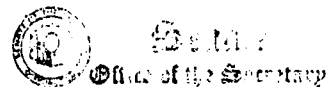


SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)



'18 MAY 22 P1:05

SENATE

P. S. RES. NO. 740

RECEIVED

Introduced by **SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA**

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT
AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE ALLEGED
IRREGULAR TRANSACTIONS AND WASTEFUL SPENDING OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM DURING THE TERM OF FORMER
SECRETARY WANDA TULFO-TEO

WHEREAS, Article II, Section 27 of the Constitution states that, “[t]he State shall maintain honesty and integrity in the public service and take positive and effective measures against graft and corruption”;

WHEREAS, on 8 May 2018, Pres. Rodrigo Duterte appointed former Department of Agriculture Undersecretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat as Secretary of the Department of Tourism (DOT)¹;

WHEREAS, Sec. Romulo-Puyat replaced former Tourism Secretary Wanda Teo, who resigned her post following a scandal involving the placement of P60 million worth of tourism ads in the television program produced and hosted by her brothers Ben and Erwin Tulfo on state-run network PTV-4²;

WHEREAS, on 29 April 2018, the Philippine Daily Inquirer reported that according to the Commission on Audit, the DOT “under Secretary Wanda Tulfo-Teo [on 2017] paid P60 million worth of advertisements on a government television program produced by her brother, Ben Tulfo, and cohosted by another brother, Erwin Tulfo, without documents showing the payments were valid and legal”³;

WHEREAS, on 20 May 2018, the Philippine Daily Inquirer reported that Sec. Romulo-Puyat admitted to being overwhelmed by the number of, what she describes

¹ Romulo-Puyat is new Tourism chief. ABS-CBN News (8 May 2018). Retrieved from: <http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/05/08/18/romulo-puyat-is-new-tourism-chief>

² *Ibid.*

³ Yap, DJ and Jovic Yee. COA: Teo's DOT paid P60M for ads on brother Tulfo's PTV 4 show. Inquirer.net (29 April 2018). Retrieved from: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/986137/coa-teos-dot-paid-p60m-for-ads-on-brother-tulfos-ptv-4-show>

as, irregularities in the projects promoted by the previous leadership at the DOT, and to being appalled at the level of corruption and misuse of DOT funds⁴;

WHEREAS, in the same report, Sec. Romulo-Puyat was quoted as saying, “It’s so shocking because I’m discovering something new every day. And it’s saddening because large sums of money are involved here. Not just ₱1 million or ₱2 million, but hundreds of millions”⁵;

WHEREAS, on 20 May 2018, the Philippine Star reported that Sec. Romulo-Puyat said she discovered that some fashion shows abroad and events that were hosted by close friends of the former Tourism Secretary were funded by taxpayers’ money via DOT funds⁶;

WHEREAS, in the same interview, Sec. Romulo-Puyat was quoted as saying, “I have to check the travels also. *Pera ng taong bayan ’yan. Hindi ka pumasok sa gobyerno para mag-around the world. Hindi mo kailangan ng isang battalion, mayroon ka isang battalion ng attachés*”;

WHEREAS, on 19 May 2018, ABS-CBN reported that Sec. Romulo-Puyat “was not able to sleep the first time she saw the documents on how the [DOT] funds were disbursed without [public] bidding”⁷;

WHEREAS, the same report states that Sec. Romulo-Puyat “has already put on hold all projects initiated by the Tourism Promotion Board (TPB) under Cesar Montano, as well as the programs under former Sec. Wanda Teo”⁸;

WHEREAS, the recent discoveries made by the newly appointed Tourism Secretary reveal a culture of extravagance and lack of accountability during the tenure of former Sec. Teo;

WHEREAS, the accountability of former Sec. Teo, as well as her undersecretaries and assistant secretaries, for the apparent gross misuse of government funds must not be terminated by the simple fact of their resignation;

WHEREAS, pursuant to existing jurisprudence, their immediate resignation from the service should be of no consequence to the filing of possible charges against them;

WHEREAS, it behooves the Senate to pursue the COA findings, as well as the findings of Sec. Romulo-Puyat, in order to shed light not just on the liability of the public officials who wasted away our people’s money on deals that are clearly

⁴ Cabalza, Dexter. *It’s ‘shocking’ – not fun – in DOT; corruption makes new chief weep*. Inquirer.net (20 May 2018). Retrieved from: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/992428/its-shocking-not-fun-in-dot-corruption-makes-new-chief-weep>

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Ramirez, Robertzon. *Overspending shocks DOT chief*. The Philippine Star (20 May 2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/05/20/1816960/overspending-shocks-dot-chief>

⁷ *Puyat to ask COA for more auditors in DOT*. ABS-CBN News. (17 May 2018) Streamed from: <http://news.abs-cbn.com/video/news/05/19/18/puyat-to-ask-coa-for-more-auditors-in-dot>

⁸ *Ibid*

disadvantageous to the government, but also on remedial legislative measures that be undertaken to prevent similar irregular and wasteful department-wide spending;

WHEREAS, there also appears to be a need to strengthen government safeguards against conflicts of interest, to ensure the protection of the Filipino public against the personal and vested interests of unscrupulous persons, especially during an administration rife with examples of the same, including rampant nepotism in the bureaucracy and influence peddling by relatives, friends, associates, etc., of public officials;

WHEREAS, there also appears to be a need to determine whether the deterrent power of existing anti-graft and corruption laws can be further strengthened, considering that the public officials and their relatives involved in these anomalies appear to have pursued irregular projects, as well as other forms of wasteful spending of public funds, seemingly without fear, and without suffering any meaningful consequence for their actions;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, to direct the appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the alleged irregular transactions and wasteful spending of the Department of Tourism during the term of former Secretary Wanda Tulfo-Teo.

Adopted,


LEILA M. DE LIMA