



**AMCHAM PHILIPPINES**  
The American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, Inc.

**THE ARANGKADA PHILIPPINES PROJECT  
NOTEWORTHY DOCUMENT #524**

October 28, 2015

**To:** John Avila, AOR, USAID-OEDG  
**From:** John Forbes, Senior Adviser, TAPP  
**Subject:** TAPP Legislative Tracker for October 2015

On October 28, the AmCham Legislative Tracker and List of Legislative Priorities for the 16<sup>th</sup> Congress were presented at the monthly Legislative Committee meeting. Both have been updated to reflect the status of priority bills of the business sector identified in the July 19, 2013 JFC-PBG letter to President Aquino on priority legislation.

The Legislative Tracker shows that either hearings or TWG meetings were conducted in October on the following bills that affect the investment climate:

- Foreigners' Lease Act
- Public-Private Partnership Law

The House approved on Third Reading the following:

- DICT Creation

A DICT will improve e-governance, raise broadband quality, strengthen cybersecurity, and make Filipinos and the Philippines more competitive. The Senate bill was earlier approved on Third Reading. There is no substantial difference between the House and Senate versions.

- Customs Modernization and Tariffs Act

CMTA seeks to simplify, modernize and align the country's customs procedures with global best practices. It aims to amend and update the Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines in compliance with the Revised Kyoto Convention, a blueprint for modern and efficient customs procedures of the World Customs Organization, to which the Philippines is a signatory since 2010. The JFC, through AmCham TAPP, has written to Senate Ways and Means Committee Chair Angara to recommend adoption of the Senate version on the de minimis value of 10,000 and the removal of PSI provision. The Senate bill is pending Second Reading.

- BSP Charter amendments

The amendments are consistent with the policy direction of the BSP to reform the banking industry to encourage it to be more responsive to the needs of stakeholders and market conditions. The Senate bill is pending in the Banks Committee.



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- Indexation of Criminal Penalties

The bill amends the Revised Penal Code to update the penalties imposed for violations of the Revised Penal Code. The formula used in the bill is equivalent to the fine or the value of the property or damage on which the penalty is based, divided by two and a half, multiplied by the current highest minimum wage rate prevailing in the Philippines rounded off to the nearest hundred (Php 500.00). The Senate bill is under TWG review.

The President signed into law two bills supported by the business sector:

- Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (RA 10687) – signed October 15

RA 10687 seeks to extend financial assistance like student loans to cash-strapped but deserving college students until they finish their chosen courses in either private or public university. The bill expands the country's government-funded scholarship program by opening up multiple windows to college students committed to graduating their courses such as student loans, subsidized tuition and outright free tuition to poor but exemplary college students.

- Public Employment Service Office Act amendments (RA 10691) – signed October 26

RA 10691 aims to transform the PESO into a modern public employment service intermediary that provides multi-dimensional employment facilitation services. Aside from job facilitation, PESOs will provide labor market trends and information, livelihood, skills and entrepreneurship training, and other capability-building initiatives. It also seeks to ensure the PESOs' continued operation and sustainability with the control and supervision of and funding from the LGUs, and the technical support of the Department of Labor and Employment.