

DATELINE PHILIPPINES

JDV to bring impeach junking to SC

by JOSE KATIGBAK
Philstar.com



Pangasinan Rep. Jose de Venecia listens to the impeachment complaint proceedings against President Arroyo at the House of Representatives in this file photo. Philstar Photo by Boy Santos

PANGASINAN Rep. Jose de Venecia Jr. said he will challenge before the Supreme Court (SC) a decision by the House of Representatives to throw out the latest impeachment complaint against President Arroyo.

Voting 183 to 21, allies of Mrs. Arroyo in the House voted late Tuesday night to uphold the report of the justice committee that declared as "insufficient in substance" the latest impeachment complaint against the President.

The former speaker said he will meet with House Minority Leader Ronaldo Zamora and Reps. Rufus Rodriguez, Teddy Casiño and Satur Ocampo and their lawyers on his return to Manila next week to map out the case they will take to the Supreme Court.

"At least we have a 50 percent fighting chance in court to get our case heard whereas we had a zero chance in the House's Committee on Justice," De Venecia told *The STAR* last Dec. 2.

De Venecia, who was conspicuously absent during the crucial voting, is in the US capital to speak before The Heritage Foundation and formally launch *Global Filipino*, his authorized biography written by Washington-based journalist and author Brett M. Decker.

Then he is off on book-signing tours of New York, Los Angeles, Las Vegas and San Francisco.

The hardcover book published by Regnery Publishing Inc. retails for \$27.95 a copy and according to De Venecia's aides has a first run of 10,000 copies.

De Venecia did not seem unduly worried he might be expelled from the ruling Lakas-CMD party and disclosed he was laying the groundwork for the formation of a powerful rainbow coalition which he expected would sweep the 2010 elections.

As Decker in a preface to *Global Filipino* wrote, "The man does not think in small or modest terms."

"To revive the body politic, he works under the assumption that bold decisions must be made, bold efforts launched, bold risks taken."

De Venecia said he would unveil details of his proposed coalition in the first quarter of 2009.

Referring to a recent finding by the Ateneo School of Government professors, the Makati Business Club and the Integrated Bar of the Philippines that corruption in the Arroyo administration is the worst since the time of former President Ferdinand Marcos, he said "it is unprecedented because it is large-scale, deep-seated and widespread."

Barring a miracle President Arroyo "is beyond salvation," he added.

It was expected

The result of the voting, which dragged up to past 1 a.m., was more or less expected with the majority ganging up on the minority who never gave up the fight.

The administration coalition, comprising almost 200 in the 238-member chamber, voted to uphold Committee Report 1551 and House Resolution 892 that threw out the complaint of businessman Jose de Venecia III, son and namesake of the ousted speaker.

Three lawmakers—Reps. Didagen Dilangalen of Shariff Kabunsgan with Cotabato City, Carlos Padilla of Nueva Vizcaya and Mariano Piamonte of A-Teacher—abstained.

Panel chairman Matias Defensor stated during his sponsorship speech that pro-impeachment complainants utterly failed to present clear and direct proof to hold the Chief Executive accountable and should be removed from office.

Defensor noted that pro-impeachment forces only made "innuendoes," but failed to mention overt and direct evidence, and presented only newspaper clippings that are "hearsay evidence" which according to the Supreme Court has "no probative value." ■

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