

Arroyo cannot be exempted from pay hike – ex-CSC chief

The former chair of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and staunch critic of the Arroyo administration said the president should not be exempted from the controversial proposal to raise the salaries of government officials.

"If you have to increase from the bottom, everybody has to increase," said Karina David, former CSC chair who has criticized the lack of professionalism in the civil service.

"You cannot have a scale where you keep the president at P50,000 while you increase the undersecretary beyond that amount," she said.

David, who as CSC chair spearheaded the drafting of a proposal to revamp the government pay scale that aimed to make salaries of government officials competitive with their counterparts in the private sector, was interviewed by [abc-NEWS.com/Newsbreak](#) in the wake of a controversy over the administration proposal for a new government wage hike.

The administration has been under fire for the proposal which will double the compensation of the country's chief executive over the next four years from P40,000 to P120,000. Some politicians even suggested that wage hikes might be appropriate for the rank-and-file, but not for top government officials.

Raising the ceiling

In a statement released Sept. 1, 2008, Budget Secretary Renato Araya Jr. defended the proposed provision, saying that "to give room to pay increases at the bottom, the ceiling must

be raised." The proposed pay of the No. 1 official of the land, the statement said, has been increased to accommodate salary augmentations below.

David agreed, saying the Constitution provides for the standardization of compensation of government officials and employees. "If you increase from the bottom, everybody has to increase. The scale has to include the president," she said.

In the current salary scale, career officials and employees may only occupy salary grades 1 to 30. Salary grade 30 is the pay scale for department undersecretaries, the highest-ranking career position. Salary grades 31 to 33 are reserved for elective and appointive officials, as well as of heads of constitutional bodies. Salary grade 33, the highest in the compensation scale, is reserved for the president.

Will Mrs. Arroyo benefit?

Whether the incumbent president and members of Congress should benefit from a proposed increase is another matter altogether though.

Matters were confused by a portion of Arroyo's Aug. 1 statement, which said: "Instead of nitpicking what the President will eventually get, which by the way will be given in 'four gives,' the last two to be enjoyed by the next Malacatang occupant, we should instead lower our sights on the pay hike those in the lower rungs of the bureaucracy will be getting." The statement led to criticisms from various sectors.

A source from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) later explained that the paragraph was included in the Aug. 1 statement "by mistake."

DBM issued another statement clarifying this matter and stating categorically that "the sitting President, Vice President, senators and congressmen are barred from receiving such an increase."

The Constitution provides that increases in the compensation of the President, the Vice President, and members of Congress shall only take effect after the expiration of the full term of these elective officials.

This constitutional provision is echoed in Section 12 of the draft joint resolution the budget department submitted to Congress.

The provision, which is standard in laws and regulations concerning government compensation, was present in two executive orders signed by the president last year and this year. Myra Chua, Director IV of the DBM's compensation bureau, said. Each of these orders provided for a 10-percent across-the-board increase in government wages. —[abc-NEWS.com/Newsbreak](#), Jess Diaz, Eva Visperas, Evelyn Maculan