

Headline	DOF prods Senate: Increase sin taxes	
MediaTitle	Philippine Star(www.philstar.com)	
Date	23 May 2019	
Section	NEWS	
Order Rank	1	
Language	English	
Journalist	N/A	
Frequency	Daily	

## DOF prods Senate: Increase sin taxes

MANILA, Philippines — Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III pleaded with senators yesterday to pass a new round of sin taxes before the 17th Congress adjourns early next month, but lawmakers were non-committal.

Dominguez made a pitch for the increased taxes on tobacco products in a closed-door meeting with senators, citing the need to fund the Universal Health Care (UHC) law.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III said the chamber will exert its “best efforts” to pass the measure, which is expected to be sponsored on the floor next week by Sen. Sonny Angara, chairman of the ways and means committee.

“Not impossible but makes it a bit more difficult,” Angara told reporters in a text message when asked about the chances of the bill passing.

Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri said the senators were “very sympathetic” but Congress has less than three weeks or equivalent to around six session days left before it finally adjourns and the chamber has many other priority bills that need attention.

The senators also raised the issue of several of their pet bills being vetoed by President Duterte upon instigation by the Department of Finance (DOF), like the Regional Investment and Infrastructure Coordinating Hub (RICH) bill.

The DOF chief told the senators that the measures, like the RICH bill, were “revenue-negative” or tend to reduce government revenues so they were vetoed.

Dominguez said the DOF was just being consistent in rationalizing fiscal incentives that tend to be abused or are outdated, that is why the Duterte administration was also pressing the passage of the Tax Reform for Attracting Better and High-Quality Opportunities (TRABAHO) bill.

Sotto and Zubiri said the DOF chief promised to look into the senators’ concerns.

Angara and Zubiri said the TRABAHO bill would likely be tackled in the 18th Congress, which opens in July, also due to lack of time and many questions from lawmakers, particularly on the feared job losses and flight of investments if the measure is enacted into law.