

Written by

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JGL Eye Column

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C HICAGO (FAXX/jGLi) – The legacy of Juan Ponce Enrile as Liberator and Philippine Senate president is already secure.

And even if he retires now at the age of 88 instead of waiting for June 2016 when he turns 92, nobody could take away his iconic contribution that galvanized the Filipino people to come to his aid against a military dictatorship in order to restore democracy.

Mr. Enrile has also presided over one of the riveting cases that captured the imagination of the Filipino people when he even-handedly disposed of the impeachment of Supreme Court Chief

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Justice Renato Corona that canceled out any sign of criticism.

If Mr. Enrile were playing a basketball championship game, he was the team captain of a team that was routing the opposing team. But when Senator Enrile distributed 1.6-million pesos (US\$38,095) Christmas gifts to all senators but for four who do not see eye to eye with him, he was like a player who would still attempt a three pointer in the dying seconds of a game which goes against the unwritten rule of padding statistics even if his lead is already out of reach, instead of just dribbling the ball away.

Playing favorites is unbecoming of a senate president. Even if he gave the same amount to all the 23 senators, he might still not make his four colleagues happy. But he can still continue to be Senate President because he still commands the support of the supermajority of 18. He only needs a simple majority of 13, including himself, to keep himself as Senate president.

As I said Mr. Enrile's faux pas of playing favorites is not only a blunder and scandalous but unnecessary. By giving a mere 250,000 pesos (US\$5,952) each to Senators Miriam Defensor Santiago, Antonio "Sonny" Trillianes IV and siblings Alan Peter and Pia Cayetano as crumbs, Mr. Enrile violated the equal protection clause of the Constitution of these senators. If you are a good father to a family, you divide equally whatever amount you have and give it to your children as gifts in equal amounts even if one child is an apple of your eye or another is a black sheep of the family.

WHO WILL PAY 30% NET GIFT TAX?

By giving the P1.6-million gifts to the 18 senators, Mr. Enrile caused Senator Santiago to revisit Section 10 of Article VI of the Constitution, which says, "The salaries of Senators and Members of the House of Representatives shall be determined by law. No increase in said compensation shall take effect until after the expiration of the full term of all the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives approving such increase."

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I believe the P1.6-million is definitely an increase of salary for a senator, who earns P485,100 (US\$11,550) a year!