

COMELEC chief hurdles CA, Senate elects former Senate President and CA Chair Pimentel as CA Member

New Senate President Vicente C. Sotto III, in his first attended plenary session today as the new Chairman of the Commission on Appointments (CA), presided over the confirmation of the nomination of **Hon. Sheriff Manimbayan Abas** as Chairman, Commission on Elections (COMELEC).

The Commission gave its consent to the nomination of Abas for a term expiring on 02 February 2022 vice Comelec Chair Andres D. Bautista.

Abas, 39, who has been Comelec Commissioner since April 28, 2015, is a native of Cotabato City. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from the Notre Dame University, Cotabato City in 1999 and his Bachelor of Laws degree from the Ateneo de Davao University, Davao City in 2004. A lawyer by profession, he was a general practitioner/partner of the *Abas, Dalig and Abas Law Offices* in Cotabato City from May 2005 - June 2007 and entered the academe as a professor at the College of Law of the Notre Dame University from 2006 - 2009. His government service started in 2007 when he served as Attorney V at the Regional Office No. 12 of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) in Cotabato City. He also served as Acting Assistant Regional Director of the CSC-Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in Cotabato City and was the Attorney VI at the same Regional Office of the CSC prior his appointment as COMELEC commissioner. His organizational affiliations include being a member of the Bangsamoro Lawyers Network, Lions Club International - Cotabato Host Lions, PINTIG ng CSC, Lakas Atenista Foundation, Integrated Bar of the Philippines and as Chairman of the Board of the Bangsamoro Business Club.

In his tenure as Comelec Commissioner, he was recognized for his managerial expertise and professionalism as head of the Commission's Packing and Shipping Committee (PSC) and credited for his role in the preparation and execution of the first ever Collective Negotiations Agreement (CNA) between the Comelec and its rank and file employees.

Sen. Cynthia A. Villar, Chairperson of the Commission's Constitutional Commissions and Offices Committee, made a motion during the plenary session to recommend Abas' confirmation to the Commission *en banc* with no objections raised.

Villar, in her sponsorship speech, highlighted Abas' credentials and significant role in the success of the 2016 national and local elections and the recently concluded 2018 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections. "Despite being the youngest member of the Commission *en banc*, he was able to stand firm on his principles, earning the respect of his highly competent fellow Commissioners," she added. Villar also stressed that, "after due deliberation, the committee is convinced that Commissioner Abas is not only fit and competent, but more importantly, that he will be able to lead the Commission on Elections with utmost integrity." In his seconding speech, Rep. Joel Mayo Z. Almario, spoke highly of Abas, who, "as a fellow Atenean, I believe that Chairman Abas, trained by the Jesuits to

understand the rule of law and taught to be a man for others will make a great difference in the Comelec. I believe that more than his prior work experience, more than his Muslim blood, more than his age, it is heart, and strength that will make him one of the best chairmen the Comelec has ever seen.” Sen. Juan Miguel F. Zubiri, for his part, described Abas as “an intelligent, conscientious and low-key individual, who has dedicated most of his career in serving the government.” Zubiri also mentioned that he knows Abas’ background very well, “as his family is not from a traditional political background, but from a group of reformists who want to change the image of the Bangsamoro throughout the Philippines.”

As the Commission gave its consent to the nomination of Abas as Comelec Chief, he now holds the distinction of being the first Comelec Chair from Mindanao, the first Muslim elections chief, the youngest head of the poll body and the first Comelec Commissioner to become Comelec Chair.

Senate elects former Senate President and CA Chair Pimentel as CA Member

Following the election of Senator Vicente “Tito” C. Sotto III as Senate President and Chairman of the Commission on Appointments (CA) last May 21, the Senate, on May 22 elected the former Senate President and CA Chairman Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel III as Member of the Commission on Appointments vice Sen. Emmanuel “Manny” D. Pacquiao.

In today’s plenary session, the Commission, likewise, elected Pimentel as Chairperson of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources and as Member of various Standing Committees previously occupied by Pacquiao. Pimentel took his oath of office as CA Member before Senate President and CA Chairman Sotto during yesterday’s plenary session at the Senate.

