

The Philippine Star  
Tuesday, February 13, 2018

11

## SENATE OKS ANTI-HAZING BILL

By PAOLO ROMERO

The Senate yesterday approved on third and final reading a bill that bans all forms of hazing and imposing harsher penalties on hazing deaths.

The passage of Senate Bill 1662 was witnessed by the parents of 22-year-old law freshman Horacio "Atio" Castillo, who died last September during initiation rites of the Aegis Juris fraternity, as well as relatives of other hazing victims.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, chairman of the Senate committee on public order and dangerous drugs and principal author

of the bill, said he hopes the harsher penalties of up to reclusion perpetua (40 years in prison) and P3 million in fines, will put an end to the cruel and deadly practice of fraternities.

Other authors of the bill are Senate Majority Leader Vicente Sotto III, and Senators Sherwin Gatchalian, Juan Miguel Zubiri, Grace Poe, Gregorio Honasan, Loren Legarda and Paolo Benigno Aquino IV.

Under the measure, the definition of hazing has been expanded to include "physical or psychological suffering, harm or injury inflicted on a recruit, member, neophyte, or applicant as a form of initiation rite or practice made as a prerequisite for admission or a requirement for continuing membership in a fraternity, sorority or organization."

It covers actions ranging from paddling to forced calisthenics; exposure to the weather; forced consumption of food, drinks or drugs; and "any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which

is likely to adversely affect the physical and psychological health of such recruit, member, neophyte or applicant."

Also, it prohibits "all forms of hazing" in fraternities, sororities or organizations in schools, communities and even businesses and uniformed service learning institutions.

The bill requires schools to be "more active and proactive" in regulating school-based initiation rites, with fraternities, sororities, and organizations required to submit and post a written application at least seven days prior to the scheduled date.

"We believe that the priority should be focused on ensuring justice for Atio Castillo and his family, and punishing those who were directly responsible for his senseless death," Anti-Hazing Enforcement Movement executive director Chris Anasam said in a statement.

"There is a growing concern, however, that this key point has been sidetracked by secondary matters, thus muddling the picture and diluting the significance of this terrible event," he said.

Anasam was referring to news reports that focused on

the Senate committee recommendation to disbar University of Sto. Tomas Faculty of Civil Law dean Nilo Divina.

Divina, a member of the Aegis Juris, maintained he did everything to locate Castillo, and took a leave from the fraternity when he became the law dean.

"Divina is at best a bit player in this story, and has been fully cleared by the police of any wrongdoing. Why is he suddenly under more scrutiny than the goons who held the paddle and tried to engineer a cover-up?" Anasam said.

\*HAZING