

Examining the Commission on Appointments

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Justice Secretary Leila M. de Lima, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon J. Soliman, and Environment Secretary Ramon P. Paje received confirmation of their appointments from the Commission on Appointments (CA) after four years of service. It took de Lima two sessions to be confirmed, Soliman took three hearings, and Paje took the longest with seven hearings. As of March 2014, de Lima and Soliman were actually bypassed by the CA for 17 times while Paje was bypassed 13 times. This long delay meant that for four years, the abovementioned Departments were headed by presidential appointees who have yet to comply with the basic constitutional requisite of confirmation by the CA.

The Essay provides a brief and concise political, legal, and historical analysis of the CA and the numerous issues that have plagued it since the need for confirmation was restored in the 1987 Constitution. The abovementioned scenario is only one of these issues and the startling fact is that the same is not an uncommon occurrence in the field of Philippine bureaucracy and politics.

The Essay explores the various criticisms against the CA as well. This refers not only the occasional branding of the commission as easily susceptible to politicking, corruption, and abuse, but also to the proposals made by lawmakers to reform, and the call by some to abolish, the CA.

In light of the foregoing, the Essay concludes by emphasizing the need for institutional reform in the CA. Its restoration to the 1987 Constitution was meant to enhance the process of choosing the most qualified people to work in government for the benefit of public and intended function as a check to the power of the President to appoint. History has shown such good intentions have often been disregarded. These institutional flaws do not only lead to unproductive political bickering; it threatens and corrupts the foundations of democratic and republican governance.