

Philippines: De Guzman-Bello tandem wants abortion decriminalized, backs divorce

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MANILA, Philippines — Labor leader and presidential aspirant Leody De Guzman and his running mate Walden Bello on Saturday said they will push for the decriminalization of abortion and the legalization of divorce and same-sex marriage should they win in the elections next year.

De Guzman and Bello who are running under the Laban ng Masa party bared their platform in an online presentation. The tandem said they would institute measures to fully achieve gender equality and gender rights by passing a divorce law, decriminalizing abortion as well as legalizing same-sex marriage, and supporting alternative forms of family arrangements.

De Guzman, in a statement sent to INQUIRER.net, explained that marriage is a “contract” that ratifies the union of two people.

“Gaya ng kahit anong kontrata, may karapatan ang bawat tao na nasa hustong edad na pumasok dito,” he told INQUIRER.net. “At tulad ng ibang kontrata, malaya din sila dapat makaalis kung hindi na ito pabor sa kanila.”

(Just like any other contract, every person who is of legal age has a right to enter [a marriage]. And just like other contracts, they should also be free to go should things turn out unfavorable.)

“Kung naniniwala tayo sa pagkakapantay-pantay ng tao, sa tingin ko tama lang na malegalisa ang same sex marriage at divorce para matamasa ng lahat ang mga benepisyo’t karapatan na kaugnay sa pagpapakasal.

(If we believe in equality among people, I think it’s time to legalize same-sex marriage and divorce so everyone could enjoy the benefits and rights of being married.)

De Guzman also called abortion a “health issue.”

“Sa tingin ko mabuti ito para makamit ng kababaihan ang tunay na kalayaan na magdikta para sa kanilang mga katawan at buhay,” he said.

(I think this is good for women, who will achieve a sense of autonomy to make a choice with their own life and body.)

“Marami pang ibang sitwasyon ang kababaihan kung saan sila ay maaaring mangailangan ng abortion at sa tingin ko nararapat na madala nila ito sa kanilang mga doktor na walang takot na makulong o mapahamak,” he added.

(There are many situations that necessitate an abortion. I also think that they could consult their doctors about this without the fear of danger and imprisonment.)

In the Philippines, both abortion and divorce are prohibited.

'Wealth tax'

De Guzman and Bello are also pushing for the imposition of a "wealth tax" on the 250 richest Filipinos with an additional 1-3 percent tax.

They would also push for the raising of the minimum wage to P750 across the board and ending the practice of contractualization, putting price control on primary and basic commodities, and freezing the country's compliance with the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The tandem also promised to provide free healthcare and education for all, as well as monthly food and health subsidies to all Filipinos.

De Guzman noted that he and Bello are the only candidates who could "confront the interests" of the billionaires and the ruling power.

"Walang ibang kandidato sa pagkapangulo ang magbibitbit ng ganitong plataporma. Bakit? Dahil sila mismo ay bilyonaryo o umaasa sa suporta ng bilyonaryo upang manalo!," he said during the online launch of their platform.

(No other candidates for the presidency could advance this kind of platform. Why? Because they rely on the support of billionaires to win!)

For his part, Bello also said their duo are the only ones capable of stopping the "Marcos-Duterte axis of evil" as well as the only one with a "comprehensive program for social transformation."

Here are the expounded economic and social development as well as political platforms of the duo.

Economic and social development platform

- Impose wealth tax of individuals with a net worth of above P100 million, while repealing all consumption-based tax laws in favor of a more progressive tax system. This would affect the 250-300 richest Filipinos who have a combined net worth of P31.66 trillion. They would pay the estimated amounts of P316 billion at 1 percent rate; P633 billion at 2 percent rate; and one trillion pesos at 3 percent rate.
- Impose price controls on oil, electricity, internet, water, farm inputs, and other basic commodities.
- P2,000 monthly food subsidy and P3,000 monthly health subsidy for all
- Guarantee free decent housing for the homeless
- Distribute for free all remaining lands under the agrarian reform, prevent land conversions especially by large property firms
- Freeze compliance with all World Trade Organization directives
- Repeal of the 2019 Rice Tariffication Law

Political platform

- End political dynasties
- Prosecution of President Rodrigo Duterte and accomplices through the local judicial system and the International Criminal Court for alleged involvement in thousands of extrajudicial killings during his term
- Exhumation of the remains of former president Ferdinand Marcos from the Libingan ng mga Bayani as well as the recovery and return to the public domain of the remaining stolen wealth

of the Marcoses amounting to P126 billion and prosecute Marcos family members who have kept and utilized their stolen wealth

- Uphold the right to self-determination of minority ethnic communities, supporting the Bangsamoro people's struggle for full and meaningful autonomy
- Unconditionally resume peace talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF
- Ending the Mutual Defense Treaty, the Visiting Forces Agreement and the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) with the US and immediate closure of all US de facto military bases in the country.
- Rejection of the expansionist and sphere-of-influence claims of China and the U.S. in the West Philippine Sea while promoting a commons-based development and utilization of natural resources in disputed areas.

Platforms for women, LGBTQIA+

- Pass a divorce law
- Decriminalize abortion
- Pass new legislation to address the gender wage gap;
- Strengthen reproductive rights; protect women from all discrimination
- Legalize the LGBTQIA+ gender category
- Legalize same-sex marriage and support alternative forms of family arrangements

Bello, meanwhile, also dared fellow aspirants to bare their own platforms.

"This election campaign should center on platforms instead of personalities," Bello said. "But right now we are the only ones who have so far come out with a comprehensive program and plan of action."

Bello also blasted Senator Manny Pacquiao and Panfilo Ping Lacson, Manila Mayor Isko Moreno, and former senator and son of late dictator Ferdinand Marcos Jr. for promising "the moon and the sky and everything nice."

"Leody and I, in contrast, offer a tough program of real reform that cannot succeed unless most of our people rally behind it to defy the rich and the powerful that will lose by it," Bello said.

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