

# Anti-red tape bill ready for Rody's signature

By PAOLO ROMERO

President Duterte is set to sign a law that will further cut red tape in the government.

Congress swiftly passed the measure in response to the administration's thrust to make it easier for an investor to set up shop in the country.

The Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act is now on the President's desk for signing, Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto said yesterday.

Recto, one of the authors of the bill, described the measure as an important component in

Duterte's infrastructure and investment drive.

"It is hoped that it will accelerate the delivery of permits needed to start up a business or ground-break a public project," Recto said.

The measure is designed to spare businesses from spending billions of pesos and millions of man-hours yearly to comply with government licensing procedures, he said.

Recto said Congress' move to quickly pass the measure is in recognition of the urgent

need "to cure a disease which has metastasized all over the bureaucracy."

He said the 2017 ranking by World Bank placed the Philippines 171st in starting a business, 85th in dealing with construction permits, and 112th in registering a property.

The features of the measure include reduced processing time of documents – simple requests or applications should be finished in three working days; complex transaction, seven to 10 working days;

highly technical applications, 20 working days.

It also provides for automatic approval of permits and licenses in case the local government unit or the concerned national government agency fails to approve/disapprove the application within the processing time, "except for cases that pose danger to public health, public safety, public morals or to public policy, and for highly technical application such as natural resource extraction activities."

Recto proposed three more initiatives – a freeze on fees, an anti-*epal* provision, and exempting one-person proprietorships from paying fire inspection fees through the law's implementing rules and regulations (IRR).

He said if red tape will be cut, there will be less paper work and fewer signatories, then the cost should remain as it is, if not go down. "Ease of doing business should lead to easy-on-the-pocket expenses," Recto said.

"It can even be argued that if we cut the process, then we should also cut the price, or at the very least keep the status quo," he added.

Recto also said that under the IRR, the design of permits would be institutional in nature, noting one "ludicrous imposition" in many LGUs is for business owners – be they grocery owners or *ukay-ukay* sellers – to buy every year as a form of business permit a thin metal or hard plastic plate featuring the name and image of local executives.

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