

# Admin solons defend Romulo

by LEILA SALAVERRIA  
Inquirer.net

LEAVE him alone, and respect his decision.

Messages of support came in for Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo Wednesday from members of the administration party amid calls for him to step down following a declaration that he was supporting Sen. Benigno Aquino III for president.

Palawan Rep. Antonio Alvarez, spokesperson of Lakas Kampi, said even members of the Cabinet have a right to choose whom to vote for, and he believed Romulo would not abuse his position to campaign for Aquino.

"Leave him alone. This guy has done a lot. I don't think he's going to campaign [for Aquino]. That's his preference. Mind you, a lot of Cabinet secretaries have a different preference. They just keep it to themselves," Alvarez said in a phone interview.

"They have no right to tell him to resign. So what if he wants to vote for [Aquino]? He doesn't say that he's going to campaign, that he's going to compromise the administration," he added.

Romulo, despite indicating that his heart was with Aquino, said he would continue to serve President Macapagal-Arroyo until the end of her term. He issued the statement after Palace officials indicated it was time for him to say goodbye to

the administration.

Speaker Prospero Nograles said he, too, had no problems with Romulo's decision, and cited the latter's integrity.

"Secretary Romulo is a very very decent and upright man. He is dignified and with solid principles and track record. Let us respect the man. Whatever it is he decides is fine by me. I truly respect him," Nograles said in a text message.

Nograles was responding to a question on what he thought of Romulo's decision to stay on in the Cabinet and if this could adversely affect the administration.

Another Lakas Kampi official, House Majority Leader Arthur Defensor, said he also saw no reason for Romulo to step down, and vouched for his character, describing the latter as a man of honesty and integrity.

"Of course, the President is expecting that if you cannot go with the candidate of the administration, she wants you to keep your mouth shut. But knowing Secretary Romulo, you know, he's a very honorable politician," Defensor said.

Alvarez said he did not believe that all members of the Cabinet could be guaranteed to support the administration's preferred candidate, Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro.

"Other secretaries, politicians working in government, they might be the first ones to jump ship.... Would they themselves vote for Gibo?" he said.

It would be the job of the administration's standard-bearer to convince party mates to support him, before he could go out and ask the people to vote for him, according to the Palawan representative.

"That candidate must convince party mates to vote for him. Otherwise, he has no business going to people and asking them vote for him," he said.

Meanwhile, a member of Aquino's Liberal Party said the administration would accomplish nothing by threatening those who decide to support other candidates and ignore the administration's standard-bearer.

"Their warnings to those who really want to support Noynoy will amount to nothing because in the end, they will support whom they want," said Muntinlupa Rep. Rozzano Rufino Biazon.

He also said Romulo's support for Aquino was a clear blow to the administration.

"Even those in their ranks believe in the reform which the Noy-Mar [Roxas] tandem stands for," he said. ■

## PALACE: TIME TO PART WAYS

# Aquino says Romulo texted him: You have my vote

by CHRISTIAN V. ESGUERRA, CHRISTINE AVENDAÑO & LEILA SALAVERRIA  
Inquirer.net

TIME to say goodbye.

Malacañang said Cabinet officials should leave the government if they are going to support and actively campaign for any presidential aspirant other than the administration's candidate, Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro.

Lorelei Fajardo, deputy presidential spokesperson, made the statement as Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, the Liberal Party (LP) standard-bearer, told reporters that Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo was supporting his candidacy for president.

"Na-text tayo ni Secretary Romulo nung isang araw ... You have my vote ang sinabi lang niya (Secretary Romulo texted us a few days ago. He simply said, 'You have my vote')," Aquino told reporters.

Pressed for details, Aquino said he could not remember if it was Romulo himself who sent him the text or it was sent by one of Romulo's children in his name.

Aquino said there were "other" administration officials who had expressed support for him but he declined to identify them.

"Can I keep that to myself until that happens ... That's secret for the meantime," he said.

**No dog-catcher**

A former member of the Arroyo Cabinet, ex-Director General Ralph Recto of the National Economic and Development Authority, came to Romulo's defense.

"Bert Romulo is the brightest light in the Cabinet and it will be a monumental folly to snuff him out on the petty basis of his tentative choice for 2010," Recto said in a statement.

"Dog-catchers you can fire anytime, but you don't serve your foreign affairs secretary his walking papers just because his politics doesn't jibe with yours," Recto said.

"You don't make a senior statesman a casualty of politics or the first victim of a purge," he added.

Another key administration official—Commissioner

Jaime Jacob of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC)—said the other day he was resigning to work for Aquino's campaign.

Asked if other administration officials supporting other candidates should follow the lead of Jacob, Fajardo said: "If their intention is to actively support and campaign for other candidates, yes."

Recto said Teodoro was a "strong, competent candidate who has his own charm and powerful draw that you don't have to crack the whip so others will follow."

**Face consequences**

Romulo's son, Pasig Rep. Roman Romulo, who belongs to the administration's Lakas-Kampi-CMD party, said his father would have to "face the consequences" of his actions.

Roman said that he had spoken to his father and that his father told him his ties with the Aquinos went way back and he could not just sever them.

Roman said in a phone interview that he had told his father that people were asking what he would do now but that he did not ask him if he would be leaving his post. He said he would rather leave that up to his father.

"He would have to face the consequences of his position, his actions," the Pasig lawmaker said.

Asked if that would mean resigning, he answered in the affirmative.

Roman clarified later that what he meant was that the resignation should come if there was already a loss of confidence in his father.

According to Roman, the issue of trust might come into play with respect to his father's position. He said the President might be uncomfortable having a Cabinet member who is not behind the administration's standard-bearer. Cabinet members serve at the pleasure of the President, he pointed out.

"If their relationship becomes uncomfortable, he would have to take action," Roman said. ■

# Romulo won't quit; Gibo says no need for loyalty check

by JAIME LAUDE  
Philstar.com

MANILA—Defense secretary and administration presidential bet Gilbert Teodoro said there is no need for a loyalty check among Cabinet members despite Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo's declaration of support for opposition Liberal Party standard bearer Sen. Benigno Aquino III.

"In my opinion, it's best to lay down our cards. But in terms of loyalty check, what good would it bring? Parang nagsoona ka na nyan at hindi naman maganda yan (It's like persecution and it's not good anymore)," Teodoro said.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said there are no "traitors" in the Cabinet even as he also ruled out a loyalty check.

"I don't think there'll be such,

as you said, traitors. Our Cabinet members are decent," Ermita told a news briefing. "I'm sure they won't be able to sleep if they have that sinister design. I don't believe anybody will put himself in such a position and the decent thing to do is for him to approach the President and say why he thinks he should already resign from his post," he said.

"I hope they understand the implications of their actions," Ermita added.

Teodoro said the country's next leader should be a "healing president."

Romulo, who had also served under the Aquino administration as budget chief, said his "long years of association with Tita Cory and the Aquino family was the basis" of his support for the presidential bid of the only son

of the late president and the martyred Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr. Sen. Manuel Roxas II is Aquino's running mate.

Lakas Kampi leaders earlier chose Interior and Local Government Secretary Ronaldo Puno as the party's vice presidential candidate, although they claimed the decision was not yet final.

There are 10 Arroyo Cabinet members who had served under the Aquino administration.

Romulo rejected calls for him to resign and said he is "standing by the President until the end of her term and beyond."

"I have to make it very clear that such comments do not in any way diminish my service and support for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Neither does it mean that I am moving to the opposition," Romulo said in a statement.

At Tuesday's farewell dinner for the Konrad Andenauer country director at the Mandarin Oriental hotel in Makati City, Teodoro said he felt no rancor about Romulo's decision.

"I don't bear ill-feelings towards anybody but the Abu Sayyaf and the rogue Moro Islamic Liberation Front," Teodoro said.

"If that is his stand, I respect that. I don't want to go personal about it," he said.

"I have been in politics and I don't get mad. Instead I learned how to deal with the situation," he said.

"Different perspectives, that's politics, and in politics many things can happen and there are many things that should be accepted with an open mind. You have to deal with it rather than feel bad about it." ■

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### Southern Nevada Health District flu shot clinic locations:

- 625 Shadow Ln., Las Vegas
- 560 Nellis Blvd., Suite E-12, Las Vegas
- 520 E. Lake Mead Pkwy., Henderson
- 1820 Lake Mead Blvd., Suite F, North Las Vegas
- 830 Hafen Ln., Mesquite (Tuesday and Thursday, 8 a.m.-12 p.m., 1-4:30 p.m.)

Hours: Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted.

Methods of Payment: Medicaid and Medicare, or \$30 cash.

The seasonal flu shot will not prevent infection with the H1N1 (swine flu) virus. Vaccine for the H1N1 virus is expected to be available in October. Those at highest risk for complications from H1N1 will be vaccinated first, including pregnant women, household contacts/caregivers of infants younger than 6 months, young people 6 months to 24 years old, adults 25 to 64 years old with certain health conditions, and health care and EMS personnel.



For up-to-date information on the H1N1 virus and vaccine availability, go to [www.SouthernNevadaHealthDistrict.org](http://www.SouthernNevadaHealthDistrict.org) or call (702) 759-1000.

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