

By JOSEPH G. LARIOSA

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CHICAGO (*jGLi*) – Some Filipino Americans urged Sunday (Feb. 12) Philippine senator-judges in the current impeachment trial of Supreme Court Chief Justice Renato Corona to arrive at the truth first before coming to a decision to avoid a constitutional crisis.

Former *Manila Bulletin* provincial editor Tony Antonio, now publisher-editor of a twice-monthly Detroit

's suburb of Belleville, Michigan-based,

Filipino Star News

, welcomed in an editorial the stand taken by Senator-Judge Loren Legarda, who made “an encouraging statement when she said the sole basis of her decision will be the truth.”

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The editorial said that while senator-judges might be using “three criteria – namely, weight of evidence, stand of their political party and their personal interest” before coming to a decision, “if these criteria are to be used, what would happen to the truth, which is the very objective of the whole, acrimonious proceedings?”

“If there is truth in the charges as affirmed by clear, convincing evidence, would it be disregarded in favor of political and personal interests?”

Several Filipinos here have been monitoring the impeachment trial, which is being telecast live here by the ABS-CBN News Channel (ANC) between 1 a.m.-5 a.m. (Eastern Standard Time) from Monday to Thursday.

Chicago, Illinois-based community organizer Marlon L. Pecson, grandson of the first Filipino woman senator, Geronima T. Pecson, said the Philippines should study and put in place in its Constitution a “superbody” that will break the impasse triggered by a constitutional crisis.

Mr. Pecson, an undergraduate law student, said the “superbody” will be made up of a “grand jury” composed of ordinary citizens, who will come up with a decision to undo the crises.

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Philippine Honorary Consul General Jose Evangelista, who has just arrived in Southfield, Michigan, from a short vacation in Manila, noted indications of a constitutional crisis had loomed in the wake of the issuance by the Supreme Court of temporary restraining order (TRO), stopping the Senate, sitting as an impeachment court, from compelling a bank president to disclose the dollar deposit accounts of the Chief Justice.

Evangelista also noted the conflicting positions of various groups on the TRO issue, saying the controversy now threatens to divide the nation into pro-Corona and anti-Corona forces.

The honorary consul expressed, however, hopes that the issue will be resolved soon by the Senate and the Supreme Court.

Roman Ibaretta, a former overseas Filipino worker who now lives here in Michigan, said that “the disturbing developments” caused by the controversy have sparked tension, noting the acrimonious “word war” that pits the prosecution panel and its allies against the defense team.

Ibaretta urged Chief Justice Corona to voluntarily disclose his dollar-deposit accounts to end the controversy once and for all and spare the country from the problems caused by the unstable situation.

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He expressed fears that the enemies of the democratic government might take advantage of the volatile situation to foment widespread violence that could plunge the nation into chaos.

The same fears were aired by lawyer Vicente Bonot, Sr., former provincial board member of Camarines Sur.

Other Filipino-American community leaders who have expressed concern about the volatile situation in the Philippines included Willie Dechavez, chairperson of the Michigan chapter of the National Federation of Filipino-American Associations (NaFFAA); Ryan Rosario, president of the Filipino-American Community Council (FILAMCCO); Becky Tungol, chairperson of the Philippine-American Community Center; and Tony Kho and Van Ong, both former FILAMCCO president. # # #

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