



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Sandiganbayan
QUEZON CITY

SEVENTH DIVISION

PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES,
Plaintiff,

Case Nos. **SB-16-CRM-0547**

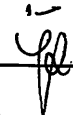
Present:

-versus -

Gomez-Estoesta, J., Chairperson
Trespeses, J. and
Hidalgo, J.

ESTER A. LACONICO-FERIA,
Accused.

Promulgated:

March 29, 2019 

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DECISION

GOMEZ-ESTOESTA, J.:

For her unliquidated cash advances, accused Ester A. Laconico-Feria was charged with *Failure to Render Accounts* under Article 218 of the Revised Penal Code, which *Information* reads, as follows:

That in October 2008, or sometime prior or subsequent thereto, in Quezon City, Philippines, and within this Honorable Court's jurisdiction, the above-named accused ESTER A. LACONICO-FERIA, a high ranking public officer, being then a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA), and as such accountable officer required under the Commission on Audit (COA) Circular 97-002 to render accounts to COA for cash advances received, committing the offense in relation to office, did then and there willfully, unlawfully, and feloniously fail to render an account of and liquidate said cash advance, comprising of public funds in the amount of Php79,161.36 for travel expenses to Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A. on 8-12 June 2008, for a period of two months after such account should have been rendered, to the damage and prejudice of the government.

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CONTRARY TO LAW.

On January 11, 2019, accused, upon arraignment, entered a plea of *not guilty*.¹ She was assisted by own counsel, Atty. Francisco S. Adriano, Jr.

During pre-trial, however, accused manifested her intention to withdraw her plea of *not guilty* and instead plead guilty to the offense charged.

In open Court, accused was fully apprised of the consequences of her plea. In clear terms, she stated in the affirmative that she understood the nature of her plea; that if she pleaded guilty to the charge, she is deemed to have admitted all the accusations alleged in the Information to which a consequent penalty of *prision correccional in its minimum period, or by a fine ranging from 200 to 6,000 pesos, or both*, may be imposed pursuant to Article 218 of the Revised Penal Code.

Accused was found to have fully understood the meaning and consequences of her plea. Let a plea of **guilty** be thus entered into the records of the case.

WHEREFORE, following her voluntary change of plea, judgment is hereby rendered finding accused **ESTER A. LACONICO-FERIA guilty** beyond reasonable doubt of *Failure of Accountable Officer to Render Accounts* defined and penalized under Article 218 of the Revised Penal Code. Having appreciated the mitigating circumstance of the plea of *guilty* in her favor, accused is imposed the penalty of **FINE** of **TWO THOUSAND PESOS (P2,000.00)**.

SO ORDERED.


MA. THERESA DOLORES C. GOMEZ-ESTOESTA
Associate Justice, Chairperson

WE CONCUR:


ZALDY V. TRESPESSES
Associate Justice


GEORGINA D. HIDALGO
Associate Justice

¹ Record, pp. 130-131

ATTESTATION

I attest that the conclusions in the above Decision were reached in consultation before the case was assigned to the writer of the opinion of the Court's Division.


MA. THERESA DOLORES C. GOMEZ-ESTOESTA
Associate Justice, Chairperson

CERTIFICATION

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 13 of the Constitution, and the Division Chairman's Attestation, it is hereby certified that the conclusions in the above Decision were reached in consultation before the case was assigned to the writer of the opinion of the Court's Division.


AMPARO M. CABOTAJE-TANG
Presiding Justice

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