

CongressWatch Report

Towards Greater Voter Involvement

Report No. 147

25 June 2009

14th Congress Priority Legislation

In a letter dated 12 July 2007, different business groups, including the Makati Business Club and the joint foreign chambers, asked President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to spearhead the urgent passage of 12 legislative reforms. These reform measures are as follows:

LEGISLATIVE REFORM MEASURE	HOUSE	SENATE
1. Amendments to Build-Operate-Transfer Law	HBs 2102, 2829, 3717 and 3763 – PIC	no bill filed as of 3 June
2. Credit Information System Act	RA 9510	RA 9510
3. Amendments to Customs Broker Act	HBs 3274 – A3R	SBs 253, 1409 – PIC
4. Financial Sector Taxes Rationalization	no bill filed as of 3 June	no bill filed as of 3 June
5. Fiscal Incentives Rationalization	HB 5241 – A3R	SBs 1640, 2375 and 3136 - PIC
6. Foreign Investment Restriction Rationalization	no bill filed as of 3 June	no bill filed as of 3 June
7. Freedom of Access to Information	HB 3732 – A3R	SB 3308 – P2R
8. Reforms in Land Administration	HB 6290 – P2R	SBs 68, 193, 1304, 1418, 145 and 1796 – PIC
9. Local Government Code Amendments	bills pending in Committee*	bills pending in Committee*
10. Magna Carta for Small and Medium Enterprises	RA 9501	RA 9501
11. Renewable Energy Act	RA 9513	RA 9513
12. Simplified Net Income Taxation Act	RA 9504	RA 9504

In her State-of-the-Nation Address (SONA) on 23 July 2007, President Arroyo cited several legislation which she asked Congress to work on at the start of the 14th Congress. On 7 August, she convened the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC), which came out with 29 priority reform measures addressing three key areas. The list also includes five of the business groups' recommendations.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM MEASURE	HOUSE	SENATE
<u>On economic progress</u>		
1. Amendments to EPIRA Law to allow more access and competition	HB 3124 – P2R	SB 2121 – A3R
2. Creation of a Civil Aviation Authority	RA 9510	RA 9510
3. 2008 National Budget	RA 9498	RA 9498
4. Simplified Net Income Taxation System	RA 9504	RA 9504

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 noel.reyes@mbc.com.ph or patrick.chua@mbc.com.ph.

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LEGISLATIVE REFORM MEASURE	HOUSE	SENATE
<u>On economic progress</u>		
5. Rationalization of Fiscal Incentives	HB 5241 – A3R	SBs 1640, 2375 and 3136 – PIC
6. Credit Information System	RA 9510	RA 9510
7. Personal Equity Retirement Account	RA 9505	RA 9505
8. National Tourism Policy	RA 9593	RA 9593
9. Amendments to Customs Brokers Law	HB 3274 – A3R	SBs 253 and 1409 – PIC
10. Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA)		Ratified by the Senate
11. National Strategy to Conserve Resources and Help Arrest Climate Change	HB 5982 – Pending in Bicam	SB 2583 – Pending in Bicam
12. Renewable Energy	RA 9513	RA 9513
13. Land Use Policy	HB 64, 1540, 1956, 2190, 3175, 3637 and 3988 – PIC	SB 76, 82, 641, and 843 – PIC
14. Anti-Trust	HBs 1678, 3009, 3856 and 6352 – PIC	SB 3197 – A3R
15. Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund Extension	RA 9496	RA 9496
16. Promotion of IT Entrepreneurial Ventures	HBs 1664, 2213 and 3367 – PIC	SBs 2305 and 2418 – PIC
<u>On educational reform and social equity</u>		
17. Cheaper Medicines Act	RA 9502	RA 9502
18. Senior Citizens	HB 5210 – A3R	SBs 1, 65, 79, 269, 851, 1657, 1893, 2024, 2109, 2154, 2309, 2373, 2864, 3061 and 3153 – PIC
19. Poll Watchdog Fund	HB 2391 – PIC	SBs 67, 227 and 587 – PIC
20. Stiffer Penalties for Election Violence	HB 3292 – A3R	SBs 338, 2157 and 2261 – PIC
21. Farmland as Loan Collateral	HBs 32, 1868, 2707 and 3368 – PIC	SBs 1084, 2185, 2224 and 2916 - PIC
22. University of the Philippines Charter	RA 9500	RA 9500
23. Reversal of devolution of district hospitals	HBs 1432 and 1964 – PIC	no bill filed as of 3 June
24. Review of the:		
a. Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law	HB 4077 – Pending in Bicam	SB 2666 – Pending in Bicam
b. Agricultural Fisheries Modernization Act	HB 123 and HR 170 – PIC	SB 219 – PIC
c. Agri-Agra Law	HB 6095 – P2R	SBs 75, 363, 791 and 833 – PIC
<u>On peace and order and rule of law</u>		
25. Witness Protection	HB 279, 881, 1318, 2510, 4080, 5833, 6252 and 6491 – PIC	SBs 260, 1999, 2081 – PIC and SB 3222 – P2R
26. Special Courts for Speedy Administration of Justice	HB 1748 – PIC	SBs 258 and 259 – PIC and SB 2669 – A3R
27. Stiffer Penalties for Political Killings	HB 566 – PIC and HCR 1	no bill filed as of 3 June
28. Harshest Penalties for Rogues in Uniform	no bill filed as of 3 June	no bill filed as of 3 June
29. Review of the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act	no bill filed as of 3 June	SR 280 – PIC

At the end of the second regular session, Congress was able to pass 11 of the priority measures into law, while the Senate ratified the JPEPA. Two measures are being reconciled by the bicameral conference committee, while the rest are still in different stages of the legislative process.

On 11 June 2009, President Arroyo again convened the LEDAC. The different business groups headed by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry presented 12 priority measures for consideration.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM MEASURE	HOUSE	SENATE
1. Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) bill	HB 4300 – A3R	SB 2546 – P2R
2. Rationalization of Fiscal Incentives bill	HB 5241 – A3R	SBs 1640, 2375 and 3136 – PIC

LEGISLATIVE REFORM MEASURE	HOUSE	SENATE
3. Free Patent to Residential Lands bill	HB 5618 – A3R	SBs 2239, 2318, 2382 and 2401 – PIC
4. Pre-Need Code bill	HB 6407 – A2R	SB 2077 – A3R
5. Real Estate Investment Act	HB 6379 – A3R	SB 2639 – A3R
6. Freedom of Access to Information	HB 3732 – A3R	SB 3308 – P2R
7. Anti-Smuggling	HBs 15, 155, 1747, 2934, 3776, 3927 and 4064 – PIC	SBs 48, 106, 615, 1533, 2014, 3041 and 3088 – PIC
8. Customs Brokers Act Amendment	HB 3274 – A3R	SBs 253 and 1409 – PIC
9. Electricity Rate Reduction Act	HBs 6207, 6350, 6398 and 6399 – PIC	SB 3282 – P3R
10. Uniform Franchise Tax on Distribution Utilities bill	HBs 6208, 6351 and 6391 – PIC	SB 3147 – PIC
11. Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Tax Compliance Amendment	HB 6330 – PIC	SB 3220 – PIC
12. Land Use	HBs 64, 1540, 1956, 2190, 3175, 3637 and 3988 – PIC	SBs 76, 82, 641 and 843 – PIC

Legend:

PIC - Pending in Committee

P2R - Pending Second Reading

A2R - Approved on Second Reading

P3R - Pending Third Reading

A3R - Approved on Third Reading

* Bills have been filed in the House and in the Senate amending different provisions of the Local Government Code.

The third regular session of the 14th Congress, which officially opens on 27 July after President Arroyo delivers her state of the nation address (SONA), will be very busy for legislators. Apart from the lengthy committee hearings in aid of legislation, and the continuous debates on issues such as Con-Ass and House Resolution 1109, and the Reproductive Health and the Right of Reply bills, Congress has to squeeze regular legislative work within the legislative calendar, which normally includes an adjournment of more than three months.

By August, Congress will be busy deliberating on the national budget for next year. On top of this, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) has moved forward the deadline for the filing of candidacy to 30 November. This may mean an earlier start for the campaign period which used to start February.

On the other hand, this may turn out to be a fruitful session in terms of legislative output, especially since those who plan to run in the May 2010 elections will be cramming for more achievement.