

PRIVILEGE SPEECH

15th Regular City Council
April 21, 2009
Sangguniang Panlungsod
Davao City

**A DREAM COMES TRUE: 50 PERCENT REDUCTION COST
TEXT MESSAGING COST**

By Councilor Pilar C. Braga, PhD

Madam President, many of us remembered the SONA speech of President GMA last year when she announced that telecommunications companies would reduce the cost of text messaging from one peso to .50 centavos. Almost a year has passed and we are wondering if the announcement would just remain a dream.

The Philippine has an estimated 48 million mobile phone subscribers, and industry estimates expect half of the 84 million population to own a handset by the end of this year.

With a billion messages crossing mobile phone networks daily, the Philippines has been tagged as the “text capital” of the world. Text messaging is also cheaper than phone calls, making in the popular way to keep in touch in the country.

More than million text messages are exchanged in the Philippines every day. Everyone from the fish ball vendor to corporate president carries a cell phone. Status symbol is gauged on the cell phone model one carries. Some people change cell phones as often as new models arrive.

Cell phones come in different models and features. Some are compact. Some are bulky. Some functions as a computer. Some are radio and MP3 players. Some are video camera. There are some models that incorporate everything in one, too.

With all this developments in cell phone, the Philippines are on the tip of the spear with regards to usage and expertise in use. Filipinos exchange text messages in the Philippines for only one peso per text and this is one of the reasons why it became an instant hit.

At long last, the dream by most Filipinos which was instigated by the President’s announcement and the clamor by cell phone users in the Philippines for a reduction in the cost of text messages is now one short step towards reality.

The oversight committee in the House of the Representatives has just decided to cut the cost of text messaging by half, from P1 to 50 centavos per text. The decision is a big boon to mobile phone owners in this country now numbering 60 million.

The decision was formalized in a resolution filed when Congress resumed session yesterday April 13. The proposal has the support of House Speaker Prospero Nograles and Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile. As agreed upon in the meeting with telecom and NTC representatives, the 50-percent cut in text message cost will take effect on May 1, Labor Day.

What are the implications of this decision?

The 50-percent reduction in text messaging cost does not necessarily mean that the income of telecom companies will be reduced by half.

Because of the substantial reduction in text message rates, cell-phone users will be induced into sending more messages.

With two billion messages sent everyday, making the Philippines the text messaging capital of the world, a conservative estimate places the daily earnings of mobile phone service providers at P1.5 billion.

Madam President, at the appropriate time, allow me to pass the corresponding resolution to cover this matter.

PILAR C. BRAGA, PhD
City Councilor, Davao City

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