

“Quo Vadis, Party List?”: A Focus Group Discussion on Party-List Reform
17 October 2007, Ateneo Professional Schools, Makati City
Organized by: Ateneo School of Government (ASoG)

FGD Background and Objectives

The enactment of Republic Act (RA) 7941, or the Party-List System Act of 1994 on March 3, 1995 has been considered a milestone in the country’s democratization. The said piece of legislation immediately drew considerable support from various civil society groups because they believed “that such a system would encourage the type of politics that are anchored on principles or programs.” It was also thought that the said system would be able to provide the electorate with real choices and “result in a healthy multi-party system and open the electoral window to small sectoral parties.”

Over a decade and four elections after its enactment, there has been a smorgasbord of issues and challenges hounding the Party-List System. Aside from the perennial problem on the insufficiency of electoral votes to fill-up all the party-list seats in the House of Representatives and the questions on the political efficacy of party-list congressmen to enact laws according to their program of government, recently there has been a debate on what constitutes a “marginalized group.” This was raised after traditional politicians (trapos) and elite leaders are beginning to jump on the party-list bandwagon and are now creating their own dummy groups.

With these growing number of concerns, it is but timely to discuss the state of affairs of party-list system and from there identify the course of action that must be taken in reforming the party-list and broadening its constituency to gain wider public support for the reform it intends to institute.

In light of this context, the Ateneo School of Government and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in the Philippines shall be holding a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on Party-list Reform.

It is the objectives of the FGD

- To gather reform-minded political groups, institutes, civil society and academics to analyze the state of affairs of the party-list system after the 2007 elections;
- To identify reform issues for the party-list that can be addressed during the 14th congress; and
- To reflect about a strategy for building a wider constituency and more public and political support for these reforms.

The FGD hopefully develops a deeper understanding among the participating members/ groups on each group’s analysis and concern regarding the PL System. By starting the consensus-building process on the parameters of a party-list law reform, a strategy for building support for the reform, including specific next steps and responsibilities of participating groups can hopefully be generated.