

# DATELINE PHILIPPINES

## US envoy confident 2010 polls will happen

by CYNTHIA BALANA  
Inquirer.net

MANILA -- United States Ambassador Kristie Kenney has expressed confidence that elections will be held in the Philippines in May 2010 and that any move to amend the Constitution should be for the Filipinos alone to decide.

Kenney was asked by reporters on Tuesday night what she thought of the controversy hounding the call in the House of Representatives for a constituent assembly to amend the Philippine Constitution and a possible no-election scenario.

Kenney was in a chance interview with reporters during a farewell reception she hosted for Karen Schinerer, assistant information officer of the US embassy in Manila, at her residence in Forbes Park, Makati City.

"You know, all of those are really concerns for Filipinos to decide. Whether you reform your country, it's a Philippine decision. It's not for me I think to decide with you. We hope that whatever you do, it will make sure democracy is stronger," Kenney said.

But the ambassador refused to speculate on whether elections might not be held at all because of moves by the House of Representatives to convert itself into a constituent assembly in order to extend their terms in office.

"I don't think I will speculate on that. But I think we have every confidence that you will have elections," she said.

Kenney stressed that most people here were aware of the term limits of public officials, as well as the rules and laws governing the exercise of their democratic rights.

Asked if President Macapagal-Arroyo might not step down at the end of her term, Kenney replied: "I'm not gonna comment on what someone else might or might be. I have a lot of confidence in the Filipinos to strengthen their democracy and elect their leaders."

Kenney likewise said the nu-

merous presidential contenders towards the 2010 might be a good thing for Filipinos.

"You know, I don't mind that at all. Having a lot of people to

choose from a lot of candidates is a great thing. Better have a lot of choices so you can really think about what you want," she added. ■

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Attorney Gali Koren is the firm's founder and managing attorney. She received her Juris Doctor Degree, Magna Cum Laude, from Western State University. She obtained her LL.M. in International Law from the University of San Diego Law School, majoring in Immigration Law. Ms. Koren is a member of the State Bar of California and is authorized to represent clients on immigration matters in all 50 states.

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