

Duterte issues EO increasing employees' benefits

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In a bid to uplift the compensation of private sector workers, President Duterte yesterday issued Executive Order 54 increasing employees' benefits in the private sector and carer's allowance in the public sector.

In the private sector, Duterte mandated a P1,500 across-the-board increase in employees' compensation disability pension of all EC permanent disability pensioners and qualified beneficiaries. The Social Security System will continue to implement the minimum EC monthly disability and survivorship pension in the private sector, which in no case shall be less than P2,000.

The SSS will also continue to grant the entitlement of primary beneficiaries of deceased permanent total disability pensioners in the private sector from 80 percent to 100 percent of the PTD pensioner's monthly pension.

The amount of carer's allowance granted to the EC permanent disability pensioners in the public and private sector is thus increased from P575 to P1,000 per month.

The EO, signed last Tuesday, also provided a matrix for the reimbursement rates of professional fees of physicians.

"There is a need to continually improve benefits under the Employees' Compensation Program to make them more responsive to the welfare and development needs of occupationally disabled workers," the EO read.

Anti-endo EO for public sector

After the signing of the executive order regulating short-term employment in private companies, government workers are seeking another anti-contractualization order, this time for the public sector.

Public sector unions belonging to the Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (SENTRO) are urging President Duterte to stop illegal contracting employment, not only in private firms, but also in government offices.

"We agree with the suggestion of Sen. (Chiz) Escudero that the prohibition of contractualization can start within the government's own backyard," SENTRO said in a statement.

"Since the President has been largely influenced by the employers' confederation for signing a next-to-nothing EO on contractualization, we are hoping that things would be different within the public sector because the 'boss' is no other than the Chief Executive or the President himself," the labor group added.

Duterte has all the powers to prohibit contractualization if he so chooses through a decisive executive order, according to SENTRO.

The labor group expressed dismay that Duterte passed the burden of prohibiting the antiworker practice onto Congress despite his promise to put an end to illegal contractualization during the presidential campaign.

“For the public sector, this act is particularly tragic as a good chunk of our ranks is by themselves non-regular workers. It could have been meaningful for the workers under his management had the President been honorable enough to fulfill his promise,” SENTRO said.

The worst thing that can happen if the President stopped endo, SENTRO said, is that erring employers would have to shave off a small portion of their profit margins.

In June last year, the Civil Service Commission, Commission on Audit and Department of Budget and Management (DBM) issued a Joint Circular governing contract of service and job order workers in the government.

SENTRO said the circular states that workers who provide work or service in various government institutions, called contract of service and job order, are considered as non-government workers. To address the problem, SENTRO is seeking the issuance of an EO against contractualization in government offices.

The group claimed that Duterte previously ignored a draft EO for the public sector, crafted by public sector unions under the Public Services International.

“If the President won’t do it, then we are urging the Congress to pick up where the President left off and finally put an end to contractualization that will strengthen workers’ security of tenure,” SENTRO said.

No ‘palabra de honor’

As this developed, Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines-National Secretariat for Social Action, Justice and Peace (CBCP-NASSA) yesterday said Duterte showed he has no word of honor when he signed EO No. 51.

In a two-page statement titled, “Betrayal of Worker’s Trust,” the CBCP-NASSA said that when Duterte signed the EO last May 1, Labor Day, he betrayed the worker’s trust.

“The signed EO is a victory for big businesses. In signing EO 51, the President chose the business sector over the labor sector. Pro-business DOLE and DTI officials won the battle of lobbying the President,” the CBCP-NASSA said, referring to the Department of Labor and Employment and the Department of Trade and Industry.

“This event reveals the true character and sentiments of President Duterte. He has no palabra de honor and he is not pro-poor as he fondly declared,” it added.

The sincerity of the President is being questioned since he has so far failed to fulfill the promise he had made to the people during the election campaign in 2016.