

## **COA to get complete picture on Senators' additional budget**

Commission on Audit (COA) Chairperson Ma. Gracia M. Pulido Tan assured the public that the Commission is already looking into the reported realignment of the Senate's savings into additional budget for maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE).

The Chairperson stressed that the law empowers the Senate to augment any item in the appropriation. She pointed to Special Provisions Applicable to the Congress of the Philippines under the General Appropriations Act (GAA) 2012 which pursuant to Section 25 (5) of Article VI of the Constitution authorizes the Senate President and the House Speaker "to augment any item in the general appropriations law for their respective offices from any savings in other items of their respective appropriations."

In addition, the GAA also authorizes the Senate President and the Speaker of the House "to formulate and implement the organizational structures of their respective offices, to fix and determine the salaries, allowances and other benefits of their respective members, employees and consultants, subject to Section 10, Article VI of the Constitution," among others.

The authority conferred by the law upon the Senate President and the House Speaker to fix and determine salaries, allowances, and budgetary requirements of personnel, among others was confirmed by Congress through Concurrent Resolution No. 5 adopted by both Houses in June 2011. The Resolution took note of the delicate and unique functions of Congress which necessitates flexibility in the use of funds and the independence of Congress as co-equal branch of government.

"Every action we take should be from the standpoint of the law. In due course, we will come up with a report," she added.

"COA can only be as effective for as long as the people will continue to be vigilant and involved. At the end of the day, the sense of proportion on whether funds were used excessively is something only the constituents of the respective legislators can determine," the Chairperson said.