



Mediator-Arbiters Meet for 2nd *En Banc*

Mediator-Arbiters – from the Bureau of Labor Relations (BLR) and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Regional Offices – held their 2nd *En Banc* meeting this year, via Zoom conference.

Upon inquiry of BLR Director Maria Consuelo S. Bacay, in her welcome remarks, a total of three (3) Mediator-Arbiters have been fully vaccinated and all regions, except IV-A, IV-B, and BLR have received their tablets which were procured based on the budget given last year.

Prior to the *en banc* meeting, all Mediator-Arbiters were required to complete the Freedom of Association (FOA) course on the Labor and Employment Educational Services (LEES) e-Portal. Only 19 have completed the said online course, the Mediator-Arbiters requested to move the deadline for completion on 07 July 2021.

Atty. Abigail R. Dela Rosa, BLR Mediator-Arbiters, informed the participants that a Memorandum addressed to the regional offices will be issued identifying those who have accomplished the course and those who haven't.

The meeting became an avenue to discuss issues and concerns in the election cases currently being handled by the Mediator-Arbiters. One of the recommendations raised during the meeting was the holding of a conference with the National Conciliation and

Mediation Board (NCMB) to discuss their procedures and reestablish its coordination with the DOLE Regional Offices' Mediator-Arbiters on decisions rendered in similar cases.

Atty. Dela Rosa introduced in the *en banc meeting* the Certification Election Digital Voting System (CE DVS), an online voting system currently being developed by the Bureau and the DOLE Planning Service in order to provide an alternative to the traditional face-to-face election. Concerns in their regions as to the digitization of union and certification elections were discussed by the Mediator-Arbiters.

Atty. Vegim-Teves raised the issue in Region III that the Provincial Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) did not allow the conduct of face-to-face election, hence the Election Officer inquired the parties whether they would agree to a deferment. Director Bacay recommended that in such cases, efforts must be exerted to convince the parties to suspend or the local government unit (LGU) to allow the conduct of the CE. A manifestation to the DOLE Secretary must be made to raise such issue to the IATF and to foster proper coordination with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

At the end of the meeting, a raffle for those who have already completed the FOA course was organized by Ms. Rhodora Lirio. The winning Mediator-Arbiter was Atty. Jasmin M. Demetillo-Galvan of Region XII.

END/Diane Virtucio