

Tired Of living
IN THE OFFICE? KUMITA SA BAHAY
FOREX.com



Like 4.3k Send
ManilaStandardToday.com
Updated on February 4, 2013 12:01 am
Manila, Philippines UTC +08:00
Search MST
About | Advertise | Contact Info

Manila Standard TODAY 26th year

- Follow MST on Facebook
- Follow MST on Twitter
- Subscribe to RSS Feed
- Get Updates via E-mail

HOME | NEWS | TECH | MOTORING | SPORTS | BUSINESS | PRINT | OPINION | ENTERTAINMENT | LIFESTYLE

E-mail Address...

Disabled? Get up to **\$35,000** from the Canadian Government!
 > Arthritis? > Fibromyalgia? > Scoliosis?
 > Anxiety? > Sleep Disorders? > Disabled?
 Free Consultation >>

SETTING A HIGHER STANDARD ONLINE

ADVERTISEMENT

PREVIOUS ARTICLE NEXT ARTICLE

Our right to information

By Manila Standard Today | Posted on Feb. 04, 2013 at 12:01am | 1 views

Like 16 Tweet 3 0 5

Certain news items last week simply proved confusing. One said the President wants Congress to pass laws that will fight corruption. In the President's beautifully-worded speech before the Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption he was quoted as saying: "Only through legislation can the bedrock of inclusiveness and positive, meaningful change be set." He then went on to say that the country has made huge strides in establishing a culture of fairness and accountability when a former president was charged with plunder and a chief justice was impeached and removed from office for having lied about his cash assets. He added that without structural reform, another corrupt president might one day take the reins of power and another chief justice might again betray public trust

Another news story, on the other hand, said that the long-delayed freedom of information bill faces certain death yet again in the House of Representatives with Congress adjourning for a long recess to give way to the election period starting February 9. Apparently, without the President certifying it as urgent, our elected representatives in the 15th Congress will once again junk it as the 14th Congress had so done. The Senate has approved on third reading its version of the bill but as our system goes, before any law gets passed, both chambers of Congress must craft their respective versions which shall then be fine-tuned into a law by a bicameral committee conference.

In reality, with a week still remaining before Congress adjourns, the bill can still become a law if the President certifies it as urgent. And, as stated by the Right to Know Right Now Coalition, "even without a certification from the President as to the necessity of the FOI bill's immediate enactment, the House Committee on Rules, through the Majority Leader, is empowered to declare a bill as urgent to facilitate its immediate passage."

So we ask ourselves, what has been keeping Congress from acting more vigorously on the bill? Are we being taken for a ride—making us forever hope that in the next Congress, or in the next after next, the enactment of the law just might come to pass? Or, are we too naïve in believing that Congress will pass a law that will spell the beginning of its doom?

Manila Standard Today
Like
4,370 people like Manila Standard Today.

To the common tao, what are the practical functions of a Freedom of Information law? It will give citizens access to information on how taxpayers' money is being spent. If we had such a law, we would not have to wait for the senators to have another squabble before we can discover how painfully and scandalously excessive their expenditures are and how morally undeserving many of them are of our mandate. When people have access to information, elected, as well as appointed, officials become aware that they can be made accountable. Thus, they become more efficient and less prone to corruption. Impunity for wrongdoing and abuse will be eradicated.

Around the world, citizens have been able to take part in governance by monitoring transactions entered into by their governments and how their public officials are performing their jobs. In India, for example, documents obtained through access to information requests uncovered the fact that money for infrastructure projects, such as a canal for clean water, was being stolen by the contractor and that the paper works were forged. In Thailand, a single mother used her right to information to demonstrate that her daughter was denied a place in the best public schools not because she had failed the entrance exam, as the school directors claimed, but simply because she was poor and could not pay bribe money. And most recently, an access to information request was made in Jamaica under their new law to find out why fish were dying in a river. The citizens obtained access to information as to whether it was due to a chemical spill and what the government was doing to clean up the water that was used for drinking, bathing and fishing.

When the new democratic Constitution of South Africa was being drafted, then President, Nelson Mandela, ensured that the people's right to information was among the first rights to be enshrined in the Constitution. He knew that it is a lack of information and knowledge that allows systems such as apartheid to thrive.

Real and lasting progress can never happen in any country unless secret deals and corrupt practices are stopped. And, unless citizens are given the right to information about how their government is being run, corruption will always thrive. President Benigno Aquino III knows this, as in fact, his campaign tagline, which remains his banner slogan to this day, is: "Kung walang korup, walang mahirap" (Where there is no corruption, there is no poverty). Why then has the freedom of information bill not been certified as urgent and a priority? I'd like to believe that his slogan is not mere rhetoric.

Email: ritalindaj@gmail.com Visit: www.jimenolaw.com.ph

Like 16 Tweet 3 0 5

Readers of this story also viewed:

- [It wasn't death that Noynoy cheated](#)
- [Manufacturing](#)
- [Elections are always local](#)
- [Love in the time of elections](#)
- [Campaign lawbreakers](#)
- [Cars, the air and a bill whose time has come](#)
- [What Jun Lozada really wants](#)
- [Free speech and punishment](#)
- [First smuggling, then jueteng; what's next?](#)
- [Arbitration is the only option](#)

COMMENT DISCLAIMER: Reader comments posted on this Web site are not in any way endorsed by ManilaStandardToday.com. Comments are views by ManilaStandardToday.com readers who exercise their right to free expression and they do not necessarily represent or reflect the position or viewpoint of ManilaStandardToday.com. While reserving this publication's right to delete comments that are deemed offensive, indecent or inconsistent with ManilaStandardToday.com editorial standards, ManilaStandardToday.com may not be held liable for any false information posted by readers in this comments section.



Post to Facebook
 Posting as Ann Marie Paquet ([Change](#))
Comment



Rogelio Lim · Top Commenter

Iyan ang hirap na ang Congress ay nasa control ni Noynoy, hindi maipasa ang isang panukalang batas kung walang go-signal ni Noynoy. Sinira talaga ni Noynoy ang Congress at iba pang government institutions.

[Reply](#) · [1 Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · February 4 at 1:13am



Zteg Brigz · Top Commenter

A simple classic case of "Kung may gusto may paraan at kung ayaw maraming dahilan". Huwag dapat tayong paloloko sa mga kandidatong gagamitin ang FOI para makakuha ng boto. Dapat i-junk ang mga trapo at political dynasty. Wala tayong maasahang mapapasa ang FOI sa admin ni BS Aquino.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · February 4 at 1:44pm



Michael Chimera · Top Commenter · Dmlmhs

The promise of FOI was nothing more than a ploy to get people to vote for BSA (among other things). Do people really believe that our politicians who most of them have dirty secrets really want to empower the masses so that they can expose said secrets?

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · February 4 at 11:44pm



Mike Moreno · Top Commenter · Far Eastern University

Dateline: Richmond City, B.C., Canada. Well said and how true though sweeping.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · February 3 at 1:07pm

Facebook social plugin

[HOME](#) [RSS FEED](#) [ABOUT MST](#) [SUBSCRIBE](#) [ADVERTISE](#) [CONTACT INFO](#)

Like 4.3k Send

Copyright © 2013 Manila Standard Today
 All Rights Reserved

Kamahalan Publishing Corporation
 3rd Floor Universal Re Building,
 106 Paseo de Roxas corner Perea Streets
 Legaspi Village, Makati City, Philippines
 Trunkline: (632) 659-4830

3 of 3

11/02/2013 1:42 PM