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# Solon on Charterchange: Watch out for SONA

by LIRA DALANGIN-FERNANDEZ  
Inquirer.net

MANILA -- While acknowledging that obtaining the required three-fourths vote of all members of Congress to amend the Constitution would be impossible, the lead proponent of the constituent assembly resolution in the House of Representatives told the public to watch out for developments after the State of the Nation Address (SONA) of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in July 27.

"It's impossible dream for the 220 votes, but let us wait for July 27 when we have the SONA and people will be eagerly waiting with their mouth open. . . . *Abangan ang susunod na kabanata* [Watch out for the next chapter]," La Union Representative Victor Ortega said in forum on Charter change at the Ateneo Professional Schools Campus in Rockwell, Makati City.

Ortega heads the committee on constitutional amendments and was one of the sponsors on the floor of House Resolution 1109 which calls for the convening of Congress into a constituent assembly to amend the Constitution.

Convening of the assembly needs only majority of the members of Congress, but introducing specific amendments to the Constitution requires

three-fourths of the total number of congressmen and senators, which, according to Ortega is 220.

In the same forum, Father Joaquin Bernas, dean emeritus of the Ateneo Law School, said he did not believe that proponents of constituent assembly could get the 220 votes.

"I don't believe you can get 220 votes to propose amendments to the Constitution that's why I'm not really worries about these things," he said.

Bernas said that for purposes of discussion, congressmen and senators could come together, but that voting by the House and the Senate should still be done separately.

Echoing this view, Ortega said it would be an "impossible dream" to gather 220 votes because the House could not ignore the Senate in moves to amend the Charter.

"HR 1109 is nothing more than a resolution saying we agreed to meet to exercise our Constitutional powers... I agree with Fr. Bernas that the Senate must be involved in this because it is the bicameral body (that should decide), there is no way we can do it alone," Ortega said.

On the possibility of convening a constituent assembly during the SONA, Ortega said his col-

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