

AMERICAN BICAMERALISM NOT APPLICABLE TO THE PHILIPPINES

The bicameral structure of the United States Congress is not applicable to the Philippines, because it arose out of a different setting and served a different purpose.

The American bicameral structure arose out of two opposing views among the component states of the United States federation. One view advocated equal representation among all the component states, each state being a sovereign equal of any other. Another view advocated proportionate representation among the component states, based on their respective populations. Eventually, the component states reached a compromise by establishing a bicameral legislature. Thus, the Senate or the upper house now provides for equal representation (consisting of 100 members with 2 senators per state), while the House of Representatives or the lower house provides for proportionate representation (with 435 members distributed among 50 states). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress

In the Philippines, there was never such a debate because the country has always been a unitary state. It was never a federal state. All the people nationwide have always agreed on proportionate representation among all the localities and regions depending on their respective populations. The people never had to contend with the legalistic theory of sovereign equality among the localities and regions. They only have to contend with the practical reality of the size and distribution of the population. Thus, American bicameralism does not apply to the Philippines.

The blind adoption of American bicameralism to the Philippines has resulted in undesirable consequences. Firstly, it allows an institutional gridlock between the Senate and the House of Representatives, because the bifurcated organizational structure and divergent selection processes involved open the upper and lower chambers to control by opposing political parties. Secondly, it institutionalizes the duplication of the law making process, essentially involving the same methodology, resource persons, information materials and national interest, resulting in the waste of public funds.

Thus, the adoption of a unicameral Congress by the country is advocated. The proposed system avoids the institutional gridlock and duplication of functions between the Senate and the House of Representatives, by merging the Senate with the House of Representatives, which will be the unicameral Congress. While the minority party retains the power to check the excesses of the majority party, it loses the power to obstruct the majority party's legislative agenda.

This article was written *ex-gratia* by Demosthenes B. Donato for the
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