

An Open Letter to the President and our Legislators

We, the former senior government officials and crossover leaders of the International Center for Innovation, Transformation, and Excellence in Governance (INCITEGov), write to express our profound concerns regarding the proposed 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA).

While we commend President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s good intentions for the 2025 GAA, **we are deeply troubled by the gross misallocations in the final version of the budget as approved by Congress. We are concerned that line-item vetos will not be enough to rectify the problematic priorities embedded in next year's budget.**

We therefore urgently **appeal to President Marcos and our legislators to revamp the proposed budget and restore the funds that have been unjustly removed from vital sectors such as health, education, agriculture, social protection, transportation, and climate change adaptability.** These services are indispensable for taking care of the welfare of our most vulnerable citizens and ensuring the well-being of our nation. Allocating sufficient resources to these sectors is not only a moral obligation but also a strategic imperative for achieving long-term economic growth, stability, and sustainability.

Furthermore, **we call for a meticulous examination of the unprogrammed appropriations and the elimination of pork barrel items from the proposed budget.** Several key big-ticket infrastructure projects, including those listed in Build Better More, are inexplicably found in the unprogrammed appropriations, and this will lead to undue delays in the construction and completion of such projects—to the detriment of Filipinos.

By contrast, **the substantial allocations for several infrastructure items (specifically in the Department of Public Works and Highways) are unmistakably pork barrel in nature, prioritized at the expense of critical essential services, and are particularly alarming.** Wanton pork barrel spending leads to the misallocation of resources, inefficiency, and wastage of public funds absent inadequate oversight and planning. It fosters corruption and political favoritism, undermining public trust and resulting in unbalanced development.

We are also gravely concerned that the process of crafting the current proposed 2025 national budget appears to have violated constitutional principles. The bicameral conference committee's decisions on budget insertions and allocations were made opaquely and with no checks and balance, bypassing the oversight and accountability essential for such a significant piece of legislation. Furthermore, the 2025 budget clearly violates the constitution's mandate to allocate the lion's share of the budget to education.

The national budget is the clearest reflection of a government's priorities. **We echo the calls from various sectors to align the national budget with the administration's 8-Point Socioeconomic Agenda and the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028,**

encompassing food security, healthcare, education, job creation, poverty reduction, affordable and clean energy, and infrastructure development.

We comprehend the complexities and challenges of crafting the annual budget of the national government. Nonetheless, we firmly believe that prioritizing the welfare of our citizens and upholding the integrity of our budgetary process are essential and non-negotiable.

SIGNED:

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

TRUSTEES AND MEMBERS: Former Senior Government Officials

Florencio Abad

Former Secretary, Department of Budget and Management

Julia Andrea Abad

Former Secretary, Presidential Management Staff

Tomas Africa

Former Administrator, National Statistics Office

Vitaliano Nanagas II

Former Chairman, Development Bank of the Philippines

Mario Aguja

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

Yasmin Busran-Lao

Former Secretary, National Commission on Muslim Filipinos

Tessam Castillo

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

Edilberto De Jesus

Former Secretary, Department of Education

Teresita Quintos Deles

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

Ric Olaya Domingo

Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor

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

Rommel Ong

Former Vice Commander, Philippine Navy

Ma. Aleta Tolentino

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

Veronica Villavicencio

Former Secretary, National Anti-Poverty Commission

Clifford Burkley

Former Undersecretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development

Jose Deles, Jr.

Former Undersecretary, Department of Agrarian Reform

Milwida Guevara

Former Undersecretary, Department of Finance

Luisito Montalbo

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

Jose Molano

Former Undersecretary and Executive Director, Commission on Filipinos Overseas

Antonio Salvador

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

Aurora Pijuan

Former Director of the Board, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office

Rosalie Romero

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

Ma. Cleofe Gettie Sandoval

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

Mario Villaverde

Former Undersecretary, Department of Health

Marilou Ibanez

Former Director, Office of Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process

Patrick Wilson Lim

Former Director, Department of Budget and Management

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

TRUSTEES AND MEMBERS: 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*

For inquiries, please contact **Marj Ibanez, 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.