

CongressWatch Report

Towards Greater Voter Involvement

Report No. 137

28 March 2008

BUCKLES TO WORK

Despite criticisms for arduously doing their oversight function, the Senate managed to pass 23 measures before going on a Lenten break last 13 March. On the other hand, the House passed 19 bills of national application and 32 local bills, which mostly seeks to establish national high schools in different localities.

In spite these number, only three laws have been passed: RA 9496 (*Extending the Utilization of the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund*), RA 9497 (*Creating the Civil Aviation Authority*) and RA 9498 (*General Appropriations Act of 2008*).

RA 9496, signed on 28 February, extends the use of the agricultural competitiveness enhancement fund (ACEF) to 2015 after it expired in 2007. ACEF aims to help the agricultural sector to become globally competitive by providing credit to small farmers and fisherfolks at zero-interest and with no collateral. RA 9497, signed on 4 March, provides fiscal autonomy to the newly created body to meet the international aviation standards. In January, the United States' Federal Aviation Authority downgraded the Philippine's rating after our airports failed in their air safety assessment and found the country lacking a civil aviation law. RA 9498, signed on 12 March, provides for P1.227-trillion national budget for 2008. The three departments that received the highest appropriations were the Department of Education (P140.24 billion), Department of Public Works and Highways (P94.73 billion) and Department of the Interior and Local Government (P53.24 billion).

The three laws were among the 11 priority measures committed by the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) to be passed before the Christmas break during their second meeting on 11 December.

The Magna Carta for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises has already been ratified by both chambers on 3 March and is waiting for the President's signature. Meanwhile, the bill amending the University of the Philippines charter and the Cheaper Medicines Bill were approved on third reading and now in the bicameral conference committee level.

The rest of the LEDAC priority legislation are in different stages:

Legislation	Bill No.	Author	Status
1. Credit Information System	HB 118	Juan Edgardo Angara	PIC
	HB 1731	Monico Puentevella	PIC
	HB 2443	Guillermo Cua	PIC
	SB 1881	Edgardo Angara	PIC
2. Amendments to the Electric Power Industry Reform Act	HB 3124	Juan Miguel Arroyo	P2R
	SB 2121	Juan Ponce Enrile	P2R
3. Personal Equity Retirement Account (PERA) Act	HB 3754	Ramon Durano VI	P2R
	SB 1882	Edgardo Angara	A3R
4. General Amnesty (those who committed crimes against the state)	<i>no bill filed as of March 2008</i>		
5. Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA)	<i>for Senate's ratification</i>		

The **CongressWatch Report** is a regular publication of the Makati Business Club. Its main mission is to promote accountability and transparency of elected government officials. For inquiries, suggestions, and additional information, please call CongressWatch at telephone nos. **751-1138 to 44** or email eric.alvia@mbc.com.ph or patrick.chua@mbc.com.ph.

Project Manager
Eric O. Alvia

Research Associate
Patrick P. Chua

Design and Layout
Christian V. Cruz



www.mbc.com.ph/congresswatch

PRIORITIES ANEW

Changes in the House continue to snowball under the leadership of Speaker Prospero Nograles. The Office of the Speaker and the Office of the Secretary-General issued this month a publication entitled, *Sustaining the Growth, Spreading the Benefits (A Legislative Reform Agenda for the House of the People)*. The Speaker presented its commitment to initiate socio-economic change and development through the legislative reform agenda which he hoped to be the thrust of the House in the next 100 days. The list includes 50 legislative measures in three areas: economic and fiscal reforms, social reforms, and political and governance reforms.

Whether the House will be able to stick to their commitment on top of catching up with their earlier promises remains to be seen.

PRIORITY LIST OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION (March 2008)

	Bill No.	Author	Status
<u>ECONOMIC AND FISCAL REFORMS</u>			
1. Rationalization of Fiscal Incentives	HB 1757	Exequiel Javier	PIC
	HB 2278	Exequiel Javier	PIC
	HB 2530	Junie Cua	PIC
	HB 2712	Thelma Almario	PIC
2. Simplified Net Income Taxation System (SNITS) [for individuals engaged in trade/business and/or practice of profession]	HB 1809	Eric Singson	PIC
3. Reformulation of the Internal Revenue Allotment	HB 181	Juan Edgardo Angara	PIC
	HB 2413	Nur Jaafar	PIC
4. Repeal Automatic Guarantess for GOCCs	<i>no bill filed as of March 2008</i>		
5. Amendments to the Tariff and Customs Code	HB 15	Lorenzo Tañada III	PIC
	HB 155	Juan Edgardo Angara	PIC
	HB 418	Eduardo Zialcita	PIC
	HB 485	Monico Puentevella	PIC
6. Creating a Central Appraisal Authority	HB 154	Juan Edgardo Angara	PIC
	HB 426	Eduardo Zialcita	PIC
7. Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation Charter Amendments	<i>no bill filed as of March 2008</i>		
8. Pre-Need Code	HB 159	Juan Edgardo Angara	PIC
	HB 295	Jaime Lopez	PIC
9. Credit Information System	HB 118	Juan Edgardo Angara	PIC
	HB 1731	Monico Puentevella	PIC
	HB 2443	Guillermo Cua	PIC
10. Personal Equity and Retirement Account	HB 3754	Ramon Durano VI	P2R
11. Corporate Accountability	HB 3456	Ramon Durano VI	PIC
12. Revised Investment Company Act	<i>no bill filed as of March 2008</i>		
13. National Competition Policy	<i>no bill filed as of March 2008</i>		
14. Philippine Trade Representative Office	HB 318	Lorenzo Tañada III	PIC
	HB 949	Prospero Nograles	PIC
15. Real Estate Investment Trust Act	HB 148	Juan Edgardo Angara	PIC
16. Amendments to the Build Operate Transfer Law	HB 2102	Junie Cua	PIC
	HB 2829	Abdullah Dimaporo	PIC
17. Amending the Charters of the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA), Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), and Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB)	<i>no bill filed as of March 2008</i>		
18. Amendments to the EPIRA Law	HB 3124	Juan Miguel Arroyo	P2R
19. Indigenous and Renewable Energy Sources	HB 184	Juan Edgardo Angara	PIC
	HB 523	Arnulfo Fuentesbella	PIC
	HB 950	Prospero Nograles	PIC
	HB 1000	Monico Puentevella	PIC

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	Bill No.	Author	Status	
19. Indigenous and Renewable Energy Sources (<i>continuation</i>)	HB 1782	Arnulfo Fuentesbella	PIC	
	HB 1958	Juan Miguel Arroyo	PIC	
	HB 2027	Lorenzo Tañada III	PIC	
	HB 2316	Raul Gonzalez Jr.	PIC	
	HB 3165	Risa Hontiveros	PIC	
	HB 3193	Edgar San Luis	PIC	
	HB 3313	Raul Del Mar	PIC	
	HB 3376	Narciso Santiago III	PIC	
	20. Developing the Downstream Natural Gas Industry	HB 1628	Aurelio Gonzales Jr.	PIC
		HB 1936	Juan Miguel Arroyo	PIC
HB 2931		Salvador Escudero III	PIC	
21. National Tourism Policy	HB 4	Edgardo Chatto	PIC	
	HB 173	Juan Edgardo Angara	PIC	
	HB 952	Prospero Nograles	PIC	
	HB 1222	Czarina Umali	PIC	
	HB 1878	Carissa Coscolluela	PIC	
	HB 2518	Rufus Rodriguez	PIC	
	HB 2815	Carissa Coscolluela	PIC	
	HB 2857	Marcelino Teodoro	PIC	
	HB 3363	Raul del Mar	PIC	
	22. Promoting Pocket Open Skies Policy		<i>no bill filed as of March 2008</i>	
23. Liberalizing the Economic Provisions of the Constitution		<i>no bill filed as of March 2008</i>		
<u>SOCIAL REFORM MEASURES</u>				
24. Amending the Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE) Act	HB 95	Juan Edgardo Angara	PIC	
	HB 320	Lorenzo Tañada III	PIC	
	HB 1368	Carmencita Reyes	PIC	
	HB 2274	Carmencita Reyes	PIC	
	HB 3431	Rufus Rodriguez	PIC	
	25. Expanding the Application of the Special Education Fund	HB 778	Arthur Defensor	PIC
HB 1278		Luis Villafuerte	PIC	
HB 1951		Rufus Rodriguez	PIC	
HB 2197		Marcelino Teodoro	PIC	
HB 2403		Rufus Rodriguez	PIC	
26. Regulating the Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs)				
27. Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Act	HB 17	Edcel Lagman	PIC	
28. Creating a Local Housing Board	HB 52	Rozzano Rufino Biazon	PIC	
	HB 404	Eduardo Zialcita	PIC	
29. Creating the Department of Housing and Urban Development	HB 336	Joseph Emilio Abaya	PIC	
	HB 402	Eduardo Zialcita	PIC	
	HB 429	Raul del Mar	PIC	
	HB 2473	Rozzano Rufino Biazon	PIC	
	HB 2698	Rodolfo Valencia	PIC	
	30. Farmland as Collateral	HB 32	Jose Carlos Lacson	PIC
HB 1868		Monico Pentevella	PIC	
HB 2707		Diosdado Arroyo	PIC	
HB 3368		Edgardo Chatto	PIC	
31. Review of the Agri-Agra Law		HB 33	Jose Carlos Lacson	PIC
	HB 1386	Ferdinand Romualdez	PIC	
	HB 3161	Abraham Kahlil Mitra	PIC	
32. Land Administration Reform	HB 21	Eduardo Zialcita	PIC	
	HB 171	Juan Angara	PIC	
	HB 932	Solomon Chungalao	PIC	
	HB 1102	Jose Solis	PIC	
	HB 1310	Rodolfo Valencia	PIC	
	HB 1650	Ferdinand Romualdez	PIC	

PRIORITY LIST OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION (March 2008)

	Bill No.	Author	Status
32. Land Administration Reform (<i>continuation</i>)	HB 2122	Rufus Rodriguez	PIC
	HB 2660	Diosdado Arroyo	PIC
	HB 2930	Salvador Escudero III	PIC
33. Marine and Coastal Conservation	HB 606	Alfredo Marañon III	PIC
	HB 1803	Lorenzo Tañada III	PIC
	HB 2623	Alfredo Marañon III	PIC
34. Hazardous and Nuclear Waste Management Act	HB 817	Judy Syjuco	PIC
	HB 2314	Raul Gonzalez Jr.	PIC
	HB 2806	Proceso Alcala	PIC
35. Water Resources Management Act	HR 153	Luis Villafuerte	PIC
36. Billion Trees Act	HB 375	Roilo Golez	A3R
37. Establishing the Mindanao Railway System	HB 1246	Pedro Romualdo	PIC
38. Creating the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos	HB 823	Judy Syjuco	PIC
	HB 2347	Rufus Rodriguez	PIC
	HB 2379	Pangalian Balindiong	PIC
<u>POLITICAL AND GOVERNANCE REFORMS</u>			
39. Access to Public Information	HB 3732	Bienvenido Abante	P2R
40. Establishing a Career Executive System	HB 366	Roilo Golez	PIC
	HB 2532	Raul Gonzalez Jr.	PIC
	HB 2535	Juan Edgardo Angara	PIC
41. Government Classification and Compensation Act	HB 183	Juan Edgardo Angara	PIC
42. The Civil Service Code	HB 2193	Rufus Rodriguez	PIC
	HB 2534	Juan Edgardo Angara	PIC
		<i>no bill filed as of March 2008</i>	
43. Reengineering the Bureaucracy	HB 3260	Mauricio Domogan	PIC
44. Amendments to the AFP Modernization Act	HJR 5	Rozzano Rufino Biazon	PIC
45. Increasing the Combat Pay of AFP Personnel			
46. Reforms in the Judiciary			
a. Enlarge the Organizational Structure of the Court of Tax Appeals	HB 1890	Exequiel Javier	PIC
b. Additional Retirement Benefits to Members of the Judiciary	HB 882	Prospero Nograles	PIC
c. Grant of Special allowances to Judges of Lower Courts	HB 1238	Fred Castro	PIC
	HB 1339	Raul Gonzalez Jr.	PIC
	HB 1865	Simeon Datumanong	PIC
	HB 2001	Arthur Defensor	PIC
	HB 2030	Mauricio Domogan	PIC
	HB 2820	Rufus Rodriguez	PIC
	HB 2868	Jose Yap	PIC
	HB 3071	Ronald Singson	PCC
	HB 279	Darlene Antonino	PIC
	HB 881	Prospero Nograles	PIC
47. Private Lawyers in the Ombudsman	HB 365	Roilo Golez	PIC
	HB 2446	Rufus Rodriguez	PIC
	HB 124	Juan Edgardo Angara	PIC
48. Strengthening Anti-Graft Laws	HB 1677	Jose De Venecia Jr.	PIC
	HB 2054	Del De Guzman	PIC
	HB 2128	Rufus Rodriguez	PIC
	HB 2268	Teodoro Locsin Jr.	PIC
49. Strengthening the Political Party System	HB 3292	Edcel Lagman	A3R
50. Stiffer Penalties for Election-Related Offenses			

Legend:

PIC - Pending in Committee

AIC - Approved in Committee (*Committee Report for Signature of the Members*)

P2R - Pending on Second Reading

A3R - Approved on Third Reading

PCC - Pending in Conference Committee