

WITH CHANGE COME REAL CHALLENGES

On Declaring the Office of the Speaker Vacant

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Mr. Speaker:

I rise today not to challenge those who voted NO but to challenge those who stand in favor of changing the leadership of the House of Representatives to ensure that the change that we are advocating for becomes a reality. What are some of these reforms?

One, transparency in the way the billions of pesos is being allocated and spent in this House; *two*, having a lean and professional bureaucracy and permanent secretariat staff devoid of any political debt to any sitting Speaker, or for that matter, any past or incumbent Representative; *three*, a more rational basis for choosing and appointing committee chairmanships; and *four*, hopefully a semblance of independence from the Executive.

I have seen how the image of this institution we are all part of deteriorate in credibility and integrity under the past and current leadership. That I am, and WE are all part of the reason for this deterioration is without question. But shall we still allow the *status quo*, this questionable situation to persist? Is it business as usual after a congressman takes his oath as the next Speaker of the House?

Mr. Speaker:

Those who are advocating for a change in the leadership in this House are being accused of simply playing into the game of the so-called "elites". It's a mere lip service and a revolving door exercise. That we are effectively not changing anything. We are just changing the head but the same rotten system remains underneath.

If we are indeed serious in reforming the House, let us not abuse the words "CHANGE and REFORM". But let us seriously change and reform not only the system but OURSELVES.

Let me be clear with regard to my party's support for the change that we had already advocated in our agenda in the beginning of the 14th Congress. Our party in July 2007 advocated for change and reform and supported Cong. Pabling Garcia. We lost. While we cannot simply shun the intramurals behind the drama that is unfolding before us, the four concerns that I have earlier enumerated – *One*, transparency in our very own budget processes, *two*, a lean and professional bureaucracy within this institution, *three*, rationality in the appointment of committee chairmanships and *four*, hopefully a semblance of independence from the Executive, are **REAL** challenges that I foist to those who

openly support the change and more importantly to the Congressman who offers himself as a viable alternative to the current leadership.

This is indeed a historic moment for this institution whose image is badly tarnished. It is an opportunity we should not waste, and if we do, we are only to be blamed for the failure of reform in this institution. I challenge those who stand up to advocate for change and reform that once we have changed our leader, the real work begins – the real work to reform ourselves and the real work to reform our institution.

My dear Colleagues, let us not continue to disappoint our people. After all, we are their so-called "Representatives".

I vote in favor of the motion to declare the Office of the Speaker vacant.

Thank you very much.