

CEAP Rejects Railroaded House Version of Philippine Constitution (RBH 15) and Calls for Inclusion of the People in Charter Change Process

Last night, Congress passed on third and final reading a draft of a new Philippine Constitution through RESOLUTION OF BOTH HOUSES NO. 15 (RBH 15), a mere eight (8) days after having been approved on second reading, and deviously only after having conducted three (3) session days for debates and discussions in the Plenary.

If actions truly speak louder than words, this is by all accounts RAILROADED legislation at its finest.

And it is no ordinary legislation at that. What RBH 15 seeks to change is the very fundamental law of our land itself. Despite the Chief Executive's mandate to constitute a group of technical experts from various sectors in society, who would craft a proposed new federal constitution after consultations, despite other proposals that could add to the discussion on charter change and federalism, ALL of these various models were thoughtlessly and recklessly tossed aside by the members of the 17th Congress – and opted for what the Speaker of the House has dubbed as a product of a “democratic process.”

How could the “lightning” speed with which this proposed Constitution passed ever be called democratic when there was hardly any public consultation that took place?

When the process for approving the proposed measure in the lower House took less than a month from the time it was calendared for second reading, and approved faster than the proposed annual budget?

More importantly, how could RBH 15 truly reflect the sentiments of the people who desire for authentic change when these, among others, still exist in the proposed “federal” Constitution?

- 1. There is only an “optional” set up for federalism which is not only vague but troublesome in implementation as it would allow for other LGUs to still operate under a centralized system if they opt not to operate under a federal set up.**
- 2. Term extension exists for all incumbent officials**
- 3. No term limits for elected officials from LGUs to Senate**
- 4. NO ban on political dynasties**
- 5. Pork barrel system institutionalized**
- 6. Allows foreign ownership of public utilities, EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, media entities**
- 7. Allows foreign ownership of land and natural resources.**
- 8. Potentially injurious to individual rights as it deleted the section where the State guarantees full respect for human rights and provides for unlimited exercise of martial law powers for the Chief Executive.**

The **CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES**, a national organization of 1,500 private catholic schools expresses its serious concern regarding this proposal.

The **CEAP** does not automatically reject calls for change in our Constitution. If any change is to take place at all, it must authentically reflect the sentiments of the people, rectify historical injustices and correct the economic imbalance by equitably distributing government access and resources especially to those regions in the country that need it the most. More importantly, the voice of the people must be heard in the proceedings – after all the Constitution is the fundamental contract of the government to its people. Which is why the CEAP calls for more discussions and provide the opportunity for discernment if a federal set up is truly the best way to go in decentralizing government operations.

The **CEAP** rejects RBH 15 as its provisions do not embody these much needed changes.

It rejects RBH 15 as it will seek to further advance the interests of a few over the needs of the many.

It vigorously objects to the manner with which RBH 15 has been hastily approved as it has reduced the fundamental law of our land to a mere piece of legislation that can surreptitiously be passed without the people's scrutiny.

It vigorously objects RBH 15 as it does not fully embody the authentic change we desire in government and in our public officers.

The **CEAP** fervently prays that our esteemed Senators, whose leadership conscientiously voiced out that no counterpart version of this bill will ever be passed in the Senate, heed the call of the people.

No to RBH 15 which effectively sells rights to foreigners with the removal of the protectionist provisions in our Constitution.

No to RBH 15 which can pave the way for foreigners dictating curriculum and policy with the removal of Filipino ownership for educational institutions.

No to RBH 15 which disregards the will of the people to decentralize, by making federalism a very whimsical option subject to the arbitrary politicking of some legislators.

No to RBH 15 which does not seek to improve transparency, accountability and good government practices as it institutionalizes the pork barrel system and allows political dynasties to remain in perpetuity.

No to RBH 15 which repealed provisions guaranteeing human rights and granting to the Chief Executive unfettered exercise of Martial Law powers.

Yes to authentic change. But absolutely, definitely no to a charter change that only solidifies the status quo.

Yes to a people inclusive charter change! No to RBH 15!