



The Doctor Is In

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Dr. Erie Agustin ...

Philippine Most Probable Presidential Candidates

" Vice Pres. Noli de Castro, Sen. Loren Legarda, Sen. Manny Villar Jr., Sen. Mar Roxas, Former Pres. Erap Estrada, and Sen. Antonio Trillanes Jr., according to "private surveys" are the leading contenders . Unfortunately, qualifications alone are not enough if the most important components to be a good president are absent in their character."

NEW YORK, N.Y., January 26 (PinoyGlobal) - There is a galaxy of stars shining out there who could be strong candidates for the presidency. What's more, they are eager to start campaigning if their sympathizers have not yet begun the ball rolling for them. Most of them could even be qualified. Unfortunately, qualifications alone are not enough if the most important components to be a good president are absent in their character. These are integrity and dedication to the task of president, which is a pure sacrifice to country and people.

Those in line to replace Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo should assess their chances first if they can win, for otherwise their candidacy would only deprive the people of the leader best qualified to serve the nation from falling deeper into problems from which it may never recover.

I would like to lend my modest opinion on this matter. I will analyze to the best of my ability each one of the probable contenders for president and share with you my honest estimate of how he or she answers our quest for a national leader, and examine their odds of winning.

Dr. Erie Agustin graduated in Medicine at the University of the East in 1980. From 1984-1988 he was a Rural Health Doctor in Pangasinan. He came to the US in 1988, and was an ER doctor at Wyckoff and Parkway Hospitals for many years. In 2003, he opened his own clinic which thrives until the present day.

It is important for us to be serious on this, because as expats our love for those we left behind is measured by our working hard in the country we have settled in abroad to send remittances in dollars that buoy and support not only our loved ones but the government as well. Moreover, we exercise the right to vote wherever we are in the globe and so let us make our votes count.

According to "private surveys" the leading contenders (aside from Pres. Arroyo who wants to succeed herself if she can after amending the Constitution and the people ratifying it before the next elections, which is next to impossible due to time constraint), are Vice Pres. Noli de Castro, Senators Loren Legarda, Manny Villar Jr., Mar Roxas, Erap Estrada, and Antonio Trillanes Jr. These are the most prominent candidates with great possibilities as of today. There may be others in the months to come who will be throwing their hat in the ring, but they are the Johnnies come lately that may just make noise with little chance of winning, if any.

Let me begin with Noli de Castro whom people say would be the probable choice of Pres. Arroyo if the Charter change does not take place. Mr. Kabayan, as his admirers on TV fondly call Noli, is very charismatic. He is like that smiling man in the advertisement with his

pearly white teeth continuously smiling for I don't know why. But the question is: is he competent? Being charming does not guarantee his fitness as president if he gets elected. And if he is endorsed by GMA it could be his political demise given Gloria's tremendous unpopularity. He has to re-invent his political image first that he is not basking in the shadow of Madam Arroyo. Also he has to prove that he has the brains to be president. He may have a hard time to convince the voters on these grounds.

Sen. Loren Legarda is the best example of beauty and brains. She could even be mistaken for a glamorous movie star. And indeed, she is very popular having won for senator with the highest majority in the last elections. More than that she is very articulate. She could be a good president. The problem with her is if she will be endorsed by Erap as he has signified his intention to support her. That would undermine her chances because of Estrada's negative image in the eyes of the general public. On this point she could not be elected president.

Another candidate that looks good in public is **Sen. Mar Roxas**. His charisma is like that of his late father **Senator Gerry Roxas** who was well loved by the people. Mar has the intelligence of a Roxas and his name carries a heavy weight in politics because his grandfather, **Pres. Manuel Roxas**, was respected and loved by the citizenry until his early demise of a heart attack.

Mar is young and like Pres. Obama here, he can fire the imagination of the youth. His integrity is a great asset in his candidacy. His mother who belongs to the wealthy Araneta clan can help finance his presidential ambition. And he would be a strong candidate if he teams up with Sen. Trillanes – if the other would be willing. Short of that, he is not yet ripe to run this time due to a lack of experience in public service.

The next strongest candidate is **Sen. Manny Villar Jr.** He is brilliant and is a lawyer by profession. But he is a better businessman with so much war chest money to finance his own presidential candidacy. He would really be a great timber for the presidency. He is a well-seasoned leader having been Speaker of the House of Representatives and Senate President until recently. Like I said he can run his own presidential campaign without tapping vested interests willing to underwrite a strong presidential candidate.

He is very eloquent although he does not speak unless absolutely necessary. Yes, he has all the

qualifications to be a great president. But his integrity is under fire with the questions he is facing in the Ethics Committee of the Senate and things like conflict of interests. By the time he is cleared, it might be rather late for him to run.

Sen. Antonio Trillanes Jr. is the best and ideal presidential candidate because of his unquestioned courage and integrity. He exposed the corruption in the Armed Forces and the corruption of President Arroyo asking her to step down in the interest of the nation. He took many risks in the name of the people who are helpless to fight the powers-that-be.

Trillanes is a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA). At U.P. he was cum laude when he took up Public Administration. He is so incorruptible that he detests corruption anywhere in the government. His college thesis was about corruption in the military. The government used it and it saved millions of pesos.

When he saw how corrupt was the military he had three options to choose from (1) play blind, (2) join them, and (3) to stand up for the principles he learned at the PMA: Loyalty, honesty and integrity. He chose the 3rd option. But this 3rd principle is not synchronized with the Arroyo administration, which is based on corruption.

It is sad that an idealist gentleman like him was prevented by the cruel military hierarchy from attending the funeral of his 2-year-old son. At the time he was jailed for fighting corruption in the government, former Pres. Joseph Erap Estrada was imprisoned for plunder (massive corruption). Yet Erap was released but he (Trillanes) was not even allowed to see his son for his last day on earth.

I still think that there are people in the military who believe in Trillanes' principles and what he stands for. Millions outside the military are devoted to his cause, electing him with an unprecedented 11 million solid votes, despite his shoestring campaign funds of P8-million and him not being permitted to campaign.

I don't know with you, dear readers, but if you want my honest opinion I will go **gung ho** for him. I believe if he becomes the presidential candidate and he picks Gov. Eddie Panlilio of Pampanga, the team will be formidable. Both are confirmed men of integrity and principles.

Panlilio exposed the president when she gave 190 congressmen P500,000 each after a breakfast conference in Malacanang. Rumors went around that it was a payoff to kill the impeachment against her in Congress, which was pending at the time. It took courage on his part because he too was given the same amount along with some other governors and mayors that day, but exposed the dole-out on TV.

Like Trillanes, Panlilio also won against great odds in the bailiwick of President Arroyo (Pampanga) who openly supported his opponent. And you know what that means in money and other methods of support she could lend to her candidate. Yet Eddie won hands down. So he and Trillanes

would be ideal because they are principled and devoted to the country and the people.

I will be happy if you join me on this crusade. As I said earlier it is important for Filipino overseas workers who remit billions of dollars to the country to help our gasping economy. It is totally unfair that the money goes into the pockets of crooked officials rendering our sacrifices meaningless.

This might be a futile battle but as I always say – hey, who knows! #

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