

# Taxpayers beat BIR deadline

by PERSEUS ECHEMINADA  
Philstar.com



Bureau of Internal Revenue employees wear red shirts for easy identification by taxpayers who may be approached by fixers during the last day for filing income tax returns at the BIR regional office in Baguio City yesterday. Philstar.com Photo by Andy Zapata Jr.

**T**AXPAYERS trooped to various offices of the Bureau of Internal Revenue last April 15 to beat the midnight deadline, as the BIR stressed that it would no longer extend the deadline for the filing of income tax returns (ITRs).

The BIR had extended the deadline to 12 midnight last April 15 but refused another extension.

To accommodate the throngs of taxpayers, the BIR set up tents and satellite offices in various parts of Metro Manila and other key areas in the country.

The BIR has been flooded with incessant calls from taxpayers inquiring whether or not there will be an extension of the April 15 tax filing deadline.

Some callers even pointed to an article in the April 9, 2009 issue of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* which said that the deadline is on April 20 rather than April 15.

"An extension of the April 15, 2009 deadline for the filing of ITRs is not forthcoming," the BIR said in a press statement.

"Failure to file on the said deadline will give us no choice but to impose increments (in the form of surcharge, interest and compromise penalty) on the basic tax due," said Aida Simborio, OIC-Assistant Commissioner of the BIR Taxpayer Assistance Service.

The BIR has sent out advisories on the filing and payment of 2008 income tax returns and asked taxpayers to watch out for updates that will be issued every now and then by the BIR.

A tax deadline countdown in newspapers as well as friendly tax reminders had also been set in place to eliminate any conflict or confusion. ■

# Teachers want P9,000 pay hike

by RAINIER ALLAN RONDA  
Philstar.com

**P**UBLIC school teachers' groups are opposing a move by the House of Representatives to cut a proposed P9,000 increase in their pay to P6,000, saying it will put them at a pay level below policemen and soldiers in the government's salary scheme.

The Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), Teachers' Dignity Coalition (TDC), Philippine Public School Teachers Association (PPSTA), and other allied groups said the P6,000 pay hike proposed under House Joint Resolution No. 24 is not enough to provide teachers the pay they deserve, considering their level

of work and credentials.

The resolution aims to lay out a new salary standard scheme for government employees.

Antonio Tinio, ACT chairman, noted that under Resolution No. 24 sponsored by Speaker Prospero Nograles Jr., Salary Grade 11 to be given to entry-level teachers is still lower than the salary grade of cadets of the Philippine National Police Academy (PNPA) and the Philippine Military Academy (PMA).

"Public school teachers are graduates of a four-year education course and are licensed teachers after passing the Licensure Examination for Teachers of the PRC (Professional Regulation Commission). But their sal-

ary grade is lower than cadets or so-called plebes of the PNPA and the PMA. Isn't that insulting to public school teachers?" Tinio said.

The groups held a forum yesterday to discuss teachers' welfare at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines in Manila.

The forum, organized with the help of the Department of Education, had Marikina Rep. Del de Guzman and Misamis Rep. Teofisto Guingona III as guests.

During the discussion, teachers lamented that the House had ignored a bill passed in the Senate that granted a P9,000 pay hike over a period of three years.

Joint Resolution No. 24 pro-

poses that P6,000 pay increase be given to teachers over a period of four years.

De Guzman and Guingona sponsored separate proposed legislation to raise teachers' pay by P9,000 to P10,000 for a period of four to five years.

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus has expressed support for the teachers' call for a P9,000 pay hike as proposed by the Senate.

"I have been strongly espousing that teachers' salary should be upgraded from the equivalent of an Army private to that of a lieutenant. Otherwise, teaching will not be considered a preferred profession of the best and the brightest," Lapus said. ■

# No law vs presidential bets appearing on TV

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gional or sectoral party, organization or coalition thereof that has filed a manifestation to participate under the party-list system," added Sarmiento, now quoting section 79 of the Omnibus Election Code.

"With RA 9369, even if a person has filed a CoC [certificate of candidacy] for the 2010 elections on or before November 30 (early deadline of CoC filing), he or she will only be recognized as candidates only at the start of campaign period," said Sarmiento.

The early deadline for CoC filing on Nov. 30 gives Comelec enough time to collate the list of candidates to be printed in special paper ballots for the 2010 elections.

Campaign period starts 90 days before the elections for national positions and 45 days

for local positions, excluding the day before and day of polls.

Asked if election campaigns done during the "gap months" between the end of CoC filing and start of campaign period sometime in February constitute an election offense, Sarmiento admitted there is no premature campaigning from the legal perspective and based on RA 9369 provisions.

In previous elections, the filing of CoC, the election campaign period and the election day, were done in succession.

Early campaigning is defined as political partisan activities that promote or oppose a candidate and is done outside the campaign period identified.

Citing the Supreme Court ruling on the

2006 "Lanot vs. Eusebio case," Sarmiento said presidential bets who appear on television are not yet candidates under the law. Their supposed appearances in bulletin boards and on TV are considered "freedom of expression" because they have not yet officially filed their candidacy.

Given the lack of legislation to prohibit "premature or early campaigning," Melo noted "it is very probable" that more political advertisements and billboards would appear as the 2010 election draws near.

The Comelec is currently conducting the bidding for the automated election system, which Melo dubs would prevent cheating and dagdag bawas (vote padding and vote shaving) in the 2010 polls. ■

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