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**Environment chief's appointment fails to muster CA nod,
DSWD chief deferred; Senator Pangilinan takes oath
as new Minority Floor Leader**

The Commission on Appointments (CA), yesterday, in its plenary session presided by President of the Senate/Chairman of the Commission Aquilino "Koko" L. Pimentel III, disapproved the *ad interim* appointment of **Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Regina Paz La'o Lopez** after three committee hearings.

The Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, chaired by Sen. Emmanuel "Manny" D. Pacquiao, recommended for the disapproval of the *ad interim* appointment of Lopez following a voting in an executive session/caucus prior to the plenary session.

Pacquiao described the deliberations on Lopez's appointment as "perhaps the longest, most dramatic, most watched by all Filipinos from all walks of life, both rich and poor." He, however, expressed his sadness over the termination of the deliberations on Lopez' appointment not in the way he personally wanted to. "But the Commission has voted today and has met the required 13 votes... the decision of the majority, which I am sorry, but that we must all respect," Pacquiao said when he delivered the committee's recommendation to disapprove Lopez's appointment on the floor. Under the New Rules of the Commission on Appointments, Section 15. REQUISITE VOTE OF THE COMMISSION provides that, "The Commission shall rule on all nominations or appointments brought before it by a majority vote of all its members. Only members present shall be entitled to vote. The *ex officio* Chairman shall not vote except to break a tie. All other matters shall be decided by a majority vote of the members present constituting a quorum."

Prior to the approval of the environment panel's recommendation to disapprove Lopez's appointment, CA Asst. Majority Floor Leader Vicente C. Sotto III, Minority Floor Leader Francis "Kiko" N. Pangilinan, Senators Loren Legarda and Joseph Victor G. Ejercito stood up on the floor to manifest that they voted for Lopez's confirmation.

"I wish I could stand here to sponsor the nomination or the confirmation of who could have been one of the greatest secretaries of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)," Legarda said when she manifested her "strong dissent" to the Commission's disapproval of Lopez's appointment. "Mr. President, it's unfortunate that we let pass a great opportunity for my much beloved DENR to be led by someone who has the passion, integrity and political will to implement our environmental laws," Legarda added. She also expressed that she agrees and will ever continue to agree with Lopez's mantra that "without ecological integrity and social justice, we cannot have genuine, inclusive economic growth." Pangilinan, for his part, manifested that, "I represent the LP contingent in the Senate and with the consent of Senators Recto, Drilon, Aquino, and of course, this representation, we'd like to place on record that we likewise voted for the confirmation of Secretary Gina Lopez because we believe in her qualification and her abilities to lead the department."

Also during the plenary session, Pacquiao pronounced that, “To you Gina Lopez, my supposed DENR secretary, I salute you. See this turmoil in your life today as a challenge to strive for more... I believe in my heart that no matter how several big people may be against Gina, she will always stand on what she believes is morally, and environmentally right and righteous. She remains unperturbed, she remains as Regina Paz La’o Lopez - the woman with a goldmine of heart.”

Meanwhile, the Commission also deferred action on the *ad interim* appointment of **Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Secretary Judy M. Taguiwalo**. The Committee on Labor, Employment and Social Welfare, chaired by Rep. Joel Mayo Z. Almario, deliberated on the merit and fitness of Taguiwalo for the job but suspended the committee hearing due to lack of material time.

Also taken up during yesterday’s plenary session was the election of **Sen. Francis “Kiko” N. Pangilinan** as Minority Floor Leader of the Commission on Appointments vice Sen. Ralph G. Recto. He took his oath of office before President of the Senate / Chairman of the Commission Aquilino “Koko” L. Pimentel III during the plenary session.

