

**Column for Manila Bulletin**  
**MANNY VILLAR**  
**April 10, 2012**

## **Of Trees and Forest**

### **Providing Relief for Fresh Graduates**

MANILA, Philippines — More than half a million students have just graduated from college, and millions more have finished high school or technical or vocational courses. All of them will join the growing army of jobseekers.

Their pursuit of employment will be difficult. The National Statistics Office reported that as of January, 2012, the Philippines' unemployment rate stood at 7.2 percent, down from 7.4 percent in the same month in 2011.

Although I find it hard to believe that our unemployment rate was lower than that of the United States (8.3 percent as of February 2012), the 7.2 percent still translates to more than 2.9 million jobless Filipinos out of our 40.3-million labor force.

The Department of Labor and Employment, in partnership with the private sector, is conducting more than 200 job fairs in the second quarter to bring together companies that are hiring workers and graduates looking for jobs.

That's the good news, although I doubt that a majority of jobseekers trooping to the fairs will be able to find employment. Besides, the process of getting hired entails additional expenses to the jobseekers, particularly the new graduates.

It's ironic that young people who just graduated from college, high school, and technical schools, which should have ended years of financial struggle for many families, must come up with more money when they apply for jobs.

For example, a clearance from the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), a standard requirement that applicants must submit, costs at least P115. And getting an NBI clearance is a physical strain. It takes at least a whole day to get it, if the applicant lines up at the NBI offices before dawn.

Each job applicant is also required to submit a police clearance, which also means lining up for many hours. In Quezon City, an applicant pays a fee of P100 and another P50 for his or her photograph, which is taken in the police office premises. And in addition to fees imposed by government agencies, fresh graduates also spend substantial amounts to obtain certifications, such as for diplomas, transcripts of records, identification cards, and numerous photocopies of required documents.

Graduates who come from well-to-do or well-connected families or those with their own businesses may not have to go through with these costly fees and time-consuming and physically draining processes just to be able to apply for jobs, but these are the reality for most of the fresh graduates.

I have filed a Senate bill aimed at reducing the financial burden that fresh graduates carry by waiving government fees and charges, which are collected in connection with requirements for employment.

Under the Senate Bill No. 2968, the Fresh Graduates Pre-Employment Assistance Act, all government agencies, including government-owned and controlled corporations and local government units, are prevented from collecting fees from a person applying for license, proof of identification, clearance, certificate, or other document within one year after graduating from high school, college, or any vocational or technical course.

Finding a job is very difficult with the limited opportunities out there. The government makes it more difficult by imposing fees for clearances, IDs, and certifications, among others. By waiving these fees, we are also giving the family a break after paying for the costly tertiary education.

To avail of the waiver, a citizen must submit to the agency concerned a copy of his or her diploma, certification, or communication from the academic, vocational, or technical institution attesting that such person has indeed successfully completed the course required.

The fees to be waived do not include those collected in connection with the granting of a professional license by the Professional Regulations Commission and with applications for passports.

Applying for jobs should not be a traumatic experience for fresh graduates. The waiver of government fees under Senate Bill No. 2968 will show them that their government is keen on promoting their interest.

The government, for its part, should not consider the waiver of fees as a loss of revenue, but as an investment in its emerging productive segment of the population, which will eventually be part of its revenue base.

(Please send comments/feedback to: [mbv\\_secretariat@yahoo.com](mailto:mbv_secretariat@yahoo.com))

**LINK:**

<http://www.mb.com.ph/articles/356715/providing-relief-for-fresh-graduates>