

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **DepEd: Make grad rites solemn, keep politics out**

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus reiterates that school graduation must be kept simple, solemn and away from partisan politics.

Secretary Lapus issued this statement to belie some media reports that DepEd has imposed a ban on the holding of political events in schools.

“The report was wrongly interpreted,” Lapus said. “There is no ban on anyone. There are long existing orders on the holding of austere and simple graduation ceremonies in elementary and high schools and that this special event is for parents, students and teachers.”

The policy has been in effect over the years and was not a knee-jerk reaction or related to ZTE witness Rodolfo “Jun” Lozada’s rounds in several colleges and universities in Metro Manila. He noted that the DepEd’s mandate and intention is to look after the safety and wellbeing of elementary and high school students.

Under the Constitution, the State is mandated to recognize the role of the youth in nation building. It is duty bound to promote and protect the physical, moral, spiritual, and intellectual well-being of the youth. DepEd, as the agency tasked with providing basic education, is at the forefront of developing patriotism and nationalism.

The State is duty bound to encourage the involvement of the youth in public and civic affairs. DepEd encourages discussion of national issues within the confines of the classrooms instead of exposing students to street rallies and mass actions that pose physical harm and disrupt class learning.

“Political discussions are done academically as part of their lessons. Elementary and high school kids are minors who need a nurturing and creative atmosphere for growth and learning. Recruiting these school kids for activities outside the school will gravely affect their study hours especially now when classes are about to end,” Lapus said.

Lapus says that any participation by students or teachers at political gatherings outside of class hours is for them to decide. The students need to seek permission from their parents and for teachers to ensure that proper supervision is made. Involvement in such activities must be done in accordance with the rule of law and the context of respect and tolerance.

“Academic freedom properly appreciated takes place in institutions of higher learning where older and mature students are better informed and can clearly grasp issues,” he adds.

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As school year ends this March, Lapus stressed that many academic requirements still remains to be fulfilled. He adds that partisan political activities during class hours can only distract students.

A DepEd order states that "...graduation rites should be conducted solemnly befitting the graduating students and their parents and should not in anyway be used as a venue for political forum."

"We need to respect the solemnity of the occasion and the rights and views of others," he said. "Our responsibility is to ensure quality education for all."

On the participation of local government officials during graduation, Lapus said it cannot prevent school administrators and parents from inviting their local executives. Local government units are identified as among the education agency's major partners in basic education. Many have helped improve schools by pushing for new buildings, furniture, books, additional teacher items, training and operating expenses, among others.

This year, graduation ceremonies are set for any day between March 24 to 28 with the theme "The Filipino Graduates: Celebrating Achievements, Pursuing Opportunities."

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