

Abalos' resignation to open a Pandora's box

Sunday 18 November 2007, by [Akbayan](#), [HONTIVEROS Risa](#) (Date first published: 1 October 2007).

AKBAYAN welcomed today the resignation of COMELEC Chair Benjamin Abalos, saying that this could open a Pandora's box.

"His resignation means that he's free to tell everything - from the ZTE controversy to electoral fraud cases in 2004 and 2007," AKBAYAN Chair Emeritus Etta Rosales said. "Otherwise, if he keeps mum on what really took place, this would only be seen as an attempt to save other personalities from the administration who have been implicated in the anomalous ZTE contract and other controversies." Rosales said to put an iota of dignity to his resignation he should spill the beans. "Or else, people would take it that he agreed to become the administration's sacrificial lamb and he willingly allowed himself to be slaughtered," Rosales added. "There is no dignity to that kind of submission."

AKBAYAN Rep. Risa Hontiveros, who earlier endorsed the impeachment complaint against Abalos, said that his resignation is a proof of the strength of the complaint. "The impeachment would create a rift within the majority, and Abalos' resignation, wittingly or unwittingly, has preserved the majority coalition in the House," Rep. Hontiveros said.

She added that Abalos would still face criminal charges. "The impeachment has become moot and academic, but we will still hold Abalos accountable. AKBAYAN's legal team is studying the charges that Abalos should face before our legal system," Rep. Hontiveros said.

She said that controversies involving Abalos, such as the 'Hello Garci' controversy, the 2007 electoral fraud cases, and the bungling of the election modernization project, would haunt the beleaguered former COMELEC Chairman.

She admitted, however, that his resignation brought a sense of relief, especially for those who have been pushing for electoral reforms. "Abalos was the single biggest block to electoral reforms. His resignation would make it easier to push for policies and programs that Abalos either mangled or ignored, in particular the automation of elections," Rep. Hontiveros said.

AKBAYAN files criminal charges against Abalos

Tuesday, 09 October 2007

AKBAYAN filed a criminal complaint today against former COMELEC Chair Benjamin Abalos before the Office of the Ombudsman.

Deputy minority leader and AKBAYAN Rep. Risa Hontiveros charged Abalos for violation of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act (RA 3019), Revised Penal Code, and the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees (RA 6713).

De Venecia's testimony makes Abalos' impeachment more compelling

Tuesday, 18 September 2007

Deputy minority leader and AKBAYAN Rep. Risa Hontiveros said today that the testimony of Joey de Venecia makes the impeachment of Abalos more compelling. "The statement, which was given under oath, would make COMELEC Chair Abalos accountable for violating the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act and for betrayal of public trust," Rep. Hontiveros said.

"At the very least, the minority should meet to discuss whether the testimony is enough to impeach Abalos. Since Iloilo Vice-Governor Rolex Suplico has not filed his complaint yet, the minority might tackle the possibility of linking up with Jose de Venecia III about the matter," Rep. Hontiveros said, adding that she would immediately talk to Rep. Ronaldo Zamora to convene an emergency meeting.

She clarified that a statement under oath is strong enough. "If he's able to present other witnesses who can provide corroborative statements, then the case would be damning," Rep. Hontiveros said. "There are, after all, cases of bribery where finding documentary evidence is nearly impossible, especially if these involve under the table negotiations."

The solon also challenged First Gentleman Mike Arroyo to return to the Philippines to face de Venecia's accusations. "He should categorically state if he was truly with Abalos and whether he also pressured De Venecia to back off from bidding for the ZTE contract," Rep. Hontiveros said. "Was he also aware that of the alleged bribe money that Abalos himself offered to de Venecia? The more silent he is on the accusation, the more difficult it would be to dissociate himself from the controversy."

The solon added that AKBAYAN would ensure that the individuals mentioned in the testimony would be summoned to the House hearing on the deal. "DOTC Sec. Leandro Mendoza and Ruben Reyes should be summoned to attend the hearing, and if they refuse, a subpoena should be issued immediately. Reyes, a businessman reportedly close to military officers involved in the 'Hello Garci' wiretapping controversy, is reportedly a golfing buddy of Abalos," Rep. Hontiveros said.

She also renewed calls to have the deal cancelled. "We certainly don't want another PIATCO or another onerous contract. The ZTE deal is already tainted, and clearly the law was violated during the bidding of the contract. For the interest of all, the government should cancel the contract while an investigation is being pursued," Rep. Hontiveros said.