

**NESTOR G. ATITIW, AS TAXPAYER, LAWYER AND IN HIS CAPACITY
AS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE CORDILLERA BODONG
ADMINISTRATION (CBA) AND AS MEMBER OF THE CORDILLERA
EXECUTIVE BOARD (CEB),...**

G.R. No. 143374. September 30, 2005

Ponente: TINGA, J.

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TINGA, J.:

PROLOGUE

The ethnographic diversity of the Filipino people is a source of national pride, enriching as it has, our nation's culture. Nonetheless, it has likewise been the source, on occasion, of political discomfort. The inherent right of peoples to maintain their traditional way of life has not always met a welcome response from the entrenched majority. The perceived discriminatory treatment of cultural minorities has in turn engendered unrest.

The restoration of democracy, with the resultant promulgation of the 1987 Constitution, has allowed more room for creative solutions that accord the utmost respect to the rights and traditions of cultural minorities. Regional autonomy is one of the preferred solutions in the Constitution, and one which the Court has been all too willing to affirm or defer to. It is a solution long dreamed of by ethnic minorities around the world, and its growing acceptance in the international realm is but a further step in the evolution of world civilizations towards the humane, democratic ideal.

There is a certain element of tragedy in the present petition, as it arises from the failure to this day to vitalize the dream of local autonomy of the Cordillera people. It might seem to some that the Court will compound the tragedy by denying, as it does, the present petition. Yet there are fundamental prerogatives that have to be upheld, particularly the powers of Congress over the national purse and to legislate, both of which it exercises in representation of the sovereign people. Neither the goal of regional autonomy nor the unique status of the Cordillera people cannot hinder the rule of law and the Constitution.

THE PETITION

Petitioners Nestor G. Atitiw, Maylene D. Gayo, Florencio Kigis, and Modesto Sagudang have brought to this Court the instant petition for prohibition, mandamus, and declaratory relief as taxpayers and officers and members of the various units of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR). They seek, among others, the declaration of nullity of paragraph 1 of the Special Provisions of Republic Act No. 8760, otherwise known as the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of 2000, directing that the appropriation for the CAR shall be spent to wind up its activities and pay the separation and retirement benefits of all affected officials and employees.

The 2000 GAA appropriated a total of P18,379,000.00 for the CAR's general administration and support services for that year, in contrast to the annual appropriation of P36,000,000.00 in the previous years.

Named respondents are the Executive Secretary, the Secretary of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and the Republic of the Philippines.

While the petition is based on Rule 65 of the Rules of Court in regard to prohibition and mandamus, petitioners also ask for the issuance of a writ of preliminary injunction and/or temporary restraining order to enjoin respondents from implementing the questioned provision and a writ of preliminary mandatory injunction commanding the Executive Secretary and the DBM to source out funds for the immediate resumption of operations of the CAR pending consideration of the petition. As the 2000 GAA has long been implemented, the application for the issuance of a writ of preliminary injunction and/or temporary restraining order is already moot and academic. Nonetheless, the Court shall pass upon the constitutional issues raised in this petition.

FACTS

A brief historical account of the CAR is in order.

When President Corazon Aquino assumed the presidency after the EDSA people power revolt, she was confronted with the insurgency in the Cordilleras, a problem of long standing which dates back to the martial rule of then President Marcos. Thus, her government initiated a series of peace talks with the Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA) and the Cordillera Bodong Administration (CBA), both headed by Fr. Conrado Balweg. The dialogues between the representatives of the government and the CPLA centered on the establishment of an autonomous government in the Cordilleras and culminated in the forging of a Joint Memorandum of Agreement on September 13, 1986, whereby the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the CPLA had agreed to end hostilities.

On February 2, 1987, the Filipino people ratified the 1987 Philippine Constitution. Section 15, Article X[1] thereof ordains the creation of autonomous regions in Muslim Mindanao and in the Cordilleras while Section 18, Article X[2] thereof mandates the congressional enactment of the organic acts for each of the autonomous regions.

After the cessation of hostilities, the dialogues went on and these paved the way for the signing on March 27, 1987 of a Joint Statement of the Government Panel and the Cordillera Panel, enjoining the drafting of an executive order to authorize the creation of a policy-making and administrative body for the Cordilleras and to conduct studies on the drafting of an organic act for the autonomous region. Thus, by virtue of her residual legislative powers under the Freedom Constitution, President Aquino promulgated Executive Order (E.O.) No. 220 on July 15, 1987, creating the CAR, which is the interim and preparatory body tasked, among others, to administer the affairs of government in the Cordilleras composed of the provinces of Abra, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga-Apayao and Mountain Province and the City of Baguio.

Pursuant to the 1987 Constitution, on October 23, 1989, Congress enacted Republic Act No. 6766 entitled An Act Providing for an Organic Act for the Cordillera Autonomous Region. On January 30, 1990, a plebiscite was held wherein the people of the aforementioned provinces and city cast their votes on the ratification of the Organic Act. The plebiscite results showed, however, that the creation of an autonomous region was approved by a majority of votes in the Ifugao province only and overwhelmingly rejected in the rest of the region. In *Ordillo v. Commission on Elections*[3] the Court ruled that the sole province of Ifugao cannot validly constitute the Cordillera Autonomous Region and upheld the disapproval of the Organic Act by the people of the region. In said case, the Court also declared E.O. No. 220 to be still in force and effect until properly repealed or amended.

On February 15, 2000, President Estrada signed into law the 2000 GAA which includes the assailed Special Provisions.

On July 20, 2000, President Estrada issued E.O. No. 270, which extended the implementation of the winding up

of operations of the CAR.[4] He extended the period further to March 31, 2001 by virtue of E.O. No. 328 which he issued on December 27, 2000.[5]

ISSUES

The instant petition raises the following remolded issues:

- WHETHER THE ASSAILED SPECIAL PROVISIONS IN R. A. NO. 8760 (2000 GAA) IS A RIDER AND AS SUCH IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL;

- WHETHER THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT, THROUGH CONGRESS, CAN UNILATERALLY AMEND/REPEAL E.O. No. 220;

- WHETHER THE REPUBLIC SHOULD BE ORDERED TO HONOR ITS COMMITMENTS AS SPELLED OUT IN E.O. No. 220.[6]

THE COURT'S RULING The petition is bereft of merit.

The lead appropriation item for the CAR in the 2000 GAA reads in part:

XXX. AUTONOMOUS REGIONS

A. CORDILLERA ADMINISTRATIVE REGION (PROPER)

For general administration and support services, support to operation, and operation, as indicated hereunder
P18,379,000

New Appropriations, by Program/Project

....

Right after the appropriation item are the following Special Provisions, thus:

Special Provisions

- Use of the Fund. The amounts herein appropriated shall be used to wind up the activities and operations of the Cordillera Administrative Region, including the payment of separation and retirement benefits of all affected officials and employees; PROVIDED, That any deficiency in the amount for the payment of terminal leave and retirement gratuity benefits shall be taken from the Miscellaneous Personnel Benefits Fund.

- Appropriations for Programs and Specific Activities. The amounts herein appropriated for the programs of the agency shall be used specifically for the following activities in the indicated amounts and conditions: . . .[7]

Petitioners argue that the above-quoted paragraph 1 of the Special Provisions is a prohibited rider which

contravenes Section 25(2), Article VI of the Constitution, which reads:

SEC. 25 (2) No provision or enactment shall be embraced in the general appropriations bill unless it relates specifically to some particular appropriation therein. Any such provision or enactment shall be limited in its operation to the appropriation to which it relates.

It is a jurisprudential axiom that respect for the inherent and stated powers and prerogatives of the law-making body, as well as faithful adherence to the principle of separation of powers, requires that its enactments be accorded the presumption of constitutionality. Thus, in any challenge to the constitutionality of a statute, the burden of clearly and unequivocally proving its unconstitutionality always rests upon the challenger. Conversely, failure to so prove will necessarily defeat the challenge.[8] The instant petition falls short of the requirement necessary to overturn the presumption of constitutionality which the questioned provision enjoys.

A rider is a provision which is alien to or not germane to the subject or purpose of the bill in which it is incorporated. There are two provisions in the 1987 Constitution which expressly prohibit riders. These are provisions in Article VI of the Constitution, namely Section 25(2) and Section 26(1), which

Sec. 25.

(2) No provision or enactment shall be embraced in the general appropriations bill unless it relates specifically to some particular appropriation therein. Any such provision or enactment shall be limited in its operation to the appropriation to which it relates.

Sec. 26.

(1) Every bill passed by the Congress shall embrace only one subject which shall be expressed in the title thereof.

The rationale against inserting a rider in an appropriations bill under the specific appropriation clause embodied in Section 25(2), Article VI of the Constitution is similar to that of the "one subject in the title" clause provided in Section 26(1) also of Article VI, which directs that every provision in a bill must be germane or has some reasonable relation to the subject matter as expressed in the title thereof. The unity of the subject matter of a bill is mandatory in order to prevent hodge-podge or logrolling legislation, to avoid surprise or fraud upon the legislature, and to fairly appraise the people of the subjects of legislation that are being considered.[9]

An appropriations bill, however, covers a broader range of subject matter and therefore includes more details compared to an ordinary bill. As a matter of fact, the title of an appropriations bill cannot be any broader as it is since it is not feasible to come out with a title that embraces all the details included in an appropriations bill. This is not to sanction, however, the insertion of provisions or clauses which do not have any relation to appropriations found therein. Thus, Section 25(2), Article VI lays down a germaneness standard akin to that prescribed in Section 26(1).

Compliance with the requirement under Section 25(2), Article VI of the Constitution is mandatory. However, the rule should not be construed so strictly as to tie the hands of Congress in providing budgetary policies in the appropriations bill.

The subsection simply requires that all the provisions in a general appropriations bill are either appropriation items or non-appropriation items which relate specifically to appropriation items. Thus, provisions or clauses that do not directly appropriate funds are deemed appurtenant in a general appropriations bill when they specify certain conditions and restrictions in the manner by which the funds to which they relate have to be spent.

In *Gonzales v. Macaraig, Jr.*, [10] the Court struck down Section 55 and Section 16 of the appropriations acts for

the fiscal years 1989 and 1990, respectively, because they were not provisions in the budgetary sense of the term. Both sections disallowed the use of savings from appropriations authorized for other purposes to augment any item of appropriation which was reduced or disapproved by Congress. The Court explained therein:

Explicit is the requirement that a provision in the Appropriations Bill should relate specifically to some "particular appropriation" therein. The challenged "provisions" fall short of this requirement. Firstly, the vetoed "provisions" do not relate to any particular or distinctive appropriation. They apply generally to all items disapproved or reduced by Congress in the Appropriations Bill. Secondly, the disapproved or reduced items are nowhere to be found on the face of the Bill. To discover them, resort will have to be made to the original recommendation made by the President and to the source indicated by petitioners themselves,... Thirdly, the vetoed Sections are more of an expression of Congressional policy in respect of augmentation from savings rather than a budgetary appropriation."^[11]

Therefore, in order that a provision or clause in a general appropriations bill may comply with the test of germaneness, it must be particular, unambiguous, and appropriate. A provision or clause is particular if it relates specifically to a distinct item of appropriation in the bill and does not refer generally to the entire appropriations bill. It is unambiguous when its application or operation is apparent on the face of the bill and it does not necessitate reference to details or sources outside the appropriations bill. It is an appropriate provision or clause when its subject matter does not necessarily have to be treated in a separate legislation.

The assailed paragraph of the Special Provisions, insofar as it limits the spending of the appropriation for CAR to the winding up of its activities, does not constitute a rider. It precisely follows the standard that a provision in an appropriations bill must relate specifically to some particular appropriation therein. Said paragraph meets the germaneness standard because it lays down a limitation or restriction on the use of a specific appropriation item already provided in the 2000 GAA. Its operation is expressly confined to the budgetary allocation for the CAR. Reference to other provisions of the 2000 GAA or to details in other laws is not called for. Said provision did not have to be the subject of separate legislation because precisely the budgetary policy of Congress not to support the programs of the CAR was properly made a part of the 2000 GAA.

It is beyond dispute that inherent in the power of appropriation is the power to specify how money shall be spent; and that in addition to distinct "items" of appropriation, the legislature may include in appropriations bills qualifications, conditions, limitations or restrictions on expenditure of funds.^[12] The only limitation is that restrictions or conditions in an appropriations bill must exhibit a connection with money items in a budgetary sense in the schedule of expenditures.^[13]

According to petitioners, however, paragraph 1 of the Special Provisions, allotting as it does the funds for the winding up of activities and operations of the CAR, is foreign to the general subject of the GAA. They argue that instead of providing a budget for the CAR, it violates the purpose (of the 2000 GAA) by not providing for the proper and reasonable budget for the CAR.

Quite the contrary, said provision is necessarily related to the budgetary allocation for the CAR because it sets forth the purposes for which the funds shall be spent, that is, for the winding up of the activities and payment of separation and retirement benefits of all affected officials of the CAR. Clearly, the policy of Congress was to discontinue budgetary support for the programs and activities thereto for undertaken through the CAR.

Petitioners posit that the questioned paragraph in the 2000 GAA had the effect of abolishing the CAR, more so that the appropriation therein was ordained to be used for the winding up of the affairs of the CAR. Since a special law created the CAR, petitioners argue that the 2000 GAA is "not the place for amending or repealing a standing law."

The CAR was not abolished, as concluded by petitioners, with the reduction of its budgetary allocation; what took place was only a discontinuance of its programs and activities. In fact, E.O. No. 328, the implementing rule of the questioned Special Provisions, provides only for the deactivation of the CAR bodies upon the lapse of its operational period as provided in the E.O. The pertinent sections read:

SECTION 1. Government Operations. — For purposes of Governmental operations, the integrity of the Cordillera Administrative Region as composed of the provinces of Abra, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga Apayao and Mt. Province and the Chartered City of Baguio shall be maintained as created by virtue of E.O. 220 and all regional offices and agencies of the National Government established in the Cordillera Administrative Region shall continue to serve the region.

... ..

SECTION 3. Development Council. — The Cordillera Regional Assembly and the Cordillera Executive Board shall continue in the meantime its development concerns for the CAR during the period.

... ..

SECTION 8. Extension of Period. — The Special Task Force, in coordination with other concerned agencies is hereby given until March 31, 2001 within which to implement the deactivation of the CAR bodies. It shall be assisted by a skeletal force consisting of personnel occupying positions listed in Annex "A" hereof for the task of winding-up of CAR operations and the safekeeping of its resources. ... Unless otherwise transferred to other agencies, members of the skeletal force will be deemed separated from the service after March 31, 2001 unless otherwise provided for by law.

There is a distinction between the words "deactivate" and "abolish." To "deactivate" means to render inactive or ineffective or to break up by discharging or reassigning personnel, while to "abolish" means to do away with, to annul, abrogate or destroy completely. In essence, abolition denotes an intention to do away with the office wholly and permanently. Thus, while in abolition the office ceases to exist, the same is not true in deactivation where the office continues to exist, albeit remaining dormant or inoperative. Be that as it may, deactivation and abolition are both reorganization measures.[14]

However, even assuming that the limitation on the CAR's budget had the effect of abolishing certain offices, the authority of Congress to do so cannot be denied and should be recognized. Except for such offices as are created by the Constitution, the creation of public offices is primarily a legislative function. Insofar as the legislative power in this respect is not restricted by constitutional provisions, it is supreme; the legislature may decide for itself what offices are suitable, necessary, or convenient. When in the exigencies of government, it is necessary to create and define duties the legislative branch has the discretion to determine whether additional offices shall be created, or whether these duties shall be attached to and become ex-officio duties of existing offices. An office created by the legislature is wholly within the power of that body, and it may prescribe the mode of filling the office and the powers and duties of the incumbent, and, if it sees fit, abolish the office.[15]

Petitioners' argument that the abolition of the CAR violates the constitutional mandate that there shall be autonomous regions in Muslim Mindanao and the Cordilleras is without merit. The CAR created by virtue of E.O. No. 220 is not the autonomous region contemplated in the Constitution. A reading of E.O. No. 220 easily reveals that what it actually envisions is the consolidation and coordination of the delivery of services of line departments and agencies of the National Government in the areas covered by the administrative region as a step preparatory to the grant of autonomy to the Cordilleras.[16] E.O. No. 220 has not established an autonomous regional government. Instead, it has created a region, covering a specified area, for administrative purposes with the main objective of coordinating the planning and implementation of programs and services; indeed, as its very name

denotes it is a mere administrative region.[17] The bodies created by E.O. No. 220 do not supplant the existing local government structure, nor are they autonomous government agencies. They merely constitute the mechanism for an "umbrella" that brings together the existing local governments, the agencies of the National Government, the ethno-linguistic groups or tribes, and non-governmental organizations in a concerted effort to spur development in the Cordilleras.[18] Considering the control and supervision exercised by the President over the CAR and the offices created under E.O. No. 220, and considering further the indispensable participation of the line departments of the National Government, the CAR may be considered more than anything else as a regional coordinating agency of the National Government, similar to the regional development councils which the President may create under the Constitution.[19] In this wise, the CAR may be considered as a more sophisticated version of the regional development council.[20]

The second and third assigned errors are interrelated and shall be discussed jointly. Petitioners contend that E.O. No. 220 is a product of peace negotiations and is in the nature of a social and political contract, which Congress cannot unilaterally amend or repeal. Petitioners argue that the Republic is bound to fully implement the provisions of E.O. No. 220; otherwise, the Republic would be guilty of a breach of its peace agreement with the CBA-CPLA. Petitioners also seek to compel respondents "to source out funds for the immediate resumption of the CAR-Propser."

Except for the contention that the assailed paragraph is unconstitutional for being a rider, the rest of petitioners' arguments look into the wisdom and efficacy of said provision, matters which are beyond this Court's power of judicial review. The arguments of petitioners should properly be addressed to the political branches of government. While the Court has resolved to take jurisdiction over this petition which questions acts of the political branches, the principle remains that it is powerless to review the wisdom, merits, or propriety thereof, as it may strike them down only on either of two grounds: (1) unconstitutionality or illegality, and (2) grave abuse of discretion.[21]

Petitioners' grievance that the budget for the CAR's administration and operations is unreasonable or insufficient should be raised before Congress. It involves the question of wisdom of the law which is beyond the province of this Court to inquire. An inquiry of that sort amounts to a derogation of the principle of separation of powers. Courts have no authority to grant relief against the evils that may result from the operation of unwise or imperfect legislation, unless its flaw partakes the nature of a constitutional infirmity.[22]

From another fundamental standpoint, however, petitioners' contention that Congress cannot unilaterally amend or repeal E.O. No. 220 must be rejected. There is no such thing as an irrevocable law. Nothing could prevent Congress from amending or repealing E.O. No. 220 in the event it decides to do so. While it is true that E.O. No. 220 is a law as it was promulgated by then President Aquino in the exercise of her extraordinary legislative power under the Freedom Constitution, said E.O. is no different from any other law. It is subject to amendment or repeal by the plenary power of Congress. Since the ratification of the 1987 Constitution, the power to make, amend, or repeal laws has been lodged exclusively with Congress, except to the extent reserved to the people through initiative and referendum.[23]

The Court is also without authority to compel the Executives branch to implement the provisions of E.O. No. 220 or to restore its budgetary allocation to its previous level. As correctly pointed out by the Solicitor General, no money shall be paid out of the Treasury except in pursuance of an appropriation made by law.[24]

The three branches of government must discharge their respective functions within the limits of authority conferred by the Constitution. Under the principle of separation of powers, the Congress, the President, and the Judiciary may not encroach on fields allocated to the other branches of government. The legislature is generally

limited to the enactment of laws, the executive to the enforcement of laws, and the judiciary to their interpretation and application to cases and controversies.[25] The Court has consistently stressed that "the doctrine of separation of powers calls for the executive, legislative and judicial departments being left alone to discharge their duties as they see fit." [26] The concept of separation of powers presupposes mutual respect by and between the three departments of the government.[27] Therefore, the implementation of E.O. No. 220 is an executive prerogative while the sourcing of funds to support the CAR's activities is within the province of the legislature. Absent any grave abuse of discretion, the Court cannot correct the acts of either the Executive or Congress in respect to the policies concerning the CAR.

CONCLUSION

The creation of autonomous regions does not signify the establishment of a sovereignty distinct from that of the Republic, as it can be installed only "within the framework of this Constitution and the national sovereignty as well as territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines." [28] Under the 1987 Constitution, the creation of the autonomous regions shall be effective when approved by a majority of the votes cast by the constituent units in a plebiscite called for the purpose.[29] In the case of the Cordilleras, the overwhelming majority of its people had voted against regional autonomy.

Petitioners cannot charge the Government of reneging on its obligation under the peace agreement. Precisely, the Government had come out with the Organic Act for the Cordillera Autonomous Region and submitted the same for ratification by the people. It was not called upon to ensure the ratification of the Organic Act by the people.[30]

EPILOGUE

The Court is sympathetic to the pleas of petitioners. The institution of the instant petition underscores the pressing need for regional autonomy of the Cordillera people, a number of whom have fought hard and sacrificed their lives if only to advance their cause for autonomy and self-determination. From the standpoint of policy, regional autonomy is also a means of solving existing serious peace and order problems and secessionist movements.[31] Establishing a system of governance for the Cordillera people that promotes their way of life and heritage, recognizes their indigenous rights, and allows them to chart their destiny as a people within the framework of national sovereignty still remains an unanswered call. It is hoped that Congress will pass another Organic Act which is finally acceptable to the people of the Cordilleras.

ADJUDICATION

WHEREFORE, the instant Petition for Prohibition and Mandamus is DENIED. No pronouncement as to costs.

SO ORDERED.

Davide, Jr., C. J., Puno, Panganiban, Quisumbing, Ynares-Santiago, Sandoval-Gutierrez, Carpio, Austria-Martinez, Corona, Carpio Morales, Callejo, Sr., Azcuna, Chico-Nazario, and Garcia, JJ., concur.

[1] Section 15, Article X of the 1987 Constitution states in full: "There shall be created autonomous regions in Muslim Mindanao and in the Cordilleras consisting of provinces, cities, municipalities, and geographical areas sharing common and distinctive historical and cultural heritage, economic and social structures, and other relevant

characteristics within the framework of this Constitution and the national sovereignty as well as territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines."

[2] Section 18, Article X states in full: "The Congress shall enact an organic act for each autonomous region with the assistance and participation of the regional consultative commission composed of representatives appointed by the President from a list of nominees from multi-sectoral bodies. The organic act shall define the basic structure of government for the region consisting of the executive department and legislative assembly, both of which shall be elective and representative of the constituent political units. The organic acts shall likewise provide for special courts with personal, family and property law jurisdiction consistent with the provisions of this Constitution and national laws.

The creation of the autonomous region shall be effective when approved by a majority of the votes cast by the constituent units in a plebiscite called for the purpose, provided that only provinces, cities, and geographic areas voting favorably in such plebiscite shall be included in the autonomous region."

[3] G.R. No. 93054, December 4, 1990, 192 SCRA 100.

[4] Comment, p. 5; Rollo, p. 117.

[5] Reply, p. 2; id. at 141.

[6] Id. at 4-5.

[7] Republic Act No. 8760. (*Italics supplied.*)

[8] *Cordillera Broad Coalition v. Commission on Audit*, G.R. No. 79956, January 29, 1990, 181 SCRA 495, 501.

[9] *Central Capiz v. Ramirez*, 40 Phil. 883, 891 (1920).

[10] G.R. No. 87636, November 19, 1990, 191 SCRA 452.

[11] Id. at 467.

[12] *Gonzales v. Macaraig*, *supra* note 10 at 468.

[13] Id. at 469.

[14] *Buklod ng Kawaning EIIB v. Honorable Executive Secretary*, 413 Phil. 281, 290 (2001).

[15] *Eugenio v. Civil Service Commission*, 312 Phil. 1145, 1 152 (1995).

[16] *Cordillera Broad Coalition v. Commission on Audit*, *supra* note 8 at 501.

[17] Id. at 502.

[18] Id. at 503.

[19] Id. at 505.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] *Disomangcop v. The Secretary of the Department of Public Works and Highways*, G. R. No. 149848, November 25, 2004, 44 SCRA 203.

[22] *Misolas v. Pnaga*, G. R. No. 83341, January 30, 1990, 181 SCRA 648, 658.

[23] Section 1, Article VI states in full: "The legislative power shall be vested in the Congress of the Philippines,

except to the extent reserved to the people by the provision on initiative and referendum."

[24] Section 29(1), Article VI, CONSTITUTION.

[25] Bengzon v. Drilon, G.R. No. 103524, April 15, 1992, 208 SCRA 133, 142.

[26] In Re: Wenceslao Laureta, G.R. No. 68635, March 12, 1987, 148 SCRA 382, 420.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Disomangcop v. The Secretary of the Department of Public Works and Highways, supra note 21.

[29] Section 18, Article X, CONSTITUTION, Supra note 2.

[30] A second Organic Act (R.A. No. 8438) was enacted by Congress on December 22, 1997. It was also rejected in all of the Cordillera Region except in the province of Apayao in the plebiscite held on March 9, 1998.

[31] Disopangcop v. The Secretary of the Department of Public Works and Highways, supra note 21.

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