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NEWS RELEASE

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Villar sponsors committee report on bill imposing tougher penalties vs botcha

Sen. Manny Villar sponsored today the report of the Committee on Trade and Commerce on the proposed legislation seeking tougher penalties for offenders selling and transporting botcha.

Senate Bill No. 2746 under Committee Report No.21 amends Republic Act 9296 or the Meat Inspection Code of the Philippines and sets a minimum fine of P10,000 to a maximum of P50,000 from the previous fine of only P1,000 to P10,000 for the sale of botcha or double dead meat.

“Despite aggressive joint market raids conducted by the National Meat Inspection Service, local officials and the police, those arrested are able to elude criminal liability since the penalties stipulated in the old law is paltry, compared to their substantial earnings,” Villar in his sponsorship speech, said.

The period of imprisonment for offenders also increased from the old law’s two months to one year to a minimum of six months to a maximum of two years in the proposed bill.

According to the Department of Agriculture, botcha being sold in Metro Manila were traced from suppliers in Tarlac, Bulacan, Pampanga, Cavite, Batangas and Quezon. From January-December 2010, the NMIS has seized more than 10 thousand kilos of hot meat from various public markets.

The Department of Health has issued a public warning against eating botcha which may cause illnesses and could also result to death. The most immediate effects of eating botcha are vomiting and diarrhea which are signs of food poisoning.

Villar noted that during the conduct of Committee’s public hearings, it was revealed that some meat traders have become creative so they may pass off botcha as freshly slaughtered meat.

“For example, to remove the foul odor of botcha and restore the meat’s reddish color, they soak it in ‘tawas’ (alum) overnight. Some cook whole ‘botcha’ pigs into lechon,” he added.

Villar also learned that others chop into little pieces botcha parts (like internal organs) and turn them into ‘sisig’, and processed foods like hotdogs, tocino, longganisa, embotido and ham.

The proposed legislation also emphasizes the importance of meat labeling in order to make

sure that all meats sold in the markets are fit for human consumption.

It also mandates increased coordination between NMIS and local government units to launch a concerted effort against the sale and transport of botcha.

Villar said LGUs can effectively supply the personnel that NMIS lacks to manage 1,500 slaughterhouses all over the country.

“The people’s health is the state’s primary concern. We cannot expect our nation to function properly if its people are unhealthy,” he said.