

THURSDAY, JUNE 3, 1999

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The President. To the Calendar for Ordinary Business.

SECOND ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

COMMUNICATION

The Secretary. Letter from Executive Secretary Ronaldo B. Zamora of the Office of the President of the Philippines, transmitting to the Senate a copy of Presidential Proclamation No. 111 dated June 2, 1999 calling the Congress of the Philippines to a special session on July 12 to 16, 1999.

The President. To the Committee on Rules.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT ON S.NO. 1137/H. NO. 7090
(Use of Seat Belts Act)

Senator Drilon. Mr. President, this morning at 9:48 a.m., the Joint Explanation of the Conference Committee on the disagreeing provisions of Senate Bill No. 1137 and House Bill No. 7090 was submitted to this Chamber.

I move that we consider this Conference Committee Report.

The President. Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, the motion is approved.

Senator Drilon. Mr. President, may I ask the Chair to recognize Sen. Vicente C. Sotto III to submit his report to the Chamber.

The President. Sen. Vicente C. Sotto III is recognized.

REPORT OF SENATOR SOTTO

Senator Sotto. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, distinguished Colleagues, as Chairman of the Senate panel in the Bicameral Conference Committee meeting, it is with pleasure that I report to this Body the reconciled version of Senate Bill No. 1137 and House Bill No. 7090, entitled

AN ACT REQUIRING THE MANDATORY COMPLIANCE BY MOTORISTS
OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC VEHICLES TO USE SEAT BELT
DEVICES, AND REQUIRING VEHICLE MANUFACTURERS TO
INSTALL SEAT BELT DEVICES IN ALL THEIR
MANUFACTURED VEHICLES

I am happy to report that during the Bicameral Conference Committee meeting, there were no protracted discussions since both Houses evidently had the same legislative intent and fully recognized the necessity and the urgency of the enactment of this

bill into law.

The Secretary has distributed copies of the Joint Explanation of the Conference Committee meeting. I would just like to summarize the salient points, Mr. President.

Both panels agreed on the following:

1. To require the use of seat belt devices in all roads and thoroughfares;

2. To allow the use of lap belts for pelvic restraints only in the case of public utility jeepneys as substantial compliance with the law;

3. To require back seat passengers of private vehicles to use seat belts. Exempted from this rule are jeeps, jeepneys, vans, and buses for private use and similar vehicles as may be determined by the LTO;

4. To require the use of seat belts also for first-row passengers in the case of public utility buses and special public service vehicles, such as school buses;

5. To adopt the House provision prohibiting the importation of any vehicle without the required seat belt devices; and

6. To adopt the House provision prohibiting children 6 years of age and below to sit in the front seat of any vehicle with modifications.

The Senate panel agreed to this, provided that the exception which allows said children to sit in front when accompanied by their parent other than the driver be deleted. This is because studies have shown that this is, in fact, a dangerous practice. The House panel accepted and acceded to this modification.

A potential deadlock however, surfaced on this point. The House Committee on Transportation and Communications wanted to introduce an amendment which would require special seats or seat belts for infants. The Senate panel, however, was apprehensive about the additional costs that will have to be borne by our commuting public, especially those with the lower-income segment of our population. But we recognized that life and limb has no cost, but we acknowledged that not everyone, especially in the case of taxis, may be able to afford these special-child seats which cost from US\$200 to US\$300.

Instead of letting this issue be a cause of delay in the enactment of the law, the two panels instead agreed to empower the LTO to require these seat contraptions as it may deem fit and reasonable in the future.

7. To agree to leave the fixing of penalties for violations

of this Act to the Land Transportation Office or its successor agencies, subject to specified minimums and maximums already provided in the Act. The Senate version was approved on this.

Then, to penalize the driver for his failure to require his passenger to wear the prescribed seat belt instead of the passenger who is caught not using the prescribed seat belt.

Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, in ensuring the safety and well-being of our riding public by requiring the use of seat belts is a priority in this Chamber. Therefore, I urge all our colleagues to support and approve the Bicameral Conference Committee Report.

Thank you, Mr. President.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

The President. The Chair would like to declare a recess because Congressmen Shahani and Gullas are here. May we give them the courtesy. Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, the session is suspended for one minute.

It was 10:35 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 10:36 a.m., the session was resumed.

The President. The session is resumed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

APPROVAL OF CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT ON S. NO. 1137/H. NO. 7090 (Use of Seat Belts Act)

Senator Drilon. Mr. President, may I now move that we approve the Bicameral Conference Committee Report on the disagreeing provisions of Senate Bill No. 1137 and House Bill No. 7090 as sponsored by Sen. Vicente C. Sotto III, copies of which, for the record, were distributed to each Member of the Chamber. The President. Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, the motion is approved.

The following is the whole text of the Conference Committee Report:

(insert)

Senator Drilon. Mr. President, we are now through with the business of the day.