

**SAYS REP. MAZA**

**Woman solon blocked women's Magna Carta**

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MANILA, Philippines -- The Magna Carta of Women, a law ensuring woman substantive parity with men, was not ratified by the House of Representatives because it was blocked by one of their own, according to Gabriela Rep. Liza Maza.

Maza alleged that Deputy Speaker Amelita Villarosa was behind the move that stopped the House from ratifying the bicameral conference committee report on the Magna Carta of Women shortly before it adjourned last week for a month-long recess.

The bicameral report was not tackled during the last session day last week. Had the House ratified the Magna Carta of Women, the President could have signed it in time for Sunday's celebration of Women's Day since the Senate has already ratified the consolidated bill.

Maza accused Villarosa of talking to lawmakers to ask them not to sign the bicameral report or to withdraw their signature from it, and said this was because Villarosa wanted to insert the word "ethical" to describe the family planning provision in the bill in order to please the Catholic Church.

"We view this as a betrayal of women and this is a disheartening message," Maza, a member of the bicameral committee, said in a press conference on Saturday.

Sought for comment, Villarosa said she was not blocking the bill, but confirmed that concerns of the Catholic Church were the reason why the bicameral report's approval was delayed.

According to Villarosa, what happened was that the House leadership decided to defer the approval of the report so that concerns raised by Catholic Church officials could be heard first, she said.

She said that after the bicameral committee finished its report after its meeting at a Makati hotel, she received a report from a Catholic Church official who wanted the word "ethical" inserted in the family planning provision. She informed Speaker Prospero Nograles about it.

"There was a request made and we had to look into this and we had to validate the source so there will be no miscommunication. It took time. It was not me who blocked it. The agenda is always approved by the Speaker. When the speaker learned of the request, he said, 'Let's talk about it first.' It's the same way with the right of reply bill, because there were concerns raised about it," Villarosa said.