



## JOINT STATEMENT

### **FROM THE DISTRICT SECRETARY AND DISTRICT LEGAL COUNSEL**

We, the undersigned, are the district officers who worked closely with the governor throughout the recent electoral exercise. At the conclusion of this exercise, we make of record the following facts and observations:

**FIRST:** As fully explained in the Executive Brief submitted to the RI South Pacific and Philippines Office on 13 May 2009, the governor interpreted the phrase “most recent semiannual payment” as including *pro-rata* payments made after the SAR-based payments. It was his belief that this interpretation best enforced what he perceived to be RI’s guiding intention, to base a club’s voting strength on its actual and current membership as of the date it decides in whose favor it shall cast its vote/s.

While the governor was aware that his interpretation may inspire the clubs to a final effort to increase their memberships, there is no basis for the notion that increased membership was the driving purpose for his interpretation.

**SECOND:** The governor decided to adopt the “one-club-one-ballot” system traditionally followed in the district, where the club would indicate on its single ballot the number of votes it represented. In consultation with the chairman of the balloting committee, it was the consensus that the traditional “one-club-one-ballot” system was the only safeguard against the splitting of a club’s votes. Vote-splitting would have meant spoilage of votes under RI rules, and it was feared that mass spoilage would raise the spectre of distorted election results. The governor’s decision was meant to avoid this greater danger.

There is no factual basis to the view that the governor himself designed the ballot solely to serve his purported agenda of spurring the clubs to increase membership at all costs.

**THIRD:** The governor’s decision to shift from the downloadable ballot back to the old-style couriered one, was in accommodation of urgent pleas from the leaders and supporters of both candidates and from district elders, who were presumably uncomfortable with the impact upon the integrity of the electoral process of an untested ballot-distribution system. The downloadable ballot was an innovation expressly allowed under the constitutional documents of RI, and the decision to ignore it not only prolonged the club vote period but also, ironically, abbreviated the actual time between the mailing of the ballots and their counting.

Quite clearly, the abbreviation of the period between the sending of the ballots and their counting was not an infirmity brought about by gubernatorial caprice or incompetence.

**FOURTH:** Several RGPs sent urgent tidings to the governor that many clubs were already in grave danger of being torn asunder by intense electoral activities. Instantly acting on his overarching concern for the clubs and his presidents, the governor sent a text to all RGPs that it might be better for a club to abstain rather than be irreversibly weakened.

We regret that this text message has since been cited to challenge the governor's neutrality and moral fitness to preside over the recent validation proceedings. It has also just recently been misrepresented as a "blatant display of partisanship and an affront to the process of a challenge" done as a "pretext of preserving unity in the District," and as "bias against the challenging candidate."

The governor (the same one who declared the challenge perfected) nonetheless presided over the validation proceedings, and he was redeemed in this by PDG Jimmy Cura who rose in the midst of the said proceedings, to remind the candidates, their counsel, and the public, that the governor's authority over all electoral activities in the district was not subject to challenge as he was RI's sole and official representative therein.

**FIFTH:** The governor has neither questioned nor opposed the right of any club to question his official acts directly with RI, most especially when a club feels that succor is no longer forthcoming from his office. But as RI's sole representative in the district, he had every right to expect sufficient notice that such club action is to be undertaken. Simply put, fair notice is a fundamental courtesy that should not be abandoned the moment one disagrees with official acts.

**SIXTH:** The governor's interpretation of the rules of RI, and his actions pursuant thereto, may very well be reversed or criticized by RI. But whether reversed or upheld, he has already set in motion, initially through the Council of District Governors, a campaign for the issuance by RI of clearer and more rational rules and regulations in regard to the selection and election processes for DGN. In such shall our hope lie for less divisive and more constructive contention in the district.

In the meantime, we take pride in the fact that, even in the midst of an ambiguous regulatory environment, the governor was able to exercise decisive leadership guided only by his own conscience and his own best lights, in a manner that educated and empowered the clubs and Rotarians that were ever first in his heart.

18 May 2009, Makati City.

(original signed)  
**PP RENE AGUIRRE**  
**District Secretary**

(original signed)  
**PP RAFFY AQUINO**  
**District Legal Counsel**