

SPEAKER JOSE DE VENECIA
of the House of Representatives,
Congress of the Philippines



SPEAKER JOSE DE VENECIA has been reelected in 2005 to an unprecedented fourth term as Speaker of the Philippine House of Representatives, where he represents the Fourth District of Pangasinan Province. He is President of the ruling party, *Lakas-Christian-Muslim Democrats (LAKAS-CMD)*, whose National Chairman is President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Jose de Venecia's years of experience as economist, journalist, diplomat and entrepreneur have prepared him for national political leadership. His vision and his dynamism have produced an

activist House of Representatives-- the full partner of the Presidency and the Senate in the economic and political reforms that have so transformed Philippine prospects over this past decade.

After serving two terms as Speaker, of the Ninth and the Tenth Congress (1992-98), de Venecia ran for President in May 1998, finishing second in a field of 10 candidates. Now President Arroyo was then his running mate.

To dispel the political tensions generated by the election campaign, he as Speaker presided over the proclamation by Congress of President-elect Joseph Estrada within an unprecedented 48 hours after Congress was convened to canvass the presidential results.

Returning to the House of Representatives in July 2001, de Venecia was elected Speaker of the Twelfth Congress for the third time as head of a coalition of 14 parties-- winning the largest majority in the history of the House. He has been described as the country's "best-ever Speaker" by President Fidel Ramos, his partner in carrying out landmark economic reforms between 1992

ACTIVE IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

IN NOVEMBER 1998, de Venecia was elected Vice President of the Centrist Parties International, which is made up of the leaders of Centrist governments and parties in Western Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa.

De Venecia is just as active in Asia's fraternal politics. He was elected President of ASEAN Interparliamentary Organization in 1993. In September 2000-- although out of public office-- he succeeded in convening the first meeting in history of Asia's ruling and opposition political parties, the first in Asia and the first in the world.

At de Venecia's invitation, political leaders from 21 nations came to Manila to consider proposals for an Asian Parliament, an Asian Monetary Fund, an Asian currency and other modalities of cooperation which could eventually lead to an Asian community on the model of the European Union.

De Venecia has also been chosen Chairman of the "Global Christian-Muslim Coalition," an international non-government organization, which would help reduce religious tensions and conflicts in various parts of the world such as Palestine, Lebanon, Chechnya, Mindanao, Aceh, Sudan, Nigeria, Southern Thailand, etc. As part of his efforts to promote a "dialogue of civilizations," de Venecia recently also initiated a Christian-Buddhist dialogue in East Asia.

In October, 2004, he presented his proposal at the U.N. Security Council for a global interfaith within the U.N. system, which was approved by the U.N. General Assembly in November, 2004. De Venecia argued that the feared "clash of civilizations" is really the "clash of religions. He said religious leaders should mobilize moral authority to assist leaders of government in solving the age-old conflicts.

In August 2003, Speaker de Venecia was elected President of the influential Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace (AAPP), which is composed of almost all parliaments in Asia. De Venecia's proposal for the conversion of the AAPP into the Asian Parliamentary Assembly within five years, was approved at the Islamabad AAPP Conference in 2004. It will be modeled after the Parliamentary Assembly in the Council of Europe and eventually the Asian Parliament.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN CONGRESS

DE VENECIA, THEN AGED 32, was serving his first term in Congress when martial law shut down the country's free-wheeling representative system in 1972. He was first returned to the House in 1987, after serving as Ambassador-at-large in the Aquino Administration.

Since then, he has written a number of landmark laws that have provided the policy framework for economic, financial and social-reform programs. As Speaker, he also speeded up the passage of 200 other bills that, by

opening up the economy and attracting foreign investment, generated economic growth and enabled the country to withstand the East Asian financial crisis of 1997-99.

De Venecia steered through Congress reforms sponsored by the Ramos Administration in the areas of legislated tax reform, oil deregulation and financial administration that prepared the ground for the Philippine exit from 37 years of financial supervision by the International Monetary Fund.

LANDMARK LAWS
HE HAS AUTHORED
AMONG THE LANDMARK LAWS

de Venecia has written, he is most proud of his 1992 "Build-Operate-Transfer Law," which has become a model for other developing countries. In the Philippines, the B-O-T law has made possible private investments in public infrastructure projects-- power plants, roads, skyways, airports, townships, markets and irrigation systems-- valued in excess of US\$26 billion.

Investors are repaid from sales or tolls over specific periods-- at the end of which the facility becomes Government property. The biggest B-O-T program so far is the mass-railway transit network connecting the finance-and-business heartland of Metro Manila to its industrial and dormitory suburbs.

De Venecia also authored the Bases Conversion Law, which has transformed the

US military bases in Luzon-- Subic Naval Base, Clark Air Base, and Baguio City's Camp John Hay-- into Special Economic Zones. The law also enabled the Philippine Government to sell off portions of Fort Bonifacio in Metro Manila-- whose proceeds are increasing soldiers' pay and financing the military's modernization program.

MAKING PEACE
WITH ARMED DISSIDENTS
HELPING CARRY OUT

the Administration's national reconciliation program, Speaker de Venecia assisted President Ramos in reaching out to the country's armed dissidents-- the MNLF separatists of the Southern Philippines, the military rebels and the Communist insurgents. And the political stability they were able to restore became the basis of renewed economic growth.

De Venecia and his wife, Gina, in late 1991, crossed the North African desert twice to meet with Libyan President Muammar Qaddafi and MNLF chairman Nur Misuari in talks that led to the 1996 peace agreement with Muslim rebels in Mindanao.

In late 1992, Speaker de Venecia began consultations with fugitive leaders of the military rebels who had several times attempted to overthrow the government of President Corazon C. Aquino. These consultations led to a cease-fire agreement in

December of that year and a formal peace agreement in 1995.

In 1997, de Venecia revived the long-stalled peace process with the Communist Party and its "New People's Army" guerrillas. Currently, he is also helping the Macapagal Arroyo Administration negotiate a settlement with Islamist rebels of the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front), who have launched their own separatist rebellion in 1984.

HIGHLIGHTS OF
HIS EARLY CAREER
WHILE POSTED AT THE PHILIPPINE
MISSION in Vietnam in 1967, Minister de Venecia conceived of and implemented the dollar-remittance program, which now enables Filipino overseas workers to send money home safely and speedily to their families. To date, the program has infused more than US\$100 billion into the economy. Because of this feat, he was appointed--at age 31-- co-chairman of the Presidential Committee on Dollar Remittances and given the TOYM (Ten Outstanding Young Men), National Jaycees and President Roxas Economic Leadership Awards.

As entrepreneur, de Venecia pioneered overseas contract work for Filipinos in the Middle East and North Africa in the mid-1970s. His companies engaged in port operations in Saudi Arabia, agriculture in Africa, mass-housing in Iraq and oil exploration in the United Arab Emirates,

which led to the employment of millions of Filipinos in the Middle East.

In the 1970s, de Venecia also pioneered oil and gas exploration offshore in Palawan Island that led to the first commercial oil discoveries in the western Philippines in the 1970s. In October 2001, the biggest Palawan field, Malampaya Sound, began yielding natural gas in commercial quantities, initiated by foreign firms.

BORN ON DECEMBER 26, 1936, Jose de Venecia is married to Georgina Vera Perez, a well-known Filipina woman leader and radio-television personality whose special charity interest is the rehabilitation of abused women and abused drug-dependent children. As President of the Congressional Spouses Foundation, Gina de Venecia has built 16 "Havens" for these unfortunates nationwide. They have so far taken care of more than 6,000 raped women. The de Venecias have six children.