

# Philippine House OKs restoring death penalty for drug cases

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — The Philippine House of Representatives has approved a bill to restore the death penalty by hanging, lethal injection, or firing squad for drug offenses despite opposition from the influential Roman Catholic Church and human-rights groups.

The House said 216 members approved the proposed legislation, 54 voted against it, and one abstained, bringing nearer to reality President Rodrigo Duterte's campaign promise to restore capital punishment for hardcore criminals, especially drug traffickers.

The death penalty could have been applicable for several crimes, including economic plunder in a country rife with corruption scandals, under earlier house versions, but lawmakers later agreed to allow it only for drug offenses, including production and trafficking.

House Bill 4727 must be merged with the version being deliberated in the senate and then signed by Duterte to become a law. Both chambers of congress are dominated by Duterte's allies.

Proponents argue the death penalty would help combat the drug menace, which Duterte has elevated to a national security threat. His anti-drug crackdown



has left thousands of drug suspects dead since he took office in June.

Opponents led by the dominant Catholic church held an anti-death penalty rally attended by more than 10,000 people in Manila about a month ago. More than 200 activists protested against the death penalty outside the house as lawmakers voted on the bill.

"The death penalty is an abhorrent

punishment. It forecloses the reformation of the convict. It victimizes the poor. It is not the solution to criminality," representative Edcel Lagman, a key critic of the bill, said. Representative Tom Villarin cited corruption among law enforcers and weaknesses in the country's judicial system to vote against the bill.

Amnesty International said the house bill's approval sets the Philippines "on a

**POLARIZING ISSUE.** Protesters lie on the street while shouting slogans during a rally outside the House of Representatives in Quezon City, north of Manila, the Philippines. Various rights groups held demonstrations to oppose the revival of the death penalty by the Philippine Congress. (AP Photo/Aaron Favila)

dangerous path in flagrant violation of its international legal obligations," citing the country's 2007 ratification of a treaty that categorically prohibits executions and commits it to the abolition of the death penalty.

The issue has long been divisive in the Philippines, Asia's bastion of Catholicism that has also grappled with widespread crime. Capital punishment was abolished in 1987, but restored in 1993 for heinous crimes such as murder, child rape, and kidnapping. Seven people were executed in that period.

Then-President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo again abolished the death penalty in 2006. Now the deputy house speaker, she voted against its reimposition, despite a threat from house speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, a key Duterte ally, to strip lawmakers of committee chairmanships and other key posts if they vote against the bill.

## Dog deformed by Thai butcher is now thriving in New Jersey

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doing well besides some cosmetic issues.

"She can always breathe through her mouth, but the fact she can breathe through her nose just increases her quality of life. She's able to eat and drink, can play with toys, so that's the important thing," he said.

Quigley eventually wants to get Teresa certified as a therapy animal so she can comfort disfigured patients at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

### SAVE THE DATE!

*The Asian Reporter Foundation's 19th Annual Scholarship & Awards banquet will be held April 20, 2017 at the TAO Event Center.*



**STELLAR SAVE.** Goalkeeper Luis Robles of the New York Red Bulls saves a shot taken by the Portland Timbers in a match played at Providence Park in this file photo. In 2015, Robles was voted Goalkeeper of the Year for Major League Soccer after making 86 saves and allowing just 43 goals in 34 matches, including nine shutouts. He did even better than that in 2016, saving 100 while allowing just one more goal in 34 matches, logging 11 shutouts. (AR Photo/Jan Landis)

## Seven Asian MLS difference-makers look to shine in 2017

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Trying to stop Endoh and Meram from scoring are goalkeeper Luis Robles of the New York Red Bulls and defender A.J. DeLaGarza of the Houston Dynamo. Robles, whose mother is from South Korea, has been one of the league's dominant goalkeepers since being named New York's starter in 2013.

In 2015, Robles won MLS Goalkeeper of the Year after making 86 saves and allowing just 43 goals in 34 matches, including nine shutouts. He did even better than that in 2016, saving 100 while allowing just one more goal in 34 matches, logging 11 shutouts.

Yet Robles was edged out by Andre Blake of the Philadelphia Union for the 2016 award. Blake's stats were not as strong — he allowed 50 goals with 99 saves and six shutouts in 32 matches — but Blake's extraordinary, head-turning saves gave him the overall edge in the voting. After his first-place Red Bulls were ousted from the 2016 playoffs, Robles hopes to

help his squad get to the MLS Cup Final for the first time since 2008.

Before this season started, the Houston Dynamo traded for A.J. DeLaGarza, who had shown his versatility and durability with the L.A. Galaxy. The Guamanian fullback made 20 or more starts for six straight seasons with the Galaxy, anchoring a back line that helped L.A. win three MLS Cups during his time there. Between 2011 and 2014, DeLaGarza won the Galaxy's Defender of the Year two times. The Dynamo is banking that the stalwart fullback can help them rise from their last-place finish in 2016.

The Asian MLS talent pool also shrank a bit this year, as Masato Kudo of the Vancouver Whitecaps chose to return to Japan after just one season in MLS, and veteran Paulo Nagamura of Sporting KC retired to join the team's coaching ranks. But this season's addition of Minnesota United and Atlanta United brings the league to 22 teams, ensuring MLS rosters will continue to swell with players of Asian heritage.

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