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## **Business, foreign chambers umbrella group cautions Congress on impeachment powers**

- JRI warns against weakening justice system, erosion of investor confidence
- Congress urged to be transparent, fair in handling impeachment cases

One of the biggest umbrella groups advocating much-needed reforms in the Philippine justice system, particularly those that impact the business sector, has urged Congress to exercise its impeachment powers under the Constitution “with great prudence, probity and transparency.”

In a press statement, the private sector umbrella group Judicial Reform Initiative (JRI) raised its grave concerns against “the growing use – or threat – of impeachment proceedings in Congress against a number of the Philippines’ highest ranking and prominent government leaders, including the President, the Vice President, the Supreme Court Chief Justice, the Ombudsman, and the Commission on Elections (Comelec) Chairman” who are protected under the Constitution “because of the significance of their roles and the implications on our legal and justice system.”

Not only will the “indiscriminate or ill-considered filings of impeachment proceedings against government officials distract those accused from the performance of their duties as public servants, as well as our Congress from its priority legislative agenda,” but will also be construed “as any serious indictment of our justice system could weaken the Constitutionally protected independence of the judiciary.”

“Investors would risk capital only in countries where they have full confidence in the rule of law. Thus, any initiative which may be perceived as weakening the check and balance among the branches of government might shatter this confidence and negate our hard-won economic gains,” it added. JRI thus urged Congress to ensure that: “impeachments are undertaken only for patently substantive and culpable violations of the Constitution; and the process is transparent and reflects the highest standards of fairness and justice.”



Comprised of leading business organizations, judicial advocacy groups, and several foreign chambers, JRI was established in 2012 by the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines, the Institute of Corporate Directors, the Management Association of the Philippines, the Makati Business Club, the American Chamber of Commerce, the European Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Australia-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce, and the Movement for Restoration of Peace & Order, among others.

Other groups that have earlier aired similar statements include the Former Senior Government Officials (FSGO); the International Center for Innovation, Transformation and Excellence in Government (INCITEGov); the Integrated Bar of the Philippines; the Philippine Bar Association; the Philippine Association of Law Schools; the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches; and the UP Women's Lawyers Circle, Inc.

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