

The 2025 GAA is a Shameless, Unconscionable Abuse of Public Funds

A Statement from Former Senior Government Officials and Civil Society Leaders

We are the former senior government officials and crossover leaders of the International Center for Innovation, Transformation, and Excellence in Governance (INCITEGov), Inc. Together with our partners and friends who have signed this statement, we would like to register our profound dismay and disagreement with the 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA) that President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed on December 30, 2024.

Contrary to the impression given by the President that the approved 2025 GAA resulted from an “exercise of maximum prudence,” lawmakers’ pork-barrel insertions remained largely intact in the ₱6.326 trillion national budget while the essential social services continued to be defunded. In particular, the budget retained at least ₱288 billion of pork barrel, consisting of ₱262 billion additional budget for the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and ₱26 billion for Ayuda Para sa Kapos ang Kita Program (AKAP), while defunding a big chunk of essential services, including the following:

- ₱74 billion from PhilHealth;
- ₱76 billion from various social program priorities that include support for health facilities, social welfare, technical and vocational education;
- ₱50.4 billion from Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps);
- ₱26.9 billion from Commission on Higher Education;
- ₱14 billion from State Universities and Colleges;
- ₱5 billion from DepEd’s computerization program;
- ₱5 billion from the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund;
- ₱2 billion from the Marawi Siege Compensation Program;
- ₱2 billion from public health emergency benefits and allowances for health care and non-health care workers;
- ₱1 billion from social pensions for indigent senior citizens;
- ₱1 billion from the Pambansang Pabahay Para sa Pilipino Program;
- ₱500 million from the community mortgage finance program of Social Housing Finance Corporation; and
- The Philippine government’s counterpart funding to foreign-assisted projects such as Metro Manila Subway Project, North-South Commuter Railway System, LRT Line 1 Cavite Extension, MRT Line 4, rehabilitation of MRT Line 3, major ports and airports, connecting roads and bridges, maritime safety projects and improvements, floor control, reconstruction and development for Greater Marawi Stage 2, Metro Manila Flood Management Project Phase 1.

In addition to the defects raised by other sectors related to the manner of computing the budget for education and the zero subsidy for PhilHealth, **we question the retention of AKAP funds worth ₱26 billion, when there are already legislated cash assistance programs such as the 4Ps with clearer targeting policies and conditionalities.** The AKAP mall tours in Metro Manila with politicians so conspicuously and shamelessly visible give away the underlying intentions behind the program.

All in all, the 2025 GAA represents a **shameless and unconscionable abuse of public funds and a betrayal of the Filipino people's trust.** This insidious attempt to use the national budget as a political tool violates the constitutional principles of checks and balances. If left unchecked, these practices in the crafting of the national budget will institutionalize pork barrel and significantly erode our democratic institutions. Worse, it will leave the vulnerable and poor Filipinos without the necessary resources to survive and thrive, and perpetuate their dependence on political patronage.

We echo the demands of various sectors for the following:

- Conduct a **complete public audit of the 2024 AKAP funds;** and
- **Release AKAP and the pork barrel funds under the DPWH after the May 2025 elections.**

The dubious process by which the 2025 GAA was passed is a stark reminder of the urgent need for constant vigilance, unyielding accountability, and reforms in the governance and politics of our country. We call on our political leaders to embody true public service and place the common good above their personal and political ambitions.

**International Center for Innovation, Transformation,
and Excellence in Governance (INCITEGov), Inc.**

SIGNED:

Former Senior Government Officials

Florencio Abad

Former Secretary, Department of Budget and Management

Tomas Africa

Former Administrator, National Statistics Office

Mario Aguja

Former Trustee, Government Service Insurance System / Former Representative, Akbayan Party List

Yasmin Busran-Lao

Former Secretary, National Commission on Muslim Filipinos

Teresita Quintos Deles

Former Secretary, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process

Edilberto De Jesus

Former Secretary, Department of Education

Ric Olaya Domingo

Former Commissioner, Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor

Lina Laigo

Former Secretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development

Patricia Licuanan

Former Chairperson, Commission on Higher Education

Alberto Lim

Former Secretary, Department of Tourism

Mardi Mapa-Suplido

Former Chairperson, National Youth Commission / Former Provincial Board Member, Negros Occidental

Imelda Nicolas

Former Chairperson, Commission on Filipinos Overseas

Aurora Pijuan

Former Director of the Board, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office

Loretta Ann Rosales

Former Chairperson, Commission on Human Rights / Former Representative, Akbayan Party List

Veronica Villavicencio

Former Secretary, National Anti-Poverty Commission

Clifford Burkley

Former Undersecretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development

Tessam Castillo

Former Undersecretary, Department of the Interior and Local Government and Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Angelita Gregorio-Medel

Former Undersecretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development

Milwida Guevara

Former Undersecretary, Department of Finance

Jose Molano

Former Undersecretary & Executive Director, Commission on Filipinos Overseas

Luisito Montalbo

Former Undersecretary, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process

Rommel Ong

Former Vice Commander, Philippine Navy

Antonio Salvador

Former Undersecretary, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process

Ma. Cleofe Gettie Sandoval

Former Undersecretary, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process

Ma. Aleta Tolentino

Council Member, National Anti-Poverty Commission NGO – Basic Sector / Former Director, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office

Mario Villaverde

Former Undersecretary, Department of Health

Rosalie Romero

Former Assistant Secretary, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process

Marilou Ibañez

Former Director, Office of Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process

Margarita Ana Lopa-Perez

Former Head Executive Assistant, Department of Social Welfare and Development

Jan Carlo Punongbayan

Former Head Executive Assistant, National Economic Development Authority

Philip Arnold Tuaño

Former Director, National Anti-Poverty Commission

Civil Society Leaders

Justin Albert Muyot

Executive Director, Young Public Servants (YPS)

Mary Racelis

*Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ateneo de Manila University /
Professorial Lecturer in Anthropology, University of the Philippines*

Sandino Soliman

Member, International Center for Innovation, Transformation and Excellence in Governance

For inquiries, please contact **Marj Ibañez, Executive Director**, at +63 917 507 7123 or email incitegov@incitegov.org.ph.

INCITEGov is a policy research and advocacy center that catalyzes and provides support to democratic movements and reform initiatives in the Philippines. It firmly believes in just, peaceful, and inclusive democracy as the bedrock of Philippine society. INCITEGov was founded in August 2005 by a group of former senior government officials as a membership-based, non-profit organization. It draws its members from civil society, the private sector, and the academe, most of whom have experience crossing over to the public sector and back to their respective civic communities.