

## Interpellation on the 2007 Ombudsman Budget

Thursday, 15 February 2007

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REP. VILLANUEVA. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much, Mr. Majority Leader. The Office of the Ombudsman is closest to this Representation's heart, and before I ask my first question to my distinguished colleague, let me read Galatians. Chapter 6, Verses 8 and 9: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For whatever a man soweth that shall he also reap for he that soweth of the flesh reap corruption but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." May I know if my distinguished colleague would yield to some questions.

REP. ABANTE. Of course, Mr. Speaker. I would like to tell my colleague, Congressman Joel, that I know that verse by heart.

REP. VILLANUEVA. I am sure you agree with that particular verse?

REP. ABANTE. And I am so glad that you are quoting from the King James version of the Bible.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, in a nutshell and for the record, can the Gentleman, the distinguished Sponsor of the Office of the Ombudsman state the constitutional, legal and moral mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman.

REP. ABANTE. Mr. Speaker, as to the mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman, according to Section 5, Article II of the 1987 Constitution, provides for the creation of an independent Office of the Ombudsman. It was organized under Executive Order No. 243 on July 24, 1987.

On 17 November 1989, Republic Act No. 6770 otherwise known as the Ombudsman's Act was enacted, which provided for the functional and structural organization of the office. And under said Act, the Office of the Special Prosecutor which was created by virtue of Executive Order No. 244 became an organic component of the Office of the Ombudsman. There are several functions, Mr. Speaker, which perhaps would take it long if I am going to read it.

REP. VILLANUEVA. That is enough, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much, and I appreciate it. So, Mr. Speaker, you are saying in a nutshell, the Office of the Ombudsman is the national graft buster, is that correct, Your Honor? Tasked to investigate and prosecute corruption and come up with means to prevent corruption. Do you agree, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. ABANTE. Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is true.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, how would you rate the Ombudsman's performance, perhaps in a scale of 1 to 10?

REP. ABANTE. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would think that upon the assumption of the new Ombudsman, I would not want to rate the Ombudsman's accomplishment in previous years, Mr. Speaker, because I would not actually have the figures and at that point in time, I was not even a Congressman yet. But I would rate that to be with a passing grade, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. The passing grade would be 5, 6, 7?

REP. ABANTE. Maybe around 8.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Eight? Well, Mr. Speaker, recently World Bank came up with a statement saying that, "for every peso being earned by this government 40% goes to corruption". In the latest ADB report, when it comes to corruption perception, out of 106 countries, Philippines was around number two. And if I remember it correct, we are also perceived to be second most corrupt country in Asia. But, let us go to specifics, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

Can the distinguished Gentleman recall some of the graft and corruption issues or scandals that rocked the Arroyo administration?

REP. ABANTE. Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, what the honorable Congressman mentioned about the international community's perception on corruption in the Philippines, Mr. Speaker, that would perhaps not be as accurate as we think it is, Mr. Speaker, because I would think that almost all nations in the world, including the USA, have their own corruption problem, Mr. Speaker. We are not the only ones who have that, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Well, I thought you will answer, Mr. Speaker, my question. But anyway...

REP. ABANTE. I made a comment on the first statement. Perhaps, I would like to answer the question now.

REP. VILLANUEVA. But before I repeat the question, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, I think we have to more constructive in saying it is just a perception because World Bank, when we talk about World Bank statements, resolutions, stuff like that, Mr. Speaker, it is not just based on perception. We have statistical data to prove that, indeed, corruption is the big problem in the Philippines. And I think all of us would agree that we are experiencing, indeed, a great problem with regards to corruption. But let me again ask the question, Mr. Speaker, if the distinguished Sponsor can recall some of the graft and corruption issues or scandals that rocked the present administration. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I would be more specific. Like the IMPSA deal that is about \$2 million, documents, paper trails submitted to the Office of the Ombudsman, the overpricing of the Macapagal Boulevard, the Philippine Bridge Program, the fertilizer scam, the 2004 election cheating, LRT/ MRT investigations, PIATCO, road users' tax misuse and fund diversion, the Jose Pidal scandal, peso advertising funds used for the 2001 elections, and so on, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ABANTE. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am very much aware of what the good Congressman mention of, Mr. Speaker, and I know that some of these are being investigated, most of these are allegations and have not yet even been, in a way, perceived to be true, Mr. Speaker, proven in court. I would say that what you have said have been mentioned all over the media, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Well, to be more specific, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, let us go through this one by one. May I ask this distinguished Sponsor if charges had been filed in the Ombudsman when I talk about these cases?

Rep. ABANTE. For example, you made mention of the Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard, Mr. Speaker. And that has been investigated by the Ombudsman and has been charged in the proper courts, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. But would you say, Mr. Speaker...

REP. ABANTE. PIATCO, for example, that you also had made mention of, had been investigated and it is now pending before the Sandiganbayan, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. So, Mr. Speaker...

REP. ABANTE. The rest are undergoing fact-finding and preliminary investigations.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am very interested and very happy to know that the Ombudsman is doing his job. But, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, let me just point out a particular article that this Representation encountered a few weeks ago that the Ombudsman issued a statement, something to that effect, that if nobody is filing cases, or nobody is filing a complaint, the Office of the Ombudsman is not going to do something about a particular case or graft charges.

REP. ABANTE. Well, Mr. Speaker, as I have talked with the office of the Ombudsman, what you said is not actually true because they are even involved in the lifestyle checks of certain government officials, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. So, Mr. Speaker, you would agree with this Representation, is it true that the Office of the Ombudsman can investigate on its own even when no complaint is filed?

REP. ABANTE. Definitely, Mr. Speaker, and that is what they have been doing.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Well, Mr. Speaker, would it enhance the credibility and public perception and trust of the people if the Office of the Ombudsman takes a progressive and proactive stance, meaning, Mr. Speaker, investigating on its own corruption issues that come into public knowledge as soon as possible.

REP. ABANTE. I am in full support of your statement, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Mr. Speaker, there are the high profile cases and many of these cases-not to mention the Mega Pacific- Comelec Billion Peso deal- have pieces of evidence available and waiting to be examined. May I know, Mr. Speaker, why aren't cases being filed?

REP. ABANTE. I would like to clarify the question, Mr. Speaker. What are you referring to, Mr. Speaker?

REP. VILLANUEVA. For example, as I mentioned, high profile cases like that of the Mega Pacific- Comelec Billion Peso deal.

REP. ABANTE. So you are referring specifically to the Mega Pacific deal, Mr. Speaker?

REP. VILLANUEVA. Yes, Mr. Speaker. Have pieces of evidence available and waiting to be examined, may I know why cases aren't being filed?

REP. ABANTE. That's one reason, why, Mr. Speaker, The Ombudsman has undertaken exhaustive and extensive public hearing, Mr. Speaker, as far as investigating the matter is concerned, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me ask the distinguished colleague Distinguished colleague. I want to know how does the office of the Ombudsman prioritize the cases? Perhaps first to file, first to be investigated.

REP. ABANTE. Are you referring to the status of the investigation, Mr. Speaker, or you are referring to cases being filed, Mr. Speaker?

REP. VILLANUEVA. Cases being filed. How the Ombudsman prioritize cases and how does the office decide which it will be investigate first- first to the file, first to investigate?

REP. ABANTE. Well, under the law, the Ombudsman prioritizes cases that are involving high-ranking officials of the government, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry, I think I didn't...

REP. ABANTE. The Ombudsman prioritizes on cases involving high-ranking government officials.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Okay, follow up question, Mr. Speaker. How can one monitor cases filed in the Office of the Ombudsman? Is there a tracking system? Is the system on-line? I have a computer here with me right now. Can we check on the internet what is happening to specific case, for instance?

REP. ABANTE. There is now a case-monitoring system being funded by the World Bank, Mr. Speaker, and it will be operational before the end of this year, Mr. Speaker, if that is what you are referring to.

REP. VILLANUEVA.. So right now, Mr. Speaker, there is really no way for Juan dela Cruz or even for Members of Congress to perhaps monitor what is happening with regards to a specific case. But my point, Mr. Speaker, is that credibility, trust and believing in the national graft buster is essential to the success of the office of the Ombudsman, thus high-profile cases even if these are against the administration or the very people who appointed officials in the Office of the Ombudsman can make or break the office. And if cases are not even filed or investigation are not being initiated or are always stalled, what do you expect from the people. Mr. Speaker?

REP. ABANTE. Mr. Speaker, if you to perhaps very high-technology equipments like IT technology, Mr. Speaker, the Ombudsman, does not have those high-tech equipments yet at this point in time. They are even hiring more than 200 field investigators to be able to go on a fact-finding strategy and investigation, so that these cases can be field properly in the proper courts.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, how can the office of the Ombudsman put in system to protect themselves from being influenced, like a tracking system or a more transparent system wherein it would be very difficult for someone to ask an investigation be killed, for example, be stalled, or perhaps be shelved?

REP. ABANTE. I think, Mr. Speaker, that the office of the Ombudsman is always open to public scrutiny, Mr. Speaker, and that because of that, the Ombudsman has even opened up a website for all the people to see the accomplishments and the reports of the investigations being done, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. But it is impossible, as you mentioned, distinguished colleague, a while ago that is impossible for all of us track or to see it, everything in there in the internet, is that correct, Your Honor?

REP. ABANTE. Not really impossible, Mr. Speaker, only that: number one, Mr. Speaker, they are limited with their resources; and number two, there is a rule on confidentiality of those investigations.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Well, speaking of the limited resources, Mr. Speaker, may I know how much is the proposed budget of the office of the Ombudsman for 2007.

REP. ABANTE. Mr. Speaker, the proposed budget for 2007 is P974, 003,000. And actually, this is the budget that we have already approved in 2006 budget.

REP. VILLANUEVA. So it is the same budget.

REP. ABANTE. It is the same budget, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. But compared to the reenacted budget, it increased, Mr. Speaker, by about...

REP. ABANTE. Forty-four percent.

REP. VILLANUEVA. P38, P40 million, something to that effect, is that correct, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ABANTE. About 38, yes, about 38.

REP. VILLANUEVA. May I know, Mr. Speaker, the present share of the Ombudsman of the total national budget allocation for the year 2007. REP.ABANTE. The total share, Mr. Speaker, is 0.07 percent only of the national budget.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Mr. Speaker, 0.07 percent of the national budget, Mr. Speaker, that the budget of Ombudsman, when you look at the historical data, for the period of 2003 to 2007, remained very small. Last year, it was 0.09, is that correct, Your Honor?

REP.ABANTE. Yes, Mr. Speaker. That is why we are very much open to your suggestion on how to be able to increase the budget of the Ombudsman.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Well, Mr. Speaker, I am interested to know the agency-recommended budget vis-à-vis the DBM-recommended budget for the office of the Ombudsman for 2007. Can I assume, Mr. Speaker, that given the urgency and prevalence of corruption in this country, and as this administration keeps on bragging that we are indeed fighting the evils of graft and corruption in this country, the Ombudsman originally proposed a higher budgetary requirement for 2007, is it not, Mr. Speaker?

REP.ABANTE. May I just mention for the enlightenment of the Congressman about the proposed budget of the Ombudsman- is P1,000,508,143, and the proposed budget that was given by DBM is P974,003,000, Mr. Speaker, or a difference of P534, 000,140.

REP. VILLANUEVA. So what was the reason behind the disapproval of the Department of Budget and Management?

REP. ABANTE. Well, Mr. Speaker that would be a very good question except that we really do not know the answer to that question, Mr. Speaker, what the reason behind is.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Hindi po ba tinanong ng ating Ombudsman kung bakit o hindi po siya nagtaka or because, Mr. Speaker, I saw the budget of Ombudsman. Mayroon pong unused appropriation last year na P228.332 million.

REP.ABANTE. Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, ay in-adopt na lang ho natin iyong budget na ibigay. Tayo naman po noong isang taon nag- approve ng budget ay hindi naman po ito inaprobahan ng Senado kaya tayo ngayon nasa reenacted budget, Mr. Speaker. Kaya hindi lang po siguro ating ipu-put ang blame sa DBM kung hindi naman sa Kongreso na napakabagal i-approve ang mga budget na ito, Mr. Speaker.

REP.VILLANUEVA. Mr. Speaker, just to correct the distinguished Sponsor- inaprobahan po ng Senado. It is just that doon sa bicam, hindi po naayos. But, Mr. Speaker, looking at the budget of the Ombudsman, I found out that...

REP. ABANTE. Ganoon pa rin iyon, Mr. Speaker. Kahit po inaprobahan ng Senado kung hindi na-approve sa bicam, di mga Senador din ang nag-approve nyan ay ganoon din po ang labas noon.

REP.VILLANUEVA. So ibig sabihin po inamin natin sa Senado lang ang bicam at hindi po kasali ang House of Representatives?

REP.ABANTE. Hindi naman iyon, Mr. Speaker. Pero sa palagay ko tayo ay nagkaka-isa sa house na ang ating budget ay approved. Hindi nagkaka-isa iyong mga Senador, Mr. Speaker, kaya nga gusto natin ang Charter change.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Mukhang sa Senado po in-approved nila, mukhang sila ang nagka-isa, tayo hindi. But, anyway, Mr. Speaker, I found out just by looking at the budget of the Office of the Ombudsman by expense plus, pinakamataas po itong Personal Services, 74% of the agency's total budget, P686, 619,000. Is that correct, Your Honor?

REP.ABANTE. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP.VILLANUEVA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to know the current number of employees of the office of the Ombudsman given the fact that the agency usually or perennially cited its problem regarding its lack of human resources which, I guess, affects its efficiency and effectiveness as an anti-graft body.

REP.ABANTE. More or less, mayroon po tayong 1,600 employees ng Office of the Ombudsman, Mr.Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. 1,600 employees. May I know how many prosecutors and field investigators do we have at present?

REP. ABANTE. Ang ating pong field investigators, Mr. Speaker, ay nagna number lamang ng 200 investigators. Alam ninyo, Mr. Speaker, compared po sa Hong Kong, ang Hong Kong po ay napakaliit na bayan ay mayroong 800 field investigators samantalang tayo po sa Pilipinas na mayroong 87 million people ay 200 lang ang field investigators.

REP.VILLANUEVA. 200, Mr. Speaker.

REP.ABANTE. Yes.

REP.VILLANUEVA. Owing to the complexity and extremely heavy case load, Mr. Speaker, how many more additional prosecutors and field investigators do we need?

REP.ABANTE. Ako po ay nagpapasalamat sapagkat ito po ay naitanong ng ating kaibigan. Ibig sabihin po ay talagang gusto niyang dagdagan ang budget ng Ombudsman, Mr. Speaker. Mayroon po tayo ngayon ideally dapat ay mayroon tayong 150 to 200 na mga prosecutors.

REP. VILLANUEVA. 150 lang ho.

REP.ABANTE. Doon na lamang sa field investigators, Mr. Speaker, ay dapat mayroong tayong mga at least 500 investigators, Mr. Speaker, para naman maka-cope up tayo sa mga backlog ng mga kaso na naipa-file sapagkat ang Ombudsman po ay, Mr. Speaker, ay napakaraming kaso niyan mula pos a barangay level hanggang sa mga high profile cases, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Considering, Mr. Speaker, you mentioned ideal, it means that it is impossible for this proposed budget to hire that figure that you are talking about.

REP. ABANTE. Come again, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Mr. Speaker, Considering that you made mention about the ideal number, it is—you are actually admitting that it is impossible for the Office of the Ombudsman right now to hire this number of field investigators.

REP.ABANTE. Well, pwede pa rin. I think the ideal would be just the minimum, Mr. Speaker. Pero alam ninyo we all should realize that lawyers would rather look for high-paying job...

REP.VILLANUEVA. So Mr. Speaker.

REP. ABANTE. ...than being employed in the government, Mr. Speaker. Kaya nga po eh kinukuha natin iyong mga estudyante ng law na idealistic, ang mga kabataan na nagsisimula para maging field investigators, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. Pero kinakailangan din po sigurong taasan ang sweldo mg Office of the Ombudsman...

REP. VILLANUEVA. We can do it.

REP. ABANTE. Upang tayo ay makapag-hire ng mga magagaling na mga prosecutors, Mr. Speaker. Iyan ang kailangan natin.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, but we cannot do it at this time. So, my question now is given the proposed 2007 budget, how many additional personnel are projected to join the Office of the Ombudsman?

REP. ABANTE. Well, Mr. Speaker, nag-iisip po tayo ng 721 total na personnel with the budget that we have now, Mr. Speaker. That is why...

REP. VILLANUEVA. 721, but the ideal, Mr. Speaker, that awhile ago you are talking about is how much again, Mr. Speaker? How many?

REP. ABANTE. That is the total. I did not actually mention all the breakdown, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Okay.

REP. ABANTE. But the total should be 721.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Okay. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, is this possible considering- I remember that there is this so-called election ban on hiring. Is this possible? Will the Office of the Ombudsman be affected by this, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ABANTE... Actually, I think the Ombudsman could be able to even get an exemption because of the urgency and the importance of their work. Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. I mean, Mr. Speaker,

REP. ABANTE. And also because it is an independent, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, what is the agency's ratio of field investigators to government officials and employees? May I know from my distinguished colleague, the ratio now? Because if I remember it correctly, Mr. Speaker, in 2002 the ratio was a staggering one is to 17,045 officials. May I know the ratio at thus time, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ABANTE. Mr. Speaker, it would not be too easy to determine that if you are going to get even all the contractuels and casuals and even our own LGUs, it might be one to 200,000.

REP. VILLANUEVA. One to 200,000, Mr. Speaker, one to 200, 000 and yet the administration that we wanted to—we are really dead serious in addressing the issue of graft and corruption here in this country. I wanted to fast track, Mr. Speaker. I have here a lot of questions but let me just bring up, Mr. Speaker, because I can still remember here in the hall of Congress when President Arroyo declared in her 2006 SONA that, and I quote: "Our reforms have earned us P1 billion from the US millennium challenge account for more investigators, prosecutors and new technology to fight corruption. We are matching this with another billion from our fiscal savings." Mr. Speaker, your honor, I learned that on July 26, 2006, representatives of the MCC or the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Philippine government signed \$21 million agreement to fund the two year threshold program, to improve revenue administration and anti-corruption efforts in this country. May I know if this pronouncement has already been translated into tangible benefits for the Office of the Ombudsman.

REP. ABANTE. Just like Mr. Speaker, the answer that I gave, in the first interpellation, that ito pong P1 billion na ito is spread out to many agencies, not just the Office of the Ombudsman.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Mr. Speaker, I am talking about the MCC and remember Finance Secretary Teves reported out that the \$21 million aid-\$6.5 million or roughly P325 million would go to the Office of the Ombudsman. And so I wanted to know, does this mean that the P325 million will be added to the budget of the Ombudsman?

REP. ABANTE. We still, Mr. Speaker, do not have the implementing guidelines. It is still being worked out, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. But, may I know from the distinguished Sponsor, through the Office of the Ombudsman, may we be clarified on how you proposed to classify funds like this in the annual budget of the Office if the Ombudsman.

REP. ABANTE. If it will be given Mr. Speaker?

REP. VILLANUEVA.. So meaning to say Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, there is no commitment yet as to--if it will be given.

REP. ABANTE. There are no commitment—there are other commitments, Mr. Speaker, the only thing is that we still do not know the real amount of how much will be allocated.

REP. VILLANUEVA. As I was already saying, Mr. Speaker...

REP. ABANTE. And, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, it might be put into special fund or perhaps, Mr. Speaker, it can be in kind where equipments will be given or training programs, Mr. Speaker...

REP. VILLANUEVA. Mr. Speaker, I can't believe that...

REP. ABANTE... or seminars or workshops, Mr. Speaker, so...

REP. VILLANUEVA. Does that mean Mr. Speaker, that the Office of the Ombudsman...

REP. ABANTE... it will not be really a transfer of funds, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA... is not aware of the MCC, Mr. Speaker? We signed the \$21 million agreement to fund this two year threshold program. It appears right now that the Office of the Ombudsman doesn't know what to do with it. I wanted to know how they are going to spend this aid that they are going to receive from MCC, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ABANTE. Well I believe they have been aware, Mr. Speaker, but the only thing is that these funds, Mr. Speaker, does not mean that it is all money, Mr. Speaker...

REP. VILLANUEVA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but let me...

REP. ABANTE... and all cash.

REP. VILLANUEVA... also point out, Mr. Speaker, in the MCC agreement, the Philippine Government has to achieve specific targets in the area of fighting graft and corruption, and to wit, Mr. Speaker, number one, it says here: increase the conviction rate in corruption rate cases filed before the Sandiganbayan, Ombudsman to 40%; increase the number of

cases successfully mediated in the Ombudsman's Public Assistance Office from zero to 300 per year. Meaning to say, Mr. Speaker, it says there in the agreement that the- when you talked about cases successfully mediated in the Office of the Ombudsman's Public Assistance Office zero po, Mr. Speaker. Are we saying now that we are not honoring this agreement, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ABANTE. The Office of the Ombudsman has increased the conviction rate from 0% to 33% in 2005.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, let us be more specific, may I know how many cases are referred to Ombudsman's Public Assistance Office in a yearly basis. Because, looking at the specific agreement that we signed, Mr. Speaker, is it true that not...

REP. ABANTE. The average, Mr. Speaker...

REP. VILLANUEVA... a single case was successfully mediated by the said Office relying, Mr. Speaker, again, saying- I wanted to say that, relying on the agreement signed by our government and representatives on MCC?

REP. ABANTE. The average Mr. Speaker, would be about 9,000 cases a year.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Five thousand cases.

REP. ABANTE. Nine thousand.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Nine thousand, so Mr. Speaker, what is that statistics on the case-resolution performance of the Ombudsman?

REP. ABANTE. As against what Mr. Speaker?

REP. VILLANUEVA. Mr. Speaker, I am asking that question because under the agreement, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, increase the number of cases successfully mediated in the Ombudsman's Public Assistance Office. From zero, current zero. It says here current zero to 300 per year. Is it attainable, Mr. Speaker? Because if it is not, maybe we should just admit that we cannot do it, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ABANTE. Well Mr. Speaker, if we are able to put in place the mechanics of mediation, then it will be very much attainable.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Well that is a relief, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ABANTE. It is a relief, Mr. Speaker. That is true.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Distinguished colleague, following the approval of the Philippine program by MCC in June 2006, the President has ordered the release, and I am sure my distinguished colleague who was here in the State-of-the Nation Address, the President ordered the release of P1 billion to match the US anti-corruption aid, one for one. It was also reported that the fund argumentation, and correct me if I am wrong, the fund argumentation is expected to be sourced from the standard appropriations for strategic government reforms under the 2000 fund General Appropriation Act and will be placed under the supervision of PAGC. Now, Mr. Speaker, I heard that this fund will be distributed to eight government agencies, if I am correct, Mr. Speaker, which will implement these parallel anti- corruption programs. Now, may I know, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, if the Ombudsman also gets a share from this. And if yes, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to know how much, and in what parallel program will it be spent.

REP. ABANTE. As I have said, Mr. Speaker, that the Ombudsman will get a share. But as of this time, we still do not

know how much the share will be.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Well, Mr. Speaker, to shorten this interpellation, Mr. Speaker, may I just request the good sponsor to furnish this Representation perhaps a copy of the program details of both the MCC funded program and the PAGC supervised counterpart fund.

REP. ABANTE. Gladly, Mr. Speaker, sapagkat mapupungay na po ang ating mga mata including our Speaker there, mapungay na iyong mga mata natin.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Second to the last point, Mr. Speaker. May I know if kung meron na pong desisyon and Ombudsman, for example, in suspending a particular local government official. Na-experience na po ba ng Ombudsman na nag-suspend po sila pero hindi naman inimplement ng DILG?

REP. ABANTE. Yes, Mr. Speaker. A case in point is the decision of the Ombudsman on the case of Governor Malicsi of Cavite, which is already executory, but it has not been implemented by the DILG.

REP. VILLANUEVA. So, Mr. Speaker, ano po ang ginagawa ng Ombudsman? Hindi ho ba nila tinatanong kung bakit? May I be clarified on this, Mr. Speaker.

A while ago you agree with me that it is important that the Filipino people trust the Ombudsman as the national graft buster.

REP. ABANTE. Right now, I am informed that the incident, Mr. Speaker, is pending in the Supreme Court.

REP. VILLANUEVA. So, is there a TRO, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ABANTE. None that I know of, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Then why not, Mr. Speaker? Bakit po hindi ma-implement? Bakit po kaya sa iba na-implement, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ABANTE. Well, I believe that the proper agency right now that ought to implement it is the DILG and I think that ought to be addressed to the DILG, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. So, Mr. Speaker, may I know what is the Office of the Ombudsman doing. Are they doing something about this? Hindi ho ba sampal ito sa Ombudsman? Is it a choice that DILG has. Mr. Speaker. Your Honor, at bale wala na lang itong Ombudsman? So, what is the use of having Ombudsman?

REP. ABANTE. Well, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the Ombudsman has issued a circular, and I was informed, Mr. Speaker, that because of your information, that the Ombudsman will look into the matter.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hope this Representation will be briefed on whatever steps that the Office of the Ombudsman would take, Mr. Speaker, especially with regards to these cases, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, am I correct from the records, Mr. Speaker... I wanted to end my interpellation, Mr. Speaker, but let me just point out one last thing, Mr. Speaker, I have been getting a lot of signals here.

As with the 2005 General Appropriations Act, Mr. Speaker, there is an item in the proposed Ombudsman budget for the conduct of continuing research and studies to determine the causes of inefficiency, red tape, corruption, mismanagement, fraud in government, and recommend corrective measures.

May I inquire, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, on the accomplishments of Ombudsman regarding this activity, Mr. Speaker. And perhaps, I wanted also to know, Mr. Speaker, how many researches and publications were published by the Office of the Ombudsman? Let's just talk, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, for 2005, for instance and then 2006.

REP. ABANTE. Mr. Speaker, in answering the question, can I just furnish the good Congressman a report coming from the Ombudsman about this thing.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. And given the fact that this budget item has been consistently funded in previous years, may the honorable Speaker, provide this Representation also what the Ombudsman deems as the primary causes of inefficiency, red tape, corruption, mismanagement and government fraud based on empirical data, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to get empirical data, it should have already collected, Mr. Speaker. And just to make it clear, Your Honor, what I am after is a list and preferably, rank of the causes of corruption and inefficiency in government on hard evidence. I wanted to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, on hard evidence and cold statistics, because I don't want that document based on Ombudsman's opinion.

REP. ABANTE. Gladly, Mr. Speaker. I will support you on that wholeheartedly, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, my distinguished colleague for your patience and I hope that the Ombudsman would do its best to live by its mandate, knowing the fact that Filipino people are expecting the national graft buster to inefficiency perform their duties and responsibilities. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker; thank you very much, Your Honor.

REP. DY(C.) Mr. Speaker. R

EP. ABANTE. We are giving the assurance to the good Congressman...

REP. DY (C.). Mr. Speaker.

REP. ABANTE. ...that all of these things will be noted and be given to you, Mr. Speaker...

REP. VILLANUEVA. Thank You.

REP. ABANTE. ...and being the Sponsor, I would like to tell you that I will be on guard on these things. Thank you very much.