

# DATELINE PHILIPPINES

## 42% of Pinoys oppose Charter change

by HELEN FLORES  
Philstar.com

A RECENT survey conducted by Pulse Asia showed that four in 10 Filipino adults or 42 percent oppose Charter change (Cha-cha).

The non-commissioned survey, conducted from Feb. 2 to 15, showed that 33 percent of respondents are in favor of amending the 1987 Constitution while 25 percent are undecided on the matter.

The survey likewise revealed that most Filipinos or 57 percent know little about the 1987 Philippine Constitution.

Pulse Asia said that between November 2006 and February 2009, the overall percentage of those against Cha-cha remains constant but there is a slight drop in the level of support for constitutional amendments (-6 percentage points), which is matched by an increase in the level of public indecision on the issue (+6 percentage points).

Pulse Asia said "big pluralities to small majorities" (42 percent to 56 percent) across geographic areas and socio-economic groupings are against constitutional amendments now.

The exceptions are in Mindanao where indecision is the

predominant public sentiment (41 percent) and Class E where almost the same percentages are either against or supportive of charter change (40 percent versus 37 percent).

And while there is an increase in the percentage of Visayans against constitutional amendments (+21 percentage points), a drop is recorded in Mindanao (-16 percentage points), Pulse Asia said.

The survey also showed that almost two out of every three Filipinos or 64 percent are of the view that it is not appropriate to have Charter change at the present time—a view shared by majorities (60 percent to 70 percent) in all geographic areas and socio-economic groupings.

Across geographic areas and socio-economic classes, 27 percent to 42 percent are open to amending the 1987 Constitution in the future while 24 percent to 40 percent are against Charter change at any time.

The survey found that economic improvement is the top reason cited by those favoring Charter change while those opposed to amending the 1987 Constitution think it is good enough and would like to avoid any chaos that may arise from changing the

country's supreme law.

Another often-mentioned reason is that Charter change would help eradicate corruption in the country (20.7 percent citing at the national level and 15.1 percent to 25.2 percent citing across geographic areas and socio-economic groupings).

The reason cited by around one in ten (11.9 percent) of those favoring Charter change is that constitutional amendments would help improve the laws in the country. Bigger percentages of those in Mindanao (19.3 percent) and Class ABC (19.7 percent) cite this as their reason for supporting Charter change now. The other reasons are mentioned by less than 10 percent while 5.8 percent are unable to say what their reasons are for favoring constitutional amendments.

Meanwhile, the top reasons cited by those against Charter change are: (1) to avoid chaos in the country (16.7 percent); (2) there is no need to amend the 1987 Constitution because it is good enough (16.4 percent); (3) to prevent term extensions for government officials (11.5 percent); (4) to prevent extending the term of office of President Arroyo (10.8 percent); and (5) the

belief that constitutional amendments will not change the economic conditions in the country anyway (10.7 percent).

"These reasons are mentioned by practically the same percentages across geographic areas and socio-economic groupings," Pulse Asia said.

The survey also found out that four in five Filipinos (81 percent) are not in favor of extending the term of office of national and local elective officials, and 77 percent do not support moves to allow elective officials to run in the elections as many times as possible.

Both proposals are opposed by considerable to overwhelming majorities across geographic areas and socio-economic classes (68 percent to 92 percent), with non-support being most pronounced in Metro Manila. In contrast, these proposed changes to the 1987 Constitution have the support of 19 percent and 23 percent of Filipinos, respectively.

As for the proposal to allow foreigners to own residential and industrial lands, majorities ranging from 81 percent in the rest of Luzon and Class E to 90 percent in Metro Manila are against this proposed amendment.

Meanwhile, the latest survey showed that 59 percent of Filipinos do not agree with proposals to shift to parliamentary and federal systems of government.

Majorities at the national level (59 percent) and across geographic areas and socio-economic classes (52 percent to 63 percent) are not in favor of shifting to a parliamentary system of government. An exception is in Mindanao where this sentiment is expressed by less than a majority (47 percent), although this is still the predominant public sentiment on the matter in this geographic area.

On the other hand, almost the same percentages are either in favor of such a shift or express ambivalence on the proposal (21 percent versus 20 percent).

The survey revealed that support for a parliamentary system is most pronounced in the Visayas (29 percent) but least notable in Class ABC (14 percent) while levels of indecision range from eight percent among Visayans to 31 percent among Mindanaoans.

March 2006 and February 2007, Pulse Asia observed a 12-percent point drop in the level of support for a parliamentary system while the

level of indecision goes up by seven percentage points.

Across geographic areas, preference for a parliamentary system becomes less pronounced in Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon (-15 to -21 percentage points).

Across all socio-economic classes, there is less preference for a parliamentary system now than in March 2006 (-11 to -17 percentage points).

Lack of support for a shift to a federal system of government is the predominant public sentiment at the national level and in all geographic areas and socio-economic groupings (47 percent to 66 percent).

Amid the revival of talks concerning Charter change, nearly six in 10 Filipinos (57 percent) report having little knowledge about their Constitution.

Meanwhile, 25 percent of Filipinos say that they know enough about the 1987 Constitution, 16 percent admit to having almost or completely no knowledge at all, and only three percent claim to know a lot.

Like previous surveys, this nationwide survey is based on a sample of 1,200 representative adults 18 years old and above. It has a plus or minus three percent error margin at the 95 percent confidence level. ■

## Lights off on Earth Hour

by DONNABELLE GATDULA  
Philstar.com



POWER firms will join Earth Hour on March 28 as their commitment to help arrest global warming.

Lopez-controlled Energy Development Corp. (EDC) and the Manila Electric Co. have signified their participation in Earth Hour, scheduled for 8:30pm to 9:30pm on Saturday, March 28, when lights and electrical appliances will be turned off for one hour.

In a statement, EDC said it has joined the Earth Hour global campaign to help widen program awareness and participation in the provinces of Leyte, Negros Oriental, Negros Occidental and Cotabato, and the Bicol region where the company's geothermal project sites are located.

The geothermal firm has actively campaigned and promoted the program among its employees, host communities, local government units, local media and other relevant stakeholders.

EDC expects at least 3,000 signatures for the online campaign, counting on the participation of all its employees from its Manila head office, Bacman Geothermal Production Field (BGPF) in Albay and Sorsogon, Bicol; Leyte Geothermal Production Field (LGPF) in Tongonan, Leyte; Mindanao Geothermal Production Field (MGPF) in Kidapawan, Cotabato province; Northern Negros Geothermal Production Field (NNGPF) in Bago City, Negros Occidental; and Southern Negros Geothermal Production Field (SNGPF) in Palinpinon, Negros Oriental, as well as its host communities.

EDC is also promoting the program and encouraging participation of other corporations and organizations such as those in the Lopez Group and League of Corporate Foundations.

"EDC has always actively participated in projects that will help arrest global warming. As a responsible corporate citizen, we have initiated some environmental projects that have become models for other companies," EDC president/CEO Paul Aquino said.

"For Earth Hour, we are doing our share in encouraging maximum participation by spreading the word and promoting the program to all our employees, host communities, business partners and other stakeholders."

Earlier, Aboitiz Power Corp. said it will encourage all its subsidiaries to observe Earth Hour.

The Department of Energy (DOE) is targeting to save some 560 megawatts (MW) of power when the country observes the Earth Hour.

The proponents of Earth Hour are hoping to entice about 10 million Filipino people to join the initiative.

This is more than 10 times higher than last year's one million participants, who saved the equivalent of 56 MW savings.

The Earth Hour project involves 371 cities across 35 countries.

Last year, the Philippines ranked ninth in the world in terms of number of people that responded to Earth Hour calls on the Internet.

In the Philippines, the effort is being led by the local World Wide Fund for Nature office (WWF-Philippines) in cooperation with the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Green Army Philippines Network, and the SWITCH movement.

"We have to act now if we are to halt, if not reverse, the dangerous momentum of climate change," Lory Tan, president and CEO of WWF-Philippines, said.

"Earth Hour gives us the vehicle to show how simple acts—like turning off a light switch—can make a difference if we act together to fight global warming," Tan said. ■

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