

It's a matter of honor...

**STATEMENT
of**

Alex A. Esclamado
National Chairman
National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA)
Before the
House Veterans Affairs Committee
U. S House of Representatives
July 22, 1998

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"When the smoke of war had cleared and victory was won, the services of the Filipino World War II veterans appeared to be remembered only in word and not in deed." - President Corazon C. Aquino

(In her speech delivered at Mount Samal, Bataan on April 9, 1992, commemorating the 50th anniversary of World War II)

".....Great nations, like great men, must keep their word.

When America says something, America means it, whether a treaty or an argument or a vow made on marble steps.....- President George Bush (Inaugural Address)

"The Philippine Army Veterans are nationals of the United States and will continue in that status until July 4, 1946. They fought as Americans, as American nationals, under the American Flag, and under the direction of our military leaders. They fought with gallantry and courage under the most difficult conditions during the recent conflict. Their officers were commissioned by us. Their official organization, the Army of the Philippine Commonwealth, was taken into the Armed Forces of the United States by executive order of the President of the United States on July 26, 1946.However, the passage and approval of this legislation (Rescission Act of 1946) do not release the United States from the moral obligation to provide for the heroic Philippine veterans who sacrificed so much for the common cause during the war."

***- President Harry S. Truman
(Upon signing the Rescission Act)***

"Of our former ward, the Philippines, we can look forward in confidence...that a strong and healthy nation will grow in the longer aftermath of war's terrible destructiveness. We must be patient and understanding and never fail them as in our hour of need they did not fail us."

***General Douglas MacArthur
(Joint Meeting of Congress, April 19, 1951)***

Mr. Chairman, Honorable Members of this Committee:

My name is Alex A. Esclamado, son of Teodorico P. Esclamado, a Guerrilla Mayor of a remote seaside village named Padre Burgos in Southern Leyte. During World War II our family supported five American Guerrillas who operated Station "TUT" on our land. Their activities on Leyte Island were made basis for a movie entitled "The American Guerrillas in the Philippines."

The station was a vital communications link between the Philippine Resistance Movement and General Douglas MacArthur's Headquarters in Australia. The Guerrilla chief in Leyte was my uncle, Colonel Ruperto Kangleon who became Secretary of National Defense after the war. Station "TUT" also provided intelligence reports needed during the preparation for the landing of the Liberation Forces on Leyte on October 20, 1944.

I was only fourteen years old then. My brother, Filomeno and I were shot at by a Japanese officer who was arresting our father on suspicion of being a guerrilla leader. We were lucky. The officer was a poor shot. I have first-hand knowledge of the vital role played by the American and Filipino guerrillas during the war. They prevented the Japanese from controlling the entire Philippines most of which remained loyal to America.

THE FILIPINO AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Now, I am privileged to be here as Chairman of the *National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA)*, the organization presently establishing an infrastructure to mobilize some 3,000 Filipino American organizations throughout the country for their empowerment. The first agenda of NaFFAA is all-out support for the passage of the Equity Act of 1995.

The Filipino American community is now the largest Asian group in California and the second-largest immigrant group to the U. S., second only to the Mexicans. Our present population is estimated to be 3 million and growing at the rate of 100,00 every year by legal immigration and family growth. The Filipino family household income is the highest among all groupings. A high percentage of Filipino-Americans are professionals.

Our youth has great promise. A significant number of them do well in the leading universities in the country. While we are not yet represented in Congress, more and more Filipino Americans are being elected to public office. Representative David Pendleton here is among our four promising State Legislators. There is Delegate David Valderrama of the State Legislature of Maryland, Rep. Vilma Veloria of Washington State's Legislature and Delegate Jon Amores of West Virginia's House of Delegates.

Of course we have Governor Ben Cayetano of Hawaii and several other legislators there. We have Mayors and Council Members in various cities. Many more are members of various Boards and Commissions in all levels of government.

DEBT OF GRATITUDE OF FILIPINO AMERICANS TO VETERANS

The Filipino American community is greatly indebted to the Filipino World War II veterans. Before the war, the Filipinos in the U. S. were mostly farm workers of Hawaii and California and cannery workers in Alaska. They were considered second or third class residents. Many were looked down upon as "monkeys". They could not court white women, nor marry one. There were anti-miscegenation laws. They could not own properties. Employment in the government and the private sector, aside from farming and manual labor, were closed to them.

World War II changed all that.

The heroes of Bataan and Corregidor and other Philippine battlefields changed the attitude of Americans towards Filipinos. The newspaper headlines and broadcasts of their gallantry effaced the image of "the monkey". The Filipino became a human being, worthy of respect. Because of the courageous partnership between Filipinos and Americans in the foxholes, we finally became brother Americans.

I am here in behalf of the leadership of the Filipino American community to pay tribute to our aging heroes and to strongly urge this Committee to grant them the Equity and justice that I long been denied them! It will be too late if you do not act now. The veterans are dying every day in a state of rejection, despair and bitterness. They feel that they have been victims of discrimination.

In memory of the heroic dead in Bataan, Corregidor and the nameless other battlefields in the Philippines and in order to honor the living whose memory has been dishonored, let not this 105th Congress pass without favorable action on the Equity Act. The 191 co-sponsors to the bill is a clear testimony that this is a bipartisan issue. It is an American issue.

We are proud to receive the strong endorsement of the California Republican Party, the Democratic National Committee and the State Legislatures of Hawaii, California, Washington State and Maryland. We even have a nice letter of endorsement from Senator Bob Dole addressed to the Chairman of this Committee. This is not to mention the numerous letters of endorsement from various Filipino community organizations and individuals sent to your Committee.

A QUARTER CENTURY OF INVOLVEMENT

I have devoted 39 years of my life in the United States in advocacy including 37 years of publishing and editing the *Philippine News*, the largest Filipino American newspaper in the U. S. Our badge of honor is having fought the Marcos dictatorship and suffered greatly for it. We had to contend with two powerful enemies: the Marcos dictatorship and the United States Government, which supported the Marcos dictatorship. Among the myriad issues we championed was the naturalization of Filipino World War II veterans for which I spent 23 years of my life. Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi and Senator Barbara Boxer have been aware of my involvement in veterans issues.

My family is proud of two awards I have been privileged to receive. The Ellis Island Medal of Honor which was awarded to 80 outstanding Americans representing the ethnic nationalities comprising our Great Country. The awards were the highlight of the Centennial Celebration of the Statue of Liberty in October, 1986. In May, 1989, President Corazon Aquino presented me with the Philippine Legion of Honor, Degree of Officer, the highest award given to a civilian in the Philippines. In both cases, I was the only Filipino American recipient.

WE MUST HONOR OUR BASIC PRINCIPLES

Let me digress for a moment from the main issue at hand.

There are times in our life as a nation when we sacrifice our basic values for our selfish or strategic interests. For instance, our support for the Marcos regime was dictated primarily by our desire to be friendly to a strong Dictator who could preserve our vital military bases in the Philippines – Subic Naval Base and Clark Air Force Base. Until today, many Filipinos can not forgive America for dishonoring the democratic values, which Americans taught Filipinos to cherish. How could Americans support a dictatorship in the Philippines, which was created in the likeness of America? They asked.

When we selectively honor our values because of considerations of State, Foreign Relations, strategic interests or other seemingly overriding factors, we diminish our moral integrity and our credibility. Consequently, the image of our people and our nation suffers. That's how the phrase "*The Ugly American*" was coined.

We ignored our values by supporting Marcos. In the end, we lost Subic Naval Base and Clark Air Force Base – the very strategic interests we tried so hard to preserve by "*waltzing with the Dictator*."

Today, the United States is negotiating with the Philippines on a treaty to allow our military forces to conduct exercises in the Philippines. There is doubt that this treaty will be ratified by the Philippine Senate even if newly-installed President Joseph Ejercito Estrada is fighting for its ratification. The Filipino people kicked us out of Subic and Clark even with the strong campaign by the very popular President Corazon Aquino to maintain the bases. Indeed, the common man has his own wisdom although often taken for granted.

Another instance of the Filipino people's grievance is in the lack of fulfillment by the United States of promised full payment of war damage claims.

The Philippines suffered more in lives and property during the liberation of the Philippines than during the invasion by the Japanese. That country suffered two attacks. The first attack was from the smaller bombs and bullets of the Japanese Imperial Army. The other, from the bigger bombs and heavier guns of the U. S. liberation forces. Indeed, the carpet bombing of the American forces were so devastating that it wrought more destruction in the Philippines than the Japanese bombings.

After the war, the U. S. promised to pay the war damage claims of Filipinos at the rate of ten percent of the properties' assessed value, which in the Philippines, is usually only ten percent of the market value.

But the U. S. reneged even in this promise. The War Damage Commission operating in the Philippines did not finish its job. The sense of disappointment was so intense and infuriating that my father-in-law, then Congressman Ramon P. Mitra, sponsored a bill that passed both Houses of the Philippine Congress. The law abolished the joint celebration of American and Philippine Independence Day. Philippine Independence Day is now commemorated on June 12 every year instead of the Fourth of July.

NO JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESCISSION ACT

We dishonored our values again in the case of the passage of the Rescission Act of 1946.

How did the Members of the 79th Congress and the President of the United States approve a bill, which negated the heroism and the gallantry of the Filipino soldiers who served in the USAFFE during World War II? I cannot understand. The Filipino veterans could not find any justification for America's rejection of their honorable service in the U. S. Armed Forces!

There clearly was no justification for the 79th Congress to pass the Rescission Act of 1946 that withdrew the benefits which the Filipino World War II veterans were already receiving, other than not wanting to spend money that was due the veterans.

The U. S. Government considered \$3.2 billion too expensive for the Filipino veterans' benefit package. The Members of Congress ignored the fact that the amount was big because there were many more Filipinos who fought America's war than any other aliens! And sacrifice and fight they did, with everything within their human strength against the overwhelming forces of the enemy. Their vital contribution to the war effort was too well known to the whole world to deny.

PUNISHED FOR BEING TOO MANY

In effect, the Filipino veterans have been punished for 52 years because too many of them joined the United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE). After all, the war had already been won! The 79th Congress must have thought that there were other priorities for the dollar such as rehabilitating their former enemies.

America continued with its newly-self-imposed obligation and poured billions of dollars to rehabilitate the lives and the economies of its former enemies - Japan and Germany! At the same time, the 79th Congress found an arbitrary method of saving money for the U. S. Government by declassifying the gallant and valiant service of Filipino heroes in the USAFFE as "not be deemed to have been active military, naval, or air service for purposes of any law of the United States conferring rights, privileges, or benefits...." What a tragedy and irony this was to the Filipino veterans! It appeared that the thinking of the 79th Congress was: "Let us take care of our former enemies first. Never mind our loyal soldiers and loyal friends." That was the unmistakable message.

There was one promise which America fulfilled. The Philippines was granted its Independence on July 4, 1946, as promised. But it was the wrong time to give Independence to a country that was in a state of total economic devastation! If the motive was to honor the Philippines for their war effort by granting them Independence, then it should have been the priority of the U. S. to help rebuild its ruined economy and then give it its independence. Unfortunately, whatever economic assistance was given was not enough and was grudgingly given!

That is why today, former enemies of the U.S. have sound economies while the WWII heroes of Bataan and Corregidor and other battlefields in the Philippines are virtually starving and neglected. Those still alive are dying daily, feeling rejected and abandoned by America.

A decent, honest and fair mind cannot but agree that passage of the Rescission Act was blatantly discriminatory and unfair to the Filipino veterans.

\$100 BILLION SAVINGS FROM DISCRIMINATION

From my own calculations, the United States has already saved, at least, \$100 billion dollars as a result of the Rescission Act over the 52 year period. It could be more if the savings were to earn interest.

Here is my basis for my calculations:

According to the Congressional Budget Office, it will cost \$4.9 billion over five years to fund full equity to the Filipino veterans if the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 1995 is approved. Then the amount will be diminishing thereafter depending upon how many veterans die each year. The more deaths, the bigger the savings!

Therefore, it will cost \$980 million per year to fund full equity; (\$4.9 divided by 5 yrs.) Consequently, the cost per veteran per year is \$14,000.

In 1946, there were an estimated 210,000 veterans who were collecting benefits or a total cost of \$2.94 billion per year. Today, we have an estimated 70,000 veterans alive; 140,000 have died over the 52 year period. This makes the average annual death rate of 2,692 or 7 deaths every day. Computing these figures on a diminishing basis for the past 52 years, I came up with a total savings of \$102,905,712,000 - monies which the U. S. Government should have given Filipino veterans as benefits during the entire period!

So, it is not a question of money, which we cannot afford to give to correct this injustice to the Filipino veterans. The U. S. has already saved, twenty times the full cost of Equity of \$4.9 billion over five years by the simple act of discriminating against them.

I respectfully submit: How can Congress or the White House justify not providing the measly sum of \$4.9 billion to correct the present discrimination against our Filipino veterans in the light of the \$102 billion we have already saved by discriminating against them?

Therefore, it is not a question of money. It is a question of our values. How much do we honor our values?

This is the real issue that this Committee faces today!

DENIAL OF FILIPINO VETERANS' MILITARY SERVICE AS SERVICE TO THE U. S. ARMED FORCES AIMED TO DEPRIVE THEM OF BENEFITS BEING RECEIVED BY THEIR AMERICAN COUNTERPARTS DURING THE WAR, IS GROSSLY UNJUST, IRRATIONAL AND DISCRIMINATORY

Without meaning to be discourteous, allow me to clarify certain key positions which the Honorable Chairman of this Committee has published seemingly to justify the continuation of the present injustice and discrimination against Filipino veterans of World War II. (*Stars and Stripes, entitled "U. S. Has Treated Filipino Veterans Fairly", October 20-November 2, 1997, copy enclosed as ANNEX "A"*)

First, he said, and I quote: *"I do not believe that simply serving under US command meets the test of swearing allegiance to the Constitution of the United States."*

The fact is that the Filipino soldier did not merely serve under US command. He actually took his Oath of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and swore to defend the Constitution of the United States. This was done at the time of his formal induction into the U. S. Army Forces in the Far East! He raised his hand and uttered the words! Ask every Filipino soldier alive today and he will confirm this fact. The formal swearing in ceremony was a matter of military procedure. It was the first thing they did as an American soldier. The Filipino soldier could not have sworn allegiance to the Philippine Flag because it was not a sovereign nation. It was a possession of the United States.

To us, the best test of allegiance to the Constitution of the United States is how much one risks in defense of it. These Filipino soldiers have not been found wanting in courage and bravery in defense of America and Democracy itself. The Joint Resolution passed by Congress last year commending their war effort and further articulated by Presidential Proclamation dated October 17, 1997, (ANNEX "B") is an unmistakable statement of their defense of the Constitution of the United States.

But the documentary evidence is overwhelming and incontrovertible, as follows:

1. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Military Order of July 25, 1941, conscripting all soldiers of the Commonwealth "into the service of the armed forces of the United States", (ANNEX "C");

2. President Manuel L. Quezon's Proclamation No. 740 dated August 10, 1941, publishing the Military Order of President Roosevelt, (ANNEX "D");

3. Implementing Orders of General Douglas MacArthur dated July 27, 1941, formally incorporating the Filipino soldiers into active service of the United States Army Forces in the Far East, USAFFE, (ANNEX "E"); and,

4. General Orders No. 6 signed by General Sutherland constituting the various commands, (ANNEX "F").

Second, the author said: "While Filipino forces certainly aided the U.S. war effort, in the end they fought for their soon-to-be independent nation."

The Filipino forces fought as members of the U. S. Army Forces, for America's cause in America's war! Ask any Filipino soldier who fought in Bataan and Corregidor if he was thinking of Philippine Independence while in the battlefield. I can only imagine that the Filipino and American soldiers who fought side by side in the foxholes could only think of sheer survival against the far superior force of the enemy. Add to this the debilitating effects of hunger, malnutrition, disease and fear itself.

Third, the writer pointed out that in the spirit of fairness, he is "disappointed that Filipino veterans look only to the United States for benefits, since it was Philippine soil on which the U. S. and Philippine armies fought the Japanese."

In the first place, the Philippine soil that the writer referred to was actually then American soil. The Philippines was then a colony and possession of the United States.

In fairness to the Philippines, which is now an independent and sovereign nation, it is taking care of the Filipino veterans in the best manner possible within the limits of its financial capacity. Evidence is being submitted to the Committee which specify the various veterans benefits now being provided for by the Philippine Government. It has even a new G. I. Bill of Rights for its veterans.

But even so, President Truman, in signing the Rescission Act of 1946, admonished the Congress and the American people that the United States is not released from its moral obligation to provide for the Filipino soldiers who were part of America's forces during the war.

Fourth, the distinguished Chairman of this Committee rhetorically asked: "Should U. S. veterans ask for benefits from the Philippines or any other country they liberated in WWII?"

If the U.S. veterans were conscripted into the Philippine Army by a General Order of a Philippine President, my answer would be in the affirmative. It would not have been a war of liberation. It would have been military service rendered based on the U.S. soldiers' allegiance to the Flag of the Republic of the Philippines or of the other countries. And, certainly, the Philippine Congress would never have passed the likes of the Rescission Act of 1946 to deprive the U.S. soldiers of their due, earned in the service of the Republic of the Philippines!

Finally, the crucial point raised by the author is the lack of evidence of a promise by the U. S. to grant full benefits to Filipino veterans. He says, quote: "News accounts about promises of full benefits being made to Filipino veterans appear to be unsubstantiated, despite our best-faith effort to find such documentation."

There are numerous communications to the Secretary of War and the President of the U.S. from General MacArthur during the thick of battle. He urgently pleaded for equal pay and benefits for all soldiers under his command in order to maintain morale. One of his secret radiograms received by the Naval Communication Service is quoted hereunder: (ANNEX "G")

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THE SCALE OF PAY OF AMERICAN AND PHILIPPINE ARMY OFFICERS AND THE SCALE OF PAY OF NON COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS OF THE AMERICAN COMMA THE SCOUT AND THE PHILIPPINE ARMY ALL DIFFER STOP I RECOMMEND THE ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION TO THE EFFECT THAT ALL

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MACARTHUR

AGO WAR DEPARTMENT RECEIVED

Obviously, the appeal of General MacArthur in February of 1942, resulted in the passage by the U. S. Senate of S. 2387 entitled "An Act To equalize the rates of pay of all personnel in the United States Army, the Navy, the Philippine Scouts, and the Philippine Commonwealth Army, and for other purposes."

The Senate approved the bill on March 31, 1942, and was forwarded to the House of Representatives for action.

The Military Affairs Committee of the House approved the bill in Committee on May 6, 1942, and recommended full House consideration. The Chairman of the Committee expected the bill to be approved by the House the following week.

But by May 6, Corregidor had fallen and our troops made the final surrender of the Philippines to the Japanese. Thereafter, the legislation was forgotten and S. 2387 was not finally acted into law.

What better promise is there to show intent to equalize benefits for the Filipino soldiers than General MacArthur's radiogram and the consequent action of the U. S. Congress in 1942 as manifested in S. 2387?

Of course, no one could find a Promissory Note signed by MacArthur or Roosevelt to equalize pay and benefits. But the documentation presented here should be enough.

DEFENDERS OF BATAAN AND CORREGIDOR CONFIRM FACTS

Early this month, I asked an aide to this Committee if it were possible to present a Video as part of my oral presentation to this Committee. I was then told that it was permissible provided that it would be part of my five-minute oral testimony. I then went to the Philippines to tape testimony on the crucial points I would like to establish at this hearing.

I met with several heroes of Bataan and Corregidor and Guerrillas. I also had the good luck of attending the monthly meeting of the Officers and Board of Trustees of the Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor, Inc. on July 3, 1998. They were composed of Rafael R. Estrada, National Commander; Rafael G. Zagala, Vice National Commander; Demetrio C. Paz, National Adjutant; Eduardo C. Abaya, National Judge Advocate; Manuel A. Acosta, National Finance Officer; Felix T. Pestana, National Auditor; Domingo G. Gabilan, National Public Relations Officer; Sebastian Posadas, National Chaplain; Antonio S. Vinluan, National Service Officer and Pedro C. Barsola, National Historian. Members were: Artemio A. Alejo, Juan E. Arroyo, Alfred X. Burgos, Ruperto S. Eustaquio, Ramo G. Lavada and Benjamin T. Malolos.

These gentlemen are mostly retired generals and colonels. I was accompanied to the historic meeting by Colonel Bart Gacad (retired), who is in this room today. Mr. Greg Macabenta, President of Minority Media Services and Director of the Secretariat of NaFFAA also was with me to Manila and was directing the video production.

I explained to the impressive group of aging heroes, in their spotless Barongs and white DBC caps, the issues the veterans face during this crucial hearings. I explained to them, specifically, the salient aspects of the published views of the Chairman of this Committee. I needed their confirmation of certain facts which I already knew.

After proper deliberation without my party's presence, the group unanimously confirmed on tape the following facts:

1. That all Filipino soldiers who were inducted into the USAFFE took the formal Oath of Allegiance to the Flag and the Constitution of the United States at the time of their induction held at their respective mobilization centers;

2. That on several occasions, they heard the radio broadcasts of General MacArthur and President Roosevelt, while they were in the battlefields. These broadcasts promised the Filipino soldiers equal pay and benefits as their American counterparts were receiving, or words to that effect;

3. That when they were fighting the war, they fought as soldiers of America and for the American flag; The thought of fighting for the eventual independence of the Philippines did not occur to them.

4. That they felt insulted, disappointed, rejected, abandoned and discriminated against by the passage of the Rescission Act of 1946 because it negated and removed from them the distinct honor and dignity of being part of the United States Army Forces. They have always felt that they were America's soldiers during the war. This hurt feeling was among the factors that discouraged them from applying for American citizenship. They strongly feel that they have been victims of utter discrimination.

5. That, they are now appealing to this Committee, through this representation, that the 52-year old injustice and discrimination be finally corrected now before they are dead! They want to redeem America's honor in their hearts before they die.

I planned to play this Video today for the Committee's viewing. Unfortunately I was told by Mr. Michael Brinck of this Committee that I cannot do it. Therefore, I respectfully submit this Video tape to this Committee to form part of the Committee's record.

A MATTER OF HONOR

I submit that it is a matter of honor for the Filipino veterans and for America, as well, to grant Filipino veterans the Equity they deserve and earned with valor. There is no time to waste to rectify this glaring discrimination and injustice. As earlier stated, there are already 191 co-sponsors to the Equity Act of 1995. It has bi-partisan support.

If this Committee will endorse this matter for full House consideration, even without favorable endorsement by the Committee, we are certain that the bill will pass!

The Filipino veterans, for their heroic stand in Bataan and Corregidor for five whole months which turned the tide of the war against the superior enemy forces, deserve to have their cause submitted to the full House for their final Vote. They deserve nothing less.

THEIR MILITARY RECORD OF VALOR

We are respectfully submitting a voluminous collage of newspaper reports and commentaries of their heroism in the field of battle. They are too many to include in this written testimony.

We are also submitting materials prepared and published by the Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor, Inc., in connection with its commemoration of the Golden Anniversary of the World War II in 1992. It is the complete story of the epic of Bataan and Corregidor which every scholar of military history should read. I am certain that your full knowledge of their war record - what they did and how they survived 145 days of uneven warfare, succeeded in derailing the timetable of the Japanese to conquer America. I realize that many members of today's Congress are post World War II babies. I want to make special mention and appropriate commendation for the gallant record of your Chairman as a soldier of that war. We commend others who are similarly situated.

Honorable Members of this Committee: We can do better than ignore the legitimate pleas of our heroes.

Let those who are buried in the nameless graves of Bataan and Corregidor and the concentration camps of Capas and other battlefields in the Philippines, finally rest in peace.

Let the aged living enjoy whatever is left of their lives in dignity.

Let these heroes die with honor.

Thank you.

MALACAÑANG PALACE
Manila

By the President of the Philippines

PROCLAMATION NO. 740

PUBLISHING THE MILITARY ORDER OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, DATED JULY 26, INCORPORATING THE PHILIPPINE ARMY INTO THE UNITED STATES ARMY.

For the information and guidance of all concerned, I, MANUEL L. QUEZON, President of the Philippines, do hereby publish the following Military Order of the President of the United States, dated July 26, 1941.

"MILITARY ORDER"

ORGANIZED MILITARY FORCES OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE PHILIPPINES CALLED INTO SERVICE OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES.

"Under and by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution of the United States, by section 2 (a) (12) of the Philippine Independence Act of March 24, 1934 (45 Stat. 475), and by the corresponding provision of the Ordinance appended to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, and as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, I hereby call and order into the service of the armed forces of the United States for the period of the existing emergency, and place under the command of a general officer, United States Army, to be designated by the Secretary of War from time to time, all of the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines; Provided, That all naval components thereof shall be placed under the command of the Commandant of the Sixteenth Naval District, United States Navy.

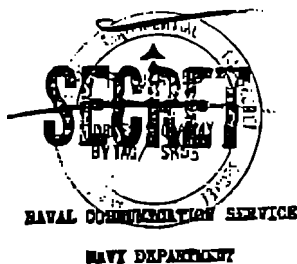
"This Order shall take effect with relation to all units and personnel of the organized forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines from and after the days and hours, respectively, indicated in orders to be issued from time to time by the general officer, United States Army, designated by the Secretary of War."

(Sgd.) FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

In witness hereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the Commonwealth of the Philippines to be affixed.

Done at the City of Manila, this tenth day of August, in the year of our Lord, nineteen hundred and forty-one, and of the Commonwealth of the Philippines the sixth.

(Sgd.) MANUEL L. QUEZON
 President of the Philippines



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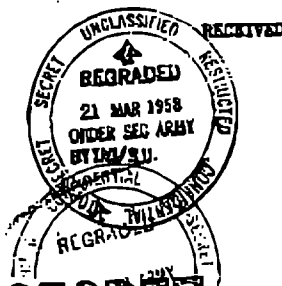
GOVT RD AGWAR WASH

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MACARTHUR

AGO

WAR DEPARTMENT



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VA CONG AFFAIRS

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Notaral

VETERANS FEDERATION OF THE PHILIPPINES
Manila 1000 Philippines

FILIPINO VETERANS EQUITY ACT OF 1995
(H. R. 836)

The Veterans Federation of the Philippines (VFP) was created by a law of the Republic of the Philippines, Republic Act No. 2640, for the purpose, among others, of representing and defending the interest of all Filipino veterans.

The VFP extends its thanks to the sponsors and co-sponsors of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 1995 in both the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States Congress and to all the friends of Filipino World War II veterans for lending their support.

The VFP hereby appeals to the Committee on Veterans Affairs and to the United States House of Representatives for the expeditious enactment of H.R. 836 into law.

HR 836 seeks to amend Section 107, Title 38 of the United States Code so that it shall henceforth read as follows:

"Sec. 107. Certain service deemed to be active service: service in organized military forces of the Philippines and in the Philippine Scouts.

(a) Service before July 1, 1946 in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, while such forces were in the service of the Armed Forces of the United States pursuant to the military order of the President dated July 26, 1941, including among such military forces organized guerrilla forces under commanders appointed, designated, or subsequently recognized by the Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, or other competent authority in the Army of the United States, shall be deemed to have been active military, naval, or air service for the purpose of any law of the United States conferring rights, privileges, or benefits upon any person by reason of the service of such person or the service of any other person in the Armed Forces.

(b) Service in the Philippine Scouts under section 14 of the Armed Forces Voluntary Recruitment Act of 1945 shall be deemed to have been active military, naval, or air service for the purposes of any of the laws administered by the Veterans Administration."

By this amendment, the Government of the United States of America can restore the pride, dignity and honor of Filipino soldiers who served under the United States flag during World War II as true members of the American military forces. The United States will honor and dignify the many Filipino soldiers who were killed in action while serving under the United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFPE) in Bataan, Corregidor and other fronts; the many Filipinos who, along with their American counterparts, perished in the Death March and in Capas and other concentration camps; the many Filipinos who sacrificed their lives and the safety of their families by joining guerrilla forces and carrying on the fight in the underground movement with loyalty to the American flag. The United States will do justice to the men of the Philippine Commonwealth Army and the organized Philippine guerrilla organizations who fought under the command of the Allied Forces Western Pacific (AFWESPAC) thereby helping ensure the victory of the United States forces in the Asia-Pacific area.

It is recalled that on July 26, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States of America, issued a Military Order to call and order into the service of the armed forces of the United States all of the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines. When war broke out on December 8, 1941, the Filipino soldiers fought under the United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFPE) with courage, perseverance and loyalty.

Even before the surrender of the United States military forces in Bataan on April 9, 1942, many soldiers decided to carry on the fight and together with farmers, fishermen, laborers, students and other patriotic civilians formed guerrilla forces under commanders appointed, designated or subsequently recognized by competent authority in the Army of the United States. These forces fought against the enemy during the resistance movement, gaining control of large areas of the country, until the final defeat of the Japanese enemy forces in the Philippines on September 3, 1945.

On February 18, 1946, the 79th Congress of the United States enacted Public Law 301 which had a provision that, in general, barred Filipino veterans from rights, privileges and benefits under the GI Bill of Rights. By this law, the Filipino soldiers were shorn of their pride, dignity and honor as true soldiers of the American forces in World War II. The Filipino soldiers were finally released by Order of President Harry S. Truman, President of the United States of America, from the service of the Army of the United States on June 30, 1946. The Republic of the Philippines became independent of the United States of America on July 4, 1946.

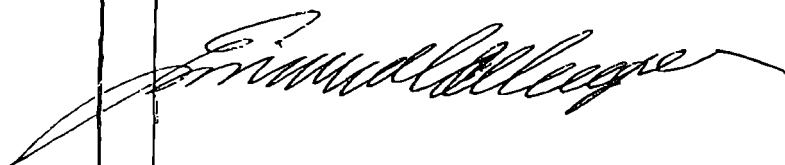
More than fifty years later, on October 17, 1996, President William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, issued a Proclamation honoring the Filipino Veterans of World War II with the following citation:

"Valiant Filipino soldiers fought, died, and suffered in some of the bloodiest battles of World War II, defending beleaguered Bataan and Corregidor, and thousands of Filipino prisoners of war endured the infamous Bataan Death March and years of captivity. Their many guerrilla actions slowed the Japanese takeover of the Western Pacific region and allowed U. S. forces the time to build and prepare for the allied counter attack on Japan. Filipino troops fought side-by-side with U. S. forces to secure their island nation as the strategic base from which the final effort to defeat Japan was launched."

President William J. Clinton acknowledged the important role Filipino soldiers played in turning back aggression, defending liberty, and preserving democracy, and extended to them his abiding thanks. He urged all Americans to recall the courage, sacrifice, and loyalty of Filipino veterans of World War II and to honor them for their contributions to freedom.

With the passage into law of H.R. 836, the restoration of the pride, dignity and honor of the Filipino veterans, living and dead, as true soldiers of the American forces in World War II will be finally fulfilled.

VFF-11 July 1998



October 15, 1999

BRIEFING

MEMORANDUM FOR MARIA ECHAVESTE

FROM: Laura Efurd

RE: Meeting with Representatives Patsy Mink and Bob Filner on Health Benefits for Filipino American Veterans

DATE/TIME: Wednesday, October 27th, 4:30 pm

LOCATION: Roosevelt Room

ATTENDEES: Maria Echaveste, Deputy Chief of Staff
Chuck Brain, Legislative Affairs
Laura Efurd, Deputy Director, Public Liaison
Irene Bueno, Domestic Policy Council
Daniel Mendelson, OMB
Rep. Patsy T. Mink
Rep. Bob Filner
Sharon Shulze, Rep. Filner's office
Andrew Helee, Rep. Filner's office

PURPOSE: To meet with Representatives Mink and Filner to discuss options for providing benefits for Filipino Veterans who served in WWII.

BACKGROUND:

Representative Mink called to request a meeting with John Podesta on health benefits for Filipino Veterans. Mink and Rep. Bob Filner, who will also be present at the meeting, have long advocated for the U.S. to provide certain benefits to Filipino Veterans of World War II who fought with the U.S. military. The primary purpose of their request is to ask the White House to include \$30.7 million in FY2000 for health benefits for Filipino Veterans in any budget deal that is negotiated with the Congress.

Currently a small portion of these veterans, known as the Old Scouts, who reside in the United States receive health care equivalent to other veterans benefits. However, about 17,000 U.S.-based veterans of the New Scouts, the Philippine Commonwealth Army and recognized guerilla

groups do not receive benefits equivalent to U.S. veterans. Those with service-connected disabilities receive monthly compensation at a rate of 50% of what other U.S. veterans receive. Those without service-connected disabilities receive no benefits.

Past efforts by Mink, Filner and other Members have sought full benefits for Filipino Veterans (health, retirement etc...), however currently Mink and Filner and the Filipino Veterans groups are advocating specifically for health benefits. Current legislation sponsored by Representative Gilman and supported by Mink and Filner would provide Filipino Veterans residing in the U.S. health care benefits equal to those received by other Veterans, and provides \$500,000 for the treatment of Filipino Veterans residing in the Philippines with service-connected disabilities and non-service-connected disabilities. The total cost of the bill is estimated to be \$30.7 million annually. The bill also provides equal compensation to Filipino Veterans who have service connected disabilities (same as Administration proposal, see below).

The Administration has sought to address the issue of benefits for Filipino Veterans in the past. As a result of a review of this issue, the Administration made a decision not to pursue health care benefits for Filipino Veterans, but to provide more equitable compensation for those with service-connected disabilities. The Presidents FY99 and FY2000 budgets have proposed equitable treatment for Filipino Veterans with service-connected disabilities, so that they may receive full compensation at 100%, rather than 50%. (Note: these are not health care benefits, but compensation similar to workers comp). This Budget request has never been adopted by the Congress.

The Administration pursued this option because the compensation for service-connected disabilities comes from mandatory spending. VA health care is funded with discretionary funds. The concern is that Veterans organizations will see funding health care for Filipino Vets out of discretionary dollars as taking away funding for U.S. Veterans.

The current Administration position remains to first pursue the 100% compensation for Filipino Veterans with service-connected disabilities, but not health care benefits.

SSI Benefits for Filipino Veterans: While not the primary subject of this meeting you should be aware of related legislation that will allow Filipino Veterans of World War II to receive 75% of their SSI benefits if they reside outside of the United States. Under current law these individuals lose all their SSI benefits if they do not reside in the U.S. This provision passed the House on June 15, 1999 as part of the Foster Care Independence Act (H.R. 1802). The Administration supports this provision. The bill is currently under consideration by the Senate. On October 13th the Senate Finance Committee held a hearing on the Foster Care bill and indicated that it would markup a bill including the Veterans SSI provision by mid-November.

FORMAT:

- Introductions
- Turn over the Reps. Mink & Filner
- Discussion

TALKING POINTS:

- The Administration is certainly sympathetic to the plight of these Veterans who served along side U.S. soldiers during WWII. The President has recognized this group of Veterans and honored them for their service.
- We have adopted an incremental approach to resolving this issue. After a thorough review of this issue we have proposed for two years now that service-connected disabled veterans receive full compensation, instead of 50%. We have faced many barriers in getting this provision adopted by the Congress. You know we face similar opposition for health benefits.
- There are two major issues that we face: 1) finding the funds to pay for the benefits and 2) facing opposition from other veterans organizations who may perceive inclusion of Filipino Veterans in VA hospital care and other services and reducing services available for U.S. Veterans.
- We are willing to work with you on this issue, and I would be interested in hearing your ideas.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Memo from Rep. Filner outlining request & background on Filipino Veterans
2. Copy of H.R. 1594, Filipino Veteran's Benefits Improvement Act
3. Bill Status including cosponsors
4. Various articles sent by Rep. Filner on this issue
5. OMB Decision Memo on Benefits for Filipino Veterans

Date: October 1, 1999
To: Chuck Brain, Deputy Assistant to the President, Legislative Affairs
From: Congressman Bob Filner

Budget Summit Priorities: Funding for Health Care for Filipino World War II Veterans

I request the inclusion of \$30.7 million in the Department of Veterans Affairs' FY2000 budget to provide access for Filipino World War II veterans to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Facilities, both in the United States and in the Philippines--as called for in the Filipino Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act (H.R. 1594), sponsored by Congressman Benjamin Gilman and myself. We propose that access to VA Medical Facilities would follow the same priority as U.S. veterans receive, nothing more or less.

History: During World War II, the military forces of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, at that time a territory of the United States, were drafted to serve in our armed forces by Executive Order of the President of the United States. In spite of their heroic service, crucial to the outcome of World War II, Filipino veterans were denied the benefits they expected by the 79th Congress in the Rescissions Act of 1946. These actions have seared the hearts of Filipino World War II veterans and their families, many of whom are now United States citizens, for over 50 years. The respect and honor due them because of their noble defense of democratic ideals has been stripped away.

In 1996, President Clinton and Congress, with a Presidential Proclamation and Congressional Resolutions, took the first steps to honor and recognize the service of Filipino World War II veterans. But they are still awaiting the promised benefits. Now in their 70s and 80s, the greatest need of these veterans is for health care. To address this need, Congressman Gilman and I introduced the Filipino Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act (H.R. 1594) in the 106th Congress. I have attached information about this bill which is estimated by the VA to cost \$30.7 million, \$500,000 of which would go to the VA Outpatient Clinic in Manila, the rest to provide health care to Filipino World War II veterans who reside in the United States.

Support/opposition: Benefits for Filipino World War II veterans are supported by over 200 co-Members of Congress who have co-sponsored legislation to restore these benefits; a vast coalition of Filipino-American organizations throughout the nation; American veterans who served in the Philippines; numerous veterans service organizations including The American Legion, the Jewish War Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Vietnam Veterans of America; State Legislatures, County Boards of Supervisors and City Councils in the United States; the Philippine government; religious groups such as the Synod of the Sun of the Presbyterian Church; the Mayor of Los Angeles; and editorials in the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, and the San Diego Union (attached). Opposition has come from the Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and the Department of Veterans' Affairs, I believe due primarily to the cost of restoring all benefits, including compensation, which is estimated to cost between \$500 million and \$1 billion a year. However, with a projected budget surplus, the United States has the opportunity to do what is morally right: to take the step of including \$30.7 million in the FY2000 budget for access to health care for Filipino World War II veterans.

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1594

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve benefits for Filipino veterans of World War II, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 28, 1999

Mr. GILMAN (for himself and Mr. FILNER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve benefits for Filipino veterans of World War II, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Filipino Veterans’ Ben-
5 efits Improvements Act of 1999”.

6 **SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATE OF PAYMENT OF CERTAIN BEN-**
7 **EFITS TO VETERANS OF THE PHILIPPINE**
8 **COMMONWEALTH ARMY.**

9 (a) INCREASE.—Section 107 of title 38, United
10 States Code, is amended—

6 “(c) In the case of benefits under subchapters II and
7 IV of chapter 11 of this title by reason of service described
8 in subsection (a)—

13 “(2) such benefits shall be paid only to an indi-
14 vidual residing in the United States who is a citizen
15 of, or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent resi-
16 dence in, the United States.”.

21 SEC. 3. ELIGIBILITY FOR HEALTH CARE OF CERTAIN ADDI-
22 TIONAL FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERANS.

•HR 1594 IH

1 “The Secretary, within the limits of Department fa-
 2 cilities, shall furnish hospital and nursing home care and
 3 medical services to Commonwealth Army veterans and
 4 new Philippine Scouts in the same manner as provided
 5 for under section 1710 of this title.”.

6 **SEC. 4. MANDATE TO PROVIDE HEALTH CARE FOR WORLD**
 7 **WAR II VETERANS RESIDING IN THE PHIL-**
 8 **IPPINES.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter IV of chapter 17 of
 10 title 38, United States Code, is amended—

11 (1) by redesignating section 1735 as section
 12 1736; and

13 (2) by inserting after section 1734 the following
 14 new section:

15 **“§ 1735. Outpatient care and services for World War**
 16 **II veterans residing in the Philippines**

17 “(a) OUTPATIENT HEALTH CARE.—The Secretary
 18 shall furnish care and services to veterans, Commonwealth
 19 Army veterans, and new Philippine Scouts for the treat-
 20 ment of the service-connected disabilities and non-service-
 21 connected disabilities of such veterans and scouts residing
 22 in the Republic of the Philippines on an outpatient basis
 23 at the Manila VA Outpatient Clinic.

1 “(b) LIMITATIONS.—(1) The amount expended by
2 the Secretary for the purpose of subsection (a) in any fis-
3 cal year may not exceed \$500,000.

4 “(2) The authority of the Secretary to furnish care
5 and services under subsection (a) is effective in any fiscal
6 year only to the extent that appropriations are available
7 for that purpose.”.

8 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
9 at the beginning of chapter 17 of such title is amended
10 by striking the item relating to section 1735 and inserting
11 after the item relating to section 1734 the following new
12 items:

“1735. Outpatient care and services for World War II veterans residing in the
Philippines.

“1736. Definitions.”.

13 (c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
14 subsection (a) shall take effect on the date of the enact-
15 ment of this Act.

○

Bill Summary & Status for the 106th Congress

[NEW SEARCH](#) | [HOME](#) | [HELP](#)

H.R.1594SPONSOR: [Rep Gilman, Benjamin A.](#) (introduced 04/28/99)RELATED BILLS: [S.1391](#)

Jump to: [Titles](#), [Status](#), [Committees](#), [Amendments](#), [Cosponsors](#), [Summary](#)

TITLE(S):

- SHORT TITLE(S) AS INTRODUCED:
Filipino Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1999
 - OFFICIAL TITLE AS INTRODUCED:
A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve benefits for Filipino veterans of World War II, and for other purposes.
-

STATUS: Floor Actions***NONE***

STATUS: Detailed Legislative Status**House Actions****Apr 28, 99:**

Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

May 20, 99:Referred to the Subcommittee on Benefits.

STATUS: Congressional Record Page References04/28/99 Introductory remarks on Measure (CR [E802](#))04/28/99 Full text of Measure as introduced printed (CR [H802-803](#))

COMMITTEE(S):

- COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERRAL:
[House Veterans' Affairs](#)
 - SUBCOMMITTEE(S):
[Hsc Benefits](#)
-

AMENDMENT(S):***NONE***

COSPONSORS(59):

<u>Rep Filner, Bob</u> - 04/28/99	<u>Rep Rohrabacher, Dana</u> - 05/05/99
<u>Rep Mink, Patsy T.</u> - 05/05/99	<u>Rep Olver, John W.</u> - 05/05/99
<u>Rep Crowley, Joseph</u> - 05/05/99	<u>Rep Romero-Barcelo, Carlos A.</u> - 05/14/99
<u>Rep Eshoo, Anna G.</u> - 05/14/99	<u>Rep Roybal-Allard, Lucille</u> - 05/14/99
<u>Rep Lofgren, Zoe</u> - 05/14/99	<u>Rep Cunningham, Randy (Duke)</u> - 05/14/99
<u>Rep Campbell, Tom</u> - 05/14/99	<u>Rep Underwood, Robert A.</u> - 05/14/99
<u>Rep Weiner, Anthony D.</u> - 05/14/99	<u>Rep McGovern, James P.</u> - 05/27/99
<u>Rep Carson, Julia</u> - 05/27/99	<u>Rep Engel, Eliot L.</u> - 05/27/99
<u>Rep Becerra, Xavier</u> - 05/27/99	<u>Rep Pelosi, Nancy</u> - 05/27/99
<u>Rep Gutierrez, Luis V.</u> - 05/27/99	<u>Rep Lipinski, William O.</u> - 05/27/99
<u>Rep Pickett, Owen B.</u> - 05/27/99	<u>Rep Miller, George</u> - 06/29/99
<u>Rep Lewis, John</u> - 06/29/99	<u>Rep Kennedy, Patrick J.</u> - 06/29/99
<u>Rep DeLauro, Rosa L.</u> - 06/29/99	<u>Rep Menendez, Robert</u> - 06/29/99
<u>Rep Hoyer, Steny H.</u> - 06/29/99	<u>Rep Tauscher, Ellen O.</u> - 06/29/99
<u>Rep Schakowsky, Janice D.</u> - 06/29/99	<u>Rep Pastor, Ed</u> - 06/29/99
<u>Rep Abercrombie, Neil</u> - 06/29/99	<u>Rep Ortiz, Solomon P.</u> - 07/01/99
<u>Rep Reyes, Silvestre</u> - 07/01/99	<u>Rep Hinojosa, Ruben</u> - 07/01/99
<u>Rep Rodriguez, Ciro</u> - 07/01/99	<u>Rep Sanchez, Loretta</u> - 07/01/99
<u>Rep Serrano, Jose E.</u> - 07/01/99	<u>Rep Maloney, James H.</u> - 07/01/99
<u>Rep Mascara, Frank</u> - 07/01/99	<u>Rep Rahall, Nick J., II</u> - 07/01/99
<u>Rep Kildee, Dale E.</u> - 07/01/99	<u>Rep Vento, Bruce F.</u> - 07/01/99
<u>Rep Peterson, Collin C.</u> - 07/15/99	<u>Rep Woolsey, Lynn C.</u> - 07/15/99
<u>Rep Martinez, Matthew G.</u> - 07/15/99	<u>Rep Frank, Barney</u> - 07/15/99
<u>Rep Scott, Robert C.</u> - 07/15/99	<u>Rep Lee, Barbara</u> - 07/15/99
<u>Rep Jackson-Lee, Sheila</u> - 07/15/99	<u>Rep Lantos, Tom</u> - 07/15/99
<u>Rep Hutchinson, Asa</u> - 07/15/99	<u>Rep Berman, Howard L.</u> - 08/03/99
<u>Rep Stark, Fortney Pete</u> - 08/03/99	<u>Rep Slaughter, Louise McIntosh</u> - 08/03/99
<u>Rep Wynn, Albert Russell</u> - 08/03/99	<u>Rep Weygand, Robert A.</u> - 08/03/99
<u>Rep McDermott, Jim</u> - 08/03/99	<u>Rep Traficant, James A., Jr.</u> - 08/03/99
<u>Rep Meehan, Martin T.</u> - 08/03/99	

SUMMARY:

(AS INTRODUCED)

Filipino Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1999 - Authorizes payment of compensation for the service-connected disability of members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army who served with U.S. armed forces during World War II in the amount of one dollar for each dollar authorized, as long as each such individual resides in the United States and is a U.S. citizen or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence.

Directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish hospital and nursing home care and medical services to such veterans and new Philippine Scouts in the same manner as furnished to U.S. veterans.

Directs the Secretary to furnish care and services to veterans, Commonwealth Army veterans, and new Philippine Scouts for the treatment of service-connected disabilities and non-service-connected disabilities of such veterans and scouts residing in the Republic of the Philippines on an outpatient basis at the Manila VA Outpatient Clinic. Limits to \$500,000 the amount to be expended during a fiscal year for such services.

The Stars and Stripes

The National Edition
Since 1861

THE OLDEST NATIONAL VETERANS NEWSPAPER

Vol. 122 No. 10

MAY 10 - MAY 21, 1999

Filipino Veterans Welcome Benefits Bill

(Stars and Stripes)—Filipino WWII veterans hailed the introduction April 28 of H.R. 1594, "The Filipino Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1999," as "the first vital step" in obtaining full recognition of their military service by the U.S. government.

The bill was introduced by Rep. Benjamin Gilman, R-N.Y., chairman of the House International Relations Committee. Its co-sponsor is Rep. Bob Filner, D-Calif., a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee.

"I believe it is long past time to correct this injustice and to provide the members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army and Special Philippine Scouts with the benefits and services that they valiantly earned during World War II," said Gilman, a WWII veteran who served in the Pacific theater with the U.S. Army Air Corps.

"Realizing that our current budgetary environment is not conducive to the creation of a new entitlement program, I have crafted this legislation to be fiscally feasible while providing the veterans with the benefits they are most in need of," he added.

"We deeply thank Gilman and Filner for their tireless and dedicated efforts to our cause of justice and equity," said Patrick Gamio, 78, president of the Washington-based American Coalition for Filipino Veterans, Inc., and a veteran of the WWII battles of Bataan and Corregidor.

"We fought as soldiers for America 57 years ago. We deserve to be treated as equals. This bill will be the key step in winning benefits for us."

Gamio's organization, with 1,400 members in the U.S., is campaigning to recognize former Filipino soldiers as veterans of the U.S. armed forces and to make them eligible to receive veterans health and disability pension benefits.

The new legislation would:

- ◆ Provide 100 percent parity for Filipino service-connected veterans living in the United States who were wounded, injured or taken prisoner during WWII and who previously were receiving half the monthly compensation of their American counterparts.

- ◆ Allow all Filipino veterans living in the U.S. to be eligible for health care at local VA clinics and hospitals.

- ◆ Provide annual funding of \$500,000 to the Manila U.S. Outpatient Clinic to treat Filipino WWII veterans living in the Philippines.

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1997

Under the American Flag

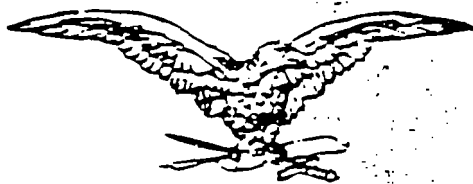
IN 1941, AS Japan prepared for war, the United States folded the armed forces of its then-territory the Philippines into its own. Promises of generous individual military benefits followed. Fighting to liberate their homeland, the Filipinos conducted themselves, it is established, with valor. But no sooner was the war over and independence bestowed than Congress reneged on important benefits. Now some of the American citizens among the 70,000 aging survivors of those Filipino forces are petitioning for review. Considerations of equity and honor commend their cause, but the benefits remain frozen.

As it happens, a couple of American Pacific war veterans loom over the Washington political terrain on which this issue is being fought. Chairman Ben Gilman (R-N.Y.) of International Relations introduced the Filipino Veterans Equity Act. Chairman Bob Stump (R-Ariz.) of Veterans' Affairs thinks it costs too much. For one thing, the new congressional pay-as-you-go rule would require his committee to make up the nearly half-billion-dollar annual cost of

pensions matching those given American servicemen. The Filipino former soldiers swore an oath to American authority and fought side by side with American soldiers, but Mr. Stump questions whether they are *American* veterans. So as not to raise their expectations, he has resisted the hearings they seek to promote their appeal.

It is demeaning to Americans as well as to Filipinos for the United States to continue denying benefits that were pledged at the highest level, then abundantly earned on the battlefield, then denied, then withheld through decades of Filipino entreaty. Surely this is an issue begging for a consensus financial resolution. Such an outcome would preserve a modicum of obligation to full-fledged comrades who fought under the American flag. It would ease the declining years of survivors' ranks that are shrinking by the day. A Senate version of this bill would leave the Filipino veterans with funeral and burial expenses only. We would not like to be the ones to tell these fading old soldiers they must die for the government they served to pay.

LOS ANGELES TIMES EDITORIALS



THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 1997

Honor Promises, However Late

U.S. has a moral obligation to these Filipino soldiers

They served with honor, dignity and respect. Yet more than 50 years later, the United States is yet to fulfill its moral obligation to provide benefits to the Filipinos who fought alongside American soldiers during World War II. The nation broke its promises. It is time to make amends.

About 200,000 Filipino soldiers came under U.S. military command in 1942 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order drafting the entire armed forces of the Philippines, then a U.S. protectorate. They fought the Japanese under Gen. Douglas MacArthur in some of the bloodiest battles of the war, including Corregidor and Bataan.

The soldiers were initially promised full military benefits and U.S. citizenship, but Congress reneged on those pledges in 1946 when the Philippines was given independence. Congress granted them citizenship rights in the 1990 immigration law but has failed to deal with the broken promise of GI benefits, from home loans to medical care. To draw attention to the plight of the estimated 70,000 surviving Filipino veterans, a group of them has been staging a sit-in protest at MacArthur Park in Los

Angeles since last weekend.

Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) has tried for the last 10 years to muster support to establish the benefits, which would cost an estimated \$700 million annually, diminishing over time. Reps. Bob Filner (D-San Diego) and Benjamin

A. Gilman (R-N.Y.) have introduced legislation in the House to do the same. Despite the clear moral justification for such legislation, Washington is ducking the issue because new federal expenditures require offsets to avoid expanding the deficit. Neither political party has been willing to come up with a way to pay the benefits. They ought to apply some bipartisan spirit on behalf of Filipinos who

fought for American interests. Thousands of these soldiers endured the Bataan death march and years of captivity.

Congress should at least hold hearings to illuminate the unkept promises and their effects on the lives of these aging former soldiers. If more Americans—including members of Congress—understood the issue, they surely would make haste to grant the Filipino veterans what they are due. This is about national honor.



In chains: Former soldiers protesting for benefits from Washington.

The San Diego Union-Tribune

Saturday
May 10, 1997

A moral obligation

Filipino vets deserve equal treatment

This week's visit to San Diego by Philippine President Fidel Ramos highlighted the friendship and close historical ties that have long existed between Americans and Filipinos. But it also cast a spotlight on a glaring injustice against Filipino veterans of World War II that demands to be corrected by the U.S. government half a century later.

In 1941, as war clouds gathered in the Pacific, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order drafting the entire armed forces of the Philippines into the U.S. military. At the time, the sprawling archipelago was an American commonwealth.

Throughout World War II, Filipino soldiers fought the Japanese alongside their American counterparts and distinguished themselves in such famous battles as Bataan and Corregidor. In 1946, however, when Philippine independence was granted, Congress cut off benefits to Filipino veterans. Even as he signed the legislation, President Harry

Truman acknowledged it did not "release the United States from its moral obligation to provide for the heroic Philippine veterans."

Yet that is where the matter stood for nearly 50 years, until Rep. Bob Filner, D-San Diego, introduced a bill to restore benefits for the estimated 75,000 Filipino veterans who are still alive. About a third of the vets live in the United States, including an undetermined number in San Diego County's flourishing Filipino community.

It is unclear how much it would cost the U.S. government to honor its moral obligation to Filipinos who served in the American military. The Congressional Budget Office puts the figure at up to \$300 million a year; Filner believes that number is vastly inflated.

But the dollar figure is hardly the issue. The real question is whether the United States will do its duty by the Filipino veterans, just as they did their duty a half-century ago. Filner's measure deserves passage by Congress.

October 15, 1999

BRIEFING

MEMORANDUM FOR MARIA ECHAVESTE

FROM: Laura Efurd

RE: Meeting with Representatives Patsy Mink and Bob Filner on Health Benefits for Filipino American Veterans

DATE/TIME: Wednesday, October 27th, 4:30 pm

LOCATION: Roosevelt Room

ATTENDEES: Maria Echaveste, Deputy Chief of Staff
Chuck Brain, Legislative Affairs
Laura Efurd, Deputy Director, Public Liaison
Irene Bueno, Domestic Policy Council
Daniel Mendelson, OMB
Rep. Patsy T. Mink
Rep. Bob Filner
Sharon Shulze, Rep. Filner's office
Andrew Helee, Rep. Filner's office

PURPOSE: To meet with Representatives Mink and Filner to discuss options for providing benefits for Filipino Veterans who served in WWII.

BACKGROUND:

Representative Mink called to request a meeting with John Podesta on health benefits for Filipino Veterans. Mink and Rep. Bob Filner, who will also be present at the meeting, have long advocated for the U.S. to provide certain benefits to Filipino Veterans of World War II who fought with the U.S. military. The primary purpose of their request is to ask the White House to include \$30.7 million in FY2000 for health benefits for Filipino Veterans in any budget deal that is negotiated with the Congress.

Currently a small portion of these veterans, known as the Old Scouts, who reside in the United States receive health care equivalent to other veterans benefits. However, about 17,000 U.S.-based veterans of the New Scouts, the Philippine Commonwealth Army and recognized guerilla

groups do not receive benefits equivalent to U.S. veterans. Those with service-connected disabilities receive monthly compensation at a rate of 50% of what other U.S. veterans receive. Those without service-connected disabilities receive no benefits.

Past efforts by Mink, Filner and other Members have sought full benefits for Filipino Veterans (health, retirement etc...), however currently Mink and Filner and the Filipino Veterans groups are advocating specifically for health benefits. Current legislation sponsored by Representative Gilman and supported by Mink and Filner would provide Filipino Veterans residing in the U.S. health care benefits equal to those received by other Veterans, and provides \$500,000 for the treatment of Filipino Veterans residing in the Philippines with service-connected disabilities and non-service-connected disabilities. The total cost of the bill is estimated to be \$30.7 million annually. The bill also provides equal compensation to Filipino Veterans who have service connected disabilities (same as Administration proposal, see below).

The Administration has sought to address the issue of benefits for Filipino Veterans in the past. As a result of a review of this issue, the Administration made a decision not to pursue health care benefits for Filipino Veterans, but to provide more equitable compensation for those with service-connected disabilities. The Presidents FY99 and FY2000 budgets have proposed equitable treatment for Filipino Veterans with service-connected disabilities, so that they may receive full compensation at 100%, rather than 50%. (Note: these are not health care benefits, but compensation similar to workers comp).

This Administration pursued this option because the compensation for service-connected disabilities comes from mandatory spending. VA health care is funded with discretionary funds. The concern is that Veterans organizations will see funding health care for Filipino Vets out of discretionary dollars as taking away funding for U.S. Veterans.

The current Administration position remains to first pursue the 100% compensation for Filipino Veterans with service-connected disabilities, but not health care benefits.

SSI Benefits for Filipino Veterans: While not the primary subject of this meeting you should be aware of related legislation that will all Filipino Veterans of World War II to receive 75% of their SSI benefits if they reside outside of the United States. Under current law these individuals lose all their SSI benefits if they do not reside in the U.S. This provision passed the House on June 15, 1999 as part of the Foster Care Independence Act (H.R. 1802). The Administration supports this provision. The bill is currently under consideration by the Senate. On October 13th the Senate Finance Committee held a hearing on the Foster Care bill and indicated that it would markup a bill including the Veterans SSI provision by mid-November.

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- Turn over the Reps. Mink & Filner
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TALKING POINTS:

- The Administration is certainly sympathetic to the plight of these Veterans who served alongside U.S. soldiers during WWII. The President has recognized this group of Veterans and honored them for their service.
- We have adopted an incremental approach to resolving this issue. After a thorough review of this issue we have proposed for two years now that service-connected disabled veterans receive full compensation, instead of 50%. We have faced many barriers in getting this provision adopted by the Congress. You know we face similar opposition for health benefits.
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ATTACHMENTS:

1. Memo from Rep. Filner outlining request & background on Filipino Veterans
2. Copy of H.R. 1594, Filipino Veteran's Benefits Improvement Act
3. Various articles sent by Rep. Filner on this issue
4. OMB Decision Memo on Benefits for Filipino Veterans

I

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1594

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve benefits for Filipino veterans of World War II, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 28, 1999

Mr. GILMAN (for himself and Mr. FILNER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve benefits for Filipino veterans of World War II, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the "Filipino Veterans' Ben-
5 efits Improvements Act of 1999".

6 **SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATE OF PAYMENT OF CERTAIN BEN-**
7 **EFITS TO VETERANS OF THE PHILIPPINE**
8 **COMMONWEALTH ARMY.**

9 (a) INCREASE.—Section 107 of title 38, United
10 States Code, is amended—

2

1 (1) by striking "Payment" in the second sen-
2 tence of subsection (a) and inserting "Except as pro-
3 vided in subsection (c), payment"; and

4 (2) by adding at the end the following new sub-
5 section:

6 "(c) In the case of benefits under subchapters II and
7 IV of chapter 11 of this title by reason of service described
8 in subsection (a)—

9 "(1) notwithstanding the second sentence of
10 subsection (a), payment of such benefit shall be
11 made in dollars at the rate of \$1.00 for each dollar
12 authorized; and

13 "(2) such benefits shall be paid only to an indi-
14 vidual residing in the United States who is a citizen
15 of, or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent resi-
16 dence in, the United States."

17 (b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by
18 subsection (a) shall take effect on the date of the enact-
19 ment of this Act, and shall apply to benefits paid for
20 months beginning on or after that date.

21 **SEC. 3. ELIGIBILITY FOR HEALTH CARE OF CERTAIN ADDI-**
22 **TIONAL FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERANS.**

23 Section 1734 of title 38, United States Code, is
24 amended to read as follows:

1 “The Secretary, within the limits of Department fa-
2 cilities, shall furnish hospital and nursing home care and
3 medical services to Commonwealth Army veterans and
4 new Philippine Scouts in the same manner as provided
5 for under section 1710 of this title.”.

6 **SEC. 4. MANDATE TO PROVIDE HEALTH CARE FOR WORLD**
7 **WAR II VETERANS RESIDING IN THE PHIL-**
8 **IPPINES.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter IV of chapter 17 of
10 title 38, United States Code, is amended—

11 (1) by redesignating section 1735 as section
12 1736; and

13 (2) by inserting after section 1734 the following
14 new section:

15 **“§ 1735. Outpatient care and services for World War**
16 **II veterans residing in the Philippines**

17 “(a) OUTPATIENT HEALTH CARE.—The Secretary
18 shall furnish care and services to veterans, Commonwealth
19 Army veterans, and new Philippine Scouts for the treat-
20 ment of the service-connected disabilities and non-service-
21 connected disabilities of such veterans and scouts residing
22 in the Republic of the Philippines on an outpatient basis
23 at the Manila VA Outpatient Clinic.

13 (c) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by
14 subsection (a) shall take effect on the date of the enact-
15 ment of this Act.

October 15, 1999

BRIEFING

MEMORANDUM FOR MARIA ECHAVESTE

FROM: Laura Efurd

RE: Meeting with Representatives Patsy Mink and Bob Filner on Health Benefits for Filipino American Veterans

DATE\TIME: Wednesday, October 27th, 4:30 pm

LOCATION: Roosevelt Room

ATTENDEES: Maria Echaveste, Deputy Chief of Staff
Chuck Brain, Legislative Affairs
Laura Efurd, Deputy Director, Public Liaison
Irene Bueno, Domestic Policy Council
Daniel Mendelson, OMB
Rep. Patsy T. Mink
Rep. Bob Filner
Sharon Shulze, Rep. Filner's office
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BOB FILNER
50TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

2463 RAYBURN BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
TEL: (202) 225-8045
FAX: (202) 225-9073

333 F STREET, SUITE A
CHULA VISTA, CALIFORNIA 91910
TEL: (619) 422-5963
FAX: (619) 422-7290



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
COMMITTEE

VETERANS' AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

e-mail: TalkToBobFilner@mail.house.gov
website: www.house.gov/filner

November 1, 1999

Laura L. Efurd
Deputy Assistant To the President and
Deputy Director of Public Liaison
122 Old Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Laura:

I appreciated the chance to meet with you to discuss the situation of
Filipino Veterans of W.W.II.

I look forward to working with you to bring justice and equity to
these brave men.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature of Bob Filner in dark ink.

BOB FILNER
Member of Congress

BF/kim
261298

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 18, 1996

HONORING THE FILIPINO VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II

- - - - -

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

During the dark days of World War II, nearly 100,000 soldiers of the Philippine Commonwealth Army provided a ray of hope in the Pacific as they fought alongside United States and Allied forces for 4 long years to defend and reclaim the Philippine Islands from Japanese aggression. Thousands more Filipinos joined U.S. Armed Forces immediately after the war and served in occupational duty throughout the Pacific Theater. For their extraordinary sacrifices in defense of democracy and liberty, we owe them our undying gratitude.

Valiant Filipino soldiers fought, died, and suffered in some of the bloodiest battles of World War II, defending beleaguered Bataan and Corregidor, and thousands of Filipino prisoners of war endured the infamous Bataan Death March and years of captivity. Their many guerrilla actions slowed the Japanese takeover of the Western Pacific region and allowed U.S. forces the time to build and prepare for the allied counterattack on Japan. Filipino troops fought side-by-side with U.S. forces to secure their island nation as the strategic base from which the final effort to defeat Japan was launched.

This month, as we mark the anniversary of General MacArthur's return to the Philippines, we acknowledge the important role Filipino soldiers played in turning back aggression, defending liberty, and preserving democracy, and we extend to them our abiding thanks.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 20, 1996, as a day Honoring the Filipino Veterans of World War II. I urge all Americans to recall the courage, sacrifice, and loyalty of Filipino veterans of World War II and honor them for their contributions to our freedom.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

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#

Filipino Veterans

Concerned about the plight of these men who fought alongside American soldiers during WWII. Providing full benefits is very costly. On October 20, 1996, I signed a proclamation honoring the Filipino Veterans of WWII.

We are taking incremental steps better serve the needs of these veterans and repay America's debt to these brave men:

Our budget calls for legislation to pay disabled Filipino Veterans and their survivors residing in the U.S. the full rate granted to other veterans, instead of .50 cents per dollar, as under current law. The Budget estimates that this will cost \$5 million in FY2000 and 25\$ over 5 years.

Also, we support a provision in the Foster Care Bill now going through the House Ways and Means Committee will expand SSI benefits for Filipino Veterans. Currently Filipino Veterans are eligible for SSI benefits only if they remain in the United States. This change will allow them to receive SSI benefits even if they return to the Philippines.

Immigrant Deportation:

issue: Under current law legal immigrants who commit a felony must be deported. This law is retroactive. This issue is of concern to the South East Asian community in particular because of the problem of youth gangs. There are concerns about the retroactive nature of the requirement which can deport someone who has already served their time for their felony conviction. Also, because the South East Asian countries do not have treaties with the U.S. often young people with felony convictions are not deported by indefinitely detained in jail.

I don't know what the answer is on this one. We need to check with INS, to see if there has been any regulatory action to ease this requirement.

Bill Summary & Status for the 106th Congress

Item 1 of 1

PREVIOUS BILL:ALL | NEXT BILL:ALL
NEW SEARCH | HOME | HELP

H.R.1594**SPONSOR:** Rep Gilman, Benjamin A. (introduced 04/28/99)

Jump to: Titles, Status, Committees, Amendments, Cosponsors, Summary

TITLE(S):

- **SHORT TITLE(S) AS INTRODUCED:**
Filipino Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1999
 - **OFFICIAL TITLE AS INTRODUCED:**
A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve benefits for Filipino veterans of World War II, and for other purposes.
-

STATUS: Floor Actions*****NONE*****

STATUS: Detailed Legislative Status**House Actions****Apr 28, 99:**

Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

May 20, 99:

Referred to the Subcommittee on Benefits.

STATUS: Congressional Record Page References04/28/99 Introductory remarks on Measure (CR E802)04/28/99 Full text of Measure as introduced printed (CR H802-803)

COMMITTEE(S):

- **COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERRAL:**
House Veterans' Affairs
 - **SUBCOMMITTEE(S):**
Hsc Benefits
-

AMENDMENT(S):*****NONE*****

COSPONSORS(21):

Rep Filner, Bob - 04/28/99

Rep Mink, Patsy T. - 05/05/99

Rep Crowley, Joseph - 05/05/99

Rep Eshoo, Anna G. - 05/14/99

Rep Lofgren, Zoe - 05/14/99

Rep Campbell, Tom - 05/14/99

Rep Weiner, Anthony D. - 05/14/99

Rep Carson, Julia - 05/27/99

Rep Becerra, Xavier - 05/27/99

Rep Gutierrez, Luis V. - 05/27/99

Rep Pickett, Owen B. - 05/27/99

Rep Rohrabacher, Dana - 05/05/99

Rep Olver, John W. - 05/05/99

Rep Romero-Barcelo, Carlos A. - 05/14/99

Rep Roybal-Allard, Lucille - 05/14/99

Rep Cunningham, Randy (Duke) - 05/14/99

Rep Underwood, Robert A. - 05/14/99

Rep McGovern, James P. - 05/27/99

Rep Engel, Eliot L. - 05/27/99

Rep Pelosi, Nancy - 05/27/99

Rep Lipinski, William O. - 05/27/99

SUMMARY:

NONE

CALL SHEET FOR MARIA ECHAVESTRE

From: Laura Efurd
Date: February 3, 2000
Re: Filipino Veterans

Call: Herschel Gober
Deputy Secretary, Veterans Affairs

Number: 202-273-4817

Best Times: Thursday, Feb. 3rd: 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm
Friday, Feb 4th: 9:00 am – 10:00 am, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm,
after 3:00 pm

Purpose: To discuss the possibility of Administration endorsement of Rep. Filner's legislation to provide health benefits for Filipino Veterans (H.R. 1594). Specifically, we want to get the Veteran's Administration's agreement on a process that would lead to endorsement with the White House facilitating a meeting with Rep. Filner et al, Veterans' organizations and the VA to work out any objections by the Veterans organizations to Administration endorsement of H.R. 1594).

Background:

In October of last year You met with several Members of Congress led by Reps. Filner and Mink regarding the possibility of including funding (approx \$30 mil) in the budget for health benefits for Filipino Veterans who fought in the U.S. military during WWII. In past years Filner and other Members have proposed more extensive benefits for the Filipino Veterans, but have chosen to concentrate their efforts on health care.

Since the October meeting, we met internally in December with OMB and DPC to discuss funding in the FY01 budget. OMB felt that we could not include the \$30 mil for Filipino Veteran Health Care because the funding would come from the discretionary health care monies and the Veteran's organizations would see this as taking money away from their health care. At that time the decision was made not to pursue funding in the budget, but to discuss possible other avenues for the Administration to demonstrate support for the Filner bill, such as an endorsement of the bill which would take place outside of the budget process.

Note that there was agreement to continue to include the provision which would provide equitable treatment for Filipino Veterans with service-connected disability, raising their compensation from 50% to 100% of what other Veterans receive (this provision affects mandatory money, so the issue of taking funds away from other Veterans does not apply to this provision).

As a result OPL has suggested that since opposition of the Veterans Organizations are our major concern, that we facilitate a meeting among all involved parties to see if the Veterans Organizations would not oppose the Administration making a formal endorsement of H.R.

Talking Points:

- I am calling today to discuss with you the issue of health care benefits for Filipino Veterans who served during WWII and to see if we might work with you on a process that would lead to the Administration's endorsement of legislation that has been proposed by Reps. Gilman, Filner, Mink and others (H.R. 1594).
- This Administration has been sympathetic to the situation of these Veterans and I know VA has worked hard to find a solution to issue. We have in previous budgets sought to improve ~~their~~ compensation for those with service-connected disability. However, there is a significant number of these Veterans that currently receive no real benefits, and the issue is really one of the United States living up to its promise to these veterans.
- Their case is unique in that they were called to serve under the U.S. military by Executive Order of the President, and that their status as veterans was specifically rescinded by legislative action.
- The Members and advocates for the Filipino Veterans have come along way in limiting their proposals to health ~~only~~ — and as I understand this is the key benefit that these aging Veterans need.
- I understand that our major obstacle that in dealing with ~~discretionary funds~~ ^{health care} the perception may be that we are taking funds away from other Veterans' health care to fund benefits for the Filipino Veterans. And that this is particularly sensitive when we really need more funds in that account to begin with.
- Given this problem, I would like your thoughts on whether there may be ~~away~~ ^{way} that the Administration can demonstrate support for the Gilman/Filner bill apart from the budget process. To do this we would need to make sure that the Veterans Organizations would be agreeable and we would have to make it very clear that the Administration would only support the bill if it included new money for the Filipino Veterans.
- ^{In other words} After our discuss I am going to have to call the Reps. Filner and Mink to give them the heads up that we are not including any new proposals for Filipino Veterans, but I would like to at least be able to share with them that we are willing to facilitate a meeting to work out any concerns of the Veterans Organizations and work toward a possible endorsement of this legislation.

October 15, 1999

BRIEFING

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RE: Meeting with Representatives Patsy Mink and Bob Filner on Health Benefits for Filipino American Veterans

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- Turn over the Reps. Mink & Filner
- Discussion

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Rep. Patsy T. Mink
Rep. Bob Filner
Sharon Shulze, Rep. Filner's office
Andrew Helee, Rep. Filner's office

PURPOSE: To meet with Representatives Mink and Filner to discuss options for providing benefits for Filipino Veterans who served in WWII.

BACKGROUND:

Representative Mink called to request a meeting with John Podesta on health benefits for Filipino Veterans. Mink and Rep. Bob Filner, who will also be present at the meeting, have long advocated for the U.S. to provide certain benefits to Filipino Veterans of World War II who fought with the U.S. military. The primary purpose of their request is to ask the White House to include \$30.7 million in FY2000 for health benefits for Filipino Veterans in any budget deal that is negotiated with the Congress.

Currently a small portion of these veterans, known as the Old Scouts, who reside in the United States receive health care equivalent to other veterans benefits. However, about 17,000 U.S.-based veterans of the New Scouts, the Philippine Commonwealth Army and recognized guerilla

groups do not receive benefits equivalent to U.S. veterans. Those with service-connected disabilities receive monthly compensation at a rate of 50% of what other U.S. veterans receive. Those without service-connected disabilities receive no benefits.

Past efforts by Mink, Filner and other Members have sought full benefits for Filipino Veterans (health, retirement etc...), however currently Mink and Filner and the Filipino Veterans groups are advocating specifically for health benefits. Current legislation sponsored by Representative Gilman and supported by Mink and Filner would provide Filipino Veterans residing in the U.S. health care benefits equal to those received by other Veterans, and provides \$500,000 for the treatment of Filipino Veterans residing in the Philippines with service-connected disabilities and non-service-connected disabilities. The total cost of the bill is estimated to be \$30.7 million annually. The bill also provides equal compensation to Filipino Veterans who have service connected disabilities (same as Administration proposal, see below).

The Administration has sought to address the issue of benefits for Filipino Veterans in the past. As a result of a review of this issue, the Administration made a decision not to pursue health care benefits for Filipino Veterans, but to provide more equitable compensation for those with service-connected disabilities. The Presidents FY99 and FY2000 budgets have proposed equitable treatment for Filipino Veterans with service-connected disabilities, so that they may receive full compensation at 100%, rather than 50%. (Note: these are not health care benefits, but compensation similar to workers comp). This Budget request has never been adopted by the Congress.

The Administration pursued this option because the compensation for service-connected disabilities comes from mandatory spending. VA health care is funded with discretionary funds. The concern is that Veterans organizations will see funding health care for Filipino Vets out of discretionary dollars as taking away funding for U.S. Veterans.

The current Administration position remains to first pursue the 100% compensation for Filipino Veterans with service-connected disabilities, but not health care benefits.

SSI Benefits for Filipino Veterans: While not the primary subject of this meeting you should be aware of related legislation that will allow Filipino Veterans of World War II to receive 75% of their SSI benefits if they reside outside of the United States. Under current law these individuals lose all their SSI benefits if they do not reside in the U.S. This provision passed the House on June 15, 1999 as part of the Foster Care Independence Act (H.R. 1802). The Administration supports this provision. The bill is currently under consideration by the Senate. On October 13th the Senate Finance Committee held a hearing on the Foster Care bill and indicated that it would markup a bill including the Veterans SSI provision by mid-November.

FORMAT:

- Introductions
- Turn over the Reps. Mink & Filner
- Discussion

TALKING POINTS:

- The Administration is certainly sympathetic to the plight of these Veterans who served along side U.S. soldiers during WWII. The President has recognized this group of Veterans and honored them for their service.
- We have adopted an incremental approach to resolving this issue. After a thorough review of this issue we have proposed for two years now that service-connected disabled veterans receive full compensation, instead of 50%. We have faced many barriers in getting this provision adopted by the Congress. You know we face similar opposition for health benefits.
- There are two major issues that we face: 1) finding the funds to pay for the benefits and 2) facing opposition from other veterans organizations who may perceive inclusion of Filipino Veterans in VA hospital care and other services and reducing services available for U.S. Veterans.
- We are willing to work with you on this issue, and I would be interested in hearing your ideas.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Memo from Rep. Filner outlining request & background on Filipino Veterans
2. Copy of H.R. 1594, Filipino Veteran's Benefits Improvement Act
3. Bill Status including cosponsors
4. Various articles sent by Rep. Filner on this issue
5. OMB Decision Memo on Benefits for Filipino Veterans