

# Nograles to consult allies on plans to junk constituent assembly

by DELON PORCALLA  
Philstar.com

MANILA – Speaker Prospero Nograles hinted on August 3 that the House is open to the suggestion to abandon plans to convene a constituent assembly without the Senate, but only if the administration lawmakers agree to the proposal to disregard the Charter change initiative out of respect for the late President Corazon Aquino.

“I will not decide on this issue all by myself. This is not how I operate. I will consult first with the members and get a clear consensus on what to do with House Resolution 1109 before making our position on this issue,” Nograles said.

Nograles said he “will not stop” his colleagues from withdrawing their signatures in the resolution for Charter change (Cha-cha), “because nobody forced them to sign it in the first

place.”

“The members of Congress who signed Cha-cha must decide for themselves. We will take the position of (Makati Rep. Teodoro) Teddy Boy (Locsin) and (presidential adviser on political affairs) Gabby (Claudio) under advisement,” Nograles said.

Locsin proposed over the weekend to the House leadership to abandon the proposed constituent assembly out of respect for the late President Aquino, under whose administration the 1987 Constitution was crafted.

Presidential political adviser Gabriel Claudio reportedly supports Locsin’s position.

Locsin, a former newspaper publisher, served as the press

secretary and speech writer of Pres. Aquino, wife of the late Sen. Ninoy Aquino, who was assassinated on Aug. 21, 1983.

Nograles maintained that since all decisions of the House leadership are based on consultation and the consensus of the majority, he would hold a multi-party caucus by mid-August to get the sentiment of the majority in relation to HR 1109.

“There are close to 180 signatories to that Resolution 1109 and each one has the right or the personal privilege to continue or to withdraw from it. It’s really up to them if they want to withdraw. No one will stop them from doing so,” he said.

“It’s not for the leadership to dictate on the authors and

co-authors on how to treat the resolution on August 4 or if they feel that Cory’s death significantly comes into play here. It’s a personal choice for each one,” Nograles pointed out.

Nograles stressed the 180 signatories were not forced by the House leadership or even Malacañang to sign HR 1109 so it will also be up to them if they decide to withdraw their support for the resolution.

House Resolution 1109 has been approved but discussions on the measure have been deferred indefinitely, since the House has yet to decide on what to do.

Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile and the other senators have reiterated that they will not

allow any amendments to the Charter before 2010, meaning, there will be no changes in the Constitution under the term of President Arroyo.

Party-list Rep. Teddy Casiño of Bayan Muna said he is joining Locsin in his call to “defer action” on the constituent assembly resolution. “I join him in deference and out of respect for the late president and the millions who believe in her.”

“Insisting on Charter change might just transform those millions of mourners into a force that could easily sweep the GMA regime from power,” he warned, implying a threat of another people power revolt that could topple Pres. Arroyo. ■

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## Awardees honor heroes of journalism

by ALCUIN PAPA  
Inquirer.net

MANILA – It was a night for remembering brave and relatively unknown heroes in journalism.

When *Philippine Daily Inquirer* columnist Patricia Evangelista, awardee for Emergent Leadership in Journalism, and Howie Severino of the GMA television network, awardee for leadership in journalism received their awards given by the Titus Brandsma Media Center in the Philippines on Wednesday, they chose to pay tribute to their slain media colleagues, including those who still toil in anonymity for community papers and radio, and a former president whose governance marked the return of basic rights, including press freedom.

Two other journalists were given posthumous awards.

The award is named after Blessed Titus Brandsma, a Dutch Catholic priest, journalist and educator who defended press freedom and the right to education during World War II, even in the face of death. He was beatified by Pope John Paul I on November 3, 1985 and is known as a martyr for press freedom.

“Severino and Evangelista were chosen because they have effectively used media to respond to the people’s clamor for truth on issues and concerns affecting them,” the Center said in a statement.

### Absent awardees

The Center also honored slain journalists Edgar Damalerio and

Marlene Esperat. “They lived the spirit of Blessed Titus Brandsma and stood for truth in times of threats, compromises, despite odds and reprisals from the powers-that-be,” it added.

Both Evangelista and Severino cited the two journalists who were gunned down in separate incidents in pursuit of their stories.

“This award means so much in light of what is happening in the country. The Philippines is an odd country and it has been branded as the second worst place for a journalist to work. To be mentioned in the same sentence as Edgar, Marlene and Howie is a big thing,” Evangelista said.

The center cited Evangelista’s columns on the disappearances and killings of members of progressive groups and journalists.

“We can’t get used to it—that a man can disappear and never be seen again, that a mother will be shot at her dining room table. We need to stay angry at what shouldn’t be, to continue to speak. Because if we accept this as the state of the nation, we allow it,” she said.

Severino, known for his investigative reports on the environment, also recognized the dangers of being a journalist in the Philippines as he spoke of Damalerio and Esperat.

### Bravest work

“Both Edgar and Marlene did their bravest work on radio while exposing anomalies in certain parts of Mindanao. The fact that there are still fearless radio

broadcasters in Mindanao means that Edgar and Marlene’s spirits are alive, driving the survivors among us to try to expose and weed out the corrupt, so that the nobility can bloom,” he said in his acceptance speech.

Damalerio, managing editor of the Zamboanga Scribe and a hard-hitting commentator of DXKP, was shot dead in May 2002 in Pagadian City.

Esperat, on the other hand, was a former employee of the Department of Agriculture who turned to journalism. Among her exposés was the controversial fertilizer

fund scam involving former Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn “Joc-Joc” Bolante. She was shot in her home in Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat in March 2005.

The Titus Brandsma Award Philippines is the country’s version of the International Titus Brandsma Award given by the Union Catholique Internationale de la Presse, the world forum of professionals in secular and religious media.

Dr. Florangel Rosario Braid, Dr. Jose De Mesa and Angela Bardonio Ureta were among the jurors this year. ■

## Senate ratifies Carp as ‘gift’ to Cory

by MICHAEL LIM UBAC  
Inquirer.net

MANILA – The Senate ratified on Monday afternoon the bicameral conference report reconciling provisions of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (Carp), which would extend for another five years the land-acquisition and distribution program with a budget of P150 billion.

All 17 senators present ratified the bicameral report, introduced to the floor by Senator Gregorio Honasan, former chair of the Senate committee on agrarian reform, as a “gift” to former President Corazon Aquino who instituted land reform when she was President in 1988.

However, Senator Joker Arroyo informed the chamber prior to the ratification that he was “tempted” to cast a negative vote since the bicameral report deleted the provision requiring the Department of Agrarian Reform to submit an audited financial report on the P160 billion that had been spent by the government since its inception.

Arroyo still voted in favor of the measure since he had signed the original Carp Law as executive secretary of Mrs. Aquino. ■

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