



AMCHAM PHILIPPINES

The American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, Inc.

September 23, 2011

HONORABLE ANDRES SALVACION, JR.

Chairman

Committee on Civil Service and Professional Regulation

House of Representatives

Quezon City

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing regarding the bills scheduled to be heard by your committee on Monday, September 26, 2011. These are:

- House Bills 2200, 2797, 4071 & 4456 – Further amending RA 544, as amended, otherwise known as the Civil Engineering Law (Reps. Salvador Escudero III, Rufus Rodriguez, Angelo Palmones and Aurelio 'Dong' Gonzales Jr.);
- House Bill 3801 – Regulating the practice of geology in the Philippines, repealing for the purpose RA 4209, otherwise known as the Geology Profession Law of the Philippines (Rep. Victor Yu);
- House Bill 3803 – Regulating the practice of metallurgical engineering in the Philippines, repealing for this purpose PD 1536, otherwise known as the Metallurgical Engineering Law of 1978 (Rep. Victor Yu); and
- House Bill 2731 – Regulating the practice of forestry in the Philippines, repealing for the purpose RA 6239, otherwise known as the Forestry Profession Law, appropriating funds therefor (Rep. Rufus Rodriguez)

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The above bills repealing or amending the existing laws on these profession either retain or contain a reciprocity provision – granting foreigners the right to practice the particular profession in the Philippines provided that their countries grant Filipinos the same right.

May I respectfully reiterate the importance of keeping this provision in the bill when it is reported out by your committee.

Because millions of Filipinos work abroad and support the Philippine economy with their remittances, it should be in the national interest to seek the reduction of restrictions on professionals in other countries, for example, in the negotiations on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) under the WTO and the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS). At the same time, having more foreign professionals practicing in the Philippines can bring new skills, ideas, connections and integration into global networks of service providers, and support sunrise sectors like the creative industries sector, R&D, medical travel, and retirement.

The economy will benefit from having foreign professionals working with Filipino professionals to develop the high growth potential of various sectors. In short, more foreign professionals practicing in the Philippines will mean more jobs for Filipinos at home.

The reduction of restrictions on foreign professionals practicing in the Philippines is a priority issue that needs to be addressed to enhance the competitiveness of the Philippines and to level the playing field in the economy. This is of the highest importance if the Philippines is to enter into new free trade agreements with the United States and with Europe which allow the free movement of trade in services and exchanges with providers of professions.

We strongly support policies geared towards a level playing field for Filipino and foreign business partnering for the faster development of the Philippines.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely yours,



JEFFREY C. WOODRUFF
Executive Director