sa Cable TV ang panoorin ninyo, sa Europe, sa Africa, sa America, iyong stay at home, talagang mahirap intindihin noong umpisa. Ngayon naman po na gusto nating bumalik, kung hindi sa “normal,” sa “new normal,” ang dami rin pong pagsubok.

I asked several times that we focus on this. As early as February, this House of Representatives, through this Representation, warned that while we were dealing with many issues katulad po noong earthquake sa various

parts of Mindanao, rehabilitation of Marawi, while we were taking care of many issues that would help our nation rise up again, maraming mga sakuna na parating, and we warned of COVID-19.

Arguing that the fate and the future of one private corporation no matter how influential cannot be weighed against the welfare of the nation and the well-being of the people, but I guess the reality is that for many, the siren call of politics is just too much to resist. Politics, like the virus, brings out the best and worst in us.

Let me be candid with all of you and speak from the heart. Ito po ay galing sa puso ko. I am disappointed, I am hurt, and to a certain degree, I am frustrated, not because I am for or against the renewal of the ABS-CBN franchise, nor am I frustrated, hurt or disappointed because I am being criticized, sala sa lamig, sala sa init. Sabi ko nga noong tinatanong ako noong asawa ko kung anong pakiramdam ko, sabi ko it is good to be loved. The pro-ABS love me, the anti-ABS or shutdown also love me, both of them love to hate me. That is the reality when you are in the midst of a highly charged political issue. But dapat ba taguan iyon? Hindi. Pero siyempre tao rin po tayo at nakakaramdam po ng disappointment, hurt and frustration. But the reason why I say that there is hurt, disappointment and frustration is because I really believe that we can temporarily set aside that which divides us and has divided us for a long time, because we are talking about survival. We are talking about people’s lives. We are talking about people’s livelihood. So, akala ko, kapag sinabing time out lang, hindi ba, dahil para sa bayan naman ito, para sa ating lahat, we can find a consensus. From the start, all I have ever asked from anyone in this Chamber and outside this Chamber regarding this or any other issue is that we should do what is right. And that has been a struggle ever since as both the pro-renewal and pro-shutdown forces do not want to give an inch to each other or other way.

And so we find ourselves veering off the topic at a time when focus is what our people need most. Sino po ang sasalungat o magdedebate that to adapt, to innovate, and to manage is what we should be focusing on to help our people. Yet, this issue, yes, partly political, partly moral, some say will be an issue of press freedom, some say will not, but this has to stop. This has to be resolved. The more I say na huwag muna nating pag-usapan, the more na pinag-uusapan. Kapag sinabing on the air, maraming galit. Kapag sinabing off the air, maraming galit. Kapag sinabing ito ang prinsipyo, nabayaran ka. Kapag sinabing nabayaran ka, nabayaran ka noong dalawa kasi bumaligtad ka. Napaka-poisoned at toxic noong atmosphere.

But please, look at people who are dealing with uncertainties. You know, we have a former colleague who passed away and I have a very good friend who

lost his mother and now has a sibling who is suffering—hindi COVID. You know, and when I speak to families who are in dire need especially sa health, parang lahat ng ito hindi importante eh, hindi ba? And I guess many of you who are here and especially those of you who are not here and on Zoom, who are in your districts because walang commercial flights, kapag pumunta sa inyong bahay ang inyong mga constituents na humihingi ng pagkain, humihingi ng ayuda, umiiyak na iyong tatay nila o nanay na hindi makauwi, you know, all of these seem to be so small. Of course, it is not always so small. Parts of Mindanao ngayon ang walang TV because they only have ABS-CBN. Sasabihin naman ng iba, “Kita mo pro siya.” Hindi po, ayaw ko lang na walang napapanood ang tao sa kanilang tahanan.

And in saying that this has to stop and this has to be resolved, and in saying that there is pain, hurt, frustration and disappointment, may I also tell you very honestly that I am hopeful because I am full of faith. That despite the terrible things that are happening around the world and in our communities, God will touch our hearts, show us our mistakes, and build us back better. He will restore us. He will heal us. God wants us to do what is right, but perhaps, what is right may be subjective or maybe we make it subjective depending on what is in our hearts. Let me remind you, our hearts are deceitful.

I can easily tell you all that my heart says this is what is correct, but Bishop Abante, who is staring at me, our Minority Leader, could come up to me and tell me, “Brother, you are wrong. Your heart is deceiving you.” So, how do we define what is right? We all define what is right based on our own perspective, based on our own point of view, and based on our own feelings. And so, we can have all the passion in fighting for what we believe is right, yet, end up losing ourselves in the process. The end does not justify the means. Hindi po natin puwedeng murahin ang mga kasama natin. Hindi po natin puwedeng i-slander ang mga kasama natin. Hindi nating puwedeng biglang suntukin o sunugin ang bahay ng isang kasama and say, “Hindi, tama ako sa argument eh.” Baka tama ka sa punto mo, pero the way you went about it is wrong and I hope people will agree with me today. Whether you are for the 25-year franchise or for the shutdown, let us agree, we are going about it the wrong way. I can agree that my way is also wrong. Hindi ko sinasabi na tama iyong paraan ko, but there has to be a way. In other words, we can fight for what is right, yet we are fighting for it in the wrong way. Discerning what is right in policymaking, especially in highly charged political issues like this, necessitates a fair and transparent process. This is so that people will be able to make informed judgment that will not only be fair but also understandable and ultimately acceptable to those who will find themselves on the losing end.

Think of any controversial measure here today—LGBT rights, divorce, POGO, whether we should allow it or not; death penalty, amending the Constitution, foreign ownership of land, land reform, whether we stick to the present system or there is a new system, or we should go to commercial farming—those are all controversial measures. Some of you will stand up here and say that you are right, some will stand up and say, “No, you are wrong, we are right.” But do we start calling each other names or do we have a process, a legislative process where everyone is allowed to speak para po marinig ng lahat?

So, kung hindi po natin kayang desisyon na tayo lang, bakit hindi natin i-involve ang publiko? May social media naman, nandiyan naman ang media na nakabantay. Bakit hindi po tayo mag-hearing habang lumalabas ang lahat ng kuro-kuro, lahat ng opinyon, lahat ng laman, pati hugot ilabas na rin natin, so that people will hear the argument and can form their judgment and for those of you who already have a judgment, may mawawala ba na i-test mo iyong paniniwala mo by listening to the other side? And if despite listening to everyone we cannot agree, again, kahit anumang isyu iyan, would it not enhance our acceptance of how the Majority voted if we know why they voted that way? We do not have to be unanimous, it does not have to be always a consensus. But to not discuss at all, that is dictatorship. So, parating nasa isyu diktador, hindi diktador, diktador, diktador. Eh kung ayaw ninyong mag-hearing at ayaw ninyong pag-usapan ito sa tamang oras, eh lahat tayo diktador. Ang diktador, iyong nagsasabing ako lang ang tama, ako lang ang masusunod. Wala pong nagsasabi noon dito po sa Kongreso. May nagsasabing ipasá natin kaagad, but I know they still want a hearing.

So, sana po sa publiko, we can find a way that there will be fairness and we can agree on timing. Timing is essential in doing what is right. I said before, I have been taught that there is always a right time to do what is right. But, obviously, this becomes a complicated matter when we cannot even agree on what is right and what we should be doing. And now that ABS-CBN is off the air, of course, they have a different view of timing and fairness compared to if the NTC did not come in and they were on the air. And, of course, for those who are anti, who are saying this is a new franchise, for them it is unfair to put ABS-CBN back on the air before there is a hearing. So, I will agree with everyone. Fairness at timing, pati doon, may debate. I still believe that dedicating all of our efforts to defeat COVID-19 or the new coronavirus, and giving our countrymen something to hope for, shining the light at the end of the tunnel, so to speak, is the right thing to do. And more importantly, this is the right thing to do now. Unfortunately, everyone agrees with me that dapat ito ang focus, pero hindi po mawala sa ating isipan, sa ating puso, sa ating dila, at sa

ating daliri kapag nagtu-Twitter, Instagram, Facebook o social media ang issue ng ABS-CBN.

I still believe that we need to be united as one nation and set aside all non-urgent, highly contentious issues that will tear us apart despite what people on the extreme end of the issue want to project. Politics should not be our main concern right now. When we first decided to hold the hearings after the break, it was under the well-founded belief that it was not urgent since there was no threat of ABS-CBN going off the air. Congress relied on the legal precedents, the DOJ opinion, the unanimous support of both Houses of Congress, and the National Telecommunications Commission's commitment under oath that they would issue a provisional authority.

On that point, let me just add that Congress will never allow these agencies to lie and mislead us in their sworn testimonies. If they lie to us, they lie to the people. But this does not mean that we are completely against what they stand for. We only ask that they respect this House as we respect them and their position. Scolding the Solicitor General does not mean his legal assertions and accusations are right. It also does not mean they are wrong. It simply means he should have presented or at least found a way to inform Congress so that we could have calibrated and decided intelligently our actions.

So when we say mali ang NTC na nagsinungaling sa atin, hindi naman natin hinuhusgahan iyong kanilang legal opinion. Ang sinasabi po natin, huwag kayong magsisinungaling sa Kongreso, kasi ang actions namin sa Kongreso ay based sa testimony na ibinibigay ninyo dito sa amin. Kapag sinabi ng DOH, "One, two, three, four factors have been met, puwede na tayong mag-GCQ." We have to rely on you. And then kapag kumalat at sabihin ninyo, "Ay, we lied pala. Ganito pa rin pala karaming kaso," then you point your fingers at Congress?

We will take responsibility when we make the decision, and it is the wrong decision based on the testimony you have given us. But if our decision becomes wrong because you lied to us or you falsified data or you gave us the wrong information, then simply it is garbage in, garbage out, and we cannot allow that to keep happening or to happen again in this Congress.

And even as all these changed, my commitment as Speaker of this House to do and to prioritize what is right has never faltered. Together with the House leadership and together with the leadership of the political parties, the geographic and regional groups and the party-lists representing your different sectors, we tried to come up with a fair arrangement where ABS-CBN would be allowed to broadcast while Congress and the Senate hold hearings.

Some have asked, "Why the need to give a provisional franchise?" The provisional franchise does not mean we are pro-ABS-CBN as some may claim, nor does it mean that we are holding the network hostage

as others alleged. It simply means fairness while we are deciding on the case. Again, sala sa lamig, sala sa init. Kapag binigyan mo ng provisional franchise, sabi po noong iba na nasa side ng ABS-CBN, "Kita ninyo hino-hostage ng Congress, gustong diktahan iyong news." Sasabihin naman po noong kabilang side, "Kita ninyo kakampi, nabayaran kaya bibigyan nila ng temporary franchise."

This was simply to allow more of our countrymen to see, hear, understand and judge for themselves what their elected officials are doing in their name, but also that all Filipinos deserve to see how and whether or not the network will broadcast the hearings with fairness and what are the accusations, evidences against them and their responses.

I hear you, those who are saying, "Mas maganda mag-hearing na off the air sila para patas." But I am telling you my personal view. Mas gusto ko nga eh naghi-hearing tayo on the air para makita natin kung fair sila o may bias, kung ang ipinapalabas lang nila ay iyong mga punto nila o ipinapalabas din ba nila ang mga punto na laban sa kanila, hindi ba? But again, that is not for me to decide. That was my personal view that I tried to push, but again, many agreed, many disagreed, but many decided to start calling each other names.

This was the middle ground that we hope would bring together people, so that we may go back and more importantly, win the war against COVID-19 and take care of people's needs. But even with all the efforts to be fair and balanced, the toxic partisanship this issue provokes has poisoned the well of public discourse. Ang public discourse po ay parang isang balon, and if we have a hundred people discussing, it only takes one from each side na maglagay ng lason at lahat na ng kumuha sa balon ay malalason.

So, I still believe, most of our people and many, if not all of our Congressmen, are arguing passionately based on what they believe and are not poisoning the well. But there are some who are in the extreme who are poisoning the well. Both sides of the extreme have gone beyond passionate debate and fair advocacy, and are now engaged in name calling, slander, and humiliating each other, all for the sake of this one partisan political issue.

If we are going to survive and build back better, we have to stop acting like young children and we have to mature quickly. Social networks and innovations in technology bring out childlike idealism. Maganda po iyan. It democratizes discussion. Maganda rin po iyan. It brings the discussions not only to your households but to every single person holding a cellphone. Even now, as I speak, people are commenting on the Facebook site of Congress. Even now as you look at your cellphones, you are getting feedback from your sectors, from your party, from your people. Unfortunately, they also bring out the bullies in us. They bring out iyong pagkaalaskador. They bring out the meanness in us.

We have to mature by listening to each other's point of view, by allowing assertions to be proven by evidence, by having a fair and transparent process that would allow all of us to make informed judgment. This process will make sure that walang saling-pusa, walang moro-moro sa usapang mahalaga sa bayan. Hindi po tayo puwedeng mag-moro-moro sa isyu na ito at lalong-lalo na pong hindi puwedeng walang saling-pusa.

Sa hearing na dadating, lahat ng gustong magsalita, gawan natin ng paraan, ke national artist po siya o budding artist, ke isang senior legislator po o isang gusto pa lang tumakbo sa 2022, kung siya po ay expert tax lawyer o siya po ay isang accountant na gusto pa lang mag-aral ng batas, gagawan natin ng paraang marinig ang kanilang opinion. And, hopefully, walang maaagrabyado sa usapan tungkol sa hustisya. But we have to learn to see these things for what they are rather than immediately conclude with faulty judgment.

Let me address myself to the extremists outside Congress who are either for or against ABS-CBN's franchise renewal. Do not poison the debate. It will not help your cause nor enrich your position. Let love and reason carry our passions and argument, not hate and obsession. Lahat po ng nagsasalita po ngayon, hindi lang po hugot iyon, importante sa kanila, so pakinggan din natin. If we disagree, we say that we disagree. Hindi ba? But, bakit natin ibu-bully? Bakit natin papahiyain? Gawin ninyo sa amin iyon because we are public servants, we are elected, okay lang iyon. Fair game po. Bawal ang onion-skinned. Bawal po ang balat-sibuyas.

So, ako, even on my page, wala akong sine-censor. Gusto ninyo akong murahin doon, gusto ninyong sabihin kung anuman, tatanggapin ko, binabasa ko. Kayo ang community ko, kailangang makinig ako sa inyo. But to others, even if they are celebrities, even if they are known in their fields, even if they are social media sensations, why bring the debate to that level, kung may magkamali sa Ingles, may magkamali sa example nila, mayroong medyo mapusok ang kanilang emosyon kaya kung ano ang nasabi, hindi ba? Who of us in our lives never experienced that, never made a mistake sa diction, sa example, et cetera?

Because of all these divisiveness and after consulting with the Members of the House, the political parties and the regional groups—I thank you for that; for the consultation and for your belief in the leadership—I, together with the House of Representatives leadership, have decided to forego the provisional franchise and immediately proceed with the hearings for the full 25-year renewal application of the ABS-CBN franchise. Let me repeat that para doon po sa hindi nakakuha: The House leadership has decided to forego the provisional franchise but we will immediately proceed with the hearings for the 25-year franchise. However, there are

non-negotiable ground rules for this to happen. I had hoped in my first speech to convince everyone that that was fair, but nakumbinsi rin ako noong iba na baka hindi fair. So, inisip ko sa sarili ko, what is a matter of principle to me and what is a matter of pride?

I really believe hindi timely na pag-usapan iyong ABS-CBN, pero baka pride ko lang iyon as Alan Cayetano, as Cong. Alan Cayetano, as Speaker Alan Cayetano. Kung tingin ng mas nakakarami, it is the time to talk about it, then I will not let the pride get in my way. But what part is principle? The part that is principle is fairness. Eh kahit tapusin natin ang hearing ngayon kung walang fairness, balewala iyon. So, these are the ground rules that I propose and hope that you will also support:

First, we must not forget our bigger concern. Huwag po nating kalimutan kung ano po ang dapat nating focus, which is to defeat the new coronavirus, to defeat COVID-19, and to provide hope to our countrymen. We must continue to focus on urgent measures that will ensure the saving of lives and livelihoods of our kababayan. And later, our most able Chairman of the Defeat COVID-19 Committee and our Majority Leader will outline some of these most urgent measures that will be there to help our people.

Second, as I have said time and time again, the hearings must be fair, impartial, comprehensive and thorough. All voices must be heard, and all issues for and against will be discussed. As we have seen yesterday, this will require a lot of time, time that we do not have. There will be sacrifice on our part if we hope to finish this without delay. So, we will multi-task, in other words. Pakiusap po sa mga Miyembro, lalo po sa may expertise sa agriculture, may expertise sa medical science, may expertise sa engineering, may expertise sa finance, hatiin natin ang trabaho. Doon po sa for and against at kailangan sa hearings ng ABS-CBN, wala pong pipigil sa inyo, get all the expert witnesses that you can. But those of you, we need you at the forefront talking about the economic stimulus, talking about kalusugan, talking about their regions, if you have testing centers already. Wes, as you were telling me kanina, the big corporations, while they need help, they can practically take care of themselves, pero paano po iyong micro, small and medium enterprises, especially the micro, hindi ba? Tama iyon eh. We cannot abandon them. We have to continue to focus on helping them.

Third, that we all vote in accordance with our conscience and not our politics. In other words po, making tayo sa hearings. May alam tayo, let us testify. Eh kung tatanungin ninyo po, sino ba ang pinakaapektado sa ABS-CBN? Iyon po ang irony doon po sa nagki-criticize sa akin, doon po sa nagsasabing ang SolGen ang tama. Bakit? Sino ba ang pinakanaapektuhan ng ABS-CBN noong 2016 election? Hindi ba ako at saka si Presidente? Hindi ba kaming dalawa ang target?

Hindi ba ako ang nagdemanda sa kanila? Hindi ba ako ang nag-file ng TRO at hindi ang SolGen? Yet, I had to find it in my heart as Speaker of the House to be fair to them and to give them a hearing.

Siguro po kung hindi ako Speaker, kung ako po ay isang Miyembro ng House, katulad ninyo, o Chairman ng isang committee, kasama po ako sa magfa-file ng resolution na imbestigahan ang ABS-CBN, pero hindi po eh.

You, by allowing me and supporting me as Speaker of the House, give me extra burden on my shoulders which is, that at the end of the day, kapag binalikan ang Kongreso and we are judged, we have to be judged to have been giving justice to everyone.

Bakit po mataas ang ratings ng Kongreso? Bakit po sa sunud-sunod na survey, pataas nang pataas po ang Kongreso? Historic po. One is because we have been working hard and we have been delivering. But I think the other reason, the more important reason, pinipilit po nating gawin kung ano ang tama despite the weight of politics, of the day-to-day things that we have to deal with sa politics. This Eighteenth Congress has tried to do what is right, that is why mataas ang rating. So, ngayon ba magbabago tayo because maraming tumutuligsa? Mangangamba ba ako na bababa iyong ratings? Hindi. Sa inyo na iyong ratings, basta kami, pipilitin naming gawin kung ano ang tama.

For those of you who are calling for an outright approval or denial, I ask that you suspend your extreme views until the facts have been presented, and all these testimonies have been heard. What do we have to lose? The hearings might prove your point at lalo kang maging pro o lalo kang maging anti.

If I may borrow the analogy of a Member of Congress who often disagrees with me but I still respect, kababayan ng aking agom, Cong. Edcel Lagman, who gave an analogy about a locomotive and a speeding bullet train, Manoy Edcel, the Gentleman from Albay, this is not a speeding bullet train or a misdirected locomotive. Trains and locomotives follow fixed tracks—may riles po iyan eh—and have predetermined destinations, may terminal po iyan. Hindi sila katulad ng jeep na puwedeng pumara kahit saan o puwede mong sabihin, “Boss, special, kumaliwa ka dito sa EDSA, punta tayo dito.” Hindi po. Ang tren po, may riles. Ang tren po, may istasyon.

Precisely, the problem in dealing with the franchise renewal of ABS-CBN is that we do not have tracks—wala pong riles dito—and we do not have terminals. Wala pong blueprint na magpapakita sa atin na mag-agree tayong lahat na ito ang paraan para sa ABS-CBN, denial or approval. What we have are our individual compasses to help us find the true north. Sabi sa akin kanina ni Congressman Gatchalian, sa kaniya, “The true Wes.” No, the true north, my friend, Wes—and this is what this leadership is all about. This is what

the Eighteenth Congress is all about. For those who cannot understand our position, thank you. For those who can understand our position, thank you rin. But for those of you who understand our position, join us in trying to understand the position of others so that one day, baka they will at least attempt to understand our position.

So to my colleagues and my countrymen, sa ating mga kababayan, we can disagree on the fate and the future of ABS-CBN, but I ask all of us to form a consensus right now on how we will face this new life—yes, it is a new life, hindi na po tayo babalik sa kahapon—and build our new economy. Yes, it will be a new economy. Iyong highway na gusto nating i-build, nandiyan pa rin pero iyong invisible highway, iyong IT highway, iyong digital highway, we will now have to build it. Maraming walang Internet. Maraming hindi po makapanood kapag walang TV kasi wala pong signal. Marami pong estudyante na sa bahay na dapat nag-aaral pero mahina ang kanilang Internet. So the new normal involves a new life and a new economy.

Let us rise up to this challenge and let us give Chairman Chicoy Alvarez and our Committee on Legislative Franchises complete autonomy. Wala pong mag-iimpluwensya sa kanila. Let us give them the task to carry out a fair, comprehensive and thorough hearing. Let it be continuous para walang magsabing pinapatigil, tinitigil, or we are dragging our feet. Let us direct our Committee to immediately and continuously hold hearings until everyone is heard. And after everyone is heard, then we can decide.

Again, my dear colleagues, let us multitask like we have never multitasked before. Let us put our focus on the Filipino today and what our tomorrow will look like and how we can make a better tomorrow for all. I thank the whole leadership of the House, Minority Leader Bishop Benny Abante, Majority Leader Martin Romualdez, our Deputy Speakers, our Presiding Officer Deputy Speaker Abu, Deputy Speaker Pulong Duterte and all the Deputy Speakers, including LRay who is a coauthor of the Bill we are discussing. I thank you for the confidence, not only in the leadership, but in the principles that we put together.

So, let us join President Duterte in his commitment to work and fight for a safe and comfortable life for all. On that point, I would like to thank the opposition, the members of the different blocs who are in opposition to this administration. Yes, you too are helping this Chamber to make and give people a safe and comfortable life.

Let me end by sharing with you a story about the wisdom ng aking ama na si Sen. Rene “Compañero” Cayetano. When I was learning to drive and when he finally allowed me to have a car and drive when I was already a student in the University of the Philippines, one day, a friend of ours drove from Alabang to UP in 10

minutes. A few weeks or month later, he tried it again, and nag-turn turtle iyong kotse. He was okay but he almost lost his life, you know, inches lang or ano. So, my Dad talked to me, “Gaano ka ba kabilis magpatakbo, 70, 80?” Siguro that was 90 or 100, pero siyempre teenager ka, hindi ba? Tapos sabi niya, “What would you do when you get to the intersection of EDSA, whether it is Pasay Road or Buendia, red iyong light, ala-una ng umaga, whether you are coming from UP going home to Alabang or you are coming from Alabang going to UP or you are going to Taguig to Bagumbayan?” Sabi ko, “I drive the same.” Sabi niya, “Hindi mo babagalan?” Sabi ko, “Hindi, baka bilisan ko pa, eh nakita ko ‘go’, ako ang tama, bibilisan ko.” Sabi niya, “Mali ka doon.” Sabi ko, “Bakit, eh green iyon?” Sabi niya, “Eh, paano kung may truck na hindi sumunod sa red at akala niya walang kotse, tumuloy iyong truck? Binangga ka, patay ka. Anong tawag sa iyo ngayon?” Hindi ako makasagot. So sabi niya sa akin, “Son, that is what you call ‘you are right but you are dead right.’”

Puwede po tayong lumaban pero patay tayo eh, hindi ba? Puwede nating ipagpilitan kung anong tama pero patay tayo. So, whoever is correct here sa ABS-CBN shutdown or ABS-CBN 25 years, people’s lives are at stake. I want to be right but I do not want people to die because we are debating who is right or not. So, what will we do? We will look ahead. We will multitask, and while looking ahead, we will have the ABS-CBN hearings but we will also take care of the urgent measures. We will look to our left and we will see that there is a health crisis and we will try to address that health crisis. Doctora Cong. Janette Garin, Helen Tan and their whole team are focused on that. We will also look to the right and see that our livelihoods are in danger and that is where Junie Cua, Wes Gatchalian, Stella Quimbo, Sharon Garin, Joey Salceda, Deputy Speaker LRay, Eric Yap, and so many others of you who are part of that cluster, that is where the Minority and the Makabayan bloc will come in. When we look at the left and the right, ano ba ang new economy? Ano ba ang new normal sa health?

In the end, can we also look up? And when we look up, remember that there is a God who is perfect and there is His creation who is imperfect, yet, made in His image. When we debate with anyone else, so iyong mga nagmumura sa akin, you are also made in God’s image, hindi ba? And I try to see that in you, but it becomes difficult to see that in you when you are unreasonable. Never mind. Let us look ahead, let us look to the left, right, let us look up, and my dear colleagues, let us get things done.

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Thank you, honorable Speaker.

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). Mr. Speaker, I move for a two-minute suspension of the session.

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

*It was 4:55 p.m.*

#### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 4:57 p.m., the session was resumed.*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The session is resumed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano’s address to the Body has made the situation perfectly clear to us as to our direction and our initiatives. It is incumbent upon us to refocus here in the plenary on the initiatives on the anti-COVID measures that have already been initiated by the DCC, the Defeat COVID-19 Committee. We shall move forward and present these matters at the proper time, after the submission of their committee reports to the plenary for their disposition and implementation, and their transmittal to the Senate. These initiatives include the emergency food subsidies for families or otherwise known as the “SAP,” how we can improve it, how we can make it more efficient, how we can use the House’s prerogatives to aid the DSWD and the LGUs in dispensing the social amelioration packages.

The CURES Bill has already been filed. Starting this week, we shall be debating on or actually discussing these matters in the technical working group of the DCC before their presentation to the plenary sessions that we will have, that will ensue.

As mentioned earlier, the Philippine Economic Stimulus Act is definitely a top priority for this will fund all of the initiatives that we will be discussing and that are needed to help defeat the COVID pandemic. Moving forward, the New Normal Bill is very critical in setting the standards, in setting their protocols and processes moving forward. These two are very important measures that we have to take.

Among the other cluster Committees’ initiatives such as health, public order and safety, social amelioration and the new normal; the establishment of an Epidemics

Preparedness Plan; the establishment of centers for disease prevention and control; and the establishment of isolation and quarantine facilities in all government hospitals, these are matters that will take precedence at the plenary as has been clearly pointed out by our Speaker.

The Committee on Legislative Franchises will take the lead in hearing the matter of the ABS-CBN franchise as well as the other franchises pending before it. They are ready, able and willing to act with expediency to meet the urgency of the franchise applications.

#### SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session for another two minutes for further deliberations outright.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Thank you very much, Majority Leader.

The session is suspended.

*It was 5:01 p.m.*

#### RESUMPTION OF SESSION

*At 5:18 p.m., the session was resumed.*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The session is resumed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### RATIFICATION OF CONF. CTTEE. RPT. ON H.B. NO. 6312 AND S.B. 1086

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, we are in receipt of the Conference Committee Report reconciling the disagreeing provisions of House Bill No. 6312 and Senate Bill No. 1086.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the titles of the measures.

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

The Secretary General is directed to read only the titles of the measures.\*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6312, entitled: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SPORTS SYSTEM AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;" and Senate Bill No. 1086, entitled: AN ACT CREATING

AND ESTABLISHING THE PHILIPPINE HIGH SCHOOL FOR SPORTS AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR."

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, in accordance with our rules, I move that we ratify the said Conference Committee Report.

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

The Conference Committee Report on House Bill No. 6312 and Senate Bill No. 1086 is ratified.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Sr. Deputy Minority Leader, Cong. Dra. Janette L. Garin, on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). May I know from the Representative of Iloilo, Cong. Janette L. Garin, what is the nature of her personal and collective privilege?

REP. GARIN (J). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, I started embarking on helping the private sector together with donations from the Members of Congress in putting up COVID laboratory testing centers, and in so doing, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, I found out some nuances that were actually hindering our testing centers. In line with this, a certain supplier has been maligning me, not only among the donors, but also among some people. With this ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). You may proceed.

#### QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE OF REP. GARIN (J.)

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, honorable colleagues, it has been around 10 weeks since we understood the deeper meaning of quarantine, and just last week, I presented before all of you our plan to put forward the Crushing COVID Act.

This pandemic has highlighted many critical points. Among them, that inequality is a greater illness in times of concern, that the government can only do so much

\* Copies of the bills were distributed to the members earlier. Section 53, Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that "[a] bill or joint resolution on Second Reading shall be read in full unless copies thereof have been distributed to the Members."

absent the help of the private sector, that our people out of fear for their own family's safety and welfare will do their utmost if only to survive.

Sa pandemic na ito, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, nakita po nating naging talamak ang fake news ukol sa kung paano labanan ang virus. Marahil dala ito ng pagkalito at takot na nararamdaman ng marami. Nakita din nating sabik na sabik ang ating mga kababayang makabalik sa dati, sa old normal. Kaya noong magbukas panandalian ang isang kilalang coffee shop, o kaya noong ninais ng ating mga kababayan na bumili ng cake noong Mother's Day, o kaya nitong weekend lang na nag-umpisa ang operasyon ng iilang mga mall ay ganoon na lang ang pagpila at pananabik ng mga tao. Ang lahat ng ito ay nakikita natin dahil nababalita. Pero ano po ba ang hindi nababalita? Iyong greediness ng iilan na marahil puno't dulo kaya gaano man kalakas ang panawagan ng madla para sa malawakan o expanded PCR swab testing ay tila yata hindi matuloy-tuloy ito.

More than two-and-a-half months, 110 million Filipinos have been asking, "If I were not a VIP, if I were not someone with special access to government resources, if I do not have the money, how will I get tested? And if I were to get tested, how does the test happen? Where does it happen? How much and how long shall we have to wait? How do we carry on with our lives?"

While waiting for news from the Department of Health regarding the much-needed testing centers, mistrust started to crawl in. One could say, even discrimination grew. People who were not tested were presumed to be infected, even if they were just waiting for the results. Not knowing where the enemy is, indeed, brings a lot of uncertainties and cultivates an atmosphere of confusion.

Naalala ko po, Mr. Speaker, noong sinabi po ng ating butihing Deputy Minority Leader, when Rep. Jose Christopher "Kit" Y. Belmonte said, "Naku, ang hirap-hirap ng nagpapa-test sa Quezon City, dahil nagpapa-test pa lang sila, eh tila pine-presume nang positibo at nagkakaroon ng diskriminasyon dahil sa tagal ng resulta."

Again, so many news both real and fake, so many expectations, so much anxieties, and in the midst of all of these, there were those who found the opportunity to peddle their lies and their political agenda. Isinara po natin ang ating bansa, sumadsad ang ekonomiya, ilang buwan na ang lumipas pero ang na-testing, wala pang iisang porsyento ng Metro Manila.

Bilang dating Kalihim ng Kalusugan, at bilang ngayon nga ay kasamahan ninyo dito na Kongresista, at ang pinakaimportante po bilang isang nanay at maybahay, hindi po naiiba ang takot ko sa karaniwang Pilipino. Kung anuman ang takot na nararamdaman ninyo, ganoon din po ang nararamdaman ko.

I remember when Rep. Juan Miguel Macapagal Arroyo was very much concerned about the people in his district getting infected. It was a daily routine for him to pray that testing centers be increased dahil nakikita niyang marami ang nawawalan ng trabaho, marami ang nangangamba, at marami ang hindi alam kung ano ang gagawin. Kaya ganoon na lang din ang pagsisikap nating makipag-ugnayan sa mga nasa katungkulan, at itulak ang mga solusyong maaaring pakinabangan ng mas nakararami kaysa ng iilan lang. Pero ang sagot sa atin madalas, na para bang sa hindi maipaliwanag sa relasyon, ang palagi pong sagot, "It's complicated." Hindi raw madali—kesyo ganito, kesyo ganoon, at kesyo ang hirap-hirap. While there is some truth to this, there appears to be a deeper reason to everything as I have come to learn. While everybody has been busy looking at the daily count of COVID cases both here and abroad, ang lingid po sa ating kaalaman ay may iilang walang konsensyang hinaharang ang access natin sa mga testing equipment at testing kits sa bansa natin.

Allegedly, there is a couple in the Philippines barring the importation of much-needed COVID testing automated machines, otherwise called automated extraction machines. Paano po ba ito nangyayari, Mr. Speaker? Nagulat po ako dahil noong gumagalaw ang pribadong sector ay tila hindi makapasok sa Pilipinas iyong order natin at ilang beses napo-postpone, only to find out that not only this company, but almost all companies selling testing kits, ibibigay lang sa iyo ang makina nila kung ikaw ay bibili ng testing kit. At ang pagkakasabi sa mga donor at sa mga negosyante ng kompanyang ito, ang dami raw ipinadala sa mag-asawang ito. They were allegedly estimating—they facilitated the entry of 30 NATCH CS Fully Automated Extraction Machines and 40 MA 6000 into the Philippines.

Lingid po sa ating kaalaman, it is the company's policy that the testing equipment are not to be sold for profit. It is being made available to facilitate testing. Kung ang isang negosyante po ay iho-hoard or itatago iyong mga kagamitan para sa testing at ibebenta nang pagkamahal-mahal sa ating mga donor, is this not an injustice to the Filipino people? Kaya naman pala noong iyong mga donor ay paulit-ulit na nakikipag-ugnayan sa iba't ibang mga kumpanya, palaging may humaharang at ang palaging reason ay "Exclusive distributor po kami."

Bansagan po natin ang mga halang ang kaluluwa na ito bilang VE. Gawang very enterprising ang mag-asawang ito. Pati buhay ng ating mga kababayan ay ginawang negosyo. Matapang pang nilapitan ng mag-asawang VE ang mga maaaring tumulong para mapasakamay nila ang exclusive distributorship. Dahil sa ginawa nila, na-delay ang pagpasok ng ating mga kinakailangang equipment at machines noong May 11 para magamit sa laylayan at bayan-bayan.

Napaikot din nila ang ilang mga donor sa pag-aakalang parating na iyong mga kagamitan at tila mayroon silang patuloy na pakikipag-ugnayan sa factory at mga scientist at eksperto na gumagawa ng testing kits. Iyon naman pala ay mayroon na silang warning one-and-a-half months ago. They were warned not to hoard equipment. They were warned to use the equipment for testing. They were warned not to overprice. They were warned not to deprive our country of the much-needed PCR or swab testing para po sa ating COVID.

Ang apela ko sa ating mahal na Pangulo, Tatay Digong, President Rodrigo Duterte, pakitingnan po ang anomalyang ito sa importation ng automated extraction machines at pakipitik naman po iyong atin pong very enterprising couple para matauhan kahit bahagya man lamang. Sa ating Senate Health Chair, Sen. Bong Go, pakiusap ko po, silipin po ninyo ang anomalyang ito.

Ayoko na sana pong tumayo sa dami ng problema at kailangan nating gawin, subalit kung walang tatayo ay wala po akong oportunidad para magsalita. Noong mga nakaraang araw, halos kulang na po ako sa tulog sa pag-aasikaso na magkaroon ng mabilisan na swab testing centers dala nga ng kontribusyon ng ating mga negosyante, kaakibat ang Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship under Sec. Joey Concepcion or iyong Go Negosyo program.

Ang nakakalungkot, imbis na magtulungan, pilit na sinisiraan po ako at iyong mga tumutulong sa programa na ito dahil ang mag-asawang si VE ay pilit na inilalayo ang bansa natin sa mga machine at sa mga testing equipment and kits. Ako na po ang magda-diagnose, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues. Hindi po COVID, kundi COPID—COPID ang sakit nina VE, COPID as in Corruption in a Pandemic is a Disaster. Ang kinu-COPID nila, hindi lang po pera, kundi buhay ng pangkaraniwang Pilipino.

Ang babala po natin sa mga ka-plot nila ay huwag po nilang subukan ang pamahalaan. Huwag ninyo pong isiping puwede ninyong bilugin ang ulo ng Pilipino. Huwag ninyong gamiting oportunidad ang COVID para pagsamantalahan ang kababayan at kapwa-tao natin because there are a lot of uncertainties. Survival became the mode for many of us. Almost everybody was looking for ways to be tested.

Ramdam ko ang kaba noong mga naghihintay ng resulta, kaya naman po gumalaw ang pribadong sector. I respect the opinion of our scientific minds. Many were against rapid test kits citing false, negative results. Ako nga po, iyan po ang naging katayuan ko.

Sa ating mga kagalang-galang na Kongresista, Mr. Speaker, simula po noong Marso, ang dami nang nagtext sa akin ukol sa COVID at rapid test kits, at patuloy ko pong sinasabi that we should be careful because the gold standard is the PCR swab test. Kaya lang, hindi mo mapipigilan ang kaba ng tao kasi kahit paulit-ulit

na sabihin natin na PCR or swab test ang gold standard ay hindi naman siya available dahil wala naman pong gumagalaw.

Again, there was no clear-cut direction of where we are going with regard to the PCR swab test. This is very important, Mr. Speaker, because while other countries were testing at \$30 to \$40, we were confused as to how much is the actual cost.

Can I have the slide, please?

Ito po ang testing natin at ang ating PhilHealth rates. Tingnan po natin ang ating PhilHealth rates at nakikita po natin na nagkakaniya-kaniyang opinion, nag-aaway-away na iyong ating mga doktor, nag-aaway-away na iyong mga tao natin sa gobyerno at dahil dito ang pinag-aawayan, ano po ba ang dapat gamitin? Rapid Test po ba or COVID PCR swab test? May kaniya-kaniya po silang strengths, mayroon din silang kaniya-kaniyang weaknesses, pero ang puno't dulo ng pinanggagalingan ng lahat ng ito ay dahil wala tayong PCR COVID testing centers enough to make it available, and most importantly, affordable to our people. Kaya nagulat po ako, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues. Paulit-ulit na sinasabi ng iilang opisyal: "Testing is not cost-effective. Testing is not needed." Tila salungat ito sa paulit-ulit na sinasabi ng World Health Organization at tila salungat ito sa unang sinabi ng DOH at tila salungat pa rin ito sa ginagawa ng lahat ng bansa sa buong mundo. Are we exempted? No. It is just because we are finding reasons, so that our people will not be tested. It is just because we do not accept the fact that we lack testing centers.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, COVID-19 is a challenge as to how the world reacts in a time of pandemic. It is also a challenge to the way we should situate ourselves in society, that all of us could be carriers and that all of us could inflict sickness on others. As such, it reorients us to think how we should put others ahead of our own and how we could support our government to meet this great challenge. COVID is also a test and challenge to our own government on the kind of leadership we have in the health sector. COVID is a test case of how we will unite and react as one, so that we could truly say we could heal as one.

Sa ilan pong meeting at pagpupulong at makailang ulit po nating ginawang suhestiyon na magkaroon ng price ceiling sa commodities at gumawa ng paraan para magkaroon ng sapat na testing kits, ang madalas po na tugon sa atin, "Tungo," o kaya, eh, "Sumulat po kayo at iyon po ay titingnan namin."

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, hindi po totoo na may shortage ng test kits dahil nagtanong-tanong kami, eh marami naman po pala. Mayroon po tayong chief implementor, si Sec. Carlito Galvez, at iyong ating lab czar, si Sec. Vince Dizon. Nagpapasalamat po

tayo sa dedikasyon at sipag nila. Sila ang tumanggap ng tungkulin na napakabigat at napakalayo sa hawak nilang puwesto sa pamahalaan. Nararapat lang po na suportahan natin sila nang todo-todo para tuluyan nating maibalik sa maayos ang ating bansa at makabalik na rin sila sa dapat nilang pagtuunan—ang peace process at ang flagship projects ng ating gobyerno. Pero ang tanong, paano naman makagagalaw ang ating implementor kung tila yata may laging humaharag sa mga dapat asikasuhin at gawin nang mabilisan? Ang private sector ay ganado at handang tumulong pero tila yata nahihirapan. In fact, just today, and in a few hours, in two hours, the C-130—thanks to the courtesy of Sec. Delfin N. Lorenzana, Sec. Carlito G. Galvez and Sec. Teodoro L. Locsin, we will be arriving carrying the donation of a few Congressmen and people in the private sector that will be enough to equip 12 laboratories. Ang tanong, bakit po ba ang simpleng bagay ay pilit na kinukumpika? At bakit po ba patuloy na hindi sinusuportahan ang ating mga pampublikong ospital? At bakit po ba sa PhilHealth ay may napakamahal tayong COVID testing packages?

Ito po, makikita natin ngayon, P8,150 kung ikaw ang bibili ng kit at kung ikaw ang gagawa ng testing, at P5,450 naman kung iyong test kits ay donated, P2,710 naman kung ang iyong laboratoryo ay ipinagawa at donated ng iba at wala kang gastusin pati sa test kits. Ang tanong, sino po, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues ang gumawa ng ganitong package?

Natutuwa po tayo na kumilos ang PhilHealth, pero hindi po nakakatuwa na gumawa sila ng package na masyadong mahal dahil ang pera po ng PhilHealth ay pera ng sambayanang Pilipino na miyembro ng PhilHealth. Kung gagawin mong napakamahal ang COVID testing, hindi po ba ito ay magiging batayan ng lahat ng gustong kumita sa panahon ng pandemya? At hindi po ba, puwede itong maging dagok na siyang ikamamatay ng PhilHealth?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Senior Deputy...

REP. GARIN (J.). Sino po ang gumawa nito, paano po ito ginawa ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Excuse me, ...

REP. GARIN (J.). ...at sino ba ang talagang may gawa?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Excuse me, Deputy Minority Leader. May I request the Majority Leader for an extension of her time for the Question of Privilege?

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we extend the time of Hon. Janette L. Garin for another 10 minutes.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved. You may proceed.

REP. GARIN (J.). Maraming salamat po kagalang-galang na Speaker. Maraming salamat po sa ating Majority Leader.

Alam ko pong tila ginagamitan na naman ng kung anu-anong medical terminologies ang testing packages sa PhilHealth para hindi mahalata at maikubli sa Presidente ng PhilHealth ang katotohanan. Tila yata may *mafia* o sindikato na siyang cancer sa ating PhilHealth. Hindi po natin puwedeng ubusin ang pondo ng PhilHealth dahil marami pa pong sakit ang kaya nitong tugunan.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, sa panahon ng COVID, kung ikaw ay mag-dialysis ay kailangan ang PPE. Kung ikaw ay magpapaopera ay kailangan ang PPE. Naging mas mahal ang gastusin ng kalusugan dahil sa COVID. At dapat, mas maging mahal ang coverage ng PhilHealth sa mga sakit na ito. Pero tila nakapagtataka na sa testing pa lamang, eh dito ipinapaubos at ibinubuhos ang pondo ng PhilHealth.

Pangalawa, bakit po ba tayo takot sa expanded swab testing gawang mayroon tayong maaaring ma-tap na health workers, at para mura ang testing? Ang siste nga po ay inuunahan natin agad ng napakamahal na PhilHealth rates at ginagawa natin itong baseline para sundin ng lahat.

Hindi po ba tayo nagtataka, why is it that only in the Philippines we have probably the most expensive COVID testing? Sa China, sa pagkakaalam ko, ang presyo ng pagpapa-test ay hindi puwedeng lumagpas sa \$20. Of course, may subsidy ang gobyerno doon. Ang presyo naman sa Singapore ay hindi lumalampas sa \$40. Ganoon din po sa ibang bansa. Sa atin, nandiyan po ang sagot ng PhilHealth.

Ang sabi naman ng iba: “Wala po kasing testing kits, may shortage, kaya huwag na lang tayong mag-test.” Ang katotohanan, marami pong testing kits na available. Wala pong sinasabing shortage dahil napakarami ng puwedeng pagpilian, puwera na lang kung may ipipilit ka na hindi naman mahagilap dahil ginagawa sa Amerika, kung saan napakalaki ng demand.

Hindi po ba nakapagtataka, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, na minsan tila hiwa-hiwalay ang pagbebenta nito? In testing, you have 12 components including the PPE, the mask, and the goggles. Bakit po ba natin idini-disaggregate at ibinebenta nang tingitngi, at kapag dumating sa ating laboratory testing centers, hirap na hirap ang Zamboanga dahil kulang-

kulang? Ang Lung Center of the Philippines, hindi makapag-push through ng operations dahil kulang-kulang. Hindi lang po iyon, ganoon na rin po ang iba nating testing centers.

Suhestiyon ko nga po, bakit hindi gumagawa ng paraan ang liderato ng Kagawaran ng Kalusugan para direktang bumili sa mga manufacturer, para makuha ang testing kits sa bagsak na presyo at maiwasan ang pagnenegosyo ng mga tuso? Idagdag pa natin ang mga bangayan at awayan para sa exclusivity ng pagbebenta. Kapag pilit po na idaan sa mga ahente o supplier, mas nagkakaroon ng pagkakataon na lumihis sa nararapat na presyo. Marami naman pong matitino pero marami rin ang garapal at tuwang-tuwa pa sa pandemic dahil ito ay pagkakataong kumita ng pera sa gitna ng pasakit ng ating mga kababayan. Pandemic ngayon, at siguro napapanahong DOH na mismo ang bumili ng kits na kailangan ng ating mga kababayan or DBM kaya or anong ahensya ng gobyerno, pero hindi po sa mga middleman kung hindi direkta sa factory.

Mr. Speaker, I was Secretary of Health for one year. Ang ginawa po ng Kagawaran ng Kalusugan noong unang panahon: bakuna, gamot, kung ano man ang mga kailangan, direktang bumibili sa manufacturing company para sa economy of scale at sa mababang presyo. Hindi po ito ibinebenta pero iyong atin pong mga supplier ay kumikita sa paraan ng pagbebenta sa private hospitals at sa local government units. Sa mga equipment naman, siyempre kailangan mong dumaan sa lokal na distributor dahil kailangan ang maintenance provider. Pero sa mga testing kits, kayang-kaya po na dumiretso sa mga kumpanyang gumagawa nito kasi iyan po ang ginagawa ng ibang mga bansa, our neighboring countries. Bakit po ba tila iba kung sa Pilipinas?

Kaya nga po habang gumagalaw ang iba't ibang ahensya ng Pilipinas, habang walang tulog na nagpupursigi ang ating ibang mga opisina, kailangan po ng liderato ng Department of Health na tingnan ang nangyayari at aksyunan kaagad. How much is COVID-19 testing, swab, PCR testing in other countries? Bakit sa atin mahal eh sa kanila \$30 or \$40? Iyan lang po. Kung walang flights, eh mayroon naman pong telepono at Internet na puwedeng gamitin para tanungin ang mga counterpart offices ng DOH sa ibang bansa. Napakadaling tumawag sa ibang Secretary of Health sa ibang mga bansa para malaman natin kung ano ang ginagawa nila.

Ang akin lang po, we cannot be a country if we cannot balance health and the economy. Hindi pupuwedeng isantabi ang usapin ng kalusugan at hindi rin naman puwedeng i-lockdown ang ekonomiya. Katumbas nito ay gutom para sa karaniwang Pilipino. Ito ang hinanakit nila.

Kamakailan lang, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, napakaagresibo ng probinsiya ng Cavite. Napakagaling noong pagdadala ni Governor Remulla

na minarapat nilang i-test iyong mga tao, pero kung ang Cavite lang ang gagalaw at iyong mga government hospitals ng DOH eh hindi natin ie-equip ang kakayanan na mag-test at bigyan ng sapat na supply ng testing kit, of course, they will be overwhelmed because we are interrelated. We cannot just allow our LGUs to act independently. We should act as one country.

Ano naman po ang matinding pakiusap ng ating frontliners na mga doctor, nurse at medical professionals? Dagdag na gamit at sana naman ay tumalima ang madla na manatili sa bahay.

Ano po ba ang pakiusap ng ating mga State health workers? Suporta at sana magkaroon ng testing centers. Habang ang buhay nila ay delikado sa araw-araw na pag-aasikaso ng mga pasyente, not only COVID-19 patients, because frontliners handling COVID-19 patients are well-protected. But frontliners handling non-COVID-19 patients are more at risk dahil hindi mo makita at akala mo iyong pasyente mo ay walang COVID-19. But are they being tested? No. Again, because I do not know why, tila itinutulak na magpa-test tayo sa pribadong sektor. We lack testing centers because nobody ever dared to lift a finger and automate government testing centers.

Testigo po ako noong nagbigay ng direktiba si Pangulong Duterte sa ating Kalihim ng Kalusugan at sabihin niyang tulungan ang mga laboratoryo. If you need to automate, automate it. Pero tila hanggang ngayon, ibinibigay natin ito sa pribadong sektor. Mabuti na lang po at sumaklolo sila, mabuti na lang po na sa liderato ni Speaker Alan Cayetano at ng ating Majority Leader, nagkaroon ng kontribusyon sa mga suweldo ng ating mga Kongresista. Pero hindi po ba ito ay mayroon namang sapat na pondo ang ating Kagawaran ng Kalusugan?

Walang reagents ang pangkaraniwang hinanakit ng ating mga laboratory specialists. Parang inuutusan mo silang magpakain ng libu-libong tao pero hindi mo binibigyan ng pambili ng gasol. "Charge to the private sector pa more" ika nga, at ito ang napakabigat sa bulsa ng ating kababayan. This is the sad state of our healthcare situation. It is severely underfunded and taken advantage of where testing kits and testing centers should be the core of our response. What makes us more sad is that we have DOH officials, hindi po lahat, marami po diyan ang mga matitino who are keeping a blind eye to what is happening.

The leadership of the Department and that of the entire country's health sector has the golden opportunity to boost the morale of our people, motivate them and encourage them to work and deliver. It begins with eliminating the obstacles to honest to goodness medical practice and science-based research. It begins by listening to those without vested interest and asking them to speak more based on their own findings, observations and experience. It encompasses listening

to the people on the ground. Our local government executives who are in the forefront are crying to sustain a bold face.

Nag-aaway-away na iyong mga doktor, nagkakagulo na iyong iba, isa lang po ang sagot dito. The DOH should own up that we need more testing centers. The DOH should own up that they became late and they should accept that we are to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, if I can be given five more minutes and I am going to wrap up?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. TADURAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that the time of Rep. Garin be extended for another five minutes to allow the Lady to wrap up her speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Is there any objection (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the five minutes extension is granted.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished colleague.

Tayo sa Kongreso, ano po ba ang puwede nating gawin? Nagawa na nating ilaan ang ating sahod para sa Mayo para makatulong sa gobyerno. It is not too late for us to push for test, test, test. Aminado naman po tayo na naging mabagal ang pagtulak natin sa expanded swab testing, pero hindi nito ibig sabihin ay hindi na natin puwedeng gawin. Sa katunayan po, higit na kailangan natin ang tests para matukoy kung saan nakatago, aling lugar ang madami at magkaroon ng kumpanya ang ating kababayan habang bumabalik sila sa trabaho.

Hindi po madali ito, because expanded testing should have been done when we are in a lockdown, where it is easy to trace people, where tracing people will not be difficult kasi alam mo na limited lang ang pinuntahan ng tao. Sa ngayon, nagbubukas na po tayo, sinayang natin ang pagkakataon kung saan tulong-tulong na nagsakripisyo ang sambayanang Pilipino kasama ang Pangulo, kasama ang mga negosyante. Kaya kung hindi pa gagalaw ang Kalihim ng Kalusugan, tila mayroon itong mensahe.

I know that he is demoralized, I know that he feels bad. I do not want to speak against the leadership of the Department, but I have to because my friendship with the Secretary ends when my responsibility as a doctor, a legislator and a mother has to start.

May hihirit diyen, sigurado po, mahal kasi, hindi raw cost efficient ang swab test. Naku naman, tila itinutulak ang usapan sa rapid test kits. Tila sinasabi ito kasi iba, puro rapid test, dapat PCR tayo, pero kapag PCR naman, sasabihin namang mahal. Bakit po ba natin paulit-ulit na dinadala sa usapan whether it is PCR swab test or rapid test kits? That is not an issue.

The PCR swab test is the gold standard, but rapid testing can complement. But if you are not making testing available, then where will our people go? It is a method of survival, kapit sa patalim, because you are not only dealing with COVID-19, you are also dealing with anxiety, the fear of people going back to work na puwede nilang ikamatay sa nerbiyos, mas mahal kung muling sasadsad ang ekonomiya natin. Mas mahal kung magkakaroon tayo ng another wave of infections, at mas mahal ngunit walang katumbas ang halaga ng bawat buhay na mawawala dahil sa COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, allow me to put forward the following suggestions. I have been saying these time and again, even during the first cluster meeting that we had, pero tila walang napupuntahan. Kaya nga po ako ay nananawagan sa lahat ng ating kasamahan, these are the solutions I humbly submit:

Maximize the help of the private sector by laying down the map towards strategically located complementary testing centers. This will guide the donations of our Congressmen. The IATF and the government should welcome all the help and allow recommendations and suggestions that would redound to the benefit of our country. Tama na po ang pagalingan. Tama na po ang kaniya-kaniyang epal. Tama na po ang pamumulitika. Tulung-tulong tayo dahil kailangan natin ito.

Purchase the kits directly from the manufacturers. Kung gagawin po natin ito, ang government po ang direktang bibili sa mga kumpanya, lahat-lahat po, from the test kits to the reagents to the consumables, lahat po iyan, hindi po lalampas sa P800 to P900. Kaya ko pong patunayan iyan.

PhilHealth will now cover the processing fee of P500 for government hospitals and P700 for private hospitals. Ibig sabihin, bibili ng bulto ang Pilipinas. Ilalagay ito sa testing centers ng pribado at pampublikong ospital. Babayaran ng PhilHealth ng admin cost na P500 sa gobyernong ospital, P700 sa private hospitals. Huwag po nating kalimutan, inilaan nila ang kanilang buhay, ang kanilang pamilya ay hindi nila nakakasama araw-araw, wala na po silang time-in, time-out, wala na pong tulog. I am referring to our laboratory specialists, our pathologists, workers in the COVID-19 testing centers na hindi lang binibigyan ng incomplete testing paraphernalia, minsan wala pang PPE. Maglaan po tayo ng P100 per test conducted. It can be paid by PAGCOR or any other government agency para naman po magkaroon naman sila ng kanilang true compensation.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, next slide please, ang magiging suma-total po ng ating swab-PCR COVID-19 testing ay P1,400 to P1,700. Puwedeng dagdagan ng miscellaneous cost na P300, sabihin na natin, though I do not know if that is still needed.

Hindi po ako naniniwalang imposible ito and we

are going to prove in the next days that this can be done. Nananawagan po ako sa aking mga kasamahan sa Kongreso at ng ating mga supporters na local government chief executives. Kung aayawan pa ito ng ating Kalihim ng Kalusugan, if again, there will be obstacles to making testing not only available, but most importantly, affordable, kasi kung sasabihin nating napakamahal, tila sinasabi nating kapag ikaw ay mayaman, puwede kang mag-survive sa COVID-19, pero kapag ikaw ay mahirap, mamamatay ka na lang, hindi mo pa alam kung dahil sa COVID-19 o hindi.

Health equity has been the mantra of President Duterte since day one that he assumed office. Huwag po natin itong kalimutan, at alam ko po, sa pagkakakilala ko sa Pangulo, hindi niya ito palalampasin. Malaking dagok ito kung magkakataon. Kung ang ginagawa lang natin ay isolate, isolate, isolate, and if we continue to infect, infect and infect while we continuously avoid to test, test and test, there will be higher chances of the virus mutating again. When this virus mutates at its core, vaccines being tested might have to start at step one, and all our efforts might be in vain.

Bakit nga po ba? For the past months and weeks, I have been very tired of convincing people that our testing in the Philippines is the most expensive in the world. Balik po ako. Bakit pahirapan? Bakit manual? Bakit hindi natin tulungan ang mga pampublikong ospital? Why are we insisting and saying that it is expensive when, in fact, it is cheap? The truth is, we should have health equity. We should not buy expensive testing kits because we can buy it directly from the source. If kits will be pre-positioned in government and private facilities, bibilis po ang testing, hindi tayo maghihintay nang matagal, makakauwi po sa kanilang mga bahay ang ating OFWs. Sa quarantine center, iyong ating mga positibo na hindi pa na ite-test ay patuloy na nakakapanghawa sa iba. Bakit nga ba? Ang iba naming kababayan, sa probinsiya ng Iloilo, dumating dito walang sintomas, nasa quarantine center sa Cebu. Umuwi after one month. Pag-test sa Iloilo, positibo sa PCR swab test, meaning it is an active infection. Kung sinasabi nating hindi nakakapanghawa ang walang sintomas, nagsisinungaling po tayo. Tinatakpan lang natin ang ating failure to test our people. Kawawa naman iyong ating OFWs. We are putting them in a petri dish where they get infected from each other. Umuwi silang walang COVID-19, nagtatagal sila doon, hihintayin nating maglabas ng sintomas, ayaw nating i-test, by the moment they get tested, they are already positive.

Nitong nakaraang mga linggo, narinig natin ang 3Ts: Test, Trace, Treat. Paninindigan ko ito para na rin sa tamang hakbang. Dagdagan po natin ito ng another T, which stands for "Trust." Trust your health experts. Trust your State scientists and doctors. Trust your

career officials who have the wealth of experience and knowledge to address these challenges. Trust the private sector to help and make it possible for them to do so. Ultimately, trust the Filipino who will listen and follow, but we, ourselves, we who are in power and authority, should be the first to comply and serve as examples.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Lady will please wrap up.

REP. GARIN (J.). We are far from curing this virus.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak anew. I will strive that this is the last time I will speak of COVID-19 in the halls of Congress, hoping that the good Secretary of Health will listen.

Mr. President, Pangulong Duterte, we call on you as our "Tatay" to discipline your children. I recall that during our meeting, you were very firm to make testing available and affordable, na bilisan ng Department of Health. Mr. President, only you can handle this situation and provide the solution so we can move forward. Whether we like it or not, we have to survive this pandemic without a virus, and only you can make expanded PCR testing a reality for so many. If in the coming days there will still be obstacles to the laboratories that the private donors are putting up, then I will be urging the Members of Congress to come forward, have an investigation, because we cannot just be blind, deaf and mute while our people are faced with an invisible enemy.

With your help and support, distinguished colleagues, I am of the belief that we can crush COVID altogether, and we could bring back our country right on its track, sooner than later.

Maraming salamat po. Keep safe, Mr. Speaker. Keep safe, distinguished colleagues.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Maraming salamat, Senior Deputy Minority Leader.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BAGATSING. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of Hon. Janette Garin to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BAGATSING. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from ANAKALUSUGAN Party-List, the honorable Rep. Michael T. Defensor, for his manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Representative from ANAKALUSUGAN, Hon. Mike Defensor, is recognized.

MANIFESTATION OF REP. DEFENSOR (M.)

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker, and also to our beautiful Majority Leader, Honorable Bagatsing of Manila.

Mr. Speaker, mabilis lang po na manifestation sa kadahilanan po nitong April 15, in line with the speech of Hon. Janette Garin kanina tungkol po sa swab testing, which I support and I urge, Mr. Speaker.

Dito po sa PhilHealth, Mr. Speaker, noong April 15, binago na po nila. Previous to April 15, ang sinabi po ng PhilHealth, full coverage kapag ikaw ay nagkasakit ng COVID-19. After April 15, Mr. Speaker, nagkaroon na po sila ng case rates: P43,997 for mild pneumonia; P143,000 for moderate pneumonia; P333,000 for severe pneumonia; and P786,000 for those with critical pneumonia. Mr. Speaker, itong case rates na ito, noon pa man ay akin nang nilalabanan dahil ito ay naging source ng korapsyon sa ilalim ng PhilHealth. Wala po silang COA last year.

Pangalawa, Mr. Speaker, ang akin pong itinutulak dito sa inyo pong suporta, Mr. Speaker, isang buwan na ho magmula nang inimplementa ito. Mr. Speaker, kapag ikaw ay nagkasakit ng COVID-19, lalo na at mahirap ka, dapat full coverage ng PhilHealth. Iyon po ang aking manifestation, Mr. Speaker. And I hope, with the support of the Majority Leader, ang inyo pong suporta, Mr. Speaker, at ang mga kasamahan natin, sa kadahilang ito, Mr. Speaker, hindi naman natin pondo ito, pondo ito ng PhilHealth. And I would like to move, Mr. Speaker, that we direct the PhilHealth to immediately review the case rates program that they have for COVID-19. Pag-aralan po nila kaagad at tanggalin na po ang limitasyon kapag ikaw ay nagkasakit ng COVID-19. Full support, Mr. Speaker, ng PhilHealth ang ibigay sa ating mga kababayan.

Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Maraming salamat, kagalang-galang Mike Defensor ng ANAKALUSUGAN. Maraming salamat at sinusuportahan ka namin diyan.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BAGATSING. Mr. Speaker, the manifestation of Hon. Mike Defensor is duly noted.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Mr. Speaker, with the permission of the Majority Leader, kung inyo pong papayagan, Mr. Speaker, dahil ito po ay pagkakataon natin, baka puwede po iyong motion ay idirekta na kaagad natin ang PhilHealth na review-hin iyong kanilang programa sa case rates at bigyan ng kabuuang suporta ang lahat ng may sakit ng COVID-19.

Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I reiterate my motion, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, on the part of the Majority, we hereby manifest and reiterate our support to the motion of Honorable Defensor.

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

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Marami pong salamat, Mr. Speaker, and to all the Members of Congress.

REP. BAGATSING. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from the First District of Agusan del Norte, the honorable Rep. Lawrence "Law" H. Fortun.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Representative from the First District of Agusan del Norte, Hon. Lawrence Fortun, is recognized.

MANIFESTATION OF REP. FORTUN

REP. FORTUN. Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker. Maraming salamat sa ating Majority Leader.

Mr. Speaker, kahapon, ang inaakala nating lahat ay magkaroon na ng Third Reading at maaaprubahan ang House Bill No. 6732, matapos nating naaprubahan on First and Second Reading noong nakaraang linggo ang panukala, ngunit may biglang pagbabago.

Kahapon, ang ginawa natin ay bumalik tayo sa Pangalawang Pagbasa o Second Reading ng House Bill No. 6732. Mr. Speaker, bagama't ako ay naniniwala na walang mali sa ginawa ng House of Representatives nang ating tinalakay at inaprubahan on Second Reading ang House Bill No. 6732 on the same day, may mga nagsabi na ito ay unconstitutional dahil may requirement na ang reading should be done on separate days. Ako po ay naniniwala na ang First and Second Readings ay maaaring gawin sa parehong araw kung ang isang panukala ay na-refer sa Committee of the Whole. Ang hindi pupuwedeng gawin ay ang Third Reading on the same day kasi klarong-klaro po ang requirement ng ating Konstitusyon na kailangang mayroon munang distribution of copies of the bill in its final form three days before the passage of the bill.

Ano po ang nangyari kahapon? Nagkaroon ng pagkakataon ang marami nating kasamahan na mag-interpellate, at supposedly, magkaroon sana ng pagkakataong magpanukala ng mga amendment sa House Bill No. 6732.

Noong narinig ko po ang mga interpellation at iba't ibang manifestations mula sa ating mga kasamahan,

ito po iyong mga conclusion na aking nakuha mula sa ating mga kasamahan.

Unang-una, lumabas kahapon na napaka-urgent po ang issue ng mga manggagawa ng ABS-CBN na nasa higit 11,000 na nawalan ng trabaho sa gitna ng krisis at pandemya na nangyayari ngayon. Eleven thousand employees translate to 11,000 families. At para sa average na five per family, it translates to 55,000 individuals heavily affected by the displacement of their breadwinners in the middle of an unprecedented crisis confronting not only the country but the whole world. Iyon ang una.

Pangalawa, lumalabas din sa mga interpellation at manifestation na urgent ang pagbalik ng ABS-CBN sa ere dahil napakahalaga ng papel na ginagampanan nito sa paghahatid ng impormasyon sa ating mga kababayan sa gitna ng pandemyang ito. Doon po sa amin sa Mindanao, marami pong mga barangay, maraming mga munisipyo na hindi abot ng ibang istasyon. ABS-CBN lang ang abot doon sa mga barangay at mga munisipyong ito. Noong nawala ang ABS-CBN, wala po sila ngayong telebisyon. So, the impact of ABS-CBN not being on the air ay napakalaki sa gitna ng pandemyang ito.

Lumabas din po sa mga interpelasyon at manifestation kahapon ang iba't ibang issues naman laban sa ABS-CBN, na ito ay may mga violation na ginawa kaya dapat imbestigahan ang mga ito at dapat matalakay hinggil doon sa pagbigay ng prangkisa sa kanila.

So, from these conclusions, Mr. Speaker, lumalabas na tama po sana talaga ang House Bill No. 6732 dahil urgent po ang concern ng mga manggagawa na sila ay bumalik sa trabaho at urgent po ang papel ng himpilang ito sa paghahatid ng mahalagang impormasyon sa gitna ng pandemyang ito. Tama lang sana na sila ay bumalik sa ere immediately to address the plight of 11,000 displaced workers and to address the issue and importance of ABS-CBN's role in disseminating information, especially in this time of crisis.

Bakit tama ang House Bill No. 6732? Sige, limang buwan lang po muna, kasi nga lumalabas din sa kahapong interpellations and manifestations na maraming issues na dapat harapin ang ABS-CBN. So, the correct and appropriate direction that the House should have taken was to approve yesterday or today House Bill No. 6732. And, iyong mga bill po para sa mas mahabang prangkisa sa Committee on Legislative Franchises ay magpapatuloy sa pagtalakay habang effective naman ang isang bagong batas para sa provisional permit.

Sinusuportahan po natin ang ating Speaker sa kaniyang direksiyon, lalo na noong kaniyang itinulak ang House Bill No. 6732. Bagama't ako, personally, Mr. Speaker, ay naniniwala na pag-usapan na kaagad ang 25-year franchise, but in the interim, it was a correct and prudent direction to push and approve House Bill

No. 6732 while we push as well for the longer franchise in the Committee on Legislative Franchises.

Mr. Speaker, sabi ng ating Speaker, we should set aside that which divides us. Ang issue po daw ng ABS-CBN ay isang napaka-divisive, highly charged na issue. Tayo po ay hindi nagkakasundo. May mga kasamahan tayong tutol dito, may mga kasamahan tayong itinutulak ang prangkisa, may mga kasamahan naman tayong nag-iisip pa kung dapat nga bang bigyan ng panibagong prangkisa ang ABS-CBN. But when we approved House Bill No. 6732 last week, Mr. Speaker, we were one. Not one of us, nobody, not one Member of the House objected to House Bill No. 6732. Yes, it is true that we should set aside that which divides us, but when we voted on House Bill No. 6732, nobody objected. Everybody agreed. Even those who were vocal against ABS-CBN's renewal of franchise voted in favor of House Bill No. 6732. And if you voted again today on House Bill No. 6732, we would not have been divided and the issue on constitutionality would have been addressed already.

Mr. Speaker, sabi ng ating kagalang-galang na Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano, kailangan nating pakinggan ang iba't ibang panig sa isyung ito kaya mas mahalaga na may mas malawakang deliberasyon doon sa Committee on Legislative Franchises. I agree that we should have more extensive deliberations on this issue in the Committee on Legislative Franchises. Kailangan nating pakinggan ang lahat ng panig. Kaya nga po sana ay ipinasá na natin ang House Bill No. 6732 para makabalik na sa trabaho ang 11,000 employees na na-displace, bumalik sa ere kahit pansamantala ang ABS-CBN habang tinatalakay naman natin doon sa Komite ang iba't ibang isyu laban sa network na ito.

Mr. Speaker, kami po sa Minorya ay naniniwala na bagama't kanina wala naman talagang motion to revert or to refer the measure back to the Committee on Legislative Franchises, because there can be no referral back to the Committee because in the first place, House Bill No. 6732 was never ever referred to the Committee on Legislative Franchises. From the beginning, it was considered and treated by the Committee of the Whole. So, what happened was that simply our distinguished Sponsors abandoned the Bill. They simply decided not to pursue it anymore. So, there is no more House Bill No. 6732 to speak of now and we go back to the Committee para doon sa earlier franchise bills that have been filed.

Iyan na po ang nangyari, iyan na po ang status ngayon, wala na po kaming magagawa. But we stood, Mr. Speaker, upang ipahayag na bagama't ito na ang naging desisyon ng mga Sponsor, at hindi naman kami puwedeng tumutol doon dahil sila naman ang Sponsors, at ayaw na nilang ituloy ang kanilang panukala, kami pa rin ay naniniwala na sana ay inaprubahan na natin

ang House Bill No. 6732 ngayong araw na ito para nag-Third Reading tayo sa Lunes na darating.

Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that the manifestation of Rep. Lawrence Fortun be noted.

Mr. Speaker, I move to ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Noted. Majority Leader, wait.

For proper disposition of the manifestation of Hon. Mike Defensor, and the manifestation of the Majority Leader earlier, I would like to refer that to the Committee on Rules for proper action.

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Yes.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to refer the manifestations of Rep. Mike Defensor and Rep. Lawrence Fortun to the Rules Committee.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Those manifestations are referred to the Committee on Rules.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I now move that we recognize, from the Second District of Caloocan City, Rep. Edgar “Egay” R. Erice, for his manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Representative from the Second District of Caloocan City, Hon. Edgar “Electronic Rice—E-rice” Erice, is recognized.

Sandali lang po, naka-mute kayo, naka-mute. Please proceed.

#### MANIFESTATION OF REP. ERICE

REP. ERICE. Mr. Speaker, thank you, and good afternoon. Thank you, Mme. Majority Leader, and my dear colleagues.

We, in the Liberal Party, are rather unique because there are members of the Liberal Party in the Minority and there are also members of the Liberal Party in the Majority. However, when it comes to House Bill No. 6732, we, whether in the Minority or in the Majority, supported H.B. No. 6732. Ito po ay isinulong ng

liderato ng House of Representatives at kami po ay lubusang sumuporta. Ganunpaman, nauunawaan ko po, I commiserate with the Speaker on how he thinks about this, how he feels about this issue. I think it is now water under the bridge. Kaya po sinusuportahan po natin iyong aksiyon na ito ng liderato ng Kamara, subalit nakikiusap lang po kami sa Committee on Legislative Franchises na siguro po talagang sundin natin iyong nasabi ng ating Speaker na magkaroon talaga tayo ng masigasig, mag-multitasking tayo ngayong panahon ng pandemyang ito upang marinig ang lahat ng dapat marinig, sumusuporta at tumututol, at makagawa kaagad tayo ng aksiyon sa lalong madaling panahon. Mahalaga po na mabigyan natin ng katapusan ang isyu na ito sapagkat tunay naman po na ang ABS-CBN is not just a media organization. It is already an institution. Ito po ay isang tradisyon na. The transmission of our customs has been made possible by ABS-CBN, I would say, matagal na po. It is not just political, I do not care about the commentators, I do not care about the owners. Really, ito po ay parte na ng ating pang-araw-araw na buhay.

Sa mga nakaraang panahon po ay nag-ikot ako sa aking distrito, sa bawat lugar sa aking distrito, at nitong mga huling araw, narinig ko pong tanong sa akin ay kailan ba magbubukas ang ABS-CBN? At nahiwatigan ko po sa kanila dahil lalo na sa mga kasuluk-sulukan, ang mga programa na pinanood nila ay malaking bagay para sa kanila, lalo na iyong mga senior citizens na halos ito na lang po ang napapaglibangan lalo na ngayong panahon ng pandemya. They do not care about politics, they do not care about the issues behind the politics. Ang tingin ko sa kanila parang ang ABS-CBN ay hindi naman po pag-aari ng mga Lopez; ito po ay pag-aari nila. At para bang sa araw-araw sila ay nawawalan dahil hindi po nagtutuloy iyong mga kanilang nagiging kagawian na nagpapaligaya, nagpapasaya sa kanilang mga buhay.

So, Mr. Speaker, maraming salamat po at magandang gabi sa inyong lahat.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. TADURAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the manifestation of Hon. Edgar Erice to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Referred to the Committee on Rules.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. TADURAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Arlene D. Brosas of GABRIELA Party-List for her manifestation.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Representative from GABRIELA Party-List, Hon. Arlene Brosas, is recognized for her manifestation.

#### MANIFESTATION OF REP. BROSAS

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Gabriela Women's Party is in favor of the proposed temporary franchise for ABS-CBN with the fervent hope that the country's largest network will be back on the air soon. Pagkilala ito sa karapatan sa pamamahayag na nakasaad sa ating Konstitusyon na hindi dapat sikilin batay lamang sa kapritso at teranikong tendensiya. Pagkilala rin ito sa mahalagang papel ng media na maghatid ng balita sa ating mga kababayan lalo na sa panahon ng pandemya.

We hope that with the passage of this temporary franchise Bill, this Chamber will seriously internalize its duty and power to independently decide on franchises without unnecessary delay and without any influence and string-pulling by the Executive branch.

We note, however, that this temporary franchise through House Bill No. 6732 is timed to expire on October 31, 2020, after which, the network's fate will once again hang in the balance. The lease of life being granted to the network and to its 11,000 workforce pending the actual deliberations on the franchise renewal bill could have been longer. At the same time, Congress is obliged to tackle the pending ABS-CBN franchise bills before October, so as to establish its good faith with this gesture of putting the network back on air. Pero saksi po tayo sa nangyari kanina sa Kapulungang ito. Pinaasa na magkakaroon ng provisional temporary franchise na puwede naman actually—puwede naman na habang dinidinig iyong actual 25-year franchise renewal ay magkaroon ng temporary franchise para sa ABS-CBN na ito ay umere. So, Mr. Speaker, we find it unfortunate that the House leadership decided to drop the ABS-CBN provisional franchise Bill, which it originally pushed to usher in a marathon of hearings on the pros and cons of the franchise renewal.

What the House did was to suspend the hopes of the 11,000 ABS-CBN workers in mid-air, while the country's largest network will remain off-air. Ang panawagan natin sa Gabriela Women's Party, ibalik sa ere ang ABS-CBN. Bakit tila iniwan natin sa ere ang libu-libong manggagawa ng ABS-CBN na apektado rin ng pandemya? Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, kailangan nating sapulin ang urgent na mga usapin. Hindi ba mas urgent na mabigyan ng katiyakan ang 11,000 na manggagawa kahit hanggang Oktubre man lang? Hindi ba mas urgent na matiyak na mayroon silang kita, lalo ngayon at humaharap tayo sa pandemya?

So, Mr. Speaker, ang gusto po sana natin—wala pong mawawala sa gobyerno at sambayanan sa ngayon kung hahayaan na makabalik sa ere ang ABS-CBN hanggang

Oktubre. On the contrary, the House would be doing a disservice to the Filipino people if it will continue to sit on the network's franchise as millions of Filipinos in far-flung areas are deprived of vital news and information amid the pandemic. Iyon po ang halaga ng malayang pamamahayag, ang halaga ng press freedom na ipinaglalaman natin, ang halaga ng sinasabi nga ng *The Jerks* sa kanta na we should "rage against the dying of the light."

Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to refer the speech of Rep. Arlene Brosas to the Rules Committee for its appropriate action.

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

The speech is referred to the Committee on Rules.

REP. SINGSON-MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to recognize, from the BAYAN MUNA Party-List, Rep. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate for his manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Hon. Carlos Zarate from the BAYAN MUNA Party-List is recognized.

#### MANIFESTATION OF REP. ZARATE

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yaman din lang na mukhang naabanduna na ng mga Sponsors ang panukalang batas na magbibigay sana ng provisional franchise sa ABS-CBN ay hindi ko na rin mai-cast iyong aking "Yes" vote doon sa House Bill No. 6732 at ito ay nakakapanlumo dahil inaasahan natin na sa linggong ito sana ay maipasá na ito ng Mababang Kapulungan at maihatid na ito doon sa Senado para naman maaksiyunan ito at sa kagyat ay bumalik na sana sa ere ang ABS-CBN.

G. Ispiker, prior to joining Congress, ako po ay isang mamamahayag at isa ring abogado by profession. As such, it is second nature to me to advocate for free speech, freedom of the press and our people's access to information, especially now during these trying times with the COVID-19 pandemic and the crisis na dala nito that affects our country and millions of our people.

Napakalaki ng magiging papel ng media rito in delivering to the public the current news and information necessary for our survival and, in fact, for our decision-making as legislators and for our leaders to resolve a myriad of issues that confront us everyday.

Kaya naman, gusto kong i-hammer uli na ang ABS-CBN is not just a simple station. Hindi po usapin ng

isang istasyon lang. Ang ABS-CBN, undoubtedly, is one of the leading broadcast networks in our country. Napakarami nitong istasyon sa buong kapuluan at sa kanayunan. Nabanggit na rin ito ng ating mga kasamahan, na lalung-lalo na nitong nakaraang bagyo, sila lang ang inaasahan para sa impormasyon ng iba nating mga kababayan dahil iyon lang ang nakakaabot at iyon lang ang may istasyon sa kanilang lugar.

In addition, nabanggit na rin ito, libu-libo ang umaasa na mga manggagawa sa ABS-CBN; 11,000 ang umaasa rito including iyong mga dependents, probably marami pa, sa kaniyang continued existence.

Nabanggit na rin kanina doon sa Senado na kung tuluy-tuloy na hindi babalik sa ere ang ABS-CBN, malamang sa darating na Agosto ay magtatanggalan na sila ng mga empleyado at sasama na rin ito sa libu-libo o milyun-milyon nating mga mamamayan na walang trabaho dulot nitong nangyayaring krisis ngayon.

Kaya nga, G. Ispiker, noong nakaraang Enero, ang Kinatawang ito, kasama ang aking mga kasamahan sa Makabayan bloc, sa katotohanan, ay naghain din kami ng isang panukalang batas para bigyan ng panibagong prangkisa ang ABS-CBN. Since then ay ating panawagan na sana ay marinig na ito, magkaroon na ng pagdinig sa Mababang Kapulungan lalung-lalo na sa Committee on Legislative Franchises.

Now, be that as it may, dahil nga wala na tayong aasahan na isang provisional franchise para makabalik na sana nang kagyat sa ere ang ABS-CBN, ang aking panawagan, at ito na rin ay inihayag kanina sa plenaryo ng ating kagalang-galang na Speaker, ay madaliin na talaga ang pagdinig noong mga renewal bills sa ABS-CBN at kailangang bigyan natin ito ng sapat na panahon para hindi malagay sa alanganin ang lahat. Let not this continuing uncertainty, Mr. Speaker, serve like a sword of Damocles not only hanging over ABS-CBN, but over its employees and the viewing public in general as well. Kailangang patunayan ng Kongresong ito to the public na tayo ang mayroong primary jurisdiction para resolbahin ang isyung ito.

We have to be reminded, Mr. Speaker, that Congress' own inaction has vast implications and consequences that may prejudice our electorate and worse, even defeat our own powers and prerogatives in the future.

So, again, Mr. Speaker, bilang panghuli, we must act urgently on this matter, in the same manner that we have to act urgently on other pressing matters related to the crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. May we all do these, Mr. Speaker, in the service of the Filipino people.

Maraming salamat po, G. Ispiker, at magandang gabi po sa ating lahat.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the manifestation of Hon. Carlos Zarate to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu.). The manifestation of the Honorable Zarate is referred to the Committee on Rules.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mr. Speaker, for the last manifestation for today, I move that we recognize our Minority Leader, Rep. Bienvenido M. Abante Jr., from Manila.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu.). The great Minority Leader from Manila, Hon. Benny Abante, is recognized.

#### MANIFESTATION OF REP. ABANTE.

REP. ABANTE. Salamat po, Mr. Speaker. Mayroon nga pong Batangneñong kasabihan na "Huli man daw at magaling, ay huli pa rin."

Anyway, my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, I admire the honesty and decorum of our Speaker in his speech a while ago. While he was the one who sponsored House Bill No. 6732, he began to realize, Mr. Speaker, that he must give way to the rule of the majority.

Maganda na po sana ang House Bill No. 6732. Natuwa ako at ang ating Speaker mismo ang nag-sponsor noong Miyerkules. Nakakatuwa na wala pong anumang oposisyon. Nakakatuwa na na-convene po natin ang buong Kongreso bilang isang Committee of the Whole. Nakakatuwa na ito po ay inaprubahan ng lahat ng mga Congressman, gayundin ang Committee Report, gayundin po ang pagpasá sa First Reading, gayundin po ang Second Reading. Hanggang kahapon, Mr. Speaker, ay marami po ang nagsalita.

Sa aking pananaw, eh para bang nawala iyong tibo sa aking dibdib habang ang isyu ng ABS-CBN is hanging on the balance. Pero, naintindihan ko ang ating Speaker. Inunawa ko ang nais niyang sabihin sapagkat hindi lang pala tibo ang siyang nasa atin ngayon kung hindi isang malaking sugat na hindi lang po kinakailangan sa emergency, dapat ito ay gamutin, kinakailangan na po itong ilagay sa operating table.

Kaya nga po, noong nalaman po namin na ito po ay ilalagay sa sting Committee on Legislative Franchises, although this is the proper process, nagkaroon din po ako ng kaunting agam-agam at kaunting kalungkutan. Bakit po? Sapagkat sana ay na-resolve na natin at least ng anim na buwan ang problema ng franchise ng ABS-CBN. At pagkatapos niyan, ay ilalagay na natin ang ilang mga bills na na-file ng ating mga Congressman, about 125 of them, upang ito ay bigyan na ng 25-year

franchise at pag-usapan na po ito nang magandang pag-uusap. Ii-scrutinize na po natin ito.

Talagang mahi-heal o maghihilom at gagaling ang mga sugat ng mga nakaraang taon, subalit I still would like to accept and believe not only in the wisdom of the Speaker, but in the wisdom of the majority of Congressmen who would like this measure to go back and be reverted to the Committee on Legislative Franchises.

Mr. Speaker, naalala ko po itong nakalagay sa aklat ng Philippians 4:8, gusto ko pong basahin ang verse:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

I would like to believe, Mr. Speaker, that this is the kind of character that the House of the People has.

Binanggit po ni Speaker na hindi po moro-moro ang ginawa natin, na hindi tayo mag-aaksaya ng panahon, na mayroong mas mahalagang bagay na dapat nating pag-usapan katulad ng economic stimulus plan, na ang bill siyang principally authored by Joey Salceda, Stella Quimbo and Sharon Garin. Iyon pong tinatawag nating ibang mga plano at mga bills na nakasalang upang maresolve na po natin ang issue ng COVID-19, naniniwala po ako, Mr. Speaker, na talagang dapat nating unahin ito, dapat po nating unahin ito, subalit naniniwala din po ako na para mawala na po ang tinatawag nating “sword that is hanging over our heads,” I hope that as soon as possible, the Committee on Legislative Franchises would immediately call for hearings, kahit na po ito ay gawin natin ng mga ilang araw sa isang linggo at lahat ng

mga kasama natin dito at mga kapatid ay makapagsalita, at sabihin nila ang dapat nilang sabihin.

Once and for all, Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, let us resolve this issue that sometimes divides our nation and divides our people.

Maraming, maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). Maraming salamat, Minority Leader.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the manifestation of the honorable Minority Leader Benny Abante, Representative Abante, to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

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

The manifestation is referred to the Committee on Rules.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

#### SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session until tomorrow, Wednesday, May 20, 2020, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Abu). The session is suspended until May 20, 2020, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

*It was 6:37 p.m.*