

JUDGE ESTRELLITA M. PAAS, PETITIONER, VS. EDGAR E. ALMARVEZ, RESPONDENT.

A.M. No. P-03-1690 (Formerly A.M. OCA IPI No. 00-956-P). April 04, 2003

Ponente: CARPIO MORALES, J.

Read online (full-text search, related cases, audio case brief): <https://batas.org/library/f706feb17723/>

CARPIO MORALES, J.:

Pasay City Metropolitan Trial Court (MeTC), Branch 44 Presiding Judge Estrellita M. Paas administratively charged Court Aide/Utility Worker Edgar E. Almarvez with "discourtesy, disrespect, insubordination, neglect in performing his duties, disloyalty, solicitation of monetary consideration and gross violation of the Civil Service Law." The case was docketed as A.M. OCA IPINo. 00-956-P.

In her complaint, Judge Paas alleged that Almarvez is discourteous to his co-employees, lawyers and party litigants; has failed to maintain the cleanliness in and around the court premises despite order to do so, thus amounting to insubordination; was, and on several instances, habitually absent from work or made it appear that he reported for work by signing the logbook in the morning, only to stay out of the office the whole day; asked from detention prisoners P100.00 to P200.00 before he released to them their Release Orders; asked for amounts in excess of what was necessary for the purchase of stamps and pocketed the difference; once failed to mail printed matter on July 11, 2000 and kept for his own use the amount given to him for the purpose; and divulged confidential information to litigants in advance of its authorized release date for a monetary consideration, thus giving undue advantage or favor to the paying party, in violation of Rep. Act No. 3019 (The Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act).[1]

Pasay City MeTC Branch 44 Clerk of Court Pedro C. Doctolero, Jr., by his Affidavit,[2] and members of the court staff,[3] by a Joint Affidavit, attested that Almarvez failed to maintain the cleanliness in and around the court premises, and had shown discourtesy in dealing with Judge Paas and his co-employees. Doctolero's affidavit also corroborated Judge Paas' allegation that Almarvez would merely sign the logbook in the morning and thereafter stay out of the office.

Pasay City Postmaster Emma Z. Espiritu, by Certification dated August 2, 2000,[4] attested that the alleged printed matter intended to be mailed on July 11, 2000 was not included in the list of registered mails posted in the Pasay City Post Office on said date.

Jail Escort Russel S. Hernandez and Jail Officer II Rosendo Macabasag, both assigned to the Pasay City Jail, by their respective affidavits,[5] attested that on several occasions, they saw Almarvez receive from detention prisoners P100.00 to P200.00 in consideration of the release of their Release Orders.

Almarvez, by Answer of September 25, 2000,[6] denied Judge Paas' charges, and alleged that the real reason why Judge Paas filed the case against him was because she suspected him of helping her husband, Atty. Renerio G. Paas, conceal his marital indiscretions; since she failed to elicit any information from him, she resorted to calling him names and other forms of harassment; on September 6, 2000, she hurled at him the following invectives before the other employees of the court: "Walang kuwenta, ahas ka, driver lang kita, pinaasenso kita, walang

utang na loob, pinagtatakpan mo pa ang asawa ko, ulupong"; and she insisted that he sign a prepared resignation letter, a copy of which he was not able to keep.

Almarvez added that he had been subjected by Judge Paas to the following incidents of oppression and abuse of authority: On July 28, 2000, he was called by the Judge to her chambers where she berated him as follows: "Sinungaling ka, ang dami mong alam, hindi ka nagsasabi ng totoo sa akin, gago, tanga, pirmahan mo itong resignation letter, kung hindi kakasuhan kita ng estafa at falsification "; the next day, the Judge, on seeing him, told him "Bakit ka nandiyan, mag-leave ka sa Lunes"; and on July 31, 2000, the Judge called him again to her chambers and told him "Ang kapal ng mukha mo, pumasok ka pa dito, gago, kaya kita ipinasok dito dahil driver kita. "

Continuing, Almarvez claimed that on July 31, 2000, he reported the foregoing incidents to Pasay City MeTC Executive Judge Maria Cancino Erum who advised him to report the same to the Office of the Clerk of Court; and on August 1, 2000, he executed a sworn statement-complaint[7] against Judge Paas and went to the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA) to file it, but he was advised to try to talk the matter over with her who then told him that they should forget all about it.

On the merits of the charges, Almarvez denied ever requesting for money in exchange for the release of court orders and alleged that both Hernandez and Macabasag executed their respective affidavits because Judge Paas was a principal sponsor at their respective weddings; Hernandez was in fact indebted to the Judge for helping him cover-up the escape of a detainee under his charge; the court's mail matters were always sealed whenever he received them for mailing and he never tampered with their contents; the alleged unmailed printed matter was actually posted on June 28, 2000, not on July 11, 2000, via ordinary instead of registered mail, because the money given to him for the purpose was insufficient; and on the days when he was out of the office, he was actually performing personal errands for the judge and her husband, Atty. Paas, who treated him as their personal driver and messenger.

As further proof of Judge Paas' oppressive behavior towards him, Almarvez claimed that she ordered him to undergo a drug test per Memorandum dated September 7, 2000,[8] even if he had no history of drug abuse on a periodic or continuous basis as shown by the test results of his examination.[9]

The Court treated respondent's Answer as a counter-complaint against Judge Paas and docketed it as A.M. No. MTJ-01-1363.

The two administrative cases were consolidated and referred for evaluation to the OCA, which assigned them to Executive Judge Vicente L. Yap of Pasay City RTC, Branch 114 for investigation.

In a separate case for inhibition of Judge Paas in a criminal case, it was revealed that Judge Paas' husband, private practitioner Atty. Paas, was using his wife's office as his office address in his law practice, in support of which were submitted copies of a Notice of Appeal signed by Atty. Paas, notices from Pasay City RTC Branch 109 and from the Supreme Court with respect to the case of People vs. Louie Manabat, et al. (G.R. Nos. 140536-37) which indicated Atty. Paas' address to be Room 203, Hall of Justice, Pasay City,[10] the office assigned to Pasay City MeTC, Branch 44.

Pursuant to Sec. 1 of Rule 139-B[11] of the Rules of Court which allows the Supreme Court to motu proprio initiate proceedings for the discipline of attorneys, this Court resolved to docket the matter as A.M. No. 01-12-02-SC and to consolidate it with A.M. OCA IPI No. 00-956-P and A.M. No. MTJ-01-1363.

In compliance with the December 4, 2001 Resolution[12] of the Court en banc, Judge and Atty. Paas submitted their January 16, 2002 Joint Affidavit[13] wherein they vehemently denied the charge that the latter was using

Room 203 of the Pasay City Hall of Justice as his office address, they claiming that Atty. Paas actually holds office at 410 Natividad Building, Escolta, Manila with his partner Atty. Herenio Martinez; Atty. Paas would visit his wife at her office only when he has a hearing before the Pasay City courts or Prosecutor's Office, or when he lunches with or fetches her, or when he is a guest during special occasions such as Christmas party and her birthday which are celebrated therein; and Judge Paas would never consent nor tolerate the use of the court for any personal activities. Attached to the Joint Affidavit were the separate sworn statements of Atty. Paas' law partner Atty. Herenio E. Martinez[14] and secretary Nilda L. Gatdula[15] attesting that he is holding office at the above-said address in Escolta, and the Joint Affidavit of the Pasay City MeTC Branch 44 court personnel[16] attesting that Atty. Paas' visits to the court are neither routine nor daily occurrences, and he never used the court in the practice of his profession.

On January 24, 2002, Judge Paas executed a Supplemental Affidavit[17] wherein she admitted that Atty. Paas did use her office as his return address for notices and orders in Crim. CaseNos. 98-1197 to 98-1198, "People vs. Louie Manabat y Valencia and Raymond dela Cruz y Salita, " (now docketed in this Court as G.R. Nos. 140536-37), lodged at the Pasay City RTC, Branch 109, but only to ensure and facilitate delivery of those notices, but after the cases were terminated, all notices were sent to his office address in Escolta.

By Resolution of February 12, 2002,[18] the Court referred the matter to the OCA for evaluation, report and recommendation.

After the completion of his investigation of A.M. OCA IPI No. 00-956-P and A.M. No. MTJ-01-1363, Judge Yap submitted his Report/Recommendation dated February 28, 2002.[19]

On March 11, 2002, the OCA submitted its Report on A.M. No. 01-12-02-SC dated March 1, 2002.[20]

I. OCA Findings and Recommendations

A. On the charges against Almarvez:

The OCA, for lack of evidence, recommended the dismissal of the charges against Almarvez of exacting money from detainees, violating confidentiality of official communication, absence without official leave, discourtesy and insubordination. Given Almarvez' unsatisfactory performance ratings for three rating periods covering January to June 2000,[21] July to December 2000,[22] and January to April 2001,[23] however, the OCA recommended that he be duly penalized for inefficiency in the performance of his official duties with One (1) Month suspension without pay, instead of dismissal as warranted under Memorandum Circular No. 12, s. 1994, his supervisor having failed to observe the procedure thereunder for dropping of employees from the rolls, which procedure is quoted at the later portion of this decision.

B. On the charges against Judge Paas:

With respect to the complaint of Almarvez against Judge Paas, the OCA, for lack of supporting evidence, recommended the dismissal of the charges of maltreatment, harassment and verbal abuse. It found, however, that Judge Paas "had used her administrative power of supervision and control over court personnel for her personal pride, prejudice and pettiness"[24] when she issued her September 7, 2000 Memorandum ordering Alvarez to undergo a drug test after she had already filed an administrative case against him. It thus concluded that, in all probability, the purpose of Judge Paas in ordering Almarvez to undergo a drug test was to fish for evidence to support the administrative case she had already filed against him.

Accordingly, the OCA recommended that Judge Paas be found guilty of simple misconduct in office, and be penalized with reprimand with a warning that a repetition of the same or similar acts shall be dealt with more

severely.

II. This Court's Findings:

A. On the charges against Almarvez:

Indeed, this Court finds that there is no sufficient evidence to support the charge of violation of confidentiality of official communication against Almarvez. The charge against Almarvez in Judge Paas' complaint-affidavit which reads:

That said ALMARVEZ being in charge of the mails had divulged informations which is confidential in nature to party litigants in advance of its authorized release date before the release of Court Order and Decision for consideration of a sum of money thus giving undue advantage or favor to the paying party detrimental to the due administration of justice,[25]

in fact lacks particularity. It is devoid of material details to enable Almarvez to intelligently meet the same.

As for the charges of neglect of duty, discourtesy and insubordination which were echoed in the affidavits of court personnel, they are also too general to support a conviction and are contrary to what is reflected in his performance rating that he cooperated willingly, even wholeheartedly, with his fellow employees.

On the charge of violation of Rep. Act No. 3019 (Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act): Absent any evidence to support the charge, the affiants-jail officers who claimed to have witnessed Almarvez receive money from detention prisoners in exchange for the release of their Release Orders not having been presented, hence, their claim remains hearsay, Almarvez' categorical denial and counter-allegation that these affiants executed their affidavits only out of fear of or favor to Judge Paas gain light.

As for the charge that Almarvez would merely sign the logbook and would thereafter leave the office, again Judge Paas failed to present the affiant-Clerk of Court Atty. Pedro C. Doctolero, Jr. While she submitted in evidence a copy of her October 6, 2000 memorandum[26] requiring Almarvez to explain why he was not in the office on September 8, 11, and 13, and October 5, 2000, despite his affixing of his signature in the logbook on those dates indicating that he reported for work, Almarvez satisfactorily explained that on September 8, 11, and 13, 2000, he submitted himself to drug testing as required by her in her September 7, 2000[27] memorandum, which explanation is supported by the September 14, 2000 letter of Dr. Rosendo P. Saulog, Medical Specialist II of the Dangerous Drug Board.[28] As to his whereabouts on October 5, 2000, Almarvez' explanation that he was actually present in the morning but left in the afternoon for the Supreme Court[29] was not controverted.

On the charge of inefficiency, this Court concurs with the following findings of the OCA that he should be faulted therefor:

The performance ratings of respondent Almarvez for three (3) rating periods covering January to June 2000, July to December 2000 and January to April 2001 evidently shows that he failed to perform his official duties. The fact that respondent Almarvez never disputed the performance ratings given him is tantamount to an implied acceptance thereof pursuant to Sec. 5 Rule IX Book V of Executive Order No. 292, quoted as follows:

"Sec. 5. An employee who expresses dissatisfaction with the rating given him may appeal through the established Grievance Procedure of the Department or Agency within fifteen (15) days after receipt of his copy of his performance rating. Failure to file an appeal within the prescribed period shall be deemed a waiver of such right."

The performance ratings of respondent for the said periods are valid grounds to drop him from the Rolls. However, considering that his superior/supervisor failed to comply with the requirements set forth in

Memorandum Circular No. 12, Series of 1994 of the Civil Service Commission, which is hereunder quoted, and that he was able to make up and cure his inefficiency after he was given the opportunity to improve his performance in his detail to Branch 11, MeTC, Manila, as shown by his performance rating for the period April to June 2001 with a "very satisfactory" rating, dropping him from the roll will no longer be appropriate[30] (Emphasis and italics supplied.)

Par. 2.2 of CSC Memorandum Circular No. 12, s. 1994 referred to in the above-quoted findings of the OCA reads:

2.2 Unsatisfactory or Poor Performance.

(a) An official or employee who is given two (2) consecutive unsatisfactory ratings may be dropped from the rolls after due notice. Notice shall mean that the officer or employee concerned is informed in writing of his unsatisfactory performance for a semester and is sufficiently warned that a succeeding unsatisfactory performance shall warrant his separation from the service. Such notice shall be given not later than 30 days from the end of the semester and shall contain sufficient information which shall enable the employee to prepare an explanation. (Emphasis and italics supplied.)

The suspension of Almarvez for One (1) Month without pay, as recommended by the OCA, is thus in order.

B. On the charges against Judge Paas:

Regarding the charges of abuse of authority and oppression against Judge Paas, Almarvez failed to substantiate the same.

Judge Paas' order for Almarvez to undergo a drug test is not an unlawful order. Per Civil Service Commission Memorandum Circular No. 34, s. 1997, public employees are required to undergo a drug test prior to employment to determine if they are drug-free. To be drug-free is not merely a pre-employment prerequisite but is a continuing requirement to ensure the highest degree of productivity of the civil service. However, considering that the order was issued after Judge Paas filed the administrative case against Almarvez, it elicits the suspicion that it was only a fishing expedition against him. This is conduct unbecoming of a member of the judiciary, for which Judge Paas should be duly reprimanded.

C. On the charges against Judge Paas and Atty. Paas:

By Judge Paas' own admission in her January 24, 2002 Supplemental Affidavit,[31] she was aware that her husband Atty. Paas was using her office to receive court notices and orders in a case lodged in a Pasay court. As the OCA puts it, "[w]hile the same appears to be innocuous, it could be interpreted as a subtle way of sending a message that Atty. Paas is the husband of a judge in the same building and should be given special treatment by other judges or court personnel." [32]

The following are instructive in the disposition of these charges against the judge and her spouse, Atty. Paas:

SC Administrative Circular No. 01-99, "Enhancing the Dignity of Courts as Temples of Justice and Promoting Respect for their Officials and Employers " reads:

As courts are temples of justice, their dignity and sanctity must, at all times be preserved and enhanced. In inspiring public respect for the justice system, court officials and employees must:

- In general: (a) avoid committing any act which would constitute grounds for disciplinary action under, as the case may be, the Canons of Judicial Ethics, Code of Judicial Conduct; and Section 46, Chapter 7, Subtitle A, Title I, Book V of the Administrative Code of 1987 (Executive Order No. 292); and (b) faithfully comply with the norms of conduct and perform the duties prescribed in the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees (R.A. No. 6713);

- Zealously guard the public trust character of their offices;

X X X

X X X

X X X

- Never use their offices as a residence or for any other purpose than for court or judicial functions. (Emphasis and italics supplied.)

Canon 2 of the Code of Judicial Conduct provides that "A judge should avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all activities." Specifically, Rule 2.03 thereof provides that:

Rule 2.03. A judge shall not allow family, social, or other relationships to influence judicial conduct or judgment. The prestige of judicial office shall not be used or lent to advance the private interests of others, nor convey or permit others to convey the impression that they are in a special position to influence the judge. (Italics supplied.)

SC Circular No. 3-92,[33] dated August 31, 1992, of this Court reads:

SUBJECT: — PROHIBITION AGAINST USE OF HALLS OF JUSTICE FOR RESIDENTIAL OR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES

All judges and court personnel are hereby reminded that the Halls of Justice may be used only for purposes directly related to the functioning and operation of the courts of justice, and may not be devoted to any other use, least of all as residential quarters of the judges or court personnel, or for carrying on therein any trade or profession.

Attention is drawn to A.M. No. RTJ-89-327 (Nellie Kelly Austria vs. Judge Singuat Guerra), a case involving unauthorized and improper use of the court's premises for dwelling purposes by respondent and his family, in which the Court, by Resolution dated October 17, 1991, found respondent Judge guilty of irresponsible and improper conduct prejudicial to the efficient administration of justice and best interest of the service, and imposed on him the penalty of SEVERE CENSURE, the Court declaring that such use of the court's premises inevitably degrades the honor and dignity of the court in addition to exposing judicial records to danger of loss or damage. (Italics supplied.)

By allowing her husband to use the address of her court in pleadings before other courts, Judge Paas indeed "allowed [him] to ride on her prestige for purposes of advancing his private interest, in violation of the Code of Judicial Conduct"[34] and of the above-stated Supreme Court circulars, which violation is classified as a less serious charge under the Rules of Court[35] and is punishable under the same Rule.[36]

A judge's official conduct should indeed be free from the appearance of impropriety; and his behavior not only in the performance of judicial duties, but also in his everyday life should be beyond reproach. This is premised on the truism that a Judge's official life cannot simply be detached or separated from his personal existence and that upon a Judge's attributes depend the public perception of the Judiciary.[37]

On his part, Atty. Paas was guilty of using a fraudulent, misleading, and deceptive address that had no purpose other than to try to impress either the court in which his cases are lodged, or his client, that he has close ties to a member of the judiciary, in violation of the following rules of the Code of Professional Responsibility:

CANON 3 — A LAWYER IN MAKING KNOWN HIS LEGAL SERVICES SHALL USE ONLY TRUE,

HONEST, FAIR, DIGNIFIED AND OBJECTIVE INFORMATION OR STATEMENT OF FACTS.

Rule 3.01. A lawyer shall not use or permit the use of any false, fraudulent, misleading, deceptive, undignified, self-laudatory or unfair statement or claim regarding his qualifications or legal services.

CANON 10 — A LAWYER OWES CANDOR, FAIRNESS AND GOOD FAITH TO THE COURT.

Rule 10.01 A lawyer shall not do any falsehood, nor consent to the doing of any in Court; nor shall he mislead, or allow the Court to be misled by any artifice.

CANON 13 — A LAWYER SHALL RELY UPON THE MERITS OF HIS CAUSE AND REFRAIN FROM ANY IMPROPRIETY WHICH TENDS TO INFLUENCE, OR GIVES THE APPEARANCE OF INFLUENCING THE COURT.

CANON 15 — A LAWYER SHALL OBSERVE CANDOR, FAIRNESS AND LOYALTY IN ALL HIS DEALINGS AND TRANSACTIONS WITH HIS CLIENTS.

Rule 15.06. A lawyer shall not state or imply that he is able to influence any public official, tribunal or legislative body.

The need for relying on the merits of a lawyer's case, instead of banking on his relationship with a member of the bench which tends to influence or gives the appearance of influencing the court, cannot be overemphasized. It is unprofessional and dishonorable, to say the least, to misuse a public office to enhance a lawyer's prestige. Public confidence in law and lawyers may be eroded by such reprehensible and improper conduct.

This Court does not subscribe to the proffered excuse that expediency and a desire to ensure receipt of court orders and notices prompted Atty. Paas and Judge Paas to allow him to have his court notices sent to office of Judge Paas, especially given the fact that for his other cases, Atty. Paas used his office address but there is no showing that he failed to receive the notices sent to that address. While a lawyer should make the necessary arrangements to ensure that he is properly informed of any court action, these should not violate his lawyer's oath or the Code of Professional Responsibility, nor provide an opportunity for a member of the judiciary to breach his or her responsibilities under Supreme Court circulars and the Code of Judicial Conduct.

WHEREFORE, this Court finds:

(1) In A.M. OCA IPI No. 00-956-P, respondent Edgar E. Almarvez GUILTY of inefficiency and is hereby SUSPENDED for One (1) Month without pay;

(2) In A.M. No. MTJ-01-1363, respondent, Judge Estrellita M. Paas GUILTY of conduct unbecoming of a member of the judiciary and is hereby REPRIMANDED, with warning that repetition of the same or similar acts shall be dealt with more severely;

(3) In A.M. No. 01-12-02-SC,

(a) Judge Paas GUILTY of violating SC Administrative Circular No. 01-99, SC Circular No. 3-92 and Canon 2, Rule 2.03 of the Code of Judicial Conduct and is hereby ordered to pay a FINE of TWELVE THOUSAND PESOS (P12,000.00), with warning that repetition of the same or similar acts shall be dealt with more severely; and

(b) Atty. Renerio Paas GUILTY of SIMPLE MISCONDUCT and is hereby SUSPENDED from the practice of law for a period of THREE (3) MONTHS, with warning that repetition of the same or similar act shall be dealt with more severely.

This Decision shall take effect immediately.

Let copies of this Decision be furnished the Office of the Bar Confidant, Integrated Bar of the Philippines, and appended to respondents' personal record.

SO ORDERED.

Davide, Jr., C.J., Bellosillo, Puno, Vitug, Mendoza, Panganiban, Quisumbing, Ynares-Santiago, Sandoval-Gutierrez, Carpio, Austria-Martinez, Corona, Callejo, Sr., and Azcuna, JJ., concur.

[1] A.M. OCA IPI 00-956-P Rollo at 2-4.

[2] Exhibit "B", Ibid, at 5.

[3] Exhibit "F", Ibid, at 11.

[4] Exhibit "C-1", Ibid, at 8.

[5] Exhibit "D" and "E", Ibid. at 7 and 10, respectively.

[6] A.M. No. MTJ-01-1363 Rollo at 2-4.

[7] Ibid, at 5-6.

[8] Annex "2", Ibid, at 5-6.

[9] Annex "3" and "4", Ibid, at 8-9.

[10] A.M. No. 01-12-02-SC Rollo at 3-6.

[11] As provided in Sections 13-14 of Rule 139-B, Rules of Court, in proceedings initiated motu proprio by the Supreme Court or in other proceedings when the interest of justice so requires, the Supreme Court may refer the case for investigation to the Solicitor General or to any officer of the Supreme Court or judge of a lower court x x x. Based upon the evidence adduced at the investigation, the Solicitor General or other Investigator designated by the Supreme Court shall submit to the Supreme Court a report containing his findings of fact and recommendations together with the record and all the evidence presented in the investigation for the final action of the Supreme Court (*Italics supplied*). See *Bautista vs. Gonzales*, A.M. No. 1625, February 12, 1990, 182 SCRA 151, 158.

[12] A.M. No. 01-12-02-SC Rollo at 9.

[13] Ibid, at 10-11.

[14] Annex "A", Ibid, at 12.

[15] Annex "B", Ibid, at 14.

[16] Annex "C", Ibid, at 15-16.

[17] Ibid, at 29.

[18] Ibid, at 34.

[19] A.M. OCA IPI No. 00-956-P Rollo at 271-280.

[20] A.M. No. 01-12-02-SC Rollo at 37-39.

[21] A.M. OCA IPI No. 00-956-P at 118-119.

[22] Ibid, at 120-121.

[23] Ibid, at 122-123.

[24] OCA Recommendation, A.M. No. OCA IPI No. 00-956-P Rollo at 308.

[25] Ibid, at 3.

[26] Exhibit "J", Ibid, at 61.

[27] Annex "2", Ibid, at 20.

[28] Ibid, at 64.

[29] Exhibit "K", Ibid, at 62.

[30] OCA Recommendation, A.M. No. OCA IPI No. 00-956-P Rollo at 307-308.

[31] A.M. No. 01-12-02-SC Rollo at 29.

[32] OCA Recommendation, A.M. No. 01-12-02-SC Rollo at 38.

[33] See Bautista vs. Costelo, Jr., A.M. No. P-94-1043, February 28, 1996, 254 SCRA 148, 157.

[34] OCA Recommendation, A.M. No. 01-12-02-SC Rollo at 38.

[35] Rule 140, Sec. 4 (4). This was amended on September 11, 2001 by A.M. No. 01-8-10-SC, "Discipline of Judges of Regular and Special Courts and Justices of the Court of Appeals and Sandiganbayan."

[36] Rule 140, Sec. 10B.

[37] Balderama vs. Judge Alagar, A.M. No. RTJ-99-1449, January 18, 2002, at 11 (citations omitted).

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.