



## Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism

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**HON. RENATO C. CORONA**  
Chief Justice  
Supreme Court of the Philippines  
Padre Faura, Manila

**Subject:**

***PCIJ's Multiple Requests for Copies of the Statements of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth (SALN) and Personal Data Sheets/Curriculum Vitae (PDS/CVs) of the Honorable Justices of the Supreme Court filed since 2006***

**Thru: The Office of the Court Administrator, Hon. Midas P Marquez**

Dear Chief Justice Corona,

Greetings from the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ)! We hope this letter finds you in the best of health and cheer.

As you may well be aware, every year the PCIJ submits requests for copies of the statement of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALNs) and the Personal Data Sheets (PDS) of the senior government officials from all branches of the government, as well as those from the constitutional commissions.

Since 2006, however, the Supreme Court has refused requests filed by the PCIJ for the public disclosure of the SALNs and PDS of the justices, judges, and other senior officers of the bench. This was even though we had precisely followed the procedures that the high court laid down in its a. M. No. 92-9-851-RTC.

In 2010, you will recall that in our earnest effort to do investigative reports that promote the best values of public accountability, transparency, and good governance, we launched a research on the business interests and financial connections of the justices of the high court.



We informed you in separate letters to the justices on Sept. 28, 2010 that our review of public and other databases yielded findings that may present or suggest possible situations of real, apparent and potential conflicts of interest that may involve your good self.

Please understand that pending the disclosure of the SALNs of the members of the high court and the bench, the existence and relevance of these data in public records remain an unsettled matter, to this day.

It was in our effort to uphold fairness and the highest standards of good journalism that we even asked all of the good justices to respond to specific queries about the specific business and economic interests that our research yielded remain in the name of certain justices of the high court.

In light of the filing of the impeachment complaint against you, including for your failure to disclose your SALNs, the PCIJ would like to, once again, formally request through this letter copies of the SALNs and PDs of the justices of the Supreme Court, which had been denied us for the period covering 2006 to 2011.

In particular, we would like to request copies of the SALNs and PDS/CVs of the justices of the Supreme Court, reckoned from the years they were appointed to the present:

- **Chief Justice Renato C. Corona**, appointed April 9, 2002, SALNs and PDS/CVs for 2002 to 2011
- **Associate Justice Antonio T. Carpio**, appointed October 26, 2001, SALNs and PDS/Cvs for 2001 to 2011
- **Associate Justice Presbitero J. Velasco Jr**, appointed in 2002, SALNs and PDS/CVs for 2002 to 2011
- **Associate Justice Teresita J. Leonardo-de Castro**, appointed Dec. 3, 2007, SALNs and PDS/Cvs for 2007 to 2011
- **Associate Justice Arturo D. Brion**, appointed March 17, 2008, SALNs and PDS/CVs for 2008 to 2011
- **Associate Justice Diosdado M. Peralta**, appointed on January 14, 2009, SALNs and PDS/CVs for 2009 to 2011
- **Associate Justice Lucas P. Bersamin**, appointed in 2009, SALNs and PDS/CVs for 2009 to 2011
- **Associate Justice Mariano C. del Castillo**, appointed in 2009, SALNs and PDS/CVs for 2009 to 2011



- **Associate Justice Roberto A. Abad**, appointed 2009, SALNs and PDS/CVs for 2009 to 2011
- **Associate Justice Martin S. Villarama Jr.**, appointed November 3, 2009, SALNs and PDS/CVs for 2009 to 2011
- **Associate Justice Jose P. Perez**, appointed December 26, 2009, SALNs and PDS/CVs for 2009 to 2011
- **Associate Justice Jose C. Mendoza**, appointed 2009, SALNs and PDS/CVs for 2009 to 2011
- **Associate Justice Maria Lourdes P.A. Sereno**, appointed May 17, 2010, SALNs and PDS/CVs for 2010 and 2011
- **Associate Justice Bienvenido L. Reyes**, appointed August 23, 2011, SALN and PDS/CVs for 2011

You will remember that in 2006, the PCIJ filed a request for the SALNs of the judges and justices, up the level of the Supreme Court, so these could be uploaded on PCIJ's online database, <http://i-site.ph>, which has served all these years as a research and learning tool for journalists, journalism students, researchers and citizens.

The PCIJ, however, never received a formal response from the Supreme Court. It learned that the Court had denied its request only because an enterprising reporter of *The Manila Times* made a story out of it. The reporter saw the PCIJ letter and asked for a specific explanation why the Court could not grant access. The Court had responded by saying that by making the SALN public on PCIJ website, the public may use the information against the justices.

On April 27, 2006, the Supreme Court issued a "Media Backgrounder" defining the procedure for "Request of Copies of Statements of Assets and Liabilities of Justices, Judges and Court Personnel."

The "Media Backgrounder" restricted access to the SALN not only of magistrates, but also down to the last court personnel. It also states that there should be a "legitimate reason" for the request, since access to such documents could lead to supposed fishing expeditions.

In the "Backgrounder," the Court reasoned that such requests could also undermine the independence of justices, and expose them to retaliation for adverse decisions, or even to extortion, kidnapping, and blackmail. The Court added, "In the few areas where there is extortion by rebel elements of where the nature of their work exposes to assaults against their personal safety, the request shall not only be denied but should be immediately reported to the military."



Interestingly, the guidelines include a provision that says the Court must state "the reason for the denial" of the request – something it failed to do with that of PCIJ.

A series of chief justices later, the "Media Backgrounder" policy remains in force. In 2009, the high court informed the PCIJ a committee had been created by the en banc to study the requests of the PCIJ for the SALNs of the justices.

In 2008, the PCIJ filed a pleading with the office of the Court Administrator to submit its views to the committee. Yet to this day, the decision of the committee and the en banc on the matter has yet to be disclosed to the public. In the meantime, the SALNs and PDS/CVs of the justices and judges remain secret, in what seems like rank exemption for the judiciary from compliance with the Constitution and R.A. No. 6713.

Through this letter, we earnestly hope that the Supreme Court could finally grant our request. Needless to say, the PCIJ is, of course, ready and willing to assume all reasonable costs related to the reproduction of these documents.

Thank you very much and best regards.

Sincerely yours,



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