

House won't insist on Senate-less constituent assembly

by JESS DIAZ
Philstar.com

MANILA – The House of Representatives will not insist on its planned constituent assembly (con-ass) if senators refuse to participate in it, according to La Union Rep. Victor Ortega.

“We will invite them to participate, but if they refuse, we

will not insist (on con-ass),” he told an Ateneo forum on efforts by President Arroyo’s congressmen-allies to amend the Constitution even without Senate involvement.

Ortega echoed Speaker Prospero Nograles’ waning confidence in attaining 220 votes for any Charter change (Cha-cha) proposal in a Senate-less con-

ass. “I don’t think we can attain that number for any controversial proposal like term extension,” he said.

That number represents three-fourths of the combined membership of the House and the Senate.

Fr. Joaquin Bernas, another forum guest, said he was not worried about a Senate-less con-

“First, I don’t think they can get 220 votes. Second, Nograles will not convene a con-ass without the Senate. That would be ridiculous,” he said.

Bernas was a member of the 1986 Constitutional Commission that wrote the present Constitution.

Ortega chairs the House committee on constitutional amendments and was the principal sponsor of both Resolutions 1109 and 737.

Resolution 1109 seeks to convene “members of Congress” and not its two chambers into a con-ass to propose Charter amendments. The resolution’s language suggests Senate participation in the envisioned assembly is not required.

Resolution 737, on the other hand, proposes specific Charter amendments. It seeks to amend

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UP prof ready to run...

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congresswoman, “I will sit down and talk to my brothers and sisters and my wife and children and tell them ‘Eto na ang kinatakatutan natin (This is what we have been fearing),” he said.

David said his father, Fiscal Pedro David, who was a lawyer of the Liberal Party, was close to Arroyo’s late father, President Diosdado Macapagal. As early as when Diosdado Macapagal was a congressman, he was a frequent visitor at the David residence in Betis.

David said he did not get close to Arroyo because she did not live in Pampanga.

He himself has been going home to Betis every Sunday on his motorcycle for weekend family reunions, he said.

“We’ll not take it lying down” In a media interview at Paman-tasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila, Panlilio let loose with fighting words in talking about Arroyo’s purported planned run.

“People are sensing a political agenda in what she is doing. There is a growing notion that she’s using the second district of Pampanga for her political plans to protect herself from legal suits later on,” he said, adding:

“We will give her a good fight. We have some options. We will definitely pit someone in case she runs. We will not take this lying down.”

Asked if David was their candidate, Panlilio neither denied

nor confirm it.

15 visits so far
He said he had only read of David’s supposed plan to challenge Arroyo in the papers, and that he had yet to talk to the UP professor who backed his candidacy for governor in 2007.

But David can definitely run in the second district as he is a registered voter there, Panlilio said.

He said Pampanga residents had “mixed” reactions to Arroyo and her frequent visits to her home province.

If the elections were held now, Arroyo would definitely win the congressional seat in the second district because she has brought improvements there, Panlilio said.

But there are other constituents who see through her political agenda, he said.

Of the 17 times Arroyo visited Pampanga this year, 15 were in the second district.

“I believe more and more people are having a growing consciousness of why she’s doing this. If she truly loves Pampanga, why doesn’t she run for governor?” Panlilio said.

“We don’t want Pampanga to be used,” he said.

Frat bro
In Malacañang, Gary Olivar, one of the President’s spokespersons, pledged support for her possible opponent in 2010. Olivar, Arroyo’s preferred

mouthpiece on economic affairs, said he and David belonged to the same fraternity.

“So I would encourage him to run regardless of whether the President will run or not,” Olivar said. “And I will certainly campaign for him.”

Olivar took a different tack after being reminded by a reporter that he was a spokesperson for Arroyo, who might end up contesting the congressional seat in Pampanga with David.

“He will have my moral support then,” Olivar said.

David will have “a bright future if he decides to go into politics,” according to Olivar.

But he said the sociology professor “should not condition [his decision] on the President’s plan.”

Ultimate intention
Lorelei Fajardo, another of Arroyo’s spokespersons, questioned David’s motivation in considering running for a seat in the House.

“We should have the right intention and right motive in running, and I think there’s no better intention for us than to serve our country, serve our people and make a good difference,” Fajardo said.


“This should be the ultimate intention, and nothing else,” she said.

Olivar added: “I would like to believe that professor David shares the same intention.” ■

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