

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Q. Pimentel, Jr. (PDP-Laban) today said there are safeguards in Joint Congressional Resolution 10 calling for the adoption of a federal system of government that will prevent anybody from pushing for a hidden political agenda such as extending the term of the incumbent President or lifting the ban on her reelection.

Senator Pimentel said that the resolution expressly provides that the term limit that applies to the incumbent President under the 1987 Constitution will not be repealed but will continue to enforce once a federal system is installed.

“The term limit – the provision prohibiting an incumbent President (Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo) from running for reelection – has not been revised. It is still in place,” he said.

Senator Pimentel says that if it is necessary to make the prohibition against the President's reelection more explicit, this should be done in revising the Constitution. He adds that this will allay the widespread apprehensions that the Mrs. Arroyo's espousal of Charter Change and shift to federal system are just a pretense to enable her to stay in power beyond 2010.

In the case of incumbent senators and members of the House of Representatives, he said the term limits that are imposed on them under the 1987 Constitution shall apply even if they are reelected under the revised (Federal) Constitution.

“In other words, there is no intention that the senators and the members of the House who are term-limited under the present Constitution would be exempted from the coverage of the term limits – and that includes me because my second consecutive senatorial term will end in 2010,” Senator Pimentel said.

He pointed out that while Resolution 10 will pave the way for the shift from the existing unitary system to a federal system, the present presidential form will be retained.

The minority leader said if the presidential form is replaced by a parliamentary form, it may conceivably enable Mrs. Arroyo to run for Member of Parliament in Pampanga and later turn her gun on the prime ministership.

If Resolution 10 favors the conversion of Congress into a Constituent Assembly, Senator Pimentel said this is because it is the most expedient mode of amending the Constitution.

He said a Constituent Assembly is definitely the least expensive, least cumbersome and fastest way of revising the fundamental law compared to a Constitutional Convention or people's initiative.

Written by Senator Pimentel's Press Office

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Senator Pimentel said the Senate and House will vote separately on the revision of the Constitution

He proposed that if the Constituent Assembly is the favored method of revising the Constitution to adopt a federal system for the country, then the Resolution converting Congress into a Constituent Assembly should: 1. include the agenda – what specific articles of the Constitution would be amended – as we do in Resolution 10; and 2. be passed by the vote of three-fourths of all members of the Senate and the House voting separately.

“If we do not define the agenda in the resolution, the people would have every reason to suspect that we, the members of Congress, have a hidden agenda. By putting on record what we want changed in the Constitution with specificity, we put to rest that popular suspicion,” Mr. Pimentel said.

Senator Pimentel said the resolution should the Senate and House, once convened as a Constituent Assembly, should meet and vote separately on any amendment by a three-fourth vote of all their respective members.

He said it would be illogical to require the Senate and House to meet and vote jointly because the Senate with only 24 authorized members can easily be swamped by the House, which has

a maximum of 250 representatives.

Since there are 22 senators out of the 24 authorized by the Constitution, three fourths of that number would be 16 or to round it off, 17 senators. On the other hand, three-fourths of the 238 sitting congressmen would be 188.

“The numbers required are an additional safeguard against any attempt to manipulate the proceedings to suit a preconceived evil plan,” Senator Pimentel said. # # #

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