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Save for those who have plotted their mark in history, the vast majority of individuals in their existence merely enjoy a temporal place in memory and time. In contrast, the institutions, ideas, and constructs of our forefathers continue to not only tell of the tales defining the progress of society, but also articulate the principles by which we must continue to live for future generations. As we come to the end of the new millennium’s first decade, we look at the path of the Supreme Court over this past year with an accompanying pragmatic thought on how its accomplishments set the tone for subsequent chapters in the story of our people. In doing so, we continue to trace a circle of existence between the Judiciary and the Filipino, while aptly giving credence and attention to the very people who ratified the Constitution and consequently, empowered the Judiciary to administer justice equally and without preference. This Annual Report, submitted to Congress and the President as required by Article VIII, section 16 of our Constitution, memorializes the programs, initiatives and other efforts of two thousand and nine in establishing a rule of law that resonates in the spirit of the free Filipino.

Of particular note, two thousand and nine marks the year when the Court effectuated the final phase of another symbolic circle: the circle of human rights. Over the past few years, the Supreme Court had put into motion the circle of human rights by focusing on three generations: (1) civil and political rights; (2) social and economic rights; and (3) collective and environmental rights. This year, the Supreme Court endeavored into the realm of environmental justice, recognizing that the constitutional right to a “healthful and balanced ecology” is inextricably tied to our human right to life. The cyclical dynamic between the people, the Constitution as ratified by the people, and the Judiciary as
protectors of their freedom was no more evident this year than during the Forum on Environmental Justice: Upholding the Right to a Balanced and Healthful Ecology. Held from April 16 to 17, 2009 in Baguio, Iloilo, and Davao City simultaneously through videoconferencing, the Forum was organized to bring together representatives of all branches of government, NGOs, people’s organizations, the academe, and environmental litigators among others, for the purpose of gathering insight and synthesizing such experiences to create solutions for on the ground access to environmental justice. Participation was crucial since the output of the Forum served as the basis of recommendation to the Court for the draft Rules of Procedure for Environmental Cases, the culminating product of this third generation of human rights. Further affirming this push was the support and presence of development partners and foreign representatives, who in turn shared their own views on the urgency to address environmental matters in the Philippines. As former United States Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney pointed out, the Philippines is an “environmental superpower” with plenty of flora and fauna worth affording protection.

The end of the decade also serves as a reminder that instilling continuity in the Court’s initiatives is as important as establishing the components through which these programs and projects function. Still on the theme of human rights, the Supreme Court strengthened its commitment to bring justice closer to the people by continuing to reach out to far-flung, marginalized communities with our Enhanced Justice on Wheels mobile courts. With the assistance of local government officials, community members, and members of the legal profession, EJOW provided jail decongestion, medical and legal missions, court-annexed mediation, and docket decongestion among others to the communities that would otherwise not have felt the hand of justice. In addition, people continued to avail of the writ of amparo and writ of habeas data in civil liberties cases, as well as the filing of small claims cases nationwide. The people’s confidence in the Judiciary, however, is not limited to the reliefs and programs available to them. Equally important is the reputation of the Judiciary as an independent, honorable body. Thus, the Supreme Court launched the judicial reform program Strengthening the Integrity of the Judiciary (SIJ) to assess the efficiency of the various courts, and recommend action to battle potential corruption within. Taken together, the Supreme Court has had a full year addressing these realms of public service in addition to the fulfillment of its primary adjudicative powers.

The pursuit of service and excellence is not only outward (the circle of human rights) and inert (judicial reform); it is also progressive. While the Forum on Environmental Justice, EJOW, and SIJ have attracted tremendous participation and support, these programs, and the solutions stemming from them only represent baby steps towards a potentially greater legal regime ahead. As we proceed to the next year, we are ever so mindful of our commitment to bring justice closer to the people, but are also open to the new challenges that the judiciary may face in the upcoming year. Undoubtedly, the compassion and diligence of all justices, judges, court officials, and employees, as exhibited in two thousand and nine, will help weave a continuing legacy of greater justice for the least of our people.
The Constitution, the bedrock of the rule of law in our country, while vesting the Government’s executive, legislative, and judicial powers in separate departments, paradoxically also provides for instances when they come together.

One example is Art. VIII, sec. 16 of the Constitution which requires the Supreme Court to submit to the President and Congress an annual report on the operation and activities of the Judiciary within 30 days from the opening of each regular session to inform them of the Judiciary’s needs so that they in turn can enact a budget responsive to these needs. Hence this report of what transpired in the Judiciary in 2009, not least of which was the change in the composition of the Supreme Court by the retirement of seven, or nearly half, of its membership.

Coincidentally, a change in leadership in all three great departments of government also came to pass this year. Indeed for many, this is a time when “the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.” (Song of Solomon 2:12) There is a palpable sense of hope, even among the usual cynics, that it will not be “business as usual” and that breakthroughs in solving the problems ailing our nation will finally come about.

Let there be no doubt about the Judiciary’s commitment to be part of the great enterprise of bringing about a better quality of life for our countrymen. We intend to build on the achievements of my illustrious predecessors as Chief Justice who have made significant strides in judicial reform and muscular use of the powers, both novel and traditional, granted under the Constitution to make the Judiciary efficient, effective and accessible.
During the first quarter of the time given me under our Constitution to head the Judiciary, I intend to focus on declogging court dockets and speed up the seemingly slumbrous pace of adjudication. This we intend to do by, among others, implementing nationwide the Enhanced Case Flow Management (eCFM) System which monitors the status of cases to see whether they are proceeding as scheduled; refurbishing our Halls of Justice and constructing new ones such as the much-awaited (and needed) one for Manila; fully computerizing our courts from Bangued, Abra to Tacurong, Sultan Kudarat; weeding out undesirables both from the Bench and the Bar; and expanding the Enhanced Justice on Wheels (EJOW) Program where justice, through the use of mobile courts, is literally brought to the doorstep of our people.

These are herculean tasks that we in the Judiciary cannot accomplish by ourselves. Indeed a democracy such as ours demands the close coordination of all departments of Government in great endeavors such as achieving a first-rate Judiciary. The Filipino people, our common master and reason for being, deserve nothing less.

Renato C. Corona
Two thousand nine, the penultimate year of Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno at the helm of the Judiciary, was a year of transition. No less than seven Justices, nearly half of the Court’s membership, hung up their robes, all but one upon reaching the mandatory retirement age of 70 under the Constitution: Justice Ruben T. Reyes, January 3, 2009; Justice Adolfo S. Azcuna, February 16, 2009; Justice Ma. Alicia Austria-Martinez, April 30, 2009 (who otherwise would have mandatorily retired on December 19, 2010); Justice Dante O. Tinga, May 11, 2009; Justice Consuelo Ynares-Santiago, October 5, 2009; Senior Justice Leonardo A. Quisumbing, November 6, 2009; and Justice Minita V. Chico-Nazario, December 5, 2009. They were succeeded by Justice Diosdado M. Peralta (appointed January 13, 2009), Justice Lucas P. Bersamin (April 1, 2009), Justice Mariano C. del Castillo (July 29, 2009), Justice Roberto A. Abad (August 7, 2009), Justice Martin S. Villarama, Jr. (November 3, 2009), Justice Jose Portugal Perez (December 21, 2009), and Justice Jose Catral Mendoza (January 4, 2010).
Together with Justices Antonio T. Carpio, Renato C. Corona, Conchita Carpio Morales, Presbitero J. Velasco, Jr., Antonio Eduardo B. Nachura, Teresita J. Leonardo-De Castro, and Arturo D. Brion, they comprise the 2009 Puno Court.

SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS

In 2009, the Court promulgated 1,267 decisions and 162 signed resolutions, including the following landmark rulings:

By a vote of 9–4, with two inhibitions, it upheld the constitutionality of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) even as it declared the Romulo-Kenney Agreements, which had allowed the detention of then rape convict Lance Corporal Daniel Smith of the United States Armed Forces in the United States Embassy, as “not in accordance with the VFA.” (GR No. 175888, Nicolas v. Romulo; GR No. 176051, Salonga v. Smith; and GR No. 176222, BAYAN v. Macapagal-Arroyo, February 11, 2008, Azcuna, J.)

It ruled that a natural-born Filipino who also possesses American citizenship having been born of an American father and a Filipino mother is exempt from the twin requirements of swearing to an Oath of Allegiance and executing a Renunciation of Foreign Citizenship under the Citizenship Retention and Reacquisition Act (RA 9225) before running for public office. (GR No. 176947, Cordora v. COMELEC, February 19, 2008, Carpio, J.)

It declared the three-month cap under the law on the claim of overseas Filipino workers with an unexpired portion of one year or more in their contracts which is not imposed on the claims of other overseas workers or local workers with fixed-term employment violative of the Equal Protection Clause. (GR No. 167614, Serrano v. Gallant Maritime Services, Inc., March 24, 2009, Austria-Martinez, J.)

It upheld the dismissal of the illegal use of alias case against former President Joseph Ejercito Estrada as his signing as “Jose Velarde” when he opened a numbered trust account was deemed private in nature. (GR Nos. 164368-89, People v. Estrada, April 2, 2009, Brion, J.)

It struck down an executive order expanding without authorizing legislation the coverage of regulation by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to include review centers. (GR No. 180046, Review Center Association of the Philippines v. Ermita, April 2, 2009, Carpio, J.)

It clarified that the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) is not authorized to cancel the certificates of public convenience (CPCs) and other licenses it had issued to the holders of duly issued legislative franchises for violation of the terms of their respective franchises since these legislative franchises are “the ultimate expression of State policy.” (GR No. 162272, Divinagracion v. CBS, April 7, 2009, Tinga, J.)

Striking a blow for more affordable medicines, it held that RA 9502, the Universally Accessible Cheaper and Quality Medicines Act of 2008, which grants third persons the right to import or possess unregistered imported drugs or medicines, as a later statute, prevails over RA 8204, the Special Law on Counterfeit Drugs (SLCD), which classifies “unregistered imported drugs” as “counterfeit drugs” and provides corresponding criminal penalties therefor. (GR No. 149907, Rona Drug v. RTC of Guagua, Pampanga, April 16, 2009, Tinga, J.)

By a unanimous vote, it changed the 2000 Veterans formula to allocate party-list seats by, among others, declaring unconstitutional the two percent threshold in the distribution of additional party-list seats in the second clause of sec. 11(b) of RA 7941, the Party-List System Act. (GR No. 179271, BANAT v. COMELEC; GR No. 179295, Bayan Muna v. COMELEC, April 21, 2009, Carpio, J.)

It upheld the three-month suspension imposed by the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board on the TV program Ang Dating Daan, aired on UNTV 37, after its host, petitioner Eliseo “Bro. Eli” S. Soriano, was found to have uttered offensive and obscene remarks during its August 10, 2004 broadcast. It ruled that the suspension is not a prior restraint, but rather “a form of permissible administrative sanction or subsequent punishment.” (GR No. 164785, Soriano v. Laguardia; GR No. 165636, Soriano v. MTRCB, April 29, 2009, Velasco, Jr., J.)

In a decision that reshaped jurisprudence on land registration, the Court clarified that to have acquired ownership of, and registrable title, to alienable and disposable lands based on the length and quality of possession, the Public Land Act merely requires possession since June 12, 1945 and does not require that the lands should have been alienable and disposable during the entire period of possession. The possessor is thus entitled to secure judicial confirmation of title as soon as the land it covers is declared alienable and disposable subject to the December 31, 2020 deadline imposed by the Public Land Act, as amended by RA 9176. (GR No. 179987, Heirs of Mario Malabanan v. Republic of the Philippines, April 29, 2009, Tinga, J.)

It absolved the Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI) and the Manila Bulletin of liability despite publication of erroneous articles pertaining to petitioner Hector Villanueva’s qualifications for candidacy as there was no conclusive showing that the articles in question were published with knowledge that these were false or in reckless disregard of the truth. (GR No. 164437, Villanueva v. PDI, May 15, 2009, Quisumbing, J.)

The Court declined to exercise jurisdiction over two consolidated petitions for the nullification of House Resolution No. 1109 calling for a Constituent Assembly in Congress as it found the petitions premature and that petitioners lack locus standi. (GR Nos. 187883, Lozano v. Nograles; GR No. 187910, Biraogo v. Nograles, April 16, 2009, Tinga, J.)
It declared that Senator Richard Gordon did not relinquish his senatorial post despite his election to and acceptance of the post of Chairperson of the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) Board of Governors as the PNRC is a “private organization merely performing public functions,” and that the “PNRC Chairman is not a government official or employee.” (GR No. 175352, Liban v. Gordon, July 15, 2009, Carpio, J.)

It upheld the constitutionality of RA 9369, the law amending RA 8436 or the Election Modernization Act, which gives Congress and the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) pre-proclamation authority over the presidential and vice-presidential elections and senatorial elections, respectively, insofar as the determination of the authenticity and due execution of the certificates of canvass are concerned. (GR No. 177508, BANAT v. COMELEC, August 7, 2009, Carpio, J.)

It denied the petition to nullify the Commission on Election (COMELEC)’s award of the 2010 Elections Automation Project to the joint venture of Total Information Management Corporation (TIM) and Smartmatic International Corporation (Smartmatic) on the ground that the COMELEC did not commit grave abuse of discretion in making the said award. (GR No. 188456, Roque, Jr. v. COMELEC, September 10, 2009, Velasco, Jr., J.)

It unanimously affirmed the dismissal by the Office of the Ombudsman of the plunder case against former President Joseph Ejercito Estrada and El Shaddai founder and leader Mariano “Bro. Mike” Z. Velarde, et al. in connection with the Estrada administration’s acquisition in 1999 of nine parcels of land owned by Velarde’s AMVEL Land Corporation for the Tollway Project C-5 Link Expressway. (GR No. 154117, Francisco, Jr. v. Desierto, October 2, 2009, Leonardo-De Castro, J.)

By a 9-5 vote, it held lawful partisan political acts as to a candidate before the election campaign period per its ruling in Lanot v. Comelec, wherein the Court held that a person who files a certificate of candidacy is not a candidate until the start of the campaign period. It noted that Congress had already elevated the Lanot doctrine into law under RA 8436. (GR No. 181613, Penera v. Comelec, November 25, 2009, Carpio, J.)

It extended the privileges of the writ of amparo to a consultant for the World Bank and the Senior Honorary Counselor for the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Scholarship Programme, who went missing in Jolo, Sulu. (GR No. 182498, Razon v. Tagitis, December 3, 2009, Brion, J.)

By a vote of 8-4, it voided for being unconstitutional the August 17, 2006 Compromise Agreement (Agreement) between the Philippine National Construction Corporation (PNCC) and the British Virgin Islands-based firm Radstock Securities Limited (Radstock) which would have cost the national government billions in pesos in terms of prime real estate properties, including a 12.9 hectare lot in the heart of the Financial Center in Pasay City. (GR No. 178158, Strategic Alliance Development Corporation v. Radstock Securities Limited; GR No. 180428, Sison v. PNCC, December 4, 2009, Carpio, J.)

It declared null and void COMELEC Resolution No. 8585, insofar as it set the deadline of voter registration for the 2010 polls on October 31, 2009, because it violates the clear text of RA 8189 (The Voter’s Registration Act of 1996), which decrees that voters be allowed to register daily
during regular offices hours, except during the period starting 120 days before a regular election and 90 days before a special election. (GR No. 189868, Palatino v. COMELEC, December 15, 2009, Carpio Morales, J.)

It held that the preventive suspension of public officials does not interrupt their term for purposes of the three-term limit rule under the Constitution and the Local Government Code (RA 7160) since preventive suspension, by its nature, does not involve an interruption of service within a term. (GR No. 184836, Aldovino, Jr. v. COMELEC, December 23, 2009, Brion, J.)

SIGNIFICANT RULES

Art. VIII, sec. 5, par. 5 of the Constitution grants the Supreme Court the singular power to “promulgate rules concerning the protection and enforcement of constitutional rights, pleading, practice, and procedure in all courts, the admission to the practice of law, the integrated bar, and legal assistance to the underprivileged.”

Pursuant to its rule-making power, the Supreme Court promulgated in 2009 (1) the Revised Rules and Internal Rules of the Court of Tax Appeals (AM No. 05-11-07-CTA, February 10, 2009); (2) Rule on Mandatory Legal Aid Service for Practicing Lawyers (BM No. 2012, February10, 2009), the effectivity of which was deferred until January 1, 2010 pending approval of its implementing rules and regulations; (3) Rule on the Exemption from the Payment of Legal Fees of the Clients of the National Legal Aid Committee (NCLA) and of the Legal Aid Offices in the Local Chapters of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (AM No. 08-11-7-SC, September 1, 2009); (4) Special Rules of Court on Alternative Dispute Resolution (AM No. 07-11-08-SC, September 1, 2009); (5) Internal Rules on the Proper Disposal of Case Rollos of the Court of Appeals (AM No. 09-7-06-CA, September 30, 2009); (6) Amended Rule of Procedure for Small Claims Cases (AM No. 08-8-7-SC, October 27, 2009), (7) Amended Rules on Who Shall Resolve Motions for Reconsideration of Decisions or Signed Resolutions of the Court (AM No. 99-8-09-SC, November 17, 2009); and (8) Rules on Juveniles in Conflict with the Law (AM No. 02-1-18, November 24, 2009).

COURT CLEANSING

Besides adjudicating cases and promulgating rules, the Supreme Court also has the power of administrative supervision over all courts and the personnel thereof, including the power to take disciplinary action against them when warranted. (CONST., Art. VIII, sec. 6)

In 2009, it disciplined 66 Regional Trial Court judges; 27 Metropolitan Trial Court, Municipal Trial Court in Cities, Municipal Trial Court, and Municipal Circuit Trial Court judges; and 181 first- and second-level court personnel.

Nor has the Supreme Court spared the rod in its own ranks. In 2009 it administratively disciplined 19 SC employees and dropped three others from the roll for being absent without leave (AWOL).

In an unprecedented and unanimous per curiam decision, the Supreme Court also imposed a PhP500,000 fine on a retired SC justice for grave misconduct for leaking a confidential internal document of the Court. (AM No. 09-2-19-SC, In Re: Undated Letter of Mr. Louis C. Biraogo, February 24, 2009)

The SC has also disciplined 129 members of the Bar for various administrative offenses.

In response to the pervasive drug menace, it has approved mandatory drug testing for all Judiciary employees as recommended by its Committee on Security. (AM No. 09-3013-SC, Mandatory Drug Testing of All Supreme Court Employees, March 24, 2009)

SIGNIFICANT JUDICIAL REFORM PROGRAMS, ACTIVITIES, AGREEMENTS

The Enhanced Justice on Wheels (EJOW) Program, the Court’s centerpiece judicial reform program, continues to accelerate in 2009. Its components include medical and dental missions and free legal aid clinics to detainees; dialogues with justice stakeholders; and legal information dissemination to barangay officials on top of hearing cases and providing mediation services that the original Justice on Wheels (JOW) Program already provided.

Since 2009, the EJOW mobile courts have traveled throughout the archipelago. In 2009, the EJOW mobile courts made stops at the Metro Manila cities of Manila, Caloocan, Pasig, Paranaque, Quezon, and Pasay; Rizal Province; Antipolo City; Sarangani Province; Silang, Tagaytay, Bacoor, and Imus in Cavite; Ligao, Tabaco, Legaspi, and Daraga in Albay; Malolos, Bulacan; Muñoz, Palayan, San Jose, and Cabanatuan City in Nueva Ecija; Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya; Tuguegarao, Cagayan; Batangas City; Lucena, Quezon; and Daet, Camarines Norte.

As of December 2009, the EJOW Program has facilitated the release of/dismissal of cases against 2,513 inmates, settled 5,361 cases through court-annexed mediation, and provided free legal aid to 1,103 detainees. A total of 6,883 inmates were provided free medical and dental assistance, while 11,900 barangay officials have been oriented on the Court’s EJOW and other judicial reform programs and Court rules enhancing human rights.

The Rule of Procedure for Small Claims Cases (AM No. 08-8-7-SC), under which ordinary litigants can prosecute and defend cases through ready-made forms without the participation of lawyers for money claims involving PhP100,000 and below, was initially implemented starting October 1, 2008 in 22 pilot courts all over the country. Because of the burgeoning volume of small claims actions being filed with the original pilot courts, the Court designated an additional 22 pilot courts (AO No. 30-2009, March 5, 2009). From October 1, 2008 until June 30, 2009, a total of 5,713 small claims cases have been filed with the 44 pilot courts. Thirty-seven percent (37%) or 1,460 cases were settled amicably. Forty-two percent (42%) or 1,624 cases became subject of default judgments after the defendants did not file their response and/or did not appear
at the hearing. Six percent or 227 cases went through the entire process from hearing to judgment. Because of these encouraging results, a national roll-out of the Rule in all 1,137 first-level courts (Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts in Cities, Municipal Trial Courts, Municipal Circuit Trial Courts) is planned for 2010.

A Local Government Unit-Judiciary Equalization Fund (LGU-JEF) has also been established to equalize the allocation or dispensation of allowances to Judiciary members that local government units (LGUs) may allocate in their budgets. On March 17, 2009, the Supreme Court, through the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA), and the Cebu City local government signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on March 17, 2009 freely obliging and binding the latter to contribute PhP1 million for the establishment of the LGU-JEF.

From February 2008 to May 2009, the Technical Working Group-Integrity Development Committee undertook the following activities for a preliminary review of the performance and integrity measures in the Judiciary: (1) survey of Supreme Court officials and personnel, (2) focus group discussions in the Supreme Court and in selected lower courts, and (3) consultative meetings with concerned stakeholders such as prosecutors, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, and non-governmental organizations.

Also in 2009, the Supreme Court entered into another cooperation pact with a foreign counterpart. On January 29, 2009, Chief Justice Puno and Chief Justice Pius N. Langa of the Constitutional Court of South Africa signed a Memorandum on Cooperation (MOC) between their respective Judiciary in simple ceremonies in Pretoria, South Africa. The MOC, consisting of eight articles, is aimed at promoting not only friendly relations between the two countries but also the continuing development of the respective judicial systems of the Philippines and South Africa.

For the third time in three years, the Supreme Court convened another multi-sectoral gathering to address a human rights issue of primary importance. Following its success in addressing issues pertinent to first- and second-generation human rights during the Summit on Extrajudicial Killings and Enforced Disappearances: Searching for Solutions in 2007 and the Forum on Increasing Access to Justice for the Poor: Bridging Gaps, Removing Roadblocks in 2008, the Supreme Court focused on the third-generation human right to a healthy environment when it held the Forum on Environmental Justice: Upholding the Right to a Healthful and Balanced Ecology on April 16-17, 2009 simultaneously in Baguio City, Iloilo City, and Davao City. A fruit of the Forum are the Rules of Procedure for Environmental Cases to address problems such as removing the high cost of litigation in environmental cases; the need to change archaic rules consistent with due process; and adoption of new mechanisms to assure that decisions of “green courts” are executed. A multi-sectoral MOA was also signed to (1) protect the environment and ensure sustainable development; (2) effectively implement environmental laws, monitor and encourage compliance therewith, and prosecute violators; (3) assure the people’s right to information on their environment, public participation in environmental matters, and enhanced access to environmental justice; (4) promulgate relevant rules, enact appropriate policies, and establish practical and effective mechanisms for implementation; and (5) regularly assess progress being made by the partnership for future actions. Chief Justice Puno Reynato S. Puno, who led the MOA signatories, was joined by Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Jose L. Atienza, Jr., Public Works and Highways Secretary Hermogenes E. Ebdane, Jr., Chairperson of the House Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources Representative Ignacio T. Arroyo, and Commission on Human Rights Chairperson Leila M. de Lima, among others.

STABLE BUT NOT STILL

It has been said that the law must be stable, but it cannot stand still. The same is also true of the highest court of the land. Notwithstanding the sea change in its membership in 2009, the Supreme Court stalwartly continued fulfilling its traditional role as final arbiter of legal disputes, interpreter of the Constitution, and protector of our people’s civil liberties while making significant progress in its efforts in judicial reform. It is called upon to do no less in 2010 when the major change will be in its leadership when Chief Justice Puno steps down per mandate of the Constitution on May 17 at the age of 70.
This section features the SC Justices of the 2009 term including those who are now retired as well as the SC Justices who have succeeded the latter.
Chief Justice Puno is the 22nd Chief Justice of the Philippines. He is also the Chairperson of the Supreme Court First Division and ex officio Chairperson of both the Presidential Electoral Tribunal and the Judicial and Bar Council. His appointment as Chief Justice by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on December 7, 2006 was a moment that many had anticipated from the time he was appointed on June 28, 1993 as the 131st member of the Supreme Court, then the youngest Justice at 53.

Prior to his promotion to the High Court, he was, among others, appointed as Acting City Judge of Quezon City in 1972, Assistant Solicitor General in 1974, Deputy Minister of Justice in 1984, and Associate Justice of the Intermediate Appellate Court in 1980, and of the Court of Appeals in 1986.

He was appointed to the Court Appeals at 40, the youngest appointee after the law had fixed 40 as the minimum age for a justice.

Chief Justice Puno chairs the High Court’s premier Committee on Revision of the Rules of Court that drafted, among many others, the Rule on the Writ of Amparo, Rule on the Writ of Habeas Data, Rule on Violence against Women and their Children, Rule on Legal Separation, Rule on Declaration of Nullity of Void Marriages and Annulment of Voidable Marriages, Rule on Adoption, Rule on Children Charged under the Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, and the Rule on DNA Evidence. He likewise chairs the Committee on Publication of Advanced Syllabi, the Committee on Administrative Concerns, the Committee on Selections and Promotions Board, the Committee...
on Security of the Supreme Court, and the Sub-committee on Rule of Procedure for Environmental Cases. He is also the Chairperson of the Board of Advisers of the Committee on Publication of the Court Systems Journal and of the Executive Committee on Integrity Development Review for the Judiciary.

Chief Justice Puno obtained his Bachelor of Science in Jurisprudence and Bachelor of Laws degrees from the University of the Philippines in 1962. He served as Editor in Chief of The Philippine Collegian, the school paper of UP, and Chairman of the Editorial Board of The Law Register, the official student newspaper of the UP College of Law in 1961. He was the Recent Documents Editor of The Philippine Law Journal of the UP College of Law, and Assistant Editor in Chief of Philippinensian, the official graduate annual in 1962.

He pursued his postgraduate studies in the United States, all on full scholarship. He obtained his Master of Comparative Laws at the Southern Methodist University, Texas, with high distinction as class valedictorian in 1967; his Master of Laws at the University of California, Berkeley in 1968; and finished all the academic requirements for the degree of Doctor of Juridical Science at the University of Illinois, Champaign in 1969. He became the first Filipino recipient of the Distinguished Global Alumnus Award given by the Dedman School of Law, Southern Methodist University, Texas, on March 31, 2005, and has been conferred honorary doctorate degrees by nine local universities, as well as by the Hannam University, South Korea.

Among many honors, he was the recipient of The People’s Magistrate Award by the Philippine Constitution Association and the Benigno S. Aquino, Jr. Award for Nationalism by the Federation of Catholic Schools Alumni Association in 2009. He was recognized as Most Outstanding Alumnus during the University of the Philippines’ centennial year in 2008. He was also the recipient of the 2008 Most Outstanding Manila Award for Public Service and was conferred the Press Freedom Award by the Philippine Association of Publishers, Person of the Year Award by the Manila Times, and Newsmaker of the Year by the Philippine Graphic magazine in 2007. He was also conferred the Ulirang Ama Award in 2005 and was given the Most Outstanding Law Alumnus Award, UP College of Law in 1997. He was recognized Araw ng Maynila Awardee as Outstanding Jurist in 1987 and chosen as one of the Ten Outstanding Young Men of the Philippines in 1977.

Chief Justice Puno is also actively involved in church and civic activities. He is a lay preacher of the United Methodist Church and the incumbent Chairperson of the Administrative Council of the Puno Memorial United Methodist Church. He was a former Chairperson of the Administrative Board of the Knox United Methodist Church, the biggest and oldest Methodist Church in the Philippines. He was also elected Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council of the S.G.I.G. by the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of the Philippines in 1991 and Grandmaster of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines in 1984.

A native of Manila, Chief Justice Puno was married to the late Supreme Court Clerk of Court Luzviminda Delgado-Puno with whom he has three children: Reynato, Jr., Emmanuel, and Ruth.
Chief Justice Corona, the 23rd Chief Justice, is one of the youngest magistrates ever to be appointed to the Supreme Court of the Philippines. He was appointed to the highest tribunal on April 9, 2002 as its 150th member. His age notwithstanding, he brings with him depth and perspective gained from many years of experience as a law professor, private law practitioner, and member of the Cabinet under two Presidents, Fidel V. Ramos and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Chief Justice Corona had a sterling record as a student. He graduated with gold medal honors from the Ateneo de Manila grade school in 1962 and high school in 1966. He obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree, also with honors, from the Ateneo de Manila University in 1970. It was here where he honed his skills in writing and argumentation, the indispensable tools for writing decisions with clarity, persuasion and sagacity. He was the Editor in Chief of The Guidon, the university student newspaper of the Ateneo and was secretary-general of the College Editors Guild of the Philippines from 1968 to 1970. He was also the captain of the overall champion team of the 1970 Annual Debating Tournament of the Ateneo School of Arts and Sciences.

Chief Justice Corona finished his Bachelor of Laws at the Ateneo Law School in 1974. Having married right after college, he held a full-time job at the Office of the Executive Secretary in Malacañang Palace while attending night classes in law school. Despite the heavy demands of work and family, he was a consistent honor student,
graduating no. 5 in his class. That same year, he placed 25<sup>th</sup> highest out of 1,965 candidates in the Bar examinations with a grade of 84.6%.

After law school, he pursued the Master of Business Administration course (without thesis) at the Ateneo Professional Schools. In 1981, he was accepted to the Master of Laws program in Harvard Law School where he focused on foreign investment policies and the regulation of corporate and financial institutions. He was conferred the LL.M. degree by Harvard Law School in 1982.

As a young lawyer, Chief Justice Corona served as special counsel at the Development Bank of the Philippines. He later became senior vice-president and general counsel of the Commercial Bank of Manila and later, a senior officer of the Tax and Corporate Counseling Group of the Tax Division of Sycip Gorres and Velayo (SGV & Co.).

In 1992, he joined the administration of then President Fidel V. Ramos as Assistant Executive Secretary for Legal Affairs, concurrently head of the Malacañang Legal Office. In 1994, he was promoted to Deputy Executive Secretary and later, Chief Presidential Legal Counsel and member of the Cabinet.

While serving in Malacañang during the Ramos administration, he earned the rare distinction of having solved the perennial backlog of cases in the Legal Office. As head of that critical agency, he not only served as one of the President’s legal advisers but also wrote decisions and recommendations which showed an insightful and exceptional understanding of legal issues, as well as mastery of the diverse options for resolving them.

As legal counsel to President Ramos, then Secretary Corona held, in concurrent capacity, the positions of Vice-Chairman of the Presidential Anti-Crime Commission; member of the Presidential Committee on Bail, Release, and Pardon, the Cabinet Consultative Committee on the Government of the Republic of the Philippines-National Democratic Front (GRP-NDF) Peace Talks, and the Cabinet Committee on National Security. He likewise chaired the Appeals Committee of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) as well as various other presidential committees.

Committed to the principles of integrity, decency, and simplicity, Chief Justice Corona and his accomplishments in the public service have merited public recognition. He was honored with a special award by the Harvard University/Kennedy School of Government Alumni Association. In 1998, then President Ramos awarded him the distinctive Philippine Legion of Honor medal with the rank of officer.

After the term of President Ramos ended in 1998, Chief Justice Corona was invited by then Vice-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to become her chief of staff and spokesman. It was in that capacity that he became deeply involved in the burning political issues of the day, and, when Arroyo assumed the presidency on January 20, 2001, he played a crucial role in the new administration as President Chief of Staff, Presidential Spokesman, and later, as Acting Executive Secretary.

A legal scholar at heart, he served as a member of the faculty of the Ateneo Law School for 17 years, teaching Commercial Law, Taxation and Corporation Law, the same subjects that became the focus of his many articles and columns in several newspapers. He also wrote for the Ateneo Law Journal. He teaches International Law at the Graduate School of the University of Sto. Tomas.

His competence in the field of law is recognized in the Philippines and abroad. In 2006, he was conferred the degree of Doctor of Laws honoris causa by the University of Batangas for his “legal scholarship, professional integrity, and judicial independence.” In 2007, he was again honored with another Doctor of Laws honoris causa degree, this time by the University of Cebu.

He has lectured and presented scholarly papers before several international law conferences and seminars, some of which were the program on Intellectual Property Rights at the Academy for the Judiciary in Washington, D.C.; the 9<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Asean Law Association in

In 2004, the Province of Batangas conferred on him the Dangal ng Batangas award, the highest and coveted honor reserved by the province for its distinguished sons and daughters. And in 2005, he was chosen as one of the Outstanding Manilans by the capital City of Manila. In 2010, he was given the Ulirang Ama award.

At present, he has limited his active participation to three organizations: the Harvard Law School Association of the Philippines (where he sits as Chairman of the Board of Trustees), the Ateneo Law Alumni Association (of which he was once Chairman), and the Asean Law Association (Philippine National Committee) of which he is the Chairman.

In the Supreme Court, he headed the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) Oversight Committee. He was also Chairman of the Legislative-Executive Relations Committee and member of the Management Committee of the Judicial Reform Support Project and the Committee on Public Information, as well as Co-Chairman of the Administration Concerns Committee.

His judicial philosophy is centered on his commitment to uphold the Constitution and the law in order that the rights of every man, woman and child are protected and enhanced. When the voice of the weak and the oppressed is inaudible and unheeded, he believes that every effort must be exerted to provide them a forum where they can be heard and their rights recognized. He is deeply committed to the cause of protecting and helping oppressed and abused street-children, and the rehabilitation of former inmates as useful members of society.

His personal advocacies include the formation of strong moral and ethical values in the legal profession, specially among young lawyers. He was Chairman of the Supreme Court Program on Strengthening the Integrity of the Judiciary in partnership with the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative.

Born on October 15, 1948 in Tanauan City, Batangas, the self-effacing and hardworking Chief Justice Corona is married to the former Cristina Roco. They are blessed with three grown-up children, all professionals and graduates of the Ateneo de Manila University and the University of the Philippines.

He is the proud and doting “Grandpa” to the jewels of his life — Franco, Santino, Anika, Katrina, Natalia, and Caia.
Senior Associate Justice Quisumbing took up his LL. B. studies at the University of the Philippines and then earned his LL. M. degree from Cornell University in New York. During his student days, he was a college scholar, president of the UP Student Council, Editor in Chief of *The Philippine Collegian*, president of the Student Councils Association of the Philippines, and member of the National Debating Team to Australia that won the Wilmot Cup. He capped his many academic achievements by placing 12th in the 1966 Bar examinations. His writing stint started at the Manuel Luis Quezon University (MLQU) where he edited *The Quezonian* and where he graduated *magna cum laude*, A.B. Journalism. He has also been awarded four honorary doctorate degrees in law, public administration, and humane letters.

He taught and practiced law for almost 15 years, then served the government in various posts for over 21 years. Prior to his appointment to the Supreme Court in 1998, he was Secretary of Labor and Employment. Before that, he served as Undersecretary of the Department of National Defense under President Corazon C. Aquino and then Senior Deputy Executive Secretary to President Fidel V. Ramos. Before his Court appointment, he also held the rank of Commodore of the Philippine Coast Guard, 106th Auxiliary Squadron.

Justice Quisumbing took special training in Management of Public Agencies at Cornell Graduate School, Research at Georgetown University, Communications at Michigan State University, and Public Sector Negotiations at Harvard University.

His published works include *Constitutional Control of the Election Process; Compensation in Land Reform Cases; Comparative Public Law Study; Asean Comparative Law (Vol. IV ed., Corporation Law) in the EEC and Asean; Two Regional Experiences; Law on Taxation in the Philippines; Labor Law and Jurisprudence (1992-1998)*; and *Access to Justice*, a lecture delivered before the 1993 Asean Law Association Conference in Singapore.

A native of Masbate, Masbate, Justice Quisumbing is married to former Commission on Human Rights Chairperson Dr. Purificacion V. Quisumbing. They have two children, Josefa Lourdes and Cecilia Rachel.
Justice Ynares-Santiago served for 17 years as a trial judge and nine years as Court of Appeals justice. Her appointment to the Supreme Court on April 6, 1999 is eloquent proof of her outstanding and dedicated service, integrity, and competence.


A native of Binangonan, Rizal, where she was born on October 5, 1939, she received the Pambayang Gawad Palosebo, the highest municipal award given to outstanding citizens of Binangonan, Rizal who have excelled in their professions and are role models for the youth. She is married to the late Atty. Francisco B. Santiago with whom she has four accomplished children: Pura Angelica, a lawyer; Jonas Francisco and Regina Carmela, both physicians; and Jennylind Allison, a Hotel and Restaurant Management graduate.

Justice Santiago earned her Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of the Philippines in 1962.
Senior Associate Justice Carpio was sworn in on October 26, 2001 as the 148th member of the Supreme Court. Justice Carpio obtained his law degree from the College of Law of the University of the Philippines (UP) where he graduated valedictorian and cum laude in 1975. He placed sixth in the 1975 Bar examinations with a grade of 85.7%. He earned his undergraduate degree in Economics from the Ateneo de Manila University in 1970.

During his student days, Justice Carpio was Editor in Chief of The Guidon, the school paper of the Ateneo de Manila University. He also served as managing editor of The Philippine Collegian, the school paper of UP and was Chairperson of the Editorial Board of the Philippine Law Journal of the UP College of Law.

Fresh out of law school, Justice Carpio went into private practice and put up his own law office, the Carpio Villaraza and Cruz law firm. He was also a Professorial Lecturer in the UP College of Law. He was appointed Chief Presidential Legal Counsel in 1992 with Cabinet rank.

Before joining the Supreme Court, Justice Carpio served as member of the Board of Regents of the University of the Philippines, member of the Technology Transfer Board of the Department of Industry, and Special Trade Representative of the Department of Trade for textile negotiations. In addition, he served as President of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines Pasay-Makati Chapter, Director of the University of the Philippines Law Alumni Association, and Director of the Philippine Bar Association.
Justice Carpio received in 1991 the *Outstanding Achievement Award in Law* from the Ateneo de Manila Alumni Association. For his “distinguished and exemplary service” to the Republic, Justice Carpio was awarded in 1998 the *Presidential Medal of Merit* by President Fidel V. Ramos. He was also the recipient in 2002 of the *Distinguished Alumnus Award* from the Ateneo de Davao Alumni Association, and was conferred in 2009 an Honorary Doctorate in Laws by the Ateneo de Davao University, where he finished his grade school and high school.

Justice Carpio is the Chairperson of the Second Division and the Committee on Strengthening the Institutional Capacity of the Judiciary, and the Vice-Chairperson of the Committees on Legal Education and Bar Matters and on Public Information. He is a member of the Management Committee for the Judicial Reform Support Project and the Committee on Security for the Judiciary. He is also the Chairperson of the Senate Electoral Tribunal.

A native of Davao City, Justice Carpio is married to Ruth Nguyen-Carpio with whom he has two children: Ronaldo and Audrey.
JUSTICE MA. ALICIA AUSTRIA-MARTINEZ

Born in Manila on December 19, 1940, Justice Austria-Martinez was introduced early to the intricacies of the law. Both her parents were lawyers. Her father, Retired Colonel Benjamin A. Austria, served in the Philippine Air Force while her mother, Remedios M. Austria, was a Doctor of Civil Law and served as a consultant in the Graduate School of the University of Santo Tomas (UST). Justice Austria-Martinez is the widow of Atty. Daniel T. Martinez who once served as the Clerk of Court of the Supreme Court.

Her expertise in law is proven by her track record: Examiner in Commercial Law in the 1994 Bar examinations and Examiner in Remedial Law in the 2000 Bar examinations; member of the Supreme Court’s Committee on Formulation of Rules of Procedure in Family Courts which includes the drafting of the Rules on Examination of a Child Witness, on Domestic Adoption, on Commitment of Children, and on Annulment and Declaration of Nullity of Marriage; lecturer and resource person in various programs and seminars conducted under the auspices of the Supreme Court, the Philippine Judicial Academy, and the U.P. Law Center.

Justice Austria-Martinez graduated from the University of the Philippines in 1962, earning the degree of Bachelor Laws (LLB). She passed the Bar examinations given in 1962. She also obtained a Master’s degree in National Security Administration in 1980 from the National Defense College of the Philippines where she eventually became the Chairman of the Panel of Examiners for Oral Defense in 1987, 1988, and 1991. She also served as a member of the Board of Admission in the same College for the school years 1991-1993. Justice Austria-Martinez also attended the 31st Program of Instruction for Lawyers held at the Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1999.

Justice Austria-Martinez has two sons, Michael and Bryan. Michael is married to Ma. Evangeline B. Austria. They have two children, Marianne Nicole and Vince Matthew.
Four Presidents oversaw the rise of Justice Carpio Morales in the Judiciary. In 1983, President Ferdinand E. Marcos appointed her as Presiding Judge of the Pili, Camarines Sur Regional Trial Court. In 1986, President Corazon C. Aquino appointed her as Presiding Judge of Pasay Regional Trial Court. In 1994, President Fidel V. Ramos appointed her to the Court of Appeals. And finally, on September 3, 2002, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo swore her in as the 151st member of the Supreme Court.

Justice Carpio Morales graduated valedictorian in elementary and in high school at Paoay Elementary School and Paoay North Institute, respectively. She earned her degree in Economics in 1964, and her Bachelor of Laws in 1968, both from the University of the Philippines.

Justice Carpio Morales went into private practice as an assistant attorney at the Atienza Tabora and Del Rosario law offices after passing the Bar in 1969. She thereafter worked at the Department of Justice as Special Assistant to Justice Secretary Vicente Abad Santos in 1971. Later on, she was appointed as a State Counsel in 1976 and Senior State Counsel in 1981 at the Justice Department, prior to joining the Judiciary.

She was the Bar examiner in Legal Ethics in 2000. She is the Chairperson of Gender Responsiveness in the Judiciary. She is also a member of the Senate Electoral Tribunal.

Justice Carpio Morales was conferred the 2001 Ulirang Ina Award for Law and the Judiciary by the Father’s Day and Mother’s Day Foundation of
the Philippines, Incorporated and the Outstanding Award in Championing Judiciary “for having distinguished herself as a fair and effective trial court judge, delivering justice with courage and untrammeled integrity” by the UP Alumni Association in 2008.

A native of Paoay, Ilocos Norte, Justice Carpio Morales is married to Eugenio T. Morales, Jr. with whom she has two sons: Eugenio III and Umberto.
Justice Azcuna holds the distinction of having helped draft two of the country’s Constitutions. This native of Katipunan, Zamboanga del Norte was a delegate to the 1971 Constitutional Convention and was among the 48 members of the 1986 Constitutional Commission who drafted the 1987 Constitution.

He earned his Bachelor of Laws degree from the Ateneo de Manila, cum laude. After placing 4th in the 1962 Bar examinations, he began his public service as assistant private secretary of then Court of Appeals Presiding Justice Jose P. Bengzon. He headed the staff of Justice Bengzon when the latter was later appointed to the Supreme Court in 1964.

Justice Azcuna did post-graduate studies on International Law at Salzburg University in Austria in 1977. He practiced law with the Bengzon Law Office and, later, with the Azcuna Yorac Sarmiento Arroyo and Chua Law Offices. He was appointed to the SC on October 17, 2002.

During the term of President Corazon C. Aquino, he served as Presidential Legal Counsel and was a member of President Aquino’s Cabinet as Press Secretary and as Presidential Spokesperson. He also served as Chairperson of the Philippine National Bank.

Justice Azcuna chaired the 2007 Bar Examinations Committee.
Before his appointment to the Supreme Court on July 3, 2003, Justice Tinga served as Dean of the College of Law at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (2001-2003) and the UE College of Law (1988-1992). He also served in Congress as Representative of the lone district of Taguig-Pateros for three consecutive terms from 1987 to 1998 where he was chosen by the Congress beat reporters as outstanding Congressman every year.

Prior to his public career, he engaged in extensive private law practice: first as senior attorney at the Araneta Mendoza & Papa Law Offices, and later as senior partner at the Santiago Tinga & Associates, as managing partner at the Pimentel Cuenco Fuentes Tinga Law Firm, and as managing partner of the Tinga & Corvera Law Firm.

Born in Taguig, Rizal (now the City of Taguig in Metro Manila), Justice Tinga finished his law course in 1960 at the University of the East College of Law at the top of his class, graduating magna cum laude. He passed the Bar Examinations in the same year, placing 15th in a field of more than 4,000 examinees with a grade of 87.7%. He obtained his Master of Laws degree in 1970 from the University of California at Berkeley on a fellowship grant, specializing in corporation law, securities regulation, and international business transactions.
Justice Chico-Nazario holds the distinction of being the first woman Justice in the Sandiganbayan and its first woman Presiding Justice. She is also the first Sandiganbayan Presiding Justice to be appointed to the Supreme Court.

Her appointment to the High Court on February 10, 2004 is a homecoming of sorts, since she started out as the social secretary of the late SC Justice Juan Liwag after graduating from the University of the Philippines College of Law in 1962.

Justice Nazario served as Division Clerk of Court at the Sandiganbayan’s First Division (1981-1987) and was later appointed Regional Trial Court Judge of Biñan, Laguna (1987-1993). In 1993, she became the first woman justice of the anti-graft court.

She has also held other government positions including Legal Researcher, Special Deputy Clerk of Court of the Court of First Instance, Judicial Supervisor of the Department of Justice, Supreme Court Judicial Assistant, and SC Senior Judicial Assistant. Likewise, she was a professor of law at the Perpetual Help University in Las Piñas City (1994-1997).

Justice Nazario has to her credit more than 40 years of uninterrupted service in government prior to her SC appointment.

Born in San Miguel, Bulacan, Justice Nazario was the Criminal Law Bar examiner for the year 2000. Among other honors, she was named Ulirang Ina Awardee (for Law and Judiciary) in 2000 and Most Outstanding Kapampangan in the Field of Law in 2002.
Justice Velasco took his oath on March 31, 2006 as the 157th member of the Supreme Court. He is the fourth Court Administrator to be elevated to the Supreme Court as Associate Justice.

Justice Velasco is a product of the public school system. He went to Sumulong Elementary School where he graduated first honorable mention and attended high school at University of the Philippines Preparatory School.

After finishing his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science in 1967 from the University of the Philippines in only three years, Justice Velasco pursued his Bachelor of Laws degree in the same university and became a member of the Order of the Purple Feather Honor Society and the Editorial Board of the Philippine Law Journal. He graduated eighth in his class with a grade of 1.79, and placed sixth in the Bar examinations with a Bar rating of 89.85 % in 1971.

Prior to joining the public sector as a regular member of the Judicial and Bar Council in 1993, Justice Velasco was a private law practitioner for 20 years. He served the Integrated Bar of the Philippines as its National President and Commissioner of the IBP Committee on Bar Discipline. He was also an Honorary Chairperson and a former National Co-Chair of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines National Committee on Legal Aid.

Justice Velasco was appointed to the Court of Appeals in 1998 and Court Administrator in 2001. Previously, he served as Undersecretary of the Department of Justice, Commissioner of the
Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board and of the Commission on Settlement of Land Disputes, and Chairperson of the Board of Pardons and Parole. He was awarded *Most Outstanding Jurist* by the Consumers Union of the Philippines in 2000.

He is the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on the Manila Bay Clean-Up and the Special Committee to Review the Position and Salary Grades of Officials and Employees. He is also a member of the Committee on Administrative Concerns and the Sub-committee on Rule of Procedure for Environmental Cases.

A native of Cavite, Justice Velasco is married to Lorna Q. Velasco with whom he has three children: Vincent Michael, Lord Allan Jay, and Tricia Nicole.
Justice Nachura held two posts in the Executive Department prior to his appointment on February 12, 2007 as the 158th member of the Supreme Court. He was first named by President Arroyo as Chief Presidential Legal Counsel in 2006 and shortly later, as Solicitor General.

Justice Nachura was the Dean of the Arellano University School of Law for two years before he was appointed Undersecretary of the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS) in 1994. Thereafter, in 1998, he was elected as Representative of Samar’s Second District in the House of Representatives serving in the 11th and 12th Congress. He was also a prosecutor during the 2001 Impeachment trial of former President Joseph E. Estrada. While in Congress, he authored the National Service Training Program Act, the Basic Education Reform Act, and the Samar State University Act. He also co-authored the Securities Regulation Code, the Joint Resolution calling for amendments to the Constitution, and Republic Act 9227, An Act Granting Additional Compensation in the Form of Special Allowances to Members of the Judiciary.

Justice Nachura graduated first honorable mention from San Beda College of Law, and placed seventh in the 1967 Bar examinations with a grade of 85.7%. He served as member of the University of the Philippines Board of Regents, and holds a Doctor in Public Management degree from the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila.
In 2001, he was named among the *Bedans of the Century* by his alma mater.

He is the present Chairperson of the Committee on Internal Rules, the Committee on Legal Education and Bar Matters, and the Sub-committee on the Revision of Rules on Special Proceedings. He is a member of the Committees on the Revision of the Rules of Court and the Legislative-Executive Relations. He is also the Chairperson of the 2009 Bar Examinations Committee.

A native of Catbalogan, Samar, he is married to Conchita Sison-Nachura with whom he has four children: Hazel Annalou, Katherine Joy, Raymond, and Antonio, Jr.
Justice Ruben T. Reyes was Presiding Justice of the Court of Appeals when he was appointed to the Supreme Court on August 2, 2007.

Justice Reyes finished his Bachelor of Laws degree from the Manuel Luis Quezon University, where he also served as law council president. After passing the Bar in 1962, he engaged in private law practice for 11 years. He then joined the government as assistant city fiscal in 1975 and was top awardee for best resolution and disposition of cases. In 1984, he was named Regional Trial Court Judge of Bataan, and of Manila in 1987. He was awarded Outstanding RTC Judge in 1993. A year later, he was elevated to the CA. On December 23, 2005, he was appointed as its 50th Presiding Justice.

He was a 2007 Study Grantee on International Criminal Law in the Hague Forum for Judicial Expertise in Netherlands. He also took eight summer courses, including six study grants, in the US.

The Bar examiner in Legal Ethics and Practical Exercises in 2002, Justice Reyes was also a reviewer in Criminal Law, Remedial Law, and Legal Ethics and Practical Exercises in six law schools. He has authored the first Bar Reviewer on Special Penal Laws. The longest-serving president of the Philippine Association of Law Professors, he has initiated a nationwide series of law-teaching seminars for law professors.
Justice Teresita J. Leonardo-De Castro was appointed on December 1, 2007 as the 160th member of the Supreme Court. Her career in public service began in 1973 when she worked as a law clerk in the Supreme Court and served as a Judicial Assistant and member of the technical staff of the 11th Chief Justice, the late Chief Justice Fred Ruiz Castro.

She transferred to the Department of Justice as State Counsel in 1978 and slowly rose from the ranks, culminating in her appointment as the Assistant Chief State Counsel in 1997.

Justice De Castro rejoined the Judiciary in 1997 as Sandiganbayan Associate Justice and became the anti-graft court’s Presiding Justice in 2004. During her incumbency, she spearheaded the establishment of the Computerized Case Management System and the adoption of reforms that contributed to the easing of the docket of the Sandiganbayan and professionalization of its workforce.

She is an alumna of the University of the Philippines (UP) where she finished her Bachelor of Arts cum laude in 1968 and Bachelor of Laws in 1972, graduating in the top four of her class. She was Vice-Chancellor and consistent member of the UP Law’s honor society, the Order of the Purple Feather, and staff member of the Philippine Law Journal. For her outstanding role as legal adviser to the government panel in the Mindanao peace talks, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Merit by President Fidel V. Ramos in 1998.
was also awarded Outstanding Jurist in the 18th Annual National Consumers Awards in 2007. She is the sole 2009 University of the Philippines Outstanding Alumna Awardee for Championing Justice/Judiciary.

Justice De Castro is the Chairperson of the Management Committee of the Judicial Reform Support Project, the Component Working Committee on Improving Case Adjudication and Access to Justice, and the Committee on Computerization and Library. She is presently the President of the Philippine Women Judges Association and Vice President of the International Association of Women Judges.

A native of Parañaque City, Justice De Castro is married to Eduardo De Castro with whom she has three children: Ma. Cherell, Christine Genevive, and Edouard Anthony.
Justice Brion rejoined the Judiciary on March 17, 2008 as the 161st member of the Supreme Court. Prior to his appointment to the High Court, he was Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment, and, before that, Associate Justice of the Court of Appeals.

He earned his Bachelor of Laws in 1974 from the Ateneo de Manila College of Law, graduating Cum Laude and Class Valedictorian. He also received the Ateneo Law School’s Golden Leaf Award, Gold Medal for Academic Excellence, and First Honors Gold Medal. He ranked 1st in the 1974 Bar examinations with a grade of 91.65%. He later pursued his Master of Laws at Osgoode Hall Law School at York University in Toronto, Canada.

Justice Brion began his law career in private law practice with the Siguion Reyna Montecillo & Ongsiako Law Offices. He also started his ties with the academe at that time, teaching at his alma mater – the Ateneo de Manila College of Law.

His first stint with the government was in the Executive Branch, as Executive Director of the Institute of Labor and Manpower Studies of the Philippine Ministry of Labor. He left the Labor Ministry for a time to transfer to the Legislative Branch; he ran and served as Assemblyman for Laguna in the Philippine National Assembly, where he was Vice-Chairman of the Labor and Employment Committee and Member of the Committee on Privileges and of the Committee on Revision of Laws. He rejoined the Labor Ministry
under the then semi-parliamentary government as Deputy Minister of Labor for Legal and Legislative Affairs.

After this first phase of his government service, he returned to private law practice as Senior Partner of the Natividad Delos Reyes Maambong and Brion Law Office, and, subsequently, of his old firm – the Siguion Reyna Law Offices. In between these Philippine private law practice stints, he practiced law overseas, initially with the Legal Services Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Labor, and later with the Legal Services Branch of the Management Board Secretariat of the Province of Ontario, Canada.

In 2001, he was appointed as Undersecretary of the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment. He transferred to the Department of Foreign Affairs the following year (2002) as Undersecretary for Special Projects. He also rejoined the academe at this time, teaching at the University of the Philippines School of Labor and Industrial Relations and at the Far Eastern University Institute of Law.

Justice Brion was appointed Court of Appeals Associate Justice in July 2003, and was a Senior Member of the Appellate Court’s 15th Division when he accepted the position of Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment in March 2006.

He presently sits with the Supreme Court’s Third Division, and also serves in the following Court committees: Chair of the Sub-Committee on Integrity Enhancement; Vice-Chair on Bar Matters of the Academic Committee; and Member of the Committee on Computerization and Library.

Although born in Manila, his family hails from, and he grew up in, San Pablo City, Laguna. These dual roots qualified him to be an Outstanding Manileño and an Outstanding San Pabloño, both in the field of Law.

Justice Brion is married to Antonietta Articona-Brion, a chemist-lawyer. They have two children: Arturo Jr., a computer engineer-lawyer engaged in Intellectual Property practice in Ottawa, Canada; and Antonella, an artist based in Toronto, Canada.
On January 13, 2009, then Sandiganbayan Presiding Justice Peralta was named as the 162nd member of the Supreme Court. He is the third Sandiganbayan Presiding Justice to be appointed to the High Court.

Justice Peralta first served as an assistant city fiscal in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte and later as assistant public prosecutor in the City of Manila before he was appointed as a Presiding Judge of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court in 1994. He was appointed to the Sandiganbayan in 2002 and became its Presiding Justice in 2008. He was a member of the Special Division of the Sandiganbayan which convicted former President Joseph Estrada of plunder.

Justice Peralta finished his Bachelor of Science degree at the San Juan de Letran before pursuing law at the University of Santo Tomas Faculty of Civil Law. He was a professor and Bar reviewer in Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure at the UST Faculty of Civil Law, the Ateneo de Manila University, San Beda College, and the University of the East, among others.

He was conferred the Special Centennial Award in Criminal Law by the Integrated Bar of the Philippines and the Supreme Court in 2001 during the SC Centenary Celebration, and was recipient of the Chief Justice Ramon Avanceña Award for Outstanding RTC Judge during the 2002 Judicial Excellence Awards. He was also given the Ulirang Ama Sectoral Award on Law and Judiciary from the
Ulirang Ama Foundation in 2006 and was awarded as The Outstanding Thomasian Alumni by the University of Santo Tomas Alumni Association in 2008. In April 2010, he was conferred the degree of Doctor of Laws Honoris Causa by the Northwestern University, Laoag City.

Justice Peralta is the Chairperson of the Working Committee for Component D of the Judicial Reform Support Project Management and the Society for Judicial Excellence. He is also a member of the Committees on the Judicial Reform Support Project Management, the Revision of the Rules of Court, the Revision of the Philippine Benchbook for Trial Judges, the Legislative-Executive Relations, the Sub-committee on Rule of Procedure for Environmental Cases, and the Sub-committee on Evidence. He is also a member of the Corps of Professors under the Department of Criminal Law, and lecturer of the Philippine Judicial Academy (PHILJA).

A native of Laoag, Ilocos Norte, Justice Peralta is married to Court of Appeals Justice Fernanda Lampas-Peralta with whom he has four children: Dorothy, John Christopher, Timothy John, and John Isaac.
Justice Bersamin had been serving as Court of Appeals Associate Justice for six years when he took his oath on April 3, 2009 as the 163rd member of the Supreme Court.

He engaged in private legal practice for over 12 years as partner of Purugganan Bersamin and Lizardo Law Offices before joining the Judiciary. Prior to being appointed to the Court of Appeals in 2003, he served as Presiding Judge of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court for 17 years.

Justice Bersamin graduated valedictorian in both elementary and high school. He finished his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of the Philippines in 1968, and earned his law degree from the University of the East in 1973, placing ninth in the Bar examinations with an average of 86.3%. Thereafter, he became a fellow at the Commonwealth Judicial Education Institute in Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada.

Justice Bersamin has received several citations from his alma mater and judicial award-giving bodies. He has been named Outstanding Alumnus in Government Service and Outstanding Alumnus in the Field of Law in 1991, and Outstanding Alumnus in the Judiciary in 2001 by the University of the East Alumni Association. He was also a recipient of the UE’s The 60 Most Outstanding Alumni Award during UE’s Diamond Jubilee Awards in 2006.

He was awarded the Chief Justice Jose Abad Santos Award (Outstanding Regional Trial Court
Judge) during the 11th Judicial Excellence Awards in 2008 and bagged the awards for Best Decision in Civil Law and Best Decision in Criminal Law in the 2000 Judicial Excellence Awards.

He was a professor at the Ateneo School of Law, the UE College of Law, and the University of Santo Tomas Faculty of Civil Law, and a special lecturer at the College of Law, University of Cebu in 2006. He was the Remedial Law Examiner in the 2008 Bar examinations. He lectured in the MCLE in the University of the Philippines Law Center and other institutes.

He is currently the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Judicial Reform Support Project and of the Committee on the Revision of the Benchbook on the Application, Computation, and Graduation of Penalties. He is also a member of the Committee on Revision of the Rules of Court, the Sub-committee on Rule of Procedure for Environmental Cases and the Sub-committee on Evidence.

A native of Bangued, Abra, Justice Bersamin is married to Aurora Bagares-Bersamin with whom he has four children: Pia Cristina, Luis Isidro, Lucas Riel, and Karissa Dominique.
Justice Del Castillo was a Court of Appeals Associate Justice for eight years before he was appointed on July 29, 2009 as the 164th member of the Supreme Court.

He obtained his Political Science degree from San Beda College in 1971. He thereafter pursued his Bachelor of Laws degree in Ateneo de Manila School of Law graduating in 1976.

Justice Del Castillo first joined the Judiciary in 1989 as a Municipal Trial Court Judge of San Mateo Rizal before he was promoted to Regional Trial Court Judge of Angeles City in 1992 and later, to Regional Trial Court Judge of Quezon City in 1995, where he was designated as First Vice-Executive Judge.


He has also held various positions in religious, civic, community, and non-governmental organizations such as Governor for Legal of the Bel-Air Village Association in 2008. He taught Practice Court II at the Ateneo School of Law and lectured at the Mandatory Continuing Legal Education and Philippine Judicial Academy seminars. He was also a pre-Bar reviewer in Legal Ethics and was the Chairperson and Editor in Chief of the Court of Appeals Journal from 2006-2009.
Justice Del Castillo was chosen as the Best Performing Court of Appeals Justice for 2004 and conferred the Justice George A. Malcolm Award by the Rotary Club of Manila in 2005 for deciding all his pending cases as of October 2004. He was likewise conferred the Presiding Justice Award for Outstanding Performance by the Court of Appeals in 2007. Justice Del Castillo had a zero backlog in the Court of Appeals prior to his appointment to the Supreme Court.

A native of Mandaue, Cebu, Justice Del Castillo is married to former Ateneo Law Dean Atty. Cynthia Roxas-Del Castillo with whom he has two children: the late Anna Patricia and Xavier Paolo, both lawyers.
Justice Roberto A. Abad was appointed as the 165th member of the Supreme Court on August 7, 2009. Unassuming yet well deserving, Justice Abad’s wisdom from a wealth of experience in the practice of law and academe certainly adds luster to our country’s most illustrious judicial body.

From his humble beginnings at Gregoria de Jesus Elementary School and Torres High School in Tondo, he obtained a degree of Bachelor of Arts at Manuel L. Quezon University (Manila) and by hard work and excellence, earned his law degree at the Ateneo de Manila University where he was in the Dean’s Honors List.

In the practice of law, Justice Abad first engaged in private practice as a trial attorney (1968-69) at the Jose W. Diokno Law Office. In 1969-1975, he served as Associate Attorney in the office of the Chief Justice Fred Ruiz Castro. He served as Solicitor in the Office of the Solicitor General for ten years (1975-85), then as Assistant Solicitor General (1985-86), after which he put up his own law firm, Abad & Associates (1986-2009). In 1988 he worked as legal consultant for the Presidential Committee on the Nuclear Power Plant under the late Justice Secretary Sedfrey Ordoñez. He served as counsel for the Equitable Banking Corporation during the 2001 impeachment trial of former President Joseph E. Estrada. In his book The Bio-Age Dawns on the Judiciary (2003), Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban acknowledged Justice Abad as one of few “distinguished advocates” who have practiced before the high court.

In the academe, Justice Abad served as an Associate Professor (1975-2008) and Dean (2008-09) at the University of Santo Tomas, Faculty of Civil Law where he taught a wide range of subjects.
He was a Professorial Lecturer at the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila. He served as a Bar reviewer at the Ateneo de Manila University and the University of Santo Tomas as well. He has given lectures and conducted seminar-workshops to different groups such as the Office of the Solicitor General, the attorneys and investigators of the Office of the Ombudsman, and the catechists for the Archdiocese of Manila. Justice Abad has authored two books, *Practical Book in Legal Writing* (2002) and *Fundamentals of Legal Writing* (2004 and 2007 editions). He now carries over his passion for improving our country’s legal education and the Bar as the newly appointed chairman of the 2011 Bar Examinations Committee.

As a contributing staff editor of the *Supreme Court Reports Annotated* for 24 years (1972-1996), Justice Abad has shown us a glimpse of his contribution to the jurisprudence which he pursued as a member and presently the Chairperson of the Supreme Court Subcommittee for the Revision of the Rules of Civil Procedure. These untiring efforts, along with his works in legal aid and advocacy, speak well of his commitment for truth and justice.

A native of Manila, Justice Abad is married to Victoria Martinez-Abad, a lawyer. He has four children with the late Lilia Beth B. Abad: Liliarosa, Ma. Leila, Rex Niño, and Blessilda.
Justice Villarama has been serving as Court of Appeals Justice for over a decade when he was appointed on November 3, 2009 as the 166th member of the Supreme Court.

Justice Villarama obtained his Bachelor of Laws degree from the Manuel L. Quezon University (MLQU) after completing BS in Business Administration from De La Salle University.

His appointment as SC Justice is a homecoming of sorts having begun his law career in 1970 as a technical assistant in the Legal Research Division (now Office of the Chief Attorney) of the High Court. He then later worked as legal counsel/corporate secretary for various companies.

In 1986, he rejoined the Judiciary after being appointed Regional Trial Court Judge of Pasig City. He served as its Executive Judge from 1992 to 1996. He was a recipient of the Ulirang Ama Award for Law and Judiciary and the Katangi-tanging Anak ng Angat, Bulacan in 2003.

On March 11, 1998, he was promoted to the CA where he had served as Chair of its Third Division and Supervising Justice of the Judicial Records Division.

He has served as examiner of Labor and Social Legislation in the 2004 Bar examinations. He has also received recognition during the 71st Anniversary of CA in 2007 as the recipient of the Zero-Backlog Cash Award in the amount of PhP200,000.00 from the Court of Appeals.
Justice Villarama is also a member of the SC Sub-Committee on the Revision of the Rules on Criminal Procedure and a lecturer in the School of Law of MLQU.

He has attended the 36th Program of Instruction for Lawyers conducted by the Harvard Law School’s Faculty at Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, among others.

Born on April 14, 1946, Manila, Justice Villarama is married to SC En Banc Clerk of Court Atty. Ma. Luisa Dizon-Villarama. They have two children: Dra. Clarissa D. Villarama-Cellona, a dermatologist, and Carlo D. Villanueva, a lawyer who graduated from the College of Law of the Ateneo de Manila University.
Justice Perez has the distinction of being the Supreme Court’s first “homegrown” Justice, having spent all the years of his professional life in the Court’s storied halls before assuming office as SC Associate Justice on December 26, 2009, replacing Senior Justice Leonardo A. Quisumbing.

Born on December 14, 1946, Justice Perez graduated in the top ten of his class in both his political science and law studies at the University of the Philippines. His academic achievements gained him entry to the Phi Kappa Phi and Phi Gamma Mu Honor Societies as well as the Order of the Purple Feather, the UP Law Honor Society.

Fresh out of law school in 1971, the young Justice Perez first worked in the Court as a legal assistant in the Office of the Reporter. In 1977, he became a confidential attorney in the Office of Chief Justice Fred Ruiz Castro; in 1980 supervising attorney in the Office of the Chief Attorney where he rose to the position of Assistant Chief. In 1987, he was promoted to Deputy Clerk of Court and Chief of the Office of the Reporter.

In 1996, he was named Assistant Court Administrator and in 2000 he was appointed Deputy Court Administrator. In 2008, he was promoted to Court Administrator.

Justice Perez was valedictorian of the Batangas City High School in 1963 and salutatorian of Saint Bridget’s College (elementary) in 1959. He is married to Expedita Perez (nee Sabile), a supervising administrative officer in the Department of Assessment of the City of Manila. They are blessed with three children—Jerico, Zernan, and Donnabelle.
A native of Lipa City, Justice Jose Catral Mendoza was born on August 13, 1947 to Col. Ibarra S. Mendoza, a retired Philippine Air Force (PAF) officer, and Teresa Catral Mendoza, a poultry raiser. He is the eldest of their eight children. Of his seven siblings, two are priests, two PAF generals, one Philippine Airlines (PAL) pilot, one a parish assistant, and the only girl, a certified public accountant (CPA) and currently Philippine International Trading Corporation (PITC) Vice President.

A law degree holder from the San Beda College of Law, he is married to the former Livia S. Rojas, with whom he has a son, Barleon Rojas Mendoza.

After passing the 1971 Bar examinations, he engaged in private practice and served as a legal officer of the Philippine Banking Corporation, the Manila Electric Co., and the Gokongwei Group of Companies, among others. Before joining the Judiciary as Research Attorney in the Court of Appeals in 1977, he also served as Senior Consular Investigator in the United States Embassy.

After three years, he re-entered the private sector and worked as an Associate of the Alampay Alvero Alampay Law Office before rejoining the Judiciary in the Supreme Court in 1985, first in the Office of Justice Nestor B. Alampay and later in that of Justice Abdulwahid A. Bidin.

In 1989, Justice Mendoza became a member of the Bench when he was appointed Presiding Judge of Branch 26, RTC, Sta. Cruz, Laguna. In 1992, he was named Executive Judge of that station.
After almost five years in the province, in 1994, he was transferred as the Presiding Judge of Branch 219, RTC, Quezon City, which was designated as a special court for heinous crimes. For his fair handling of the sensational cases assigned to him, he was nominated by the IBP, Quezon City, for the Judicial Excellence Award. The Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC) and the Crusade Against Violence (CAV) recognized and commended him on how he was dispensing justice. In 2002, the VACC bestowed on him the “Outstanding Judge” award. In 2003, he was appointed as the station’s Executive Judge.

On July 4, 2003, he was appointed Associate Justice of the Court of Appeals. He is most remembered for penning the decision on the reinstatement of the criminal charges against Dante Tan, and for writing the decision granting the petition for a writ of *amparo* filed by the families of University of the Philippines students Sherlyn Cadapan and Karen Empeño, who were abducted allegedly by members of the military in 2006.
Year 2011 is the first budget under a new administration when the Court would reap the fruits of what past administrations have strived for: to get at least 1% share in the National Budget that would support the Court’s objective. The Court would start from the CY 2010 appropriations of PhP11,158,172,000.00 with a proposed increase of PhP5,683,659,000.00 or 50.94% in the CY 2011 total budget estimate of PhP16,841,831,000.00 (exclusive of retirement and terminal leave). The proposed budget will hopefully enable the Court to sustain reforms and activities initiated and implemented a few years ago, as follows:

• Strengthening the integrity of the Judiciary
• Accessibility of the poor to justice
• Rehabilitation of Halls of Justice nationwide and completion of pilot model courts
• Designation of more trial courts as family courts and, if possible, the formal creation of such courts to answer for the rising number of family cases
• Upgrading and development of Information and Communication Technology
• Decentralization of courts
• Ensuring the safety of the Court’s environment through the rehabilitation of the electrical and alarm system
• The best effort to increase the compensation of the members of the bench and those with judicial ranking
• To address gender issues

THE FISCAL PROGRAM

In comparison with the previous year’s budget, the Court hereby proposes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>CY 2009 Actual</th>
<th>CY 2010 Approved</th>
<th>CY 2011 Proposed</th>
<th>Inc./(Dec.)</th>
<th>% of Inc./(Dec.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Services</td>
<td>8,984,835</td>
<td>8,018,143</td>
<td>10,309,283</td>
<td>2,291,140</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M O O E</td>
<td>2,209,382</td>
<td>2,998,941</td>
<td>4,717,538</td>
<td>1,718,597</td>
<td>57.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Outlay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings and Infrastructure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,560,000</td>
<td>1,560,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14,702</td>
<td>14,702</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>111,088</td>
<td>210,308</td>
<td>99,220</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Appropriations (Regular Programs)</td>
<td>11,194,320</td>
<td>11,128,172</td>
<td>16,811,831</td>
<td>5,683,659</td>
<td>51.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add: Projects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Locally-Funded Projects</td>
<td>22,500</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Foreign-Assisted Projects</td>
<td>33,772</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Appropriations (Regular Programs and Projects)</td>
<td>11,250,592</td>
<td>11,158,172</td>
<td>16,841,831</td>
<td>5,683,659</td>
<td>50.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total SCPLC Appropriations including Automatic Appropriations</td>
<td>11,739,963</td>
<td>11,773,937</td>
<td>17,524,434</td>
<td>5,750,497</td>
<td>48.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add: Terminal Leave &amp; Retirement Gratuity</td>
<td>406,606</td>
<td>1,952,030</td>
<td>6,321,588</td>
<td>4,369,558</td>
<td>223.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total SCPLC Obligations</td>
<td>12,146,569</td>
<td>13,725,967</td>
<td>23,866,022</td>
<td>10,120,055</td>
<td>73.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HIGHLIGHTS OF CY 2011 BUDGET PROPOSALS
The proposed increase of PhP5,683,659,000.00 (net of RLIP and TLRG) represents a 50.94% increase over the CY 2010 approved budget. By allotment class and object of expenditures, the proposed increase is broken down as follows:

### PERSONAL SERVICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Incorporation of the salary increase under EO 811 (1st Tranche) for justices, judges, officials with judicial rank and personnel</td>
<td>757,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Proposed casuals for the Justice on Wheels (AM No. 04-6-02-SC)</td>
<td>3,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Proposed new positions for:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Philippine Judicial Academy (AM No. 08-2-5-SC-PHILJA and AM No. 09-5-12-SC-PHILJA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Judicial and Bar Council (SC Resolution Re: JBC-021)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Internal Audit Office (RA No. 3456)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regional Court Administrator’s Office (AM No. 06-11-09-SC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Child and Family Courts – For 86 RTCs designated OFCs and 6 pilot courts as partial implementation of RA 8969)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Converted municipal courts to city courts (RA 9391 to RA 9394, RA 9398, RA 9404 to RA 9405, RA 9407 to RA 9409, RA 9434 to RA 9435, RA 9389, and RA 9491 as per NOSCA approved by DBM)</td>
<td>549,376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Adjustment in Longevity Pay, Step Increment, Representation and Transportation Allowance, Uniform Allowance and Productivity Incentive Benefit corresponding to authorized number of positions</td>
<td>151,059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Integration of Additional Compensation to Personnel Economic Relief Allowance per BC No. 2009-3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Increase in ECIP, PHIC, HDMF, Year-End Bonus consequential to salary increase under EO 811 (1st Tranche)</td>
<td>15,793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Pension will increase pursuant to SC Status Quo Ante Order dated October 27, 2009 and En Banc Resolution dated May 4, 2010</td>
<td>806,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Laundry, Subsistence and Hazard Pay in accordance with rates prescribed for Health Workers per Magna Carta (RA 7305)</td>
<td>1,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Total for Personal Services</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,291,140</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MAINTENANCE AND OTHER OPERATING EXPENSES

MOOE for the budget year registers 57.31 % increase or PhP1,718,597,000.00 over CY 2010 level. This will be distributed to recurring expenses of the Supreme Court (including the PHILJA, JBC, OCA) and the Lower Courts with emphasis on special activities. The increase in Supreme Court’s proposal arises from activities such as conduct of bar, seminars & conferences, computerization of courts, improvement of court libraries, printing of Philippine reports, continuous rehabilitation of facilities due to damages caused by typhoons Ondoy and Pepito & maintenance of Halls of Justice, court visitations, continuity of mandatory legal education, legal apprenticeship program, SC’s Committee on Gender Responsiveness in the Judiciary (CGRJ) share in Gender Responsive Development at PhP13.9M, and projects focused on access to justice by the poor and improvement of performance. Increase in proposal for MOOE of the Supreme Court is ..................

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>453,873</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the Lower Courts, the increase is attributable to maintenance of information systems like DSL, CAMIS, E-Library, E-Payment, and other reforms instituted by the Judicial Reform Support Project. It would also take care of the operating expenses of the Child and Family Courts as part of GAD plan, the decentralized Regional Court Administrators Office in Region 7 (RCAO-7), and increased mandatory, regular expenses of the Lower Courts (light and water, communication, rent) ..........................................................................................................................................

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,264,724</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sub-Total for MOOE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,718,597</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, the foundation for a strong Judiciary has been laid down for the next generation. The uninterrupted growth of the budget will make sure that there will be improvement in the Judiciary’s capacity to perform its fundamental mandate and promote good stewardship.
The automation system is definitely here to stay. Much of the old ways in the conduct of elections from voting to counting will be rendered obsolete. The success of the automation system will minimize the possibility but, definitely, will not eliminate a post-election vote protest and protest procedures. In fact, the Automation Electoral System strengthened more the electoral laws. To this end, the Tribunal will involve itself more to researches and continuing studies in the meantime that there is no protest while prudently spending for all its activities.

For Calendar Year 2011, the Budget Proposal of the Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET) in the total amount of PhP61,099,000.00 will show a slight increase of PhP5,128,000.00 or 9.16% over CY 2010 approved appropriation of PhP55,971,000.00. Inclusive of automatic appropriations, proposal of PhP65,561,000.00 registers a total increase of PhP5,694,000.00 or 9.51% over the total CY 2010 budget of PhP59,867,000.00.

In thousand pesos:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>CY 2009 Actual</th>
<th>CY 2010 Approved</th>
<th>CY 2011 Proposed</th>
<th>Increase/ (Decrease)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Services</td>
<td>28,072</td>
<td>43,665</td>
<td>48,661</td>
<td>4,996</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance &amp; Other Operating Expenses</td>
<td>23,814</td>
<td>12,306</td>
<td>12,306</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Outlay</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Appropriations</strong></td>
<td>51,886</td>
<td>55,971</td>
<td>61,099</td>
<td>5,128</td>
<td>9.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Add: GSIS RLIP</em></td>
<td>3,416</td>
<td>3,896</td>
<td>4,462</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Obligation</strong></td>
<td>55,302</td>
<td>59,867</td>
<td>65,561</td>
<td>5,694</td>
<td>9.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The increment of PhP5,694,000.00 is intended for the following:

a. Salary Adjustment to cover 1st Tranche of SSL III;
b. Corresponding increases in Retirement & Life Insurance Premium, Year-End Bonus and Philippine Health Insurance; and
c. Proposal of PhP132,000.00 for the replacement of obsolete computers.

The lean budget of the PET will be spent for researches and studies, compilation and publication of handbooks on election cases, and maintenance of its present staff and office. Should there be an electoral protest, prior years’ savings (CY 2008 – CY 2009) will be used as augmentation fund.

RENATO C. CORONA
Chief Justice & PET Chairman
The State of the 2009 Judiciary

Budget Overview

Of the PhP1.414T budget\(^1\) approved by the President in 2009, 0.89% was allocated to the Judiciary. With a total appropriation of PhP12.680B\(^2\) for the Supreme Court, the third-level and lower courts, and the Presidential Electoral Tribunal, the Judiciary received the tenth largest allocation among government agencies, the same rank it held in 2008.

By agency, the biggest recipient of government spending was the Department of Education (PhP158.2B) followed by the Department of Public Works and Highways (PhP130B); Department of Interior and Local Government (PhP63B); Department of National Defense (PhP56.5B); Department of Agriculture (PhP41.2B); Department of Health (PhP27.9B); Department of Transportation and Communications (PhP25B); State Universities and Colleges (PhP22.8B); and the Department of Agrarian Reform (PhP13.1B).

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While the allotted PhP12,680,044,000.00 represented an increase of PhP2.4 million from the previous year, the judicial branch’s overall percentage of the national budget posted only a slight increase, from 0.83% in 2008 to 0.89% in 2009. Thus, the Judiciary’s cut remained below one percent of the national budget pie.

In line with Article VII, Section 3 of the Constitution which prohibits Congress from reducing appropriations for the Judiciary below the amount appropriated for the previous year, there has been a steady increase in yearly allocations for the Supreme Court, the third-level courts, the lower courts, and the Presidential Electoral Tribunal as shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURT</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SC, PET, &amp; Lower Courts</td>
<td>8,215,118,000</td>
<td>9,052,246,000</td>
<td>11,120,579,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court of Appeals</td>
<td>712,733,000</td>
<td>722,874,000</td>
<td>970,135,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandiganbayan</td>
<td>230,367,000</td>
<td>301,403,000</td>
<td>344,513,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court of Tax Appeals</td>
<td>197,553,000</td>
<td>198,275,000</td>
<td>244,817,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,355,771,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,274,771,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,680,044,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While there had been a huge volume of applications for judgeship positions, the JBC balanced the need to fill the gap and the need to find quality magistrates. By the end of 2009, the vacancy rate was at 22.74% or 522 vacancies out of the 2,295 available judicial positions.6

### PERSONNEL AND BUDGET BREAKDOWN

The Supreme Court and the lower courts it supervises—Metropolitan Trial Courts (MeTCs), Municipal Trial Courts in Cities (MTCCs), Municipal Trial Courts (MTCs), Municipal Circuit Trial Courts (MCTCs), Shari’a Circuit Courts (SCCs), Regional Trial Courts (RTCs), and Shari’a District Courts (SDCs)—employ 25,526 people, including judges and non-judicial staff. Personal Services accounted for 71.8% of the SC and lower courts budget, with a total allotment of PhP7.95B, while Maintenance and other Operating Expenses represented 27.7% at PhP3.07B. The remaining 0.5% went to Capital Outlay, which was allotted PhP52.438 million, a drop of PhP287.21 million from the previous year.

### VACANCY RATES

At the end of 2008, the vacancy rate of the positions for judges and justices was at 22.66% with 519 vacancies among the 2,290 positions available. In 2009, the Judicial and Bar Council continued to focus on programs to reduce the vacancy rate and improve the quality of the nominees, thus processing 3,918 applications for 227 judicial positions in the Supreme Court, the third-level courts, and the lower courts.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURT</th>
<th>NO. OF EMPLOYEES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Court, PET</td>
<td>2,2533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Courts</td>
<td>23,2734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>25,526</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### COURT NO. OF EMPLOYEES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURT</th>
<th>NO. OF EMPLOYEES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Court</td>
<td>2,253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Courts</td>
<td>23,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>25,526</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Data from the Office of Administrative Services, Supreme Court
4. Data from the Court Management Office, Office of the Court Administrator

5. 2009 Judicial and Bar Council Report

6. Id
ADJUDICATION: CASELOAD AND DISPOSITION

While the same problems such as insufficient number of judges and limited facilities continued to create difficulties in the adjudication of cases, our trial courts posted gains in reducing the number of pending cases.

THE LOWER COURTS

At the end of 2008 our lower courts had a total of 642,082 pending cases. By December 31, 2009, that number stood at 618,892, a decrease of 23,190 pending cases. The decrease is significant considering that 320,785 new cases were filed in 2009.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURTS</th>
<th>PENDING CASES AS OF 12/31/08</th>
<th>NEWLY FILED</th>
<th>REVIVED /REOPENED</th>
<th>RCVD FROM OTHER SALAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RTCs</td>
<td>357,955</td>
<td>163,199</td>
<td>12,590</td>
<td>8,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeTCs</td>
<td>100,945</td>
<td>59,502</td>
<td>9,793</td>
<td>1,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTCCs</td>
<td>81,271</td>
<td>54,386</td>
<td>7,505</td>
<td>1,984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTCs</td>
<td>55,330</td>
<td>22,635</td>
<td>2,710</td>
<td>1,733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCTCs</td>
<td>46,205</td>
<td>20,669</td>
<td>1,873</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDCs</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCCs</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>642,082</td>
<td>320,785</td>
<td>34,478</td>
<td>14,574</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lower courts have posted modest gains in case disposition. In 2009 it disposed of 363,297 cases which are broken down as follows: 237,136 cases were decided or resolved; 108,830 were archived; and 17,331 were transferred to other courts.8 With the continuation of administrative and judicial reform programs such as the Enhanced Justice on Wheels Program, the Small Claims Courts, and the Strengthening the Integrity of the Judiciary Project, it is hoped that these figures will further decline in 2010.

LOWER COURTS’ CASE OUTFLOW 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURTS</th>
<th>DECIDED/RESOLVED</th>
<th>ARCHIVED</th>
<th>TRANSFERRED TO OTHER SALAS</th>
<th>PENDING CASES AS OF 12/31/09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RTCs</td>
<td>129,855</td>
<td>44,376</td>
<td>10,400</td>
<td>357,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeTCs</td>
<td>43,620</td>
<td>29,609</td>
<td>1,485</td>
<td>97,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTCCs</td>
<td>51,020</td>
<td>21,364</td>
<td>2,478</td>
<td>70,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTCs</td>
<td>24,182</td>
<td>9,136</td>
<td>2,189</td>
<td>46,901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCTCs</td>
<td>18,211</td>
<td>4,009</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>46,301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDCs</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCCs</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>237,136</td>
<td>108,830</td>
<td>17,331</td>
<td>618,892</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Summary Report of Cases from January to December 2009, Statistical Reports Division, Court Management Office, Office of the Court Administrator
8. Id.
LOWER COURTS’ CASE DISPOSAL 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURTS</th>
<th>CASE INPUT</th>
<th>CASE OUTPUT</th>
<th>% OF CASE DISPOSALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RTCs</td>
<td>542,467</td>
<td>184,361</td>
<td>33.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeTCs</td>
<td>171,821</td>
<td>74,714</td>
<td>43.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTCCs</td>
<td>145,146</td>
<td>74,862</td>
<td>51.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTCs</td>
<td>82,408</td>
<td>35,507</td>
<td>43.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCTCs</td>
<td>69,300</td>
<td>22,999</td>
<td>33.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDCs</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCCs</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>45.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,011,919</td>
<td>363,297</td>
<td>35.90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Total number of pending cases as of December 31, 2008 (beginning balance), newly filed cases, revived/reopened cases, and cases received from other salas.
10. Total number of decided/resolved cases, archived cases, and cases transferred to other salas.

THE THIRD-LEVEL COURTS

The Court of Appeals posted an output of 10,888 cases disposed of in 2009. The Court of Tax Appeals on the other hand exceeded its target output quota of 340 cases, disposing of 376 cases by the end of 2009, while the Sandiganbayan disposed of 357 cases within the same period.

THE SUPREME COURT

Of its 19,156 caseload in 2009, the High Tribunal disposed of 11,361 cases for a case disposal rate of 59.31%, an increase from its rate of 44.9% the previous year.13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURT</th>
<th>CASE INPUT</th>
<th>CASE OUTPUT</th>
<th>% OF CASE DISPOSAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Court of Appeals</td>
<td>Judicial Matters</td>
<td>28,405</td>
<td>10,888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandiganbayan</td>
<td>Judicial Matters</td>
<td>2,419</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court of Tax Appeals</td>
<td>Judicial Matters</td>
<td>1,067</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>Judicial Matters</td>
<td>31,891</td>
<td>11,621</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Case Input for Judicial Matters includes pending judicial matters as of December 31, 2008 (beginning balance), new cases, transferred cases, referred cases, and reinstated cases.
12. Case Output for Judicial Matters includes petitions denied/dismissed by minute/extended resolutions, denied motions for extension of time to file petitions, transferred cases, to En Banc/ Divisions or other courts, and cases disposed of by decisions/signed resolutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIVISION</th>
<th>CASE INPUT</th>
<th>CASE OUTPUT</th>
<th>% OF CASE DISPOSAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EN BANC</td>
<td>Judicial Matters</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative Matters</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Division</td>
<td>Judicial Matters</td>
<td>3,646</td>
<td>2,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative Matters</td>
<td>1,292</td>
<td>929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Division</td>
<td>Judicial Matters</td>
<td>4,160</td>
<td>2,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative Matters</td>
<td>2,010</td>
<td>844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Division</td>
<td>Judicial Matters</td>
<td>5,202</td>
<td>3,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative Matters</td>
<td>1,410</td>
<td>952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>Judicial Matters</td>
<td>19,156</td>
<td>11,361</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Case Input for Judicial Matters includes pending judicial matters as of December 31, 2008 (beginning balance), new cases, transferred cases, referred cases, and reinstated cases. Case Input for Administrative Matters includes pending administrative cases as of December 31, 2008 (beginning balance), new cases, transferred cases, referred cases, and reinstated cases.
15. Case Output for Judicial Matters includes petitions denied/dismissed by minute/extended resolutions, denied motions for extension of time to file petitions, transferred cases to En Banc/ Divisions or other courts, and cases disposed of by decisions/signed resolutions.
Reform Projects

Under the watchful eye of the Supreme Court, judicial reform projects continued to flourish in 2009 with the assistance from various international donor agencies.

Chief Justice Puno even had the occasion to showcase these reforms to the other chief magistrates from the Asia Pacific region during the first day of the 13th Conference of Chief Justices of Asia and the Pacific Conference on November 10, 2009 where he said that “[w]ithout a reformed Judiciary, our hope to ‘secure to ourselves and our posterity the blessings of independence and democracy under the rule of law’ will be an impossible dream.”

Case Management Information System (CMIS)

In 2009, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI), continued to provide assistance to the CMIS.

There were validation meetings and hands-on activities with the SC Users’ Committee and parallel activities implemented in the Court of Appeals and the Court of Tax Appeals in the development of the judiciary-wide CMIS program.

A Knowledge Sharing Forum on the Impact of Automating the Courts was held on June 8, 2009 at a hotel in Pasig City. The Forum, which featured a lecture by Ms. Naida Castro, a Filipino-American working as Senior Clerk of Court in the Los Angeles Superior Court, was attended by members of the various technical working groups on CMIS in the third-level courts and court officials.

The CMIS helps the Judiciary unclog congested dockets and help solve delays in case management and resolution through the use of technology.

Regional Court Administration Office (RCAO)

Following the successful launching of the pilot RCAO in the 7th Judicial Region, the Supreme Court continuously worked on the establishment of RCAO in two more regions – particularly the 3rd and 11th Judicial Regions with said offices to be based in the cities of Angeles and Davao, respectively.

With assistance from the Asian Development Bank, the RCAO strengthens the institutional capacity of the Judiciary by decentralizing its administrative functions and responsibilities.

ENHANCED CASE FLOW MANAGEMENT (eCFM)

Launched in 2008, the eCFM continuously provided timely and reliable information to manage the lower courts more efficiently in 2009.
The eCFM is a fully automated system piloted in the Pasay and Lapu-Lapu City Halls of Justice. It is also funded by the World Bank.

ENHANCED JUSTICE ON WHEELS (EJOW)
By the end of 2009, the EJOW Program has facilitated the release of/dismissal of cases against 2,513 inmates, settled 5,361 cases through court-annexed mediation, and provided free legal aid to 1,103 detainees. A total of 6,883 inmates were provided free medical and dental assistance, while 11,900 barangay officials have been oriented on the Court’s EJOW and other judicial reform programs and Court rules enhancing human rights.

The EJOW Program’s components include medical and dental missions and free legal aid clinics to detainees; dialogues with justice stakeholders; and legal information dissemination to barangay officials on top of hearing cases and providing mediation services that the original Justice on Wheels (JOW) Program already provided. In 2009, its mobile courts have made stops at the Metro Manila cities of Manila, Caloocan, Pasig, Paranaque, Quezon, and Pasay; Rizal Province; Antipolo; Sarangani Province; Silang, Tagaytay, Bacoor, Imus in Cavite; Ligao, Tabaco, Legaspi, and Daraga in Albay; Malolos, Bulacan; Muñoz, Palayan, San Jose, and Cabanatuan City in Nueva Ecija; Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya; Tuguegarao, Cagayan; Batangas City; Lucena, Quezon; and Daet, Camarines Norte.

SMALL CLAIMS
A total of 5,713 small claims cases were filed with the 44 pilot courts from October 2008 to June 2009. Of this figure, 69% has been disposed of and terminated by judgment, settlement, or dismissal, while the remaining 31% is awaiting service of summons, hearing, and resolution. Of the total number of disposals, 37% was based on amicable settlement approved by the courts, 6% through judgment on the merits, 42% was judgments due to the failure of defendants to respond to the claim, and 15% was caused by outright dismissal.

Planning workshops for Small Claims Courts were held in Cebu City for the pilot courts in the Visayas, Mindanao, and Bicol Region and in Angeles City, Pampanga for the pilot courts in Luzon and the National Capital Judicial Region in 2009. Workshop participants were judges, the clerks of court (CoCs) in multi-sala stations, and the branch clerks of courts in single-sala stations.

Under the High Court’s small claims project, ordinary Filipinos are empowered to litigate on money claims of PhP100,000 or less under an inexpensive, informal, and simple procedure.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI), provided assistance for this project.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR THE POOR PROJECT (A2J 1)
The Supreme Court participated in the series of consultation convened by the National Economic and Development Authority among the participating agencies of A2J 1. The results of the consultation were incorporated in the European Commission’s Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for 2011-2013.

Under the Programme, the target beneficiaries include the vulnerable groups – indigenous peoples and victims of human trafficking and violence against women and children.
PUBLIC EDUCATION ON THE RULE OF LAW ADVANCEMENT AND SUPPORT (PERLAS) PROJECT

Funded by the United Nations Development Programme, the second phase of the PERLAS Project was officially launched on June 26, 2009. Field testing of the exemplars and student manual under the PERLAS Project Phase II was conducted.

The Expert Validation Writeshop of the Grade School and High School Exemplars were completed as scheduled in July 2009. The Training Framework was thereafter updated based on the feedback from the Teachers’ Training in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

STRENGTHENING THE INTEGRITY OF THE JUDICIARY (SIJ) – INTEGRITY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW (IDR)

In June 2009, the SIJ-IDR Committee started cascading the IDR process to the first- and second-level courts through workshops conducted in key regions across the country. The workshops, participated in by selected Executive Judges, Clerks of Court and Sheriffs, focused on major areas of trial court operations which are (1) recruitment, selection, appointment and promotion; (2) financial management; (3) internal reporting and investigation; and (4) judicial records management.

A Round Table Discussion on Strengthening Judicial Integrity and Capacity was held in Pasay City on May 15, 2009 with Victoria Banks Henley, an expert on professional liability and Director-Chief Counsel of the Commission on Judicial Performance in California, United States, as resource speaker. Justices of the appellate courts participated in the RTD.

The SIJ-IDR was among the top priorities under Chief Justice Puno’s watch to restore the credibility of the Judiciary and increase the public trust. It received support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI).

SUSTAINED OUTREACH PROGRAM

Launched in October 18, 2008, the Sustained Outreach Program of the Office of the Chief Justice (OCJ) Cluster continued till May 31, 2009. The program was in partnership with Nayon ng Kabataan (NK), a Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)-run child-caring institution providing care and treatment for children aged seven to 17 years in Mandaluyong City. The Program was an offshoot of the initial outreach program of the Court in 2007 under the leadership of Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno. For the duration of the Program, service to the chosen resource-poor community was sustained to better assist the community in addressing their needs and at the same time effectively inculcate social responsibility and a keen sense of justice among Supreme Court employees.
The Office of the Clerk of Court (OCC) En Banc is the core of the administrative machinery of the Court. Its function is to assist the Court in its delicate task of adjudicating with finality all justiciable disputes, both public and private. Its primary task is the preparation of the agenda for the Court En Banc weekly sessions. This office is headed by the Clerk of Court whose main responsibilities include the implementation of policies formulated and the work programs set by the Court through the Chief Justice; the general supervision over personnel and administrative matters; and the recommendation of courses of action on various matters ranging from personnel to non-judicial concerns. Besides these, the Clerk of Court also acts as the custodian of the Court’s funds, revenues, properties, and premises and is usually the liaison officer in all official matters in relation to other government agencies.
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

The Office of Administrative Services (OAS) plans, recommends, and implements personnel management and development programs, and handles the administrative service functions of the Supreme Court, including the Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET), Judicial and Bar Council (JBC), the Philippine Judicial Academy (PHILJA), the PHILJA Development Center, Maintenance Sections of the Halls of Justice, and the Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Office (MCLEO).

OFFICE OF FISCAL MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET OFFICE

The Fiscal Management and Budget Office takes charge of the fiscal, budget, accounting, and cashiering activities of the Court. This includes planning the budget, accounting work methods and procedure, preparing the estimates of the expenditures of the Judiciary, managing the court expenditures, and submitting budget estimates and financial reports. It is tasked with all financial transactions of the Supreme Court including those of the JBC, the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA), all Halls of Justice, PHILJA, PET, and the MCLEO.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ATTORNEY

The Office of the Chief Attorney is the legal research office of the Supreme Court. It primarily renders adjudicative support functions, such as planning, coordinating, including reviewing research and case studies. When the need arises, it performs tasks specifically assigned by the Chief Justice, Associate Justices, and the Clerks of Court.

OFFICE OF THE REPORTER

The Office of the Reporter is tasked with the publication of the Philippine Reports, containing the decisions of the Supreme Court. It also prepares synopses, syllabi, and topical indices for the Philippine Reports, Monthly Decisions, and Monthly Digests.
MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS OFFICE

The Management and Information Systems Office is the information technology arm of the Supreme Court. It provides the technical expertise behind the formulation of systems design studies and application system development as well as support services on hardware maintenance. Its goal is to support and guide the Court in establishing state-of-the-art information technology infrastructure to further its modernization program. It consults the Committee on Computerization on policies and implementation of new technology and the improvement of systems already used in the Supreme Court and in the lower courts.

ATTY. EMMANUEL L. CAPARAS
Chief

OFFICE OF THE BAR CONFIDANT

The Office of the Bar Confidant (OBC) manages the conduct of the annual Bar examinations and takes custody of the Bar records and personnel record of lawyers. It helps the Court in disciplining lawyers by directly supervising the investigation of complaints against Bar candidates. The OBC is also tasked to monitor, update, and maintain Court statistical data pertaining to the Bar examinations and related matters, as well as to update the list of the members of the Bar.

ATTY. MA. CRISTINA B. LAYUSA
Chief

ATTY. EDNA B. CAMBA
Assistant Chief
(September 8, 2006 - February 18, 2010)

JUDICIAL RECORDS OFFICE

The Judicial Records Office (JRO) manages and superintends activities in connection with the judicial process from the filing of cases to the promulgation of decisions, entry of judgment, and the remand of records of cases disposed of. It also controls the receipt, processing, reporting, and distribution of pleadings filed before the Court. Besides this, the JRO takes custody of the rollos, and records of cases, including transcript and exhibits; and prepares and keeps data or statistics on judicial cases.

ATTY. MA LOURDES C. PERFECTO
Chief

ATTY. CORAZON T. DE LOS REYES
Assistant Chief
(February 10, 2009 - present)
LIBRARY SERVICES

The Supreme Court Library Services continuously evolves towards maintaining the highest standard of collection and services for the mission/vision of the Supreme Court and the whole Judiciary and for judicial reform. It has maintained and further improved its standards of being the Model Centennial Law Library.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL SERVICES

The Medical and Dental Services attends to the medical and dental needs of Supreme Court justices, judges, officials, and employees as well as its component bodies such as the JBC and PHILJA. They also provide medical services during official court activities, such as the Bar examinations and provincial seminars. The primary form of service is by consultation and treatment. Medications are dispensed free whenever appropriate. Other services rendered are pre-employment and annual physical examinations, laboratory testing, psychological testing, and physical therapy.

PRINTING SERVICES

The Printing Services Office addresses the printing requirements of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, the Sandiganbayan, and the lower courts, including attached institutions such as PHILJA, JBC, and MCLEO.
The Program Management Office (PMO) was created by the Supreme Court to coordinate and manage the implementation of the technical and administrative aspects of the Judicial Reform Program. Its activities focus on project development, resource mobilization, advocacy for reform, procurement and contract management, project implementation, and monitoring, financial management, as well as administrative management.

The Public Information Office (PIO)’s primary task is to promptly disseminate as widely as possible, news and jurisprudence from the Supreme Court. The primary objective of the PIO is to bring the Court closer to the people. It is an information-based office which cultivates the Court’s good relations with the media and the general public. It provides photo and video coverage of oral arguments and other important Court activities, conducts court tours, and produces information, education, and communication (IEC) materials about the Judiciary.
Pursuant to Article VIII, section 6 of the 1987 Constitution, the Supreme Court exercises administrative supervision over all lower courts. To properly discharge the constitutional mandate, the Court is assisted by the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA), which was created under PD 828, as amended by PD 842, and further strengthened in a Resolution of the Supreme Court dated October 24, 1996.

The OCA is tasked with the supervision and administration of the lower courts all over the country and all of their personnel. It likewise reports and recommends to the Supreme Court all actions that affect lower court management, personnel and financial administration, and administrative discipline. Jose P. Perez heads the OCA.

The OCA is assisted by five line offices: the Office of the Administrative Services, the Court Management Office, the Financial Management Office, the Legal Office, and the Office on the Halls of Justice.
Other Offices

MANDATORY CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION OFFICE

The Court promulgated Administrative Order No. 113-2003 creating a Mandatory Continuing Legal Office (MCLEO) to carry out the objectives of the mandatory continuing legal education program. The MCLEO also sets the schedule of MCLE fees in consultation with the IBP Board of Governors, with the approval of the Supreme Court.

(RET.) JUSTICE CAROLINA C. GRİNO-AQUİNO
Chairperson

SOCIETY FOR JUDICIAL EXCELLENCE

The Society for Judicial Excellence is in charge of the annual Judicial Excellence Awards for outstanding members of the Judiciary. In choosing the awardees, the Society, though its Board of Judges, considers the nominees based on criteria that determines their efficiency and effectiveness in carrying out their duties and responsibilities; their initiative, innovativeness, and resourcefulness in meeting the exigencies of the service; public perception in upholding judicial integrity and independence; their noteworthy contributions to the administration of justice; and leadership in the Judiciary and the community.

ATTY. MA. LUISA L. LAUREA
Executive Director
Under the stewardship of the Justice Adolfo S. Azcuna, who was appointed as the new Philippine Judicial Academy (PHILJA) Chancellor on June 1, 2009, the PHILJA continued to live up to its mandate as a “training school for justices, judges, court personnel, lawyers, and aspirants to judicial posts” and as “the Supreme Court’s implementing arm and the nation’s watchdog in the pursuit of excellence in the judiciary.”

The Supreme Court En Banc, through its February 24, 2009 Resolution in A.M. No. 09-2-17-SC conferred the title Founding Chancellor Emeritus to former PHILJA Chancellor Ameurfina Melencio-Herrera. She was also awarded the Right Honourable Telford Georges’ Award by the Commonwealth Judicial Education Institute, the first Filipino and only the third person to receive this prestigious accolade.

For 2009, the PHILJA conducted a total of 48 programs for 12,748 participants including newly-appointed judges and clerks of court, court attorneys, and court employees from the various lower court associations. The Academy included new subjects in the orientation programs for judges, namely, “Jurisdiction of Courts on Violation of Tax Laws” and “Law on the Automated System.”

On January 22, 2009, the PHILJA was the recipient of the Metrobank Foundation’s Partner in Empowering and Advocating Excellence Award for the Academy’s support to the Metrobank Foundation Inc.’s advocacy for excellence in judicial education through PHILJA’s conduct of the Professorial Chair Lecture Series.

In addition to its regular publications such as the PHILJA Judicial Journal and PHILJA Bulletin, the PHILJA also released the special publications Fundamentals of Decision Writing and the Manual for Executive Judges.
Under the stewardship of Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno, the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) continued with its daunting task of evaluating who merits the recommendation for appointment to the Judiciary, taking into great consideration the virtues and qualities of “competence, integrity, probity, and independence” of each and every applicant to any vacant judicial post.

In 2009, the Council En Banc evaluated 2,836 applications for 164 positions. It publicly interviewed a total of 148 candidates for 20 positions in the third-level courts and the Supreme Court and in the Legal Education Board, broken down as follows: 34 candidates for six judicial positions in the Supreme Court; 65 candidates for six positions in the Court of Appeals; 37 candidates for two positions in the Sandiganbayan; and 12 candidates for six positions in the Legal Education Board.

As of December 2009, a total of 3,918 applications for 227 positions were processed and deliberated upon by the Council during the first preliminary evaluations, with 36 applications for two vacancies in the Supreme Court; 317 for 11 vacancies of the Court of Appeals; 37 for one position in the Sandiganbayan; nine for the position of Deputy Ombudsman for Luzon; eight for the position of Special Prosecutor; 25 for the six positions in the Legal Education Board; and 3,486 for 202 judgeship positions.

The creation of the JBC, which is under the administrative supervision of the Court, was an innovation of the 1987 Philippine Constitution. Its principal mandate is to recommend to the President at least three nominees for every vacant judicial position and that for Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman.

**Judicial and Bar Council**

The Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET) is the sole judge of all contests relating to the election, returns, and qualification of the President and Vice-President. It is composed of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court as Chairperson and the 14 Associate Justices as Members. Officially supervising and administering the activities of the PET is Clerk of Court Atty. Ma. Luisa D. Villarama.
2009 Significant Decisions

GR No. 155076, Laurel v. Abrogar, January 13, 2009, Ynares-Santiago, J.
The Court held that the business of providing telecommunication and telephone service is personal property under Article 308 of the Revised Penal Code, and that the act of engaging in International Simple Resale (ISR), which is a method of routing and completing international long distance calls using lines, cables, antennae, and/or air wave frequency which connect directly to the local or domestic exchange facilities of the country where the call is destined, constitutes theft of said property. Since the Amended Information in this case describes the thing taken as “international long distance calls,” and only later mentions “stealing the business from PLDT” as the manner by which the gain was derived by the accused, the Court remanded the case to the trial court for amendment of the Information, to clearly state that the property subject of the theft are the services and business of respondent PLDT. This is to ensure that the accused is fully and sufficiently apprised of the nature and cause of the charge against him as required under the Constitution.

The Court held that the retransmission of ABS-CBN’s signals by PMSI – which functions essentially as a cable television – does not constitute rebroadcasting in violation of ABS-CBN’s intellectual property rights under the Intellectual Property Code.

GR No. 122846, White Light Corporation v. City of Manila, January 20, 2009, Tinga, J.
The Court struck down as unconstitutional a 1992 Manila City ordinance banning short-time admissions and “wash-up” rates in hotels, motels, inns, lodging houses, and pension houses in the city as it restrains the business operations of the establishment owners and restricts the rights of the latter’s patrons without sufficient justification.

GR No. 180206, City Government of Baguio v. Masweng, February 4, 2009, Tinga, J.
The Court granted the Baguio City Government’s bid to demolish residential houses situated within the Busol Forest Reservation, one of the few remaining forests in Baguio and the city’s main watershed, which has been declared as inalienable land even as it affirmed the jurisdiction of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), through its Regional Hearing Offices, to issue temporary restraining orders and writs of injunctions over claims and disputes involving
indigenous peoples as part of the powers granted to NCIP under the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act.

GR No. 175888, Nicolas v. Romulo; GR No. 176051, Salonga v. Smith; and GR No. 176222, BAYAN v. Macapagal-Arroyo, February 11, 2009, Azcuna, J.

By a vote of 9–4, with two inhibitions, the Court upheld the constitutionality of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) even as it declared the Romulo-Kenney Agreements, which had allowed the detention of then rape convict Lance Corporal Daniel Smith of the United States Armed Forces in the United States Embassy, as “not in accordance with the VFA.”

GR No. 175220, Dagan v. Philippine Racing Commission (Philracom), February 13, 2009, Tinga, J.

The Court held that there was a proper legislative delegation under PD 420 of rule-making power to the Philracom and that it had exercised its rule-making power in a proper and reasonable manner when it instructed the Manila Jockey Club, Inc. (MJCI) and Philippine Racing Club, Inc. (PRCI) to immediately come up with a Club’s House Rule to address the Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) problem and to rid their facilities of horses infected with EIA and later promulgated guidelines for the monitoring and eradication of EIA.

GR No. 184849, Spouses dela Paz v. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, February 13, 2009, Nachura, J.

The Court upheld the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations’ authority to probe into the October 11, 2008 Moscow airport incident where retired Philippine National Police Director Eliseo D. dela Paz was found in possession of 150,000 euros.

GR No. 176947, Cordora v. Commission on Elections (COMELEC), February 19, 2009, Carpio, J.

The Court ruled that a natural-born Filipino who also possesses American citizenship having been born of an American father and a Filipino mother is exempt from the twin requirements of swearing to an Oath of Allegiance and executing a Renunciation of Foreign Citizenship under the Citizenship Act (RA 9225) before running for public office.

GR No. 178160, Bases and Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) v. Commission on Audit (COA), February 26, 2009, Carpio, J.

The Court held that Board members and full-time consultants of the BCDA are not entitled to the year-end benefits they have already received but did not require them to refund the same since there is no proof that they knew that their receipt of the year-end benefit was unlawful.

GR Nos 178831-32, Limkaichong v. COMELEC; GR No. 179120, Biraogo v. Nograles; GR Nos. 179240-41, Villando v. COMELEC, April 1, 2009, Peralta, J.

The Court upheld the validity of the proclamation of Jocelyn D. Sy Limkaichong as Representative of the First District of Negros Oriental and ruled that the party questioning her citizenship should now make his case in a proper proceeding before the House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal, the constitutionally mandated tribunal to hear and decide cases involving a Member of the House of Representatives with respect to the latter’s election, returns, and qualifications.

GR No. 126890, United Planters Sugar Milling Co., Inc. (UPSUMCO) v. Court of Appeals (CA), April 2, 2009, Tinga, J.

The Court reinstated the decision of the Court of Appeals which found that only the “take-off” loans and not the operational loans of UPSUMCO were condoned by the Deed of Assignment between it and the Asset Privatization Trust (APT) so that APT was entitled to have the funds from UPSUMCO’s savings accounts with the Philippine National Bank transferred to its own account, to the extent of UPSUMCO’s remaining obligations under the operational loans less the amount condoned in the Deed of Assignment and the PhP450 Million proceeds of the foreclosure. The Court also ordered a remand of the case to the Regional Trial Court for computation of the parties’ remaining outstanding balances.

GR No. 158885, Fort Bonifacio Development Corporation (FBDC) v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue (CIR); GR No. 170680, FBDC v. CIR, April 2, 2009, Tinga, J.

Reversing the decisions of the Court of Tax Appeals and the Court of Appeals, the Court granted the petitions of FBDC allowing it to claim transitional input tax credit on its land inventory. It held that the transitional input tax credit operates to benefit newly VAT-registered persons, whether or not they previously paid taxes in the acquisition of their beginning inventory of goods, materials, and supplies.

GR No. 163072, Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) v. City of Pasay, April 2, 2009, Carpio, J.

The Court held that the airport lands and buildings of MIAA are properties of public dominion intended for public use, and as such are exempt from real property tax under Section 234(a) of the Local Government Code. However, under the same provision, if MIAA leases its real property to a taxable person, the specific property leased becomes subject to real property tax. In this case, only those portions of the NAIA Pasay properties which are leased to taxable persons like private parties were held subject to real property tax by the City of Pasay.

GR Nos. 164368-89, People v. Estrada, April 2, 2009, Brion, J.

The Court upheld the dismissal of the illegal use of alias case against former President Joseph Ejercito Estrada as his signing as “Jose Velarde” when he opened a numbered trust account with Equitable PCI Bank was deemed private in nature.
Finding that respondent public officials have deprived petitioners of the right to broadcast as certified by the Constitution and their particular legislative franchise by withholding from them zoning clearances and consequently the mayor’s permit, the Court granted petitioners’ petition for mandamus and ordered respondent public officials to pay them jointly and severally PhP4 million as temperate damages, PhP1 illion as exemplary damages, and PhP5 million as attorney’s fees.

GR No. 180046, *Review Center Association of the Philippines v. Ermita*, April 2, 2009, Carpio, J.
The Court struck down an executive order expanding without authorizing legislation the coverage of regulation by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to include review centers.

GR No. 162272, *Divinagracia v. Consolidated Broadcasting System, Inc.*, April 7, 2009, Tinga, J.
The Court clarified that the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) is not authorized to cancel the certificates of public convenience (CPCs) and other licenses it had issued to the holders of duly issued legislative franchises for violation of the terms of their franchise.

The Court held that RA 9502, the *Universally Accessible Cheaper and Quality Medicines Act of 2008*, which grants third persons the right to import or possess unregistered imported drugs, as a later statute, prevails over RA 8204, the *Special Law on Counterfeit Drugs (SLCD)*, which classifies “unregistered imported drugs” as “counterfeit drugs” and provides corresponding criminal penalties therefor.

GR No. 179271, *Barangay Association for National Advancement and Transparency (BANAT) Partylist v. COMELEC; GR No. 179295, Bayan Muna v. COMELEC*, April 21, 2009, Carpio, J.
By a unanimous vote, the Court changed the 2000 *Veterans formula* to allocate party-list seats by, among others, declaring unconstitutional the two percent threshold in formula to allocate party-list seats by, among others, COMELEC Advancement and Transparency (BANAT) Partylist v. COMELEC; GR No. 179295, Bayan Muna v. COMELEC*, April 21, 2009, Carpio, J.

GR No. 164785, *Soriano v. Laguardia; GR No. 165636, Soriano v. Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB)*, April 29, 2009, Velasco, Jr., J.
The Court upheld the three-month suspension imposed by the MTRCB on the TV program *Ang Dating Daan*, aired on UNTV 37, after its host, petitioner Eliseo “Bro. Eli” S. Soriano, was found to have uttered offensive and obscene remarks during its August 10, 2004 broadcast. It ruled that the suspension is not a prior restraint, but rather a “form of permissible administrative sanction or subsequent punishment.”

GR No. 166510, *People v. Romualdez*, April 29, 2009, Tinga, J.
On motion for reconsideration, the Court held that the graft charges against Benjamin “Kokoy” Romualdez for holding two government positions and receiving remunerations for both had already prescribed.

The Court clarified that to have acquired ownership of, and registrable title, to alienable and disposable lands based on the length and quality of possession, the *Public Land Act* merely requires possession since June 12, 1945 and does not require that the lands should have been alienable and disposable during the entire period of possession. The possessor is thus entitled to secure judicial confirmation of title as soon as the land it covers is declared alienable and disposable subject to the December 31, 2020 deadline imposed by the *Public Land Act*, as amended by RA 9176.

GR No. 180363 *Teves v. COMELEC*, April 28, 2009, Ynares-Santiago, J.
The Court allowed a former mayor to run in the 2010 elections despite his prior conviction for violation of RA 3019 or the *Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act*, holding that a breach of the said law does not automatically disqualify a candidate from running for public office under the *Omnibus Election Code* unless the act committed involves moral turpitude.

GR No. 179652, *People’s Broadcasting (Bombo Radyo Phils., Inc.) v. The Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)*, May 8, 2009, Tinga, J.
The Court held that at least a *prima facie* showing of absence of an employer-employee relationship, as in this case, is needed to preclude the DOLE from the exercise of its visitorial and enforcement powers under Article 128 of the *Labor Code*.

The Court absolved the PDI and the Manila Bulletin of liability despite publication of erroneous articles pertaining to petitioner Hector Villanueva’s qualifications for candidacy as there was no conclusive showing that the articles in question were published with knowledge that these were false or in reckless disregard of the truth.

GR No. 179452, *Civil Service Commission (CSC) v. Alfonso*, June 11, 2009, Nachura, J.
The Court ruled that even though the CSC has appellate jurisdiction over disciplinary cases decided by government departments, agencies, and instrumentalities, a complaint may be filed directly with the CSC, and the CSC has the authority to hear and decide the case, although it may in its discretion opt to deputize a department or an agency to conduct the investigation, as provided for in the *Civil Service Law* of 1975. In this case, since the complaints were filed directly with the CSC and the CSC had opted to assume jurisdiction over the complaint, the CSC’s exercise of jurisdiction shall be to the exclusion of other tribunals exercising concurrent jurisdiction.

The Court declined to exercise jurisdiction over two consolidated petitions for the nullification of House Resolution No. 1109 calling for a Constituent Assembly in Congress as it found the petitions premature and that petitioners lack locus standi.

GR No. 175352, Liban v. Gordon, July 15, 2009, Carpio, J. The Court declared that Senator Richard Gordon did not relinquish his senatorial post despite his election to and acceptance of the post of Chairperson of the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) Board of Governors as the PNRC is a “private organization merely performing public functions,” and that the “PNRC Chairman is not a government official or employee.”

GR No. 185401, Dueñas, Jr. v. House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal (HRET), July 21, 2009, Corona, J. The Court held that the HRET could continue or discontinue revision proceedings ex proprio motu, that is, of its own accord by authority of Rule 88 of the HRET Rules. It further held that since the HRET possessed the authority to motu proprio continue a revision of ballots, it also had the wherewithal to carry it out. It thus upheld the disbursement by the HRET of its own funds for the revision of the ballots in the remaining counter-protested precincts in this case, citing Rule 7 of the HRET Rules which provides that the HRET has exclusive control, direction and supervision of its functions as well as Rule 33 of the HRET Rules allowing it to take such action as it may deem equitable under the premises.

GR No. 185220, Laguna Metts Corporation v. Caalam, July 27, 2009, Corona, J. Holding that under the amendment by AM No. 07-7-12-SC of Section 4, Rule 65 there can no longer be any extension of the 60-day period within which to file a petition for certiorari, the Court reversed and set aside resolutions by the CA granting such an extension.

GR No. 177508, BANAT v. COMELEC, August 7, 2009, Carpio, J. The Court upheld the constitutionality of RA 9369, the law amending RA 8436 or the Election Modernization Act, which gives Congress and the COMELEC pre-proclamation authority over the presidential and vice-presidential elections and senatorial elections, respectively, insofar as the determination of the authenticity and due execution of the certificates of canvass are concerned.

AM No. 08-11-7 SC, Re: Request of National Legal Aid Office to Exempt Legal Aid Clients from Paying Filing and Other Fees, August 28, 2009, Corona, J. The Court granted the request of the Misamis Oriental Chapter for the exemption from the payment of filing, docket and other fees of the clients of the legal aid offices of the various IBP chapters and approved The Rule on the Exemption From the Payment of Legal Fees of the Clients of the National Committee on Legal Aid (NCLA) and of the Legal Aid Offices in the Local Chapters of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP).

GR No. 188456, Roque, Jr. v. COMELEC, September 10, 2009, Velasco, Jr., J. The Court denied the petition to nullify the COMELEC’s award of the 2010 Elections Automation Project to the joint venture of Total Information Management Corporation (TIM) and Smartmatic International Corporation (Smartmatic) on the ground that the COMELEC did not commit grave abuse of discretion in making the said award.

GR No. 175490, Macalinao v. BPI, September 17, 2009, Velasco, Jr., J. In exercising its power to determine what is iniquitous and unconscionable, the Court reduced both the interest rate and penalty charge of the unpaid credit card charges in this case to 1% monthly or a total of 2% per month or 24% per annum in line with the prevailing jurisprudence and in accordance with Art. 1229 of the Civil Code.

GR Nos. 177857-58, Philippine Coconut Producers Federation Inc. (COCOFED) v. Republic, September 17, 2009, Velasco, Jr., J. The Supreme Court has approved the conversion of 753,848,312 San Miguel Corporation (SMC) Common Shares, registered in the name of the Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF) and the so-called “14 Holding Companies” (collectively known as CIIF Companies), into SMC Series 1 Preferred Shares. The preferred shares shall remain in custodia legis (in the custody of the law) and their ownership shall be subject to the final ownership determination of the Court.

GR No. 167330, Philippine Health Care Providers, Inc. v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue, September 18, 2009, Corona, J. The Supreme Court ordered the cancellation of the 1996 and 1997 documentary stamp tax assessments against petitioner health maintenance organization on the ground, among others, that it is not engaged in the insurance business as its principal purpose is service and not indemnity.

GR No. 154117, Francisco, Jr. v. Desierto, October 2, 2009, Leonardo-De Castro, J. The Court unanimously affirmed the dismissal by the Office of the Ombudsman of the plunder case against former President Joseph Ejercito Estrada and El Shaddai founder and leader Mariano “Bro. Mike” Z. Velarde, et al. in connection with the Estrada administration’s acquisition in 1999 of nine parcels of land owned by Velarde’s AMVEL Land Corporation for the Tollway Project C-5 Link Expressway.

Min. Res., GR No. 171947-48, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) v. Concerned Residents of Manila Bay, October 6, 2009 To allay fears that the MMDA now has a court order to evict families without due process, the Court clarified its directive in its 2008 Manila Bay clean-up decision for the MMDA, as the lead agency and implementor of programs and projects for flood control projects and drainage services in Metro Manila, in coordination with and other agencies, to dismantle and remove all structures,
constructions, and other encroachments established or built in violation of RA 7279, and other applicable laws along the Pasig-Marikina-San Juan Rivers, the National Capital Region (Parañaque-Zapote, Las Piñas) Rivers, the Navotas-Malabon-Tullahan-Tenejeros Rivers, and connecting waterways and esteros in Metro Manila. The Court clarified that its directive covers summary eviction and structures, constructions, and encroachments that either fall (1) within the PD 1607-proscribed three-meter/20-meter/40-meter zone, as the case may be or (2) those considered as public nuisances and danger areas as defined in RA 7279. It held that the eviction process that will apply will depend on the classification of the settler or occupant: If the settler is a squatter whose structure or dwelling was built after the effectivity of RA 7279 on March 29, 1992 under Item 1, sec. 2 of RA 7279 or a professional squatter under Item 2, sec. 2 of the same law, then he can be summarily evicted, but he is entitled to an eviction notice. It ruled that only when a settler has been identified as underprivileged and homeless will all the requirements under sec. 28 of RA 7279 on, among others, notice, consultation, and resettlement apply.

GR No. 165276, Angeles v. Gaite, November 25, 2009, Peralta, J.
The Supreme Court upheld Memorandum Circular No. 58, promulgated by the Office of the President on June 30, 1993, which bars an appeal or a petition for review to the Office of the President of decisions/orders/resolutions of the Secretary of Justice except those involving offenses punishable by reclusion perpetua or death.

GR No. 181613, Penera v. Comelec, November 25, 2009, Carpio, J.
By a 9-5 vote, the Court held lawful partisan political acts as to a candidate before the election campaign period per its ruling in Lanot v. Comelec, wherein the Court held that a person who files a certificate of candidacy is not a candidate until the start of the campaign period. It noted that Congress had already elevated the Lanot doctrine into law under RA 8436.

GR Nos. 162243 and 164516, Alvarez v. Paper Industries Corp. of the Philippines (PICOP) Resources Inc., December 3, 2009, Chico-Nazario, J.
The Supreme Court denied the petition for mandamus filed by PICOP to compel the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to issue an Integrated Forest Management Agreement (IFMA) contract in the paper firm’s favor. The IFMA contract entitles PICOP to a renewal of its tenure to operate on forest areas which had been licensed to the company for 50 years. The Court held that
the DENR did not violate PICOP’s constitutional right to non-impairment of contracts when it denied the company an IFMA as the Presidential Warranty (1969 Document), signed by then President Ferdinand E. Marcos on July 29, 1969 granting PICOP’s predecessor-in-interest Bislig Bay Lumber Company, Inc. (BBLCI) a license to operate over forest lands through Timber License Agreement (TLA) No. 43, was not a contract recognized under the Non-Impairment Clause of the Constitution.

GR No. 179830, Bedol v. COMELEC, December 3, 2009, Leonardo-De Castro, J.
The Court dismissed the petition of Lintang Bedol, the former Chair of the Provincial Board of Canvassers (PBOC) for the province of Maguindanao, assailing the six-month jail term and PHP1,000 fine imposed on him for contempt by the COMELEC in connection with its investigation of the allegations of fraud and irregularities in the conduct of the May 14, 2007 elections in Maguindanao. It held that the COMELEC can initiate motu proprio indirect contempt proceedings under the Omnibus Election Code and the COMELEC Rules of Procedure.

GR No. 182161, Reyes v. Court of Appeals (CA), December 3, 2009, Leonardo-De Castro, J.
The Supreme Court upheld the decision of the CA which had denied a petition for the issuance of the writ of amparo filed by Father Robert P. Reyes in connection with a Hold Departure Order (HDO) issued against him by then Department of Justice (DOJ) Secretary Raul Gonzalez for Reyes’ alleged involvement in the November 30, 2007 Manila Peninsula Hotel siege. The Court ruled that the restriction on Reyes’ right to travel as a consequence of the criminal case against him was not unlawful and that Reyes failed to establish that his right to travel was impaired in the manner and to the extent that it amounted to a serious violation of his right to life, liberty, and security, for which there exists no readily available legal recourse or remedy.

GR No. 182498, Razon v. Tagitis, December 3, 2009, Brion, J.
The Court extended the privileges of the writ of amparo to a consultant for the World Bank and the Senior Honorary Counselor for the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Scholarship Programme, who went missing in Jolo, Sulu. It issued a directive to police agencies to undertake specified courses of action to address the disappearance.

GR No. 178158, Strategic Alliance Development Corporation v. Radstock Securities Limited; GR No. 180428, Sison v. Philippine National Construction Corporation (PNCC), December 4, 2009, Carpio, J.
By a vote of 8-4, the Court voided for being unconstitutional the August 17, 2006 Compromise Agreement (Agreement) between the PNCC and the British Virgin Islands-based firm Radstock Securities Limited which would have cost the national government billions in pesos in terms of prime real estate properties, including a 12.9 hectare lot in the heart of the Financial Center in Pasay City.

GR No. 189868, Palatino v. COMELEC, December 15, 2009, Carpio Morales, J.
The Court declared null and void COMELEC Resolution No. 8585, insofar as it set the deadline of voter registration for the 2010 polls on October 31, 2009, because it violates the clear text of RA 8189 (The Voter’s Registration Act of 1996), which decrees that voters be allowed to register daily during regular office hours, except during the period starting 120 days before a regular election and 90 days before a special election.

GR No. 179554, MMDA v. Trackworks, December 16, 2009, Bersamin, J.
The Court ruled that the MMDA has no authority to dismantle billboards and other forms of advertisements posted on structures of the Metro Rail Transit 3 (MRT3) as MMDA Regulation No. 96-009, which prohibited the posting, installation, and display of billboards, signage, and other advertising media on any part of the road, sidewalk, center island, posts, trees and open space, only applies to public areas and the MRT3 being private property owned by the Metro Rail Transit Corporation, Limited (MRTC) pursuant to RA 6957 (Build, Operate, and Transfer Law).

GR No. 176951, League of Cities of the Philippines v. COMELEC; GR No. 177499, League of Cities of the Philippines v. COMELEC; GR No. 178056, League of Cities of the Philippines v. COMELEC, December 21, 2009, Velasco, Jr., J.
The Supreme Court, by a vote of 6-4, reversed its November 18, 2008 decision and declared as constitutional the Cityhood Laws or Republic Acts (RAs) converting 16 municipalities into cities. Looking at the circumstances behind the enactment of the laws subject of contention, the Court held that the Local Government Code amending RA 9009 intended the local government units covered by the cityhood laws to be exempt from the PhP 100 million income criterion.

GR No. 184836, Aldovino, Jr. v. COMELEC, December 23, 2009, Brion, J.
The Court held that the preventive suspension of public officials does not interrupt their term for purposes of the three-term limit rule under the Constitution and the Local Government Code (RA 7160) since preventive suspension, by its nature, does not involve an effective interruption of service within a term.
ADDENDUM TO THE 2005 REVISED RULES OF THE COURT OF TAX APPEALS (CTA), AS AMENDED AND INTERNAL RULES OF THE CTA
AM NO. 05-11-07 CTA, February 10, 2009; effective March 20, 2009

The additional amendments concern the disqualification of justices and other officers or employees of the CTA in relation to any case filed with the CTA, the applicability of the rule on pre-trial as well as the procedure for pre-trial in CTA civil cases, and the internal operating procedures of the CTA.

RULE ON MANDATORY LEGAL AID SERVICE
BAR MATTER NO. 2012, February 17, 2009

The above Rule requires every practicing lawyer to render yearly a minimum of 60 hours of free legal aid services to indigent litigants. Sec. 9 of the Rule authorizes the IBP’s National Committee on Legal Aid (NCLA) to recommend the regulations for implementing the Rule, particularly on the determination of who constitute “practicing lawyers,” what constitute “legal aid cases,” and what administrative procedures and financial safeguards are necessary for the proper enforcement of the Rule. In view of the foregoing, the Supreme Court directed the NCLA to promptly coordinate with the various chapters of the IBP in drafting regulations for implementing the Rule.

The Supreme Court deferred implementation of the Rule to January 1, 2010 provided the implementing regulations have been published prior to the said date.

AM NO. 08-11-7-SC (IRR), September 10, 2009; effective September 27, 2009

Under this Rule, clients of the NCLA and the chapter legal aid offices are exempted from legal fees. Their qualifications shall be determined based on the tests provided in the Rule.

SPECIAL RULES OF COURT ON ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR)
AM NO. 07-11-08-SC, September 1, 2009; effective October 30, 2009

The objectives of the Special ADR Rules are to encourage and promote the use of ADR, particularly arbitration and
mediation, as an important means to achieve speedy and efficient resolution of disputes, impartial justice, curb a litigious culture, and to declog court dockets.

According to the Special ADR Rules, courts shall intervene only in the cases allowed by law or the Special ADR Rules. In situations where no specific rule is provided under the Special ADR Rules, the court shall resolve such matter summarily and be guided by the spirit and intent of the Special ADR Rules and the ADR Laws (which refers to the whole body of ADR laws in the Philippines).

Considering its procedural character, the Special ADR Rules shall be applicable to all pending arbitration, mediation, or other ADR forms covered by the ADR Act, unless the parties agree otherwise. The Special ADR Rules, however, may not prejudice or impair vested rights in accordance with law.

AMENDED RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR SMALL CLAIMS CASES
AM NO. 99-8-09-SC, amendments effective November 3, 2009; effective date of the implementation/roll-out of the Rule, as amended, to all first level courts, except the Shari’a Circuit Courts – March 18, 2010

The Amended Rules retain features of the original rule while introducing a number of critical amendments, some of which are the following: (a) deletion of the exception allowing the filing of a motion to dismiss on the ground of lack of jurisdiction; (b) reiteration of the mandatory personal appearance of the parties at the hearing and the prohibition of lawyers as representatives of juridical entities; (c) deletion of the phrase “Judicial Dispute Resolution” because of its technical meaning; (d) clarification of the effect of failure of a defendant to file a response; and, (e) imposition of additional fees for frequent filers.

With the promulgation of the Amended Rules, all first-level courts nationwide, except Shari’a courts, now hear small claims cases, i.e., money claims of PhP100,000 or less, thus widening the avenues of justice of our people.

AMENDED RULES ON WHO SHALL RESOLVE MOTIONS FOR RECONSIDERATION OF DECISIONS OR SIGNED RESOLUTIONS IN CASES ASSIGNED TO THE DIVISIONS OF THE COURT
AM NO. 99-8-09-SC, November 17, 2009; effective November 25, 2009

The said Amended Rules supersede the Resolution of the Court promulgated on February 15, 2000.

RULE ON JUVENILES IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW
AM NO. 02-1-18-SC, November 24, 2009; effective December 1, 2009

The Rule determines how cases of children in conflict with the law should be handled and treated by police, legal officers, social workers and other service providers, thereby preventing exploitation of children.

Under the Rule, a Child in Conflict with the Law (CICL) is a child below 18 years old but not less than 15 years and one (1) day old, who is alleged as, accused of, or adjudged as having committed an offense under Philippine laws.

A significant provision of the Rule states that if a child is found guilty of an offense charged, the Court, instead of executing the judgment of conviction shall place the CICL under suspended sentence. In this case, the court shall proceed to determine dispositions which can be any or combination of the following: care, guidance, and supervision orders; community service orders; drug and alcohol treatment; participation in group counseling; and commitment to the Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) or other centers for children in conflict with the law authorized by the Secretary of the DSWD. The Rule also states that a CICL who has been transferred to the youth rehabilitation center or youth detention home shall be provided with a healthy environment.
The Standing and Ad Hoc Committees, and Technical Working Groups of the Court continued to make substantial contributions to the dispensation of its constitutionally mandated responsibilities in 2009.

The Committee on Legal Education and Bar Matters (CLEBM) drafted the proposed guidelines on the Pilot On-the-Job Training Program for Law Students in the First and Second Level Courts and submitted the same for approval of the Supreme Court En Banc.

The CLEBM took up the proposal to implement the designation of two examiners per subject. The CLEBM referred the matter to the Bar Confidant, Atty. Ma. Cristina B. Layusa, for her study and recommendation. In her Memorandum dated January 29, 2009, Atty. Layusa outlined the mechanics to effect the designation of two examiners per subject. She proposed the division of a bar subject into two parts—Part I and Part II. Each examiner shall be assigned a specific scope from which to formulate their questions. The CLEBM adopted Atty. Layusa’s recommendation and submitted it to the Court En Banc for approval. On February 3, 2009, the Court En Banc approved the proposed reform in the Bar Examination, and it was implemented in the 2009 Bar Examinations.

The CLEBM also drafted proposed amendments to Sections 5 and 6 of Rule 138 of the Rules of Court.

Upon the recommendation of the CLEBM, the SC approved the respective Clinical Legal Education programs of the University of Cebu, St. Mary’s University of Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya, and Central Philippine University.

The Personnel Development Committee (PDC) approved 30 requests for the availment of study leaves, local trainings and seminars, foreign scholarships, foreign short-term trainings, and certificates issued as to no pending scholarships or service obligations.

The SC Performance Evaluation Review Committee (SC PERC) already finalized the proposed rules of the Head Office Performance Evaluation Review (PERC)-SC and Office PERCS-SC that will primarily govern its internal procedures and activities as part of the proposed Performance Management System for Court Personnel (PMS-COUPER) in the SC.

During the 2009 Search for Model Employees and Special Awardees, the SC Program on Awards and Incentives for Service Excellence (SC PRAISE) gave each of the winners of the Model Employees Awards a certificate of recognition, medallion, and cash incentive, while the special awardees were given a certificate of recognition and cash incentive. The following were adjudged as winners: Lourdes M. Laraya, Supervisory Level; Atty. Fe Cresencia B. Babor,
also conducted trainings on the Code of Conduct for Court Personnel (PMS COUPER). The IDR Committee, Procurement Plan, and Performance Management System impinge on the over-all performance of the judicial branch, Judiciary by systematically examining its integrity and combating corruption within the administrative aspect of the lower courts were continuously provided by the mandated organizations.

The Procurement Planning Committee, which is mandated to formulate a procurement plan and annual consolidated procurement programs for the Supreme Court, halls of justice and the lower courts, conducted a random physical inventory of the official properties issued to the lower courts to determine the actual needs of these offices for computers, printers, and other office supplies. The approved procurement plan for 2009 totaled PhP2,353,125,856.62 while the actual purchases and expenses made totaled PhP836,701,601.11.

Support services to the employees of the SC and the lower courts were continuously provided by the mandated SC Committees. Among these are the Shuttle Bus Committee, which ferried SC employees to and from its fixed routes while also serving the transportation needs of the various offices, groups, and organizations of the High Court; and the Supreme Court Health and Welfare Plan Committee which processed and evaluated medical claims amounting to PhP43,381,894.63.

The Integrity Development Review (IDR) Committee, an initiative of the Court to eliminate opportunities for corruption within the administrative aspect of the Judiciary by systematically examining its integrity measures, identifying institutional weaknesses that impinge on the over-all performance of the judicial branch, and assessing the functions of the courts in terms of their vulnerability to corruption, submitted a draft Rule of Procedure for Whistleblowing, Comprehensive Procurement Plan, and Performance Management System for Court Personnel (PMS COUPER). The IDR Committee also conducted trainings on the Code of the Conduct for Court Personnel, updated the financial manual, and proposed the numerical system in evaluating for appointment and promotion. The IDR Committee also continued the conduct of the “Strengthening the Integrity of the Judiciary” overarching activity in Davao for Regions IX to XII, Cebu for Regions VI to VIII, Lucena for Regions IV-A and V, excluding Catanduanes and Masbate, and Clark for Regions II and III.

To continuously upgrade information and communication technology (ICT), the Committee on Computerization and Library (CCL) has approved vital components of the Management and Consultancy Services for the Development of the Judiciary’s Information and Communications Technology Capability. These are primarily the Enterprise Information Systems Plan (EISP) and MISO Re-engineering Development Plan (MRDP).

The Enterprise Information Systems Plan (EISP) is the Judiciary’s information technology (IT) framework of the functional, technical, and structural specifications for various information systems that are envisioned to be implemented in 2010 until 2014. As part of its mandate to oversee the implementation of the EISP, the CCL has approved the development and implementation of the Judiciary Case Management System (JCMS), and the JCMS ePayment, a module of the Judiciary Case Management System that replaced the system developed by Land Bank of the Philippines. The module has been deployed in Lapu-Lapu City, Quezon City, Pasay City, Caloocan City, Marikina City, and Manila to computerize the recording of collections and implement the issuance of a single official receipt.

The MISO Re-engineering Development Plan (MRDP) is a detailed plan for the upgrading of the Court’s Management Information Systems Office (MISO) and the MIS Divisions (MISDs) of the Court of Appeals, Sandiganbayan and Court of Tax Appeals. It was conceived to provide needed support mechanisms, in terms of organizational structure, staffing, and training, as well as implementation and change management strategies.

The CCL also approved the procurement of key IT equipment and software packages, E1 Internet lines, ICT equipment for the Judiciary Data Center, computers, printers, and AVRs as submitted by the Procurement Planning Committee, Internet Bandwidth Manager, DB Web Pro Software, and scanners.

The Committee on Gender Responsiveness in the Judiciary (CGRJ), in partnership with the Philippine Judicial Academy and the Philippine Judges Association, conducted the second and third Regional Multi-Sectoral Stakeholders Seminar Workshop on Increasing Access to Family Courts for the National Capital Region on February 5, 2009 and Luzon participants on June 5, 2009. The outputs for the regional conferences are to be presented and validated at a national summit scheduled the following year. The CGRJ through its Sub-Committee on Training and Capacity Building, in partnership with the delegation of the European Commission to the Philippines and the Philippine Judicial Academy (PHILJA), conducted a two-day seminar on CEDAW and Gender Sensitivity Training for Court Attorneys on March 10 to 11, 2009.

To increase the awareness of the SC employees, the CGRJ commemorated Women’s Month by holding
The CGRJ as part of its efforts in enhancing partnership and networking with other Gender and Development (GAD) advocates and upon request of the Quezon City Gender and Development Resources and Coordinating Office (QCGADRCO), hosted a “Lakbay Aral” for QCGADRCO focal persons and legal staff, representatives from the People’s Law Enforcement Board (PLEB) and Federacion Internacional de Abogadas on June 4, 2009. Participants were oriented on the role and functions of CGRJ and the Court’s mission and vision of a gender responsive judiciary by the CGRJ.

With the view of providing gender responsive welfare services, the SC Day Care Center was placed under the auspices of the CGRJ through the SC Office of Administrative Services. In this regard, the Sub-Committee on Gender Responsive Welfare Services was formed.

### GENDER STATISTICS OF JUSTICES AND JUDGES AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Court</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total No. of Incumbent Judges</th>
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<tr>
<td>Court of Appeals</td>
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<tr>
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### Gender Statistics of Employees of the Supreme Court and Presidential Electoral Tribunal as of December 31, 2009

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<tr>
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<th>SUPREME COURT</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FEMALE</strong></td>
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Source: OCA-CMO
The year 2009 saw the Supreme Court under the leadership of Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno once more convene another multi-stakeholder gathering for yet another set of human rights, this time the third-generation human rights, including the right to a healthy environment. The Forum on Environmental Justice: Upholding the Right to a Healthful and Balanced Ecology held on April 16 and 17, 2009 followed the Summit on Extrajudicial Killings and Enforced Disappearances: Searching for Solutions in 2007 and the Forum on Increasing Access to Justice by the Poor: Bridging Gaps and Removing Roadblocks in 2008 that addressed issues pertinent to first- and second-generation human rights, respectively. The three precede yet another forum, the National Forum on Family Courts to be held in 2010.

The Forum on Environmental Justice was aimed at determining ways through which the courts can help in promoting, protecting, upholding, and preserving the environment and ensuring the various government agencies’ commitment to environmental justice. Inputs from more than 400 participants from various sectors, concerned government agencies, and the courts were solicited in helping draft the new court rules to be observed when hearing environmental cases.

FORUM ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: UPHOLDING THE RIGHT TO A HEALTHFUL AND BALANCED ECOLOGY

The Supreme Court-led Forum on Environmental Justice: Upholding the Right to a Balanced and Healthful Ecology resulted in the signing of a multi-sectoral Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to further strengthen the enforcement and implementation of the country’s environmental laws. Under the MOA, the signatories undertake to (1) protect the environment and ensure sustainable development; (2) effectively implement environmental laws, monitor and encourage compliance therewith, and prosecute violators; (3) assure the people’s right to information on their environment, public participation in environmental matters, and enhanced access to environmental justice; (4) promulgate relevant rules, enact appropriate policies, and establish practical and effective mechanisms for implementation; and finally (5) regularly assess progress being made by the partnership for future actions. Chief Justice Puno led the signatories including Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Jose L. Atienza, Jr., Public Works and Highways Secretary Hermogenes E. Ebdane, Jr., Chairperson of the House Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources Representative Ignacio T. Arroyo, Commission on Human Rights Chairperson Leila M. de Lima, among others.

Participants in the Forum included the judges appointed to the 117 designated environmental courts, non-government organization members, government representatives, and other stakeholders.

Held on April 16 to 17, 2009 simultaneously in Baguio City, Iloilo City, and Davao City, Forum participants contributed valuable inputs to the draft Rule of Procedure for Environmental Cases.

The Forum was supported by various development partners which include the American Bar Association-Rule of Law Initiative, the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the United States Agency for International Development, the United States Department of the Interior, and the World Bank.

MEDIATION DIVERSITY—ASIA AND BEYOND

Representatives from the Philippine Mediation Center Office (PCMO) of the Philippine Judicial Academy...
(PHILJA), the Supreme Court’s training and educational arm, spoke on the issues, best practices, trends, and developments concerning dispute resolution during the Asian Mediation Association (AMA) Conference held from June 4 to 5, 2009. With the theme “Mediation Diversity—Asia and Beyond,” the Conference provided a venue for participants to broaden and deepen their understanding of dispute resolution cultures and practices in Asia. The event was hosted by the Singapore Mediation Center.

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR JUDICIAL TRAINING

PHILJA Chancellor Adolfo S. Azcuna, accompanied by Supreme Court Associate Justice Conchita Carpio Morales and Judge Maria Filomena-Singh, represented the Philippines in the Fourth International Organization for Judicial Training (IOJT) held in Sydney, Australia from October 25 to 29, 2009. Mr. Waleed Malik of the World Bank, in one of the sessions, cited the Philippines’ Enhanced Justice on Wheels Program for its effectiveness in mediation and information dissemination. In the same program, Justice Azcuna was elected as the new member of the IOJT’s Executive Committee for the Asia-Pacific Region. The Conference was attended by 200 participants from 48 countries.

GAD STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP

In November 2009, the SC Committee on Gender Responsiveness in the Judiciary held its GAD Strategic Planning Workshop in time for the culmination of the 2004-2009 Strategic GAD Plan for the Philippine Judiciary. Aimed at evaluating the gender mainstreaming activities undertaken by the CGRJ as embodied in the five-year Gender and Development (GAD) Plan, the Workshop resulted in the formulation of the core strategies and priority gender activities for the Judiciary in 2010 to 2014. The key strategies in the gender mainstreaming plan of the Judiciary are to (1) organize family courts throughout the country; (2) enhance commitment of the judicial system to gender equality through training and capacity building; (3) strengthen the Judiciary’s policies, programs, and practices through gender assessment; (4) enhance the gender-responsive database in the judicial system; and (5) enhance the provision of gender-responsive welfare services to court employees.

JUDICIAL ETHICS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE JUDICIARY

In the Conference on Judicial Ethics and Organization of the Judiciary held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on November 19 and 20, 2009, PHILJA Chancellor Azcuna took part in the discussion on the codes of judicial conduct of various countries and their impact on judicial decision-making as well as on the Bangalore Principles.

VARIOUS CORE PROGRAMS

In its continuing efforts to update the knowledge and efficiency of judges and clerks of court, PHILJA conducted 17 core programs in 2009 attended by a total of 877 participants. To detail, the Academy held four Seminar-Workshops for Executive Judges and Vice Executive Judges, two Regional Judicial Career Enhancement Programs (RJCEP), three Orientation Seminar-Workshops for Newly Appointed Judges
(with new subjects “Jurisdiction of Courts on Violations of Tax Laws” and “Law on the Automated Election System”), six Orientation Seminar-Workshops for Newly Appointed Clerks of Court, and two Pre-Judicature Programs. The RJCEP Level 5, which began in 2007 was successfully completed in February 2009 with 1,537 judges benefiting from the program.

**SPECIAL FOCUS PROGRAMS**

A total of 5,778 participants attended 48 Special Focus Programs conducted in 2009. These include seven Multi-Sectoral and Skills-Building Seminar-Workshops on Human Rights Issues: Extralegal Killings and Enforced Disappearances; two Multi-Sectoral Seminar-Workshops on Agrarian Justice; Seminar-Workshops on Deposit Insurance, Banking Practices, and Bank Conservatorship, Receivership, and Liquidation; eight Seminar-Workshops on CEDAW and Gender Sensitivity; nine Competency Enhancement Trainings for Family Court Judges and Personnel in Handling Child Abuse Cases; one Forum on Child in Conflict with the Law: Creative Partnership among the Pillars of Justice and NGOs; one Multi-Sectoral Seminar Workshop on Dangerous Drugs Law for Judges, Prosecutors, and Law Enforcers; one Pagsasanay ng mga Takigrapo ukol sa Paggamit ng Wikang Filipino sa Hukuman; one Pagsasanay ng mga Hukom ukol sa Paggamit ng Wikang Filipino sa Hukuman; three Regional Multi-Sectoral Stakeholders Seminar-Workshops in Improving Access to Justice in Family Courts; eight Launchings of Justice on Wheels, Mobile Court Annexed Mediation, and Information Dissemination Through a Dialogue Among Barangay Officials; two Orientation Seminar-Workshops on Comparative Analysis Between the Family Code and the Code of Muslim Personal Laws; and one Seminar on Speedy Trial and Disposition of Cases.

**JUDICIARY ORGANIZATIONS’ CONVENTIONS AND SEMINARS**

Conventions and Seminars by several organizations in the Judiciary were also held. These organizations include the Philippine Women Judges Association, the Sheriffs’ Confederation of the Philippines, the Court Librarians Association of the Philippines, Inc., the Process Servers Association of the Philippines, the Philippine Association of Court Employees, the RTC Clerks of Court Association of the Philippines, the Metropolitan and City Judges Association of the Philippines, the Philippine Judges Association, and the Philippine Trial Judges League, Inc.

**SPECIAL LECTURES**

The Distinguished Lecture Series and the Metrobank Professorial Chair Lecture Series were also conducted in 2009. Speakers for the first were Professor Dr. Rudolf Dolzer (University of Bonn, Germany) who delivered his lecture on “Sixty Years Basic Law of Germany — The Impact of the Constitutional Court on German Democracy” at the Court of Appeals Auditorium on May 7, 2009 and Kelvin Ong (Senior Political Affairs Officer, Mediation Support Unit Department of Political Affairs, United Nations) and Professor Edmundo G. Garcia (Senior Policy Advisor, International Alert), who spoke on the “Comparative Peace Processes and their Relevance to the Philippine Setting” at the Ateneo de Manila Law School on September 30, 2009. For the sixth Metrobank Professorial Chair Lecture, University of the Philippines Law Dean Marvic M.V.F. Leonen spoke on “Law at its Margins: Questions of Identity, Indigenous Peoples, Ancestral Domains and the Diffusion of Law” at the Malcolm Theater, UP College of Law on October 21, 2009.
Underscoring the “heavy burden and responsibility that court personnel are saddled with, in view of their exalted positions as keepers of the public faith,” the Supreme Court, in the year 2009, continued its campaign against incompetence and corruption in the Judiciary by penalizing court officials and employees who fail to live up to the high standards of public service and fidelity.

In a fearless and unprecedented exercise of its administrative powers over its own ranks, the Supreme Court *En Banc* imposed a PhP500,000 fine on a retired Associate Justice of the Supreme Court for grave misconduct “for leaking a confidential internal document of the Court.” The said retired Justice was disqualified from holding any public office or employment and, in a later decision, was also indefinitely suspended from the practice of law for violation of Rules 1.01 and 1.02 of the *Code of Professional Responsibility*. The Court declared, “Horse trading or any unauthorized disclosure of internal deliberations during Court sessions, or premature information about decisions on cases that are yet to be promulgated officially, are anathema to the preservation of the integrity of the Court as the last bastion of justice. Definitely, the Court will not allow this isolated case to create a dent in its dignified and honorable administration of justice.” (AM No. 09-2-19-SC, *In Re: Undated Letter of Mr. Louis C. Biraogo*, February 24, 2009; Res., AM No. 09-2-19-SC, *In Re: Undated Letter of Mr. Louis C. Biraogo*, Petitioner in *Biraogo v. Nograles and Limkaichong*, GR No. 179120, August 11, 2009)

For soliciting and receiving PhP100,000 in exchange for a favorable decision involving the case of an aunt’s friend, a Makati City Regional Trial Court (RTC) judge was suspended from service for six months for gross misconduct. The Court said that misconduct is a “transgression of some established and definite rule of action, a forbidden act, a dereliction of duty, unlawful behavior, willful in character, improper or wrong behavior; while ‘gross’ has been defined as ‘out of all measure, beyond allowance; flagrant; shameful; such conduct as is not to be excused.’” (AM No. RTJ-07-2093, *Santos v. Arcaya-Chua*, February 13, 2009)

An Olongapo City RTC judge was dismissed from service for gross ignorance of the law and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service for his repeated erroneous issuances of writs of preliminary injunction. He was also suspended for three months without pay for simple misconduct for issuing a writ of execution over a property even when no adjudication of even possessory rights over the said property had been made. (AM No. RTJ-07-2063, *Republic v. Caguioa*, June 26, 2009)

Due to her wanton abuse of the power of contempt and violations of the provisions of the *New Code of Judicial Conduct for the Philippine Judiciary* for using “cruel and vulgar language” in court which “does not befit the person of a judge who is viewed by the public as a person of wisdom and scruples,” a Pasig City Metropolitan Trial Court (MeTC) judge was dismissed from service by the Court. Among the acts subject of numerous complaints against the judge were her residing in her chambers, borrowing money from her...
staff, instructing the branch stenographer to collect a minimum amount for *ex parte* cases, frequently bringing some of her staff to her nighttime gimmicks, conduct unwinding a lady judge, uttering invectives in front of staff and lawyers, conducting staff meeting in an unsightly attire, and unfriendliness to litigants. The Court also said that her remarks “such as ‘Ano kaya kung mag-hearing ako ng hubot’t hubad tapos naka-robe lang, pwede kaya?’; ‘Hayaan mo, Farah, pag natikman ko na siya, ipasusa ko sa iyo, ha ha ha!’; and ‘Alam mo na ang dari iniitiga dito; ni-report ba naman na nakatira ako dito, ano kaya masama dun? Alam ko staff ko rin nagsumbong eh, PUTANG INA NILA, PUTANG INA TALAGA NILA’ have no place in the judiciary.” (AM No. MTJ-06-1623, Reyes v. Reyes, Sept. 18, 2009)

Two judges of the Toledo City, Cebu RTC were each found guilty of gross ignorance of the law and were fined in the amount of PhP21,000 each. The first judge issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) pertaining to an order of a co-equal and coordinate court of concurrent jurisdiction and the second judge extended the validity of the said TRO, in blatant disregard the basic precept that no court has the power to interfere by injunction with the judgments or orders of a co-equal and coordinate court of concurrent jurisdiction having the power to grant the relief sought by injunction. (AM No. RTI-09-2170, Heirs of Piedad v. Estrera and Villarin, December 16, 2009)

For harassing and publicly humiliating a clerk, calling the latter a “whore,” “GRO,” and “pakialamera,” among others, a Municipal Circuit Trial Court (MCTC) judge was found guilty of gross misconduct and was fined PhP40,000. (AM No. MTJ-06-1659, Libaylibay v. Canda, June 18, 2009)

“Misbehavior by judges and employees necessarily diminishes their dignity. Any fighting or misunderstanding is a disgraceful occurrence reflecting adversely on the good image of the Judiciary.” Thus said the Court as it imposed a PhP11,000 fine each on two Mandaluyong City judges who shouted and hurled accusations against each other within court premises. The Court added that “more detestable” was the fact that “their squabble arose out of a mere allowance coming from the local government.” (AM No. RTJ-08-2124, Capco-Umali v. Acosta-Villarante; AM No. RTJ-08-2125, Acosta-Villarante v. Capco-Umali, August 27, 2009)

For borrowing PhP5,000 from a lawyer who had at least two cases pending before her sala, a judge from the Malolos City RTC was dismissed from service, for violating paragraph 7, section 8, Rule 140 of the Rules of Court which also constitutes a gross misconduct for violation of the Code of Judicial Conduct, aggravated by, among others, undue delay in rendering decisions or orders and violation of Supreme Court rules, directives, and circulars. (AM No. RTJ-09-2183, Concerned Lawyers of Bulacan v. Villalon-Pornillos, July 7, 2009)

A judge was dismissed from service for gross misconduct, gross ignorance of the law, and gross negligence and inefficiency after he was found guilty of serious charges under sec. 8 of Rule 140 of the Rules of Court, namely gross misconduct constituting violations of the Code of Judicial Conduct for signing conflicting decisions and gross ignorance of the law or procedure, and gross negligence or inefficiency for failing to administer proper supervision over his staff when a fake registry return receipt and entries of judgment were effected in separate cases. (AM No. RTJ-06-2014, Suarez v. Dilag; AM No. 06-07-415-RTC, OCA v. Dilag, March 4, 2009)

Reminding court employees that dishonesty, to warrant the penalty of dismissal, need not be committed in the course of the performance of duty by the person charged, the Court imposed a fine of PhP40,000 on a court stenographer from Bukidnon for indicating in both her Personal Data Sheet and Statement of Assets and Liabilities that she was single when, in fact, she was already married. (AM No. P-06-2251, Faelnar v. Palabrica, January 20, 2009)

A cashier from the Court of Tax Appeals who failed to remit the total amount of PhP8,593,977.56 representing net collections in the Judiciary Development Fund, and who wasted all the opportunities given by the Court for her to explain her failure to do so, was found guilty of dishonesty and grave misconduct, and was dismissed from service. (AM No. CTA-05-2, Office of the Court Administrator v. Espineda, September 4, 2009)

An acting clerk of court in the RTC of San Fernando, Pampanga who violated standard office procedure on the encashment of money orders and who left the office on official hours without permission from his superiors was found guilty of dishonesty and of repeated violations of reasonable office rules and regulations and the Code of Conduct for Court Personnel, and was suspended for six months without pay. (AM No. P-08-2523, Estardo-Toledo v. Segismundo, April 7, 2009)

The Court dismissed from service a process server from Municipal Trial Court (MTC) of Kayapa, Nueva Vizcaya after he was found to have kissed and sucked the lips of a fellow court employee and for smoking within court premises and leaving his post during office hours. (AM No. P-06-2620, Dontogan v. Pagkamulungan, Oct. 9, 2009)

For misappropriating the amount of PhP625,175.29 from the funds of the MTC of San Jose, Antique, a clerk of court was dismissed from service and was ordered to reimburse the said amount which represented the amount of shortages in her collection. (AM No. RTJ-06-2026, Office of the Court Administrator [OCA] v. Nolasco, March 4, 2009)

A sheriff of the Manila MeTC who implemented a writ of execution despite a pending motion to quash the said writ was found liable by the Supreme Court for simple misconduct and was fined in an amount equivalent to his three months’ salary. The Court also held that the said sheriff’s rude and inappropriate remarks and aggressive behavior during his implementation of the writ constitute simple misconduct. (AM No. P-09-2644, Quilo v. Jundarino, July 30, 2009)

Just as it was with court officials and personnel, the Supreme Court was equally consistent in exercising its administrative supervision over erring members of the Philippine Bar.
For deceiving an American into giving him thousands of dollars to purchase several real estate properties for resale, a lawyer was meted the ultimate penalty of disbarment by the Supreme Court and was ordered to return to his foreigner client the amount of US$544,828 which he had admitted to have received from the latter. The Court said that the “orchestrated manner” by which the lawyer “carried out his fraudulent scheme…depict a man whose character falls way, way short of the exacting standards required of him as a member of the bar and an officer of the court.” (AC No. 7027, Reddi v. Sebrio, Jr., January 30, 2009)

A lawyer who prepared and notarized illegal lease contracts which violate the law limiting lease of private lands to aliens for a period of 25 years (renewable for another 25 years) was suspended from the practice of law for six months for violation of the lawyer’s oath and gross misconduct. The Court found that the lawyer’s act of drafting lease agreements beyond the period provided by law caused his clients to violate Section 7 of RA 7652 (An Act Allowing the Long-Term Lease of Private Lands by Foreign Investors). (AC No. 5704, Kupers v. Hontanosas, May 8, 2009)

A well-known lawyer who hosted a television program and a radio program and wrote columns in tabloids was suspended from the practice of law for three years for violation of the Lawyer’s Oath and breach of ethics of the legal profession as embodied in the Code of Professional Responsibility. The lawyer was found to have continuously attacked a manufacturer and distributor of canned goods in his articles and radio and TV programs despite a TRO issued against him by the Valenzuela City RTC. (AC No. 7199, Foodsphere, Inc. v. Mauricio, July 22, 2009)

The Court suspended a lawyer from the practice of law for one year for convincing the clients of another lawyer to transfer legal representation by persistently calling them and sending them text messages in violation of the Code of Professional Responsibility and to have distributed business cards containing the phrase “with financial assistance.” The Court ruled that the phrase “was clearly used to entice clients (who already had representation) to change counsels with a promise of loans to finance their legal actions.” (AC No. 6672, Linsangan v. Tolentino, September 4, 2009)

### Data on Administrative Complaints

#### JUSTICES

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<tr>
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<th>SC Justices</th>
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#### LOWER COURT JUDGES

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# COURT PERSONNEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SC Personnel</th>
<th>CA Personnel</th>
<th>Sandiganbayan Personnel</th>
<th>CTA Personnel</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases Filed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cases Decided</td>
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<td><strong>PENALTY / ACTION</strong></td>
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<td>Admonished</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Dismissed from Service</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Court Personnel</th>
<th>RTC, MeTC, MTCC, MTC, &amp; MCTC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases Filed</td>
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<td>Complaint Dismissed</td>
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<td><strong>PENALTY / ACTION</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reprimanded</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>181</strong></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Court Personnel</th>
<th>SDC Personnel</th>
<th>SCC Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases Filed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases Decided</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaint Dismissed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissed from Service</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reprimanded</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspended</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fined</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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Source: Docket and Clearance Division, Legal Office, OCA and the Complaints and Investigation Division, OAS

# LAWYERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PENALTY / ACTION</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Suspended Notarial Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reprimanded</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fined and Reprimanded</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admonished</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fined and Admonished</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Censured</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fined</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ORDERED ARRESTED</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>129</strong></td>
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</table>

Source: Office of the Bar Confidant

Note: Admonition and Warning are not penalties.
Employee Welfare and Benefits

Special Allowance for the Judiciary (SAJ)

The SAJ is a special allowance equivalent to the 100 percent individual basic monthly salaries under the Salary Standardization Law, granted to justices, judges, and other Judiciary officials holding a similar rank. Created in 2003 by RA 9227, An Act Granting a Special Allowance for Justices, Judges, and those Holding Ranks Equivalent to Justices of the Court of Appeals and the Regional Trial Court, the SAJ was implemented over the span of four years, spreading uniformly the special allowance in amounts equivalent to 25 percent of the basic salaries covered for each installment.

As provided by RA 9227, the surplus from the collections in excess of the amount needed to fund the special allowances granted to justices, judges, and all other positions in the Judiciary with the equivalent rank of justices of the Court of Appeals and judges of the Regional Trial Court may be used by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to grant additional allowances exclusively to other court personnel not covered by the benefits granted under the said law.

Funding for the SAJ is derived from the legal fees originally prescribed, imposed, and collected under Rule 141 of the Rules of Court prior to the promulgation of the amendments under PD 1949, Judiciary Development Fund Decree, and increases in 1989 current fees and new fees which may be imposed by the Supreme Court after the effectivity of RA 9227 on November 11, 2003.

Additional Cost of Living Allowance from the Judiciary Development Fund (JDF)

The JDF was established in 1984 by PD 1949 for the benefit of the members and personnel of the Judiciary, to help ensure and guarantee the independence of the Judiciary as mandated by the Constitution and public policy and required by the impartial administration of justice. Derived from the increase in legal fees and from other sources, such as Bar examination fees, interest on deposits of its income, confiscated bail bonds, income from publications of the Supreme Court Printing Press, and rentals of facilities in the Halls of Justice, the JDF is used to augment the allowances of members and personnel of the Judiciary and to finance the acquisition, maintenance, and repair of office equipment and facilities. PD 1949 provides that at least 80 percent of the JDF shall be used for cost of living allowances, and that no more than 20 percent of the said Fund shall be used for office equipment and facilities.
The 80 percent of the JDF is given monthly to all qualified employees in proportion to their basic monthly salaries. Employees with a basic monthly salary of less than PhP7,000 are given the biggest share. The JDF allocated for employees of the same salary grade is the same across all courts. Court employees who have rendered at least six months of service in the Judiciary are entitled to the full amount of the allowance, while court personnel who have rendered less than six months of service as of the cut-off date are entitled to the pro-rated amounts of the JDF.

**Personal Economic Relief Assistance (PERA) and Additional Compensation**

Upon assumption of duty, each employee receives Personal Economic Relief Assistance of PhP500, and Additional Compensation of PhP1,500 per month.

**Productivity Incentive Benefit**

This benefit is based on the productivity and performance of employees, as evaluated by the heads of their respective offices. Entitled to this benefit are court employees who have had a performance rating of at least “satisfactory” and have rendered actual government service for at least one year.

**Emergency Economic Assistance (EEA)**

The EEA is sourced from the savings generated the previous year as certified by the Fiscal Management and Budget Office of the Supreme Court, the proper officials of the appellate courts, and the Financial Management Office of the Office of the Court Administrator. This benefit is granted to officials and employees of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, the Sandiganbayan, and the Court of Tax Appeals, and the lower courts, including the personnel of the Halls of Justice.

**Year-End Bonus and Cash Gift**

Every December, Court employees receive a bonus equivalent to the actual base monthly salary as of October 31, and a cash gift of PhP5,000. Employees who have rendered at least four months of service from January 1 to October 31 and are employed in the government service as of October 31 of the same year are entitled to this benefit.

**Loyalty Award**

The Loyalty Award is conferred to Court employees who have rendered an initial 10 years of service in the Judiciary and every five years thereafter.

**Shuttle Bus Service**

To extend additional economic benefits to Court employees, the Supreme Court provided 10 shuttle buses which help Court personnel save on transportation expenses. Each shuttle bus has a fixed route in the areas of Las Piñas, Cainta, Valenzuela, Novaliches, Fairview, Laguna, Cavite, and Marikina.

The shuttle buses are also utilized to ferry Court officials and personnel to and from different official events of the Court, especially during outreach programs.

**Medical and Dental Services**

The SC Clinic provided a total of 24,335 various medical services in 2009, of which 15,371 were medical consultations/treatment, 3,479 were dental consultations/treatment, 2,472 were laboratory services, and 2,060 were physical therapy.

Six hundred six subjects underwent psychological testing, and 102 subjects had neuro-psychiatric evaluations made for pre-employment purposes, disability retirement and diagnostic purposes. The SC
Clinic also conducted 245 pre-employment physical examinations.

Of the 12 ailments commonly encountered at the SC Clinic, respiratory tract infections was the most common cause of consultation, with 40 percent. Musculo-skeletal ailments, at 12 percent, were the second most common cause of visits to the SC Clinic, followed by gastrointestinal disorder comprising 10 percent of reported cases. Other common ailments experienced by the employees were neurologic, dermatological, viral systemic illness, miscellaneous, renal, optha/EENT, endocrine/metabolic, cardiovascular, and obstetrics/gynecology.

Hypertension and diabetes were the two conditions which required repeated check-up and monitoring.

Likewise, the SC Clinic conducted a total of 3,479 various dental services last year, of which 741 were gingivitis/gum treatment, 558 were permanent filling, and 530 were tooth extraction.

The Clinic staff performed simple tooth extraction on 390 employees, and attended to 416 procedural cases, 353 cases of oral prophylaxis, 220 cases of temporary tooth filling, 164 post-operative cases, 105 cases of oral consultations, and two difficult extractions.

Out of the 100 medical evaluations made by the SC Clinic, 19 were for disability retirement, 53 were for maternity leave, 24 were for sick leave, and 4 were for rehabilitation leave.

The SC Clinic initiated a lecture on Post-Calamity Stress De-briefing for employees, in cooperation with the National Center for Mental Health on November 19, 2009, and conducted mass blood-letting activities on May 26, 2009 with the Philippine General Hospital Blood Bank, and on December 3, 2009 with the Philippine National Red Cross.

Through Fortune Medicare, Inc., the Court’s healthcare provider, the SC Clinic also organized anti-flu vaccinations on March 30 and 31, and April 19 to 30, 2009, and anti-pneumonia vaccinations on October 19 to 30, 2009. It also conducted a special lecture on cervical cancer on March 31, 2009.

In 2009, a total of 1,185 employees have availed of the annual physical examinations, facilitated by Fortune Medicare, Inc. in its Manila Satellite Clinic.
The Philippine Judicial System

**FIRST LEVEL**

Occupying the first level of the hierarchy are the first-level courts comprised of the Metropolitan Trial Courts (MeTCs), which are established in Metropolitan Manila; the Municipal Trial Courts in Cities (MTCCs), in every city which does not form part of Metropolitan Manila; the Municipal Trial Courts (MTCs) established in each of the other cities or municipalities; and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts (MCTCs), created in each circuit comprising such cities and/or municipalities as grouped by law.

At the same level are the Shari’a Circuit Courts (SCC). Shari’a Courts have been established in Islamic regions and provinces to interpret and apply the Code of Muslim Personal Laws (PD 1083). Their decisions are appealable to the Shari’a Appellate Court, which, however, is yet to be organized.

**SECOND LEVEL**

The second tier consists of the Regional Trial Courts (RTCs) established in each of the 13 regions in the Philippines. Each RTC may be single-sala or composed of several branches. RTCs act as trial courts and may receive evidence from the parties of the case. They also exercise appellate jurisdiction over decisions of the MeTCs, MTCCs, MTCs, and MCTCs in their respective territorial jurisdictions.

Also at the same level are the Shari’a District Courts (SDC). Their decisions are appealable to the Shari’a Appellate Court.

Since the Shari’a Appellate Court has not yet been organized, decisions of SDCs may be brought to the Supreme Court through a special civil action of certiorari if the issue is one of jurisdiction or through a petition for review on certiorari as a mode of appeal under Rule 45. (GR No. 159210, Macaraig v. Balindong, September 20, 2006)

**THIRD LEVEL**

**COURT OF APPEALS**

At the third level is the Court of Appeals (CA), which exercises its powers, functions, and duties through 23 Divisions of three members each. The CA’s 18th, 19th, and 20th Divisions comprise the CA Visayas, located in Cebu City; while the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd Divisions make up CA Mindanao, situated in Cagayan de Oro City. The CA is assigned to review cases elevated to it from the RTCs as well as quasi-judicial agencies such as the Civil Service Commission, Securities and Exchange Commission,
National Labor Relations Commission, and the Land Registration Authority.

The CA also reviews cases where the sentence is reclusion perpetua or life imprisonment, as well as decisions of the Office of the Ombudsman in administrative disciplinary cases. The CA is a collegiate court and may sit en banc only for the purpose of exercising administrative, ceremonial, or other non-adjudicatory functions. Being essentially an appellate court, it generally resolves cases only on the basis of records, but in certain instances, it may also try cases, conduct hearings, and receive evidence.

The Philippine Judicial System also includes two special courts: the Sandiganbayan and the Court of Tax Appeals.

**SANDIGANBAYAN**

The Sandiganbayan is an anti-graft court that tries public officers with a salary grade of 27 and above – including their co-accused private persons – charged with criminal cases involving graft and corrupt practices as well as corresponding civil cases for the recovery of civil liability. The Sandiganbayan is composed of a Presiding Justice and 14 Associate Justices who sit in five divisions of three Justices each. Like the CA, its decisions are directly appealable to the Supreme Court.

**COURT OF TAX APPEALS**

Under RA 9503, the CTA is composed of a Presiding Justice and eight Associate Justices, and may sit en banc or in three divisions of three justices each. Republic Act 9282, which took effect on March 30, 2004, has elevated the status of the CTA to that of the CA. It has exclusive jurisdiction to review on appeal decisions in cases involving disputed assessments, refunds of internal revenue taxes, fees, or other charges, penalties in relation thereto, or other matters arising under the National Internal Revenue Code or Tariff and Customs Code. It also exercises original jurisdiction over all criminal offenses arising from violations of the Tax or Tariff Codes and other laws administered by the Bureau of Internal Revenue or the Bureau of Customs.

**FOURTH LEVEL**

**SUPREME COURT**

At the apex of the judicial hierarchy is the Supreme Court. It is composed of a Chief Justice and 14 Associate Justices who currently sit En Banc or in three divisions of five members each. It has the power to settle actual controversies involving rights that are legally demandable and enforceable, and to determine whether or not there has been grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction on the part of any branch or instrumentality of the government.

The Supreme Court is considered “the court of last resort” since no more appeals can be made from a judgment or decision on the merits rendered by this court. A decision of a Supreme Court division is considered a decision of the entire Court. Decisions of the Supreme Court are considered as part of the law of the land.