

# Akbayan: Nothing wrong with gay Deputy Speaker

Sunday 18 November 2007, by [Akbayan](#), [HONTIVEROS Risa](#) (Date first published: 13 August 2007).

AKBAYAN Rep. Risa Hontiveros said today that the ruckus caused by the election of a woman Deputy Speaker is a lesson on gender sensitivity. "Leadership positions in the House of Representatives should be open to all members of Congress and should be based solely on competence, not on gender or sexual orientation. There is nothing wrong with a woman or a gay Deputy Speaker," Rep. Hontiveros said.

"The commotion simply means that gender sensitivity workshops should be made mandatory to the honorable members of Congress," Rep. Hontiveros said, explaining that the elected Deputy Speakers won't be representing their gender but the entire House members. "In short, a woman Deputy Speaker won't be representing lady legislators alone, or for that matter, a gay Deputy Speaker won't represent the gay members of Congress. In the same manner, the male leaders of the chamber won't be representing the male members of Congress."

In a speech delivered last July 30, 2007, Rep. Hontiveros said that the woman Deputy Speaker should prioritize gender-related bills. "It would be a shame if the elected woman Deputy Speaker is anti-women," Rep. Hontiveros added.

Meanwhile, AKBAYAN's Gay and Lesbian Collective (GLC) slammed homophobia in Congress. "Filipino lesbians and gays are legitimate constituents of Congress, and thus they deserve to be represented properly. Furthermore, any member of Congress, regardless of sexual orientation, has the right to be elected to the leadership positions of the chamber," AKBAYAN GLC Convenor Jonas Bagas said.

"Congress was not established to represent the heterosexual members of the Filipino society. This institution is duty-bound to represent all Filipinos. To see Congress inflicting upon the public and upon its own members its homophobia is condemnable," Bagas added. "This violates the Constitution and laws protecting equality among Filipinos."

Rep. Hontiveros said that she would move that the reference to the 'Third Sex' be stricken off the House Journal and the official records. "It is an expression of homophobia. There is no such a thing as the 'Third Sex'. It trivializes Filipino lesbians and gays, making them in language and in substance second-class citizens in the country," Rep. Hontiveros said, explaining that the more acceptable term is lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT).

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**Opposition solon bats for gender sensitivity, delicadeza in distribution of**

## House posts

**Wednesday, 25 July 2007**

AKBAYAN Rep. Risa Hontiveros urged the House leadership today to exercise gender sensitivity and delicadeza in the distribution of key committees in the House of Representatives.

"The only thing that could reverse the dismal reputation of the House of Representatives is the use of principles and competence as the basis for the allocation of committees in Congress. We challenge Speaker De Venecia to maximize his new mandate to develop a principled selection process - preferably with the help of civil society - in choosing the chairpersonship for each House committee," Rep. Hontiveros said.

"I feel dismayed that despite the increase in the number of lady legislators in the House of Representatives, no woman Deputy Speaker was appointed by the majority. It is like saying that the top leadership of the House is off-limits to women and that congresswomen are second-class legislators," she added, criticizing the failure of the House majority to consider that there are 54 lady legislators in the 14<sup>th</sup> Congress.

The solon also challenged the sons and brother-in-law of President GMA to refuse from chairing committees. "It's a simple question of delicadeza. How can they serve a supposedly independent institution as chairs of important committees if they are no less than the sons and brother-in-law of the President?" Rep. Hontiveros urged.

Presidential sons Dato Arroyo and Mikey Arroyo, including presidential bother-in-law Iggy Arroyo, are reportedly eyeing the chairpersonship of different committees in the House. "Is this in exchange for the support they gave to Speaker De Venecia? This idea of dispensing committee chairpersonship on the basis of loyalty is one of the reasons why the House has one of the lowest trust rating. Competence should be the basis of the selection," Rep. Hontiveros stressed.

The solon re-filed the Gender Balance Bill (HB968) to ensure that gender balance is exercised in filling up appointive and elective posts. It requires at least 30% representation for women, a minimum standard recommended by the UN to increase the participation of women in politics and governance. The bill also provides for additional support services for women in politics and governance.