

REGINA BILBAO, PETITIONER, VS. REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES (BUREAU OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS) AND WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION COMMISSION, RESPONDENTS.

G.R. No. L-43741. October 28, 1977

Ponente: TEEHANKEE, J.

Read online (full-text search, related cases, audio case brief): <https://batas.org/library/eb4349040c5e/>

TEEHANKEE, J.:

The Court annuls respondent commission's decision and reinstates the referee's award of disability compensation benefits on the fundamental ground of the commission's loss of jurisdiction and authority to set aside the award that was already final and executory for lapse of the reglementary periods for appeal and for re-lief from judgment.

The referee's decision-award of October 30, 1975 granted petitioner Regina Bilbao's claim against respondent Republic (Bureau of Public Schools) in the sum of P5,444.79 as disability compensation benefits (due to her ailments of hypertension, myocarditis and rheumatoid arthritis as confirmed by the Compensation Rating Medical Officer who examined claimant on October 28, 1975, which were contracted by her during her employment as classroom teacher from 1933 until she stopped working due to physical disability on August 13, 1974) and ordered respondent to pay the sum of P55.00 as administrative fees.

Copy of the referee's decision was admittedly received by respondent through the Office of the Solicitor General on December 11, 1975. Respondent failed to take an appeal to the commission within the reglementary 15-day period[1] "due to the volume and heavy pressure of work" and belatedly filed its "Petition to Elevate Records for Relief from Judgment" dated January 15, 1976 beyond the ultimate 30-day grace period from knowledge/notice of the decision prescribed by the Commission Rules for the purpose.[2]

Respondent commission nevertheless took cognizance of the case and treating sub silentio the petition for relief as if the case had been timely appealed to it, rendered its decision of February 13, 1976 setting aside the "decision appealed" and dismissed the claim "for lack of merit".

Hence, the petition at bar which must be granted because the commission no longer had jurisdiction and authority to set aside the referee's decision that was already final and executory due to the lapse of the statutory periods for appeal and for relief from judgment.

Respondent's contention that the commission exercised its authority under the Workmen's Compensation Act of resolving the claim "without regard to technicalities or legal forms" is untenable since the statutory periods for appeal and for relief from judgment are not mere technicalities but go to its very jurisdiction.

Respondent commission itself (in contrast to the case at bar) had correctly denied similar belated petitions for relief from judgment filed by the Solicitor General in the Luzon Stevedoring Corporation[3] cases finding no merit in the contention that volume and pressure of work had prevented the taking of a timely appeal as such ground is "not among those provided for by the Rules of the Commission" and ruling that at any rate "the

commission has no longer any jurisdiction to review the decision(s), the same being already final and executory." As held by this Court in the said cases, the lapse of the 30-day reglementary period from knowledge or notice of judgment within which to avail of the statutory last chance to file a timely petition for relief from judgment for the grounds and reasons stated in the Rule is fatal.

The Court has consistently adhered to this settled doctrine of finality of judgments that "(the) basic rule of finality of judgments is applicable indiscriminately to one and all and regardless of whether respondent employer be a public or private employer, since the rule is grounded on fundamental considerations of public policy and sound practice that at risk of occasional error, the judgment of courts and award of quasi-judicial agencies must become final at some definite date fixed by law," and "(I)t is of course beyond question that the perfection of an appeal within the statutory or reglementary period is mandatory and jurisdictional and that failure to so perfect an appeal renders final and executory the questioned decision and deprives the appellate court of jurisdiction to entertain the appeal. The lapse of the appeal period deprives the courts of jurisdiction to alter the final judgment." [4]

The commission's questioned decision reversing the final and executory judgment-award in favor of petitioner-claimant must therefore be set aside as null and void for lack of jurisdiction and authority on its part to render the same, and such declaration of nullity may be made either in a regular appeal or in a special civil action of certiorari filed within the prescriptive period. [5]

ACCORDINGLY, judgment is hereby rendered setting aside as null and void respondent commission's decision and reinstating the referee's decision-award in favor of petitioner. [6] SO ORDERED.

Makasiar, Muñoz Palma, Martin, Fernandez, and Guerrero, JJ., concur.

[1] Sections 49 and 50, Workmen's Compensation Act, Rule 19, sec. 1, 1973 Workmen's Compensation Commission Revised Rules.

[2] Rule 22, sec. 3, 1973 Workmen's Compensation Commission Revised Rules.

[3] Luzon Stevedoring Corp. vs. Reyes, et al., 71 SCRA 655, 658 (June 30, 1976).

[4] Quintos, et al. vs. Republic, L-46249-52, August 31, 1977, citing Soliven vs. Workmen's Compensation Commission, L-44763, June 30, 1977, and other cases.

[5] Idem.

[6] No attorney's fees were awarded by the referee, as petitioner was not assisted by counsel or representative. In the present case, contempt and other proceedings are pending against Messrs. JAIME A. JAKOSALEM who filed the petition as "attorney" and MAGDALENO E. JAKOSALEM who "notarized" the petition for representing themselves to be members of the Philippine Bar when the records do not show that they are such members, but have been held up due to the failure of the NBI to locate them at their given addresses and elsewhere.

ABOUT BATAS.ORG

Study smarter at BATAS.org

The Philippine bar review and law-school companion built around how your brain actually remembers.

The complete Philippine law library - free for everyone.

More than 100,000 Supreme Court decisions, Republic Acts, and executive issuances - full-text searchable, browsable by category and year, and always free. No paywall, no login. This PDF came from it.

Audio case-brief lectures.

Any decision becomes a podcast-style lecture - facts, issues, ruling, and doctrine - with read-along highlighting and a hands-free presentation mode. Study while commuting, working out, or resting your eyes.

Bar review built on the science of memory.

Complete, sequenced courses for all eight bar subjects, narrated like podcasts and reinforced with retrieval practice and spaced review - the study techniques with the strongest evidence behind them.

The full law-school curriculum.

One subscription unlocks the entire J.D. curriculum - every subject, every lesson, with your progress tracked down to the paragraph so you can pick up exactly where you left off, on any device.

Mock exams that tell you where you stand.

Timed multiple-choice exams graded instantly, with per-subject score breakdowns and focus suggestions that point you at your weakest topics first.

A study planner that keeps you on pace.

Set your schedule and BATAS tells you every day whether you are on track for bar day - and exactly which lesson to take next.

Start free at <https://batas.org>

The law library is free forever - and your first lesson is one click away.

The text of this document is an official public record and remains in the public domain. Formatting, presentation, and compilation © 2026 batas.org.

Downloaded free from the batas.org Law Library. Share it freely - the library is free for every law student, bar reviewee, and practitioner.