

**HEALTH CARE OF FILIPINO WORLD WAR II
VETERANS WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION

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JUNE 13, 2002
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**HEALTH CARE OF FILIPINO WORLD WAR II
VETERANS WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS**

THURSDAY, JUNE 13, 2002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 3 p.m., in room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Jerry Moran (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Moran, Stearns, Gibbons, Miller, Boozman, Filner and Rodriguez.

Also Present: Representative Evans.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MORAN

Mr. MORAN. I thank you all very much. Our subcommittee will come to order. I am delighted to be here today for purposes of taking testimony in regard to an issue that obviously draws a lot of attention and has a number of folks who are interested in testifying. In fact, we have 27 witnesses scheduled to testify today and because of the voting schedule and because of members' schedules, I am going to forego any lengthy opening statement. But to simply say that we are very interested in hearing from our panel of witnesses today, and in particular, I would like to recognize the efforts and the passion that the ranking member of the subcommittee, Mr. Filner, brings to this topic.

He has been an advocate in regard to the issue of Filipino veterans for a significant period of time, and it is an issue that matters to him. He and Secretary Principi have joined forces, and in fact, were together earlier this week in regard to this issue. And as always, as a subcommittee, we are delighted to have Mr. Principi with us. So without further delay and in an attempt to try to keep this meeting someplace close to a reasonable amount of time, I will forego any additional comments and recognize the gentleman from California, Mr. Filner.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB FILNER

Mr. FILNER. I thank the chairman. And I thank those of you who were here this afternoon to join with us to talk about a very, very important subject. We have waited almost 60 years to get equity for the Filipino veterans of World War II. Many people have worked on this a long time. I want to especially thank the Chair

of this committee, Mr. Moran, who kept an open mind on this, gave me the courtesy of hearing me out, read the materials, and is supporting the bill that has emerged from discussions with the executive branch and with both parties.

The staff of the committee here on both sides of the aisle worked very closely together. John Bradley, I want to thank you for your help on this, and Kathleen Greve, and Stacy Zelenski, your new assistant. It has been an effort that has been joined by both sides of this aisle. I would say this is a historic day because we have achieved a level of agreement between the executive and the legislative branch, between the two parties and the Congress, and between the House and the Senate.

We have the support of Mr. Moran and Ranking Member Evans, who himself has spent so many years working on this subject. I thank you, Lane, for your steadfast support because you were there before I got here and you helped keep this issue alive. We would have not gotten this far without you.

We have agreed that the Filipino veterans of World War II have not been treated fairly. They were drafted in World War II. They didn't say no. They fought and the bullets didn't distinguish between those who were U.S. citizens at the time and those who were Filipino citizens. Death didn't make a distinction when Americans died or Filipinos died. And so they helped us win the war in the Pacific, helped harass the enemy and gave us time for McArthur and the American forces to regroup and, in fact, retake the Philippines and the Pacific and win the war.

So we owe the Philippine soldiers a great deal. And yet in 1946 the Congress at that time, for whatever reason, said thank you but no thank you, and withdrew all the benefits that these brave men were promised. We have not redeemed that promise for over 55 years now. I think we will begin to redeem this promise in this current congressional year.

Veterans are able to get both pensions and health benefits from the United States Government as a thank you, not enough but somewhat of a thank you for their service. We have introduced a bill supported by this administration and by Republicans and Democrats. A similar bill was dropped in the Senate by Senator Inouye that opens up health care for the Filipino veterans who live in this Nation, that will provide grants to the Philippine government for treatment in the Veterans Hospital in Manila, and so begin the path of restoring equity to those brave men of World War II.

We will hear testimony today from veterans, from Congressmembers who are supporting this bill, from the secretary of the VA, and although I will say this when he testifies, he too, like I said of Mr. Moran, kept an open mind, he gave me the courtesy of hearing my arguments and we sat down and he is the first secretary that said, you know, I agree with you. He was the first one who sat down and said let's try to work out something that we can accept, that the budget can live with and our political system would pass.

I thank the Secretary for his courtesy and his willingness to hear the arguments and then do the right thing. We have, by the way, Mr. Chairman, visitors from the Philippines, from their House of

Deputies and Senators, the chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs in the Philippines, Congressman Tomas Dumpit is here; Congressman James Gordon, Jr., who is the vice chairman of the House Committee on Veterans, Congressman Mauricio Domogan, also from the Committee on Veterans; Congressman Antonio Roman, who is an official delegate; Commodore Artemio Arugay, who is administrator of the Philippines Veterans Office; Colonel Emmanuel DeOcampo, a good friend of mine, who is the president of the Veterans Federation of the Philippines; Esperanza DeOcampo, the assistant secretary general of the Veterans Federation of the Philippines; retired General Rodrigo Gutang, a consultant for the Federation; and attorney Peregrino Andres from the Veterans Federation. If you will all stand up, I want to say thank you for being here today.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I received a phone call a year or so ago from someone who worked in Hollywood on movies, Rob Schneider, and he said that there were people in the Hollywood community, most of whom had Filipino ancestry who said they wanted to work on this issue. Rob said his good friend, Lou Diamond Phillips wanted to help, and the two of them, Rob Schneider and Lou Diamond Phillips—under the generalship, should I say, of Fritz Friedman, who is the First Vice President for Worldwide Marketing for Sony Pictures, the three of them went to work and produced a video which I have distributed to all the Members of Congress, a 3-minute or 4-minute video, which is a very moving story of why we ought to grant benefits to our veterans.

And with some of their friends like Tia Carrera and Dean Devlin, they said although we are involved in our careers and making movies and doing television, we are going to devote time to something that we cared very much about. Fritz Friedman and Lou Diamond Phillips are here today to testify, and I want to thank them for saying our responsibility to our society is not just doing our own jobs, but caring for other people around us and working hard for them. We will hear from them, and they will speak from their hearts, Mr. Chairman.

So I thank you for the courtesy and the help for putting together this hearing. I think it is going to be a very moving day, especially for people who have not heard much about this issue before. We will learn about the contributions of these veterans and why we ought to give them certain benefits that will be the subject of legislation.

Mr. MORAN. I thank the gentleman from California. And I welcome our first panel to today's hearing. The first panel consists of His Excellency, Albert Del Rosario, the Philippine ambassador to the United States. Welcome Mr. Ambassador. This is the first time an ambassador of any foreign nation has testified before our subcommittee, and we are honored to have you here today. Also Mr. Ambassador, as a Kansan, I would like to thank you and your government for your efforts on behalf of the Kansan missionaries in the Philippines and the efforts that your country made in the attempt to rescue the Burnhams. We are very grateful for the relationship we have with your country and appreciate your efforts on behalf of the two U.S. Citizens working in your nation.

We also have our Honorable Secretary, Mr. Principi, and we are delighted as always to have the Secretary before our subcommittee.

STATEMENTS OF HIS EXCELLENCY ALBERT DEL ROSARIO, AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES, EMBASSY OF THE PHILIPPINES; HON. ANTHONY J. PRINCIPI, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, ACCOMPANIED BY JOHN H. THOMPSON, DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL

Mr. MORAN. We appreciate your attendance back here again today and I would now ask that we proceed with the panel. Mr. Ambassador, we welcome your testimony.

STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY ALBERT DEL ROSARIO

Ambassador DEL ROSARIO. Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for this privilege. I assure you the honor is mine. I appear before you, Mr. Chairman, with humility. As I speak on behalf of our beloved veterans, I am humbled because any one of them, without a doubt, is braver and more patriotic than I could ever expect to be. I also appear before you with profound gratitude to those who had specifically saved my life. In the liberation of Manila when I was 5 years old, after my father had been imprisoned and tortured, our home was destroyed with my sister and I being seriously wounded and left for dead.

It was the guerillas, much like the veterans that we have here today, Mr. Chairman, who rescued us. We never saw them again. I, therefore, appear before you in a suspended state because it was never possible for me to thank those who had saved my life and to express to them how much I value the gift of love, the gift of life and the gift of freedom.

I appear before you in awe as I see a few of the surviving gallant veterans here. They had been called by the President of the United States to place their lives at risk for America and the Philippines during World War II so that all of us present today can also value the gift of life and the gift of freedom.

I appear before you, Mr. Chairman, with sadness in my heart because these distinguished veterans to whom we owe so much have become much older, yet they remain unbowed, Mr. Chairman, even as they await recognition before they ultimately fade away.

Lastly, I appear before you today with the hope and trust that we will finally demonstrate our eternal gratitude to our veterans by bestowing on them their entitlement. In ending, Mr. Chairman, may I request permission to salute our beloved veterans who are here today.

Mr. MORAN. You certainly may. Mr. Ambassador, thank you very much for your very heartfelt statement. I appreciate your participation today and we look forward to working with you and your government.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Del Rosario appears on p. 63.]

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Secretary.

STATEMENT OF HON. ANTHONY J. PRINCIPI

Secretary PRINCIPI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is indeed a privilege to appear before this committee, alongside His Excellency,

Ambassador Albert Del Rosario, and I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the subcommittee on H.R. 4904, a bill to expand health care eligibility and benefits delivery for Filipino veterans.

I have a written statement I would request be submitted for the record. Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your leadership and for your holding this hearing on this very, very important subject. I also wish to commend Congressman Filner for his unwavering support for Filipino veterans and for his leadership in holding their rightful cause as high as the Filipinos held America's righteous cause 60 years ago.

I don't think it is an overstatement to say that the ill wind which our Nation faced during our darkest hours of World War II could have swept away all we hold dear as Americans had it not been for the incredible bravery and sacrifice of tens of thousands of Filipinos, who half a world away believed as we do in freedom. Mr. Chairman, Congressman Filner, other members on this committee, and members of the other panels here today, I understand Senator Inouye could not be here because of illness.

Congressman Gilman, Congresswoman Mink and so many of your colleagues throughout the Congress should be commended for recognizing their bravery and sacrifice and for championing legislation to redeem, as best we can, the price Filipinos paid for our liberty. I am most grateful to President Bush for backing my appearance before the committee today to share with you the administration's enthusiastic support for legislation to insure Filipino veterans receive just and fair services and benefits.

President Bush and President Aroyo have spoken on several occasions and are in agreement that we should extend our hands and our hearts to Filipino veterans and their families. I thank President Aroyo for her very thoughtful and cooperative efforts, and I know the President thanks President Aroyo and the people of the Philippines for their standing, once again, shoulder to shoulder with Americans in the war on terrorism.

I also want to express my deepest appreciation and thanks to Ambassador Del Rosario for his invaluable help and the many kindnesses he extended to the President and to me during our travels to the Philippines and in helping us better understand the needs of Filipino veterans.

Mr. Chairman, only a precious few men and women alive today can fully appreciate the sacrifices Filipinos offered so unselfishly when their homeland and American soil came under brutal and overwhelming attack. I am in awe of every Filipino who survived the Bataan Death March, the most infamous death march in all of history, and I am indebted to every Filipino who died for freedom's sake during that dreadful ordeal.

America is in debt to their ultimate sacrifices, and today we redeem that debt by what we do here in the days and weeks ahead. In recognition of our commitment to honor Filipino veterans and their survivors, the administration supports payment of the full service connected disability compensation rates to former new Filipino scouts who reside in the United States.

We support payment of the full dependency and indemnity compensation rates to surviving spouses of veterans of the Common-

wealth Army Recognized Guerillas, or new Filipino scouts who reside in the United States. We also support providing health care on the same basis as for U.S. veterans for veterans of the Commonwealth Army Recognized Guerillas or new Philippine scouts who reside in the United States, regardless of service connection for their disabilities. There is more that we must do to honor our Philippine comrades in arms in death as much as in life.

I personally support the proposal to provide burial benefits for the former members of the new Philippine scouts. I have been assured that because of the small number of beneficiaries this provision would not trigger PAYGO requirements.

Mr. Chairman the president has also authorized VA to provide annual equipment grants of approximately \$500,000 to the Philippine government to provide care and improved care, much needed care at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center in Manila. Again, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I thank you for providing this opportunity to stand in support of the changes that the administration believes are necessary to fill America's—to fulfill America's obligation to Filipino veterans. Working together, we can, we must move forward with the legislation needed to meet our commitment to the proud and brave Philippine citizens who stood shoulder to shoulder, who stood by the United States in our time of need during the Second World War. Today let us say we are standing by them.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my remarks. And I would be happy to answer any questions that you or members of the subcommittee may have. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Principi appears on p. 65.]

Mr. MORAN. Your Excellency, Mr. Ambassador and Mr. Secretary, thank you for your testimony and I would ask Mr. Filner, the gentleman from California if he has any questions.

Mr. FILNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Secretary, and I thank the Ambassador for your very eloquent statement. Every time we bring together people on this topic, the statements are so compelling I wish every member of Congress could hear them. I think there would be no trouble passing legislation.

I thank my colleagues who are here. After we have adjourned for the week, I thank you for being here and for working to understand this issue. It really means a great deal to me, and I am sure to all the people in this room, that you are here. And Mr. Secretary, again, I say as I said earlier, you have worked extremely hard to understand this issue. You bring to it a sensitivity. You gave me the chance to make my case to you and I appreciate that greatly.

The points that you have outlined as administration support, we have embodied in the legislation. It is H.R. 4904.

[The attachment appears on p. 41.]

Mr. FILNER. It is cosponsored by my good friends on the Republican side, Mr. Gilman, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Rohrabacher. It is, on the Democratic side, Mr. Evans and several others who have participated in this fight for a long time. I hope that this committee can act knowing that the administration supports this bill. I feel confident that our chairman of our full committee will support this bill, and I hope that we could pass it before the August break because then the Senate would have time to take up Senator Inouye's

companion bill. He cannot be with us today, and Mr. Chairman, I would ask that his statement be included as part of our record.

Mr. MORAN. Without objection. So ordered.

[The prepared statement of Senator Inouye appears on p. 49.]

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Inouye has worked on this issue for decades. He is the real hero who has kept this issue alive when various Congressmembers came and went. I hope the Senator's staff will transmit to him our deep appreciation for his support. With Mr. Phillips and Mr. Friedman, we were on the Senate side today lobbying for that bill and we have from some key people, I think, gotten expressions of support, and I think we will be able to pass this on the Senate side also.

Mr. Secretary, I assume if we pass this bill in this congressional session, that it would be implemented in the coming fiscal year, and that these veterans would be eligible for the health care beginning October 1, assuming it passed by then. Would that be correct?

Secretary PRINCIPI. That certainly would be my hope, Mr. Filner.

Mr. FILNER. And your commitment to us—I assume you can do on your own authority—is this grant in aid to the Philippines of \$500,000 would be an annual grant; is that correct?

Secretary PRINCIPI. That is correct, Mr. Filner.

Mr. FILNER. For equipment which would help treat veterans there?

Secretary PRINCIPI. That would be an equipment grant based upon a priority list, and we would have that equipment transported to the Philippines; that is correct.

Mr. FILNER. Some people have let me know that the hospital there is not in the greatest condition; that is the Veterans Memorial Medical Center. We might want to look at, along with equipment, some help in rehabilitating or helping them to make whatever modernization is needed to help our veterans be treated fully and most beneficially.

Secretary PRINCIPI. Well, we certainly will do so Mr. Filner. I believe that the grant of equipment will go a long way to modernizing the medical center technologically. And we certainly will look to see how we can assist our Philippine counterparts in the modernization effort.

Mr. FILNER. And again, as I expressed to you privately, I had visited the outpatient clinic there, that the VA maintains. In fact, I think it is the only place outside the United States that we have an outpatient clinic? I am not sure.

Secretary PRINCIPI. To my knowledge, yes. The only location of an outpatient clinic would be in Manila. It is a relatively small outpatient clinic. We do primarily compensation and pension exams at the clinic, although we do afford treatment to U.S. veterans, military retirees who reside in the Philippines. But again, it is rather limited, if you will, in scope.

Mr. FILNER. Right. I have visited. As we go along in your commitment, you might look at that outpatient clinic for some expansion. I think it is capable of doing that. Again, Mr. Secretary, I don't know how to thank you enough for your willingness to look at this issue, to talk with the President. I know you carried the President's support to President Aroyo on your recent trip to Ma-

nila, and we want to convey to the President our thanks for his support of these measures and appreciate it so much.

Secretary PRINCIPI. Thank you, Mr. Filner.

Mr. FILNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Boozman.

Mr. BOOZMAN. I would just like to thank you and Mr. Filner for holding the hearing. I am anxious to hear the testimony that we have got today and appreciate having you here, and the ambassador.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you, Mr. Boozman. Mr. Evans.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. LANE EVANS, RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER, FULL COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Mr. EVANS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate the time that you have given us today to talk about this important issue. I want to salute Bob Filner for his leadership. He has been a constant champion over the years. This is his most important cause. He has understated his past involvement. We have worked really hard in terms of the legislation that we proposed, but he is only telling half the story. The other half is that he has worked hard for over 10 years and we salute you and thank you, we think you did an outstanding job. The Filipino veterans, I think, have treated us to a lesson here in the United States, and that is that one person can make a difference. Many more put together can make a bigger difference.

If you want to know what a hero looks like, just go out in that hallway, right out there, and you will see 60 or 70 of them. Thank God for them because without them, we all wouldn't be here talking today about the freedoms and liberties that we enjoy. So I appreciate what you have done.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you, Mr. Evans. Thank you for joining us today. And Mr. Miller.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF MILLER

Mr. MILLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the first time publicly, I can now say thank you, Mr. Secretary, for visiting my congressional district. Appreciate that very much. Appreciate your testimony here today as well. I, too, salute those that are bringing this legislation forward. I would like to submit a statement to the record, if that is agreeable and also ask the Ambassador a question, if I might.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Miller appears on p. 48.]

Mr. MILLER. In your opening statement, you talked about some of the veterans choosing to stay in the Philippines and being disadvantaged by staying there. And I was wanting to know what you meant by that statement.

Ambassador DEL ROSARIO. Well, sir, the—there was a privilege given to Filipino veterans to become citizens of the United States if they were to come to the United States and apply for the citizenship. The greater part of the Filipino veterans, sir, could not afford to come to the United States, and therefore, the veterans who could not do that remained in the Philippines. In terms of number, num-

bers we are talking of perhaps 10,000 veterans here, and about 34,000 veterans left in the Philippines. The way the bill that has been filed is structured, I believe that the benefits are being significantly restored for those who are residing in the United States. We have to—we are grateful for this—for these benefits and for the veterans who are going to receive benefits in the United States and we believe this is an important incremental and a step forward in terms of the restoration of benefits. But our position, sir, is that we have to keep on working in order to be able to help the Filipino veterans who remain in the Philippines.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you, Mr. Miller. Your statement will be made part of the record if there is no objection. No objection. So ordered. Mr. Rodriguez.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you. First of all, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for allowing this to occur, I know that a lot of our members are not here because we did not anticipate being in session on Friday, our last vote just occurred and many members were going home. But that doesn't mean that we are not interested. And so I want to personally thank you, first of all, for allowing this to happen. And I also want to thank Bob Filner.

When I came up in the Congress, I think one of the first issues that Bob Filner got me on was on this. He educated me on what had transpired, to the fact that the Filipino veterans had been there for us, and the fact that we have failed to be there for them by having denied them the veterans benefits that they deserve. I know that today, Congressman Filner and along with Mr. Lou Diamond Phillips, came by to speak to the Hispanic caucus, I think we are going to be able to—if we don't already have get the 18 Hispanic members of Congress on the bill. And so I was real proud to hear from all of them. So I want to thank you for continuing this effort.

Secretary Principi, thank you very much. You know, I think the will is there. We have just got to get over the hill to make it happen. Ambassador Rosario, I also want to thank you and ask you to continue pushing on behalf of the Filipinos from your country; I want to thank you also for your service and for being there for us. And so on behalf of the United States, we want to thank you and the Filipino veterans for what they have done and we hope that one way of doing this is through making this legislation a reality.

I have a flight later on and so I am going to have to be leaving, but the best way to say thanks to our veterans is by making this happen. So hopefully we can make this happen. Thank you.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Rodriguez, thank you for your statement. Mr. Gibbons.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JIM GIBBONS

Mr. GIBBONS. Again, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you as have all my colleagues thanked you and Mr. Filner for your leadership in holding this hearing today. I think it is so important for this Congress and for America to understand the history and the close connection the Philippines and the Filipino people have with our Nation and our freedoms. I want to thank the Ambassador and the

Secretary also for their presentations today. Certainly want to thank the Ambassador for the administration's support on this issue that I think is long overdue, as do many Americans think it is long overdue. We are grateful that you are here to present that message to our committee as well.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit my written statement for the record at a point in time and just take a brief moment here to thank everybody, thank you for coming as far as you have, from your home to Washington, DC, to our capital and to our committee to express your support for this issue. Clearly, during World War II, none of you who participated in helping America fight and win that war ever thought that you would be giving only 50 percent of your effort, so we believe that 100 percent of our return in terms of support and assistance is a measure that is long overdue for what you have contributed to this country. I, for one, as a veteran, understand all too well the promises made need to be kept. And as a member of this committee I can assure you that I will work to keep America's promises to all of those Filipinos. And with that Mr. Chairman I want to thank you and appreciate again the opportunity to be here.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Gibbons, thank you for your remarks.

Mr. MORAN. And I do thank His Excellency and our own Secretary for being with us today. Thank you. We will now call upon our second panel. Thank you. The second panel consists of six members of Congress: The Honorable Benjamin Gilman of New York; the Honorable Randy "Duke" Cunningham of California; the Honorable Patsy Mink of Hawaii; the Honorable Juanita Millender-McDonald of California; the Honorable Dana Rohrabacher of California; and the Honorable Robert Underwood from the territory of Guam.

STATEMENTS OF HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN, MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK; HON. RANDY "DUKE" CUNNINGHAM, MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA; HON. PATSY T. MINK, MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF HAWAII; HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-MCDONALD, MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA; HON. DANA ROHRABACHER, MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA; AND HON. ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD, MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM THE TERRITORY OF GUAM

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Gilman you are the dean of this panel.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MORAN. We would be delighted to hear your statement and we will proceed.

STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, members of our committee, I want to thank you and the entire Health Subcommittee for arranging this hearing today to examine our newly introduced legislation, H.R. 4904, and I want to express my gratitude to you for inviting us to testify before your subcommittee on a subject that is dear to our hearts, benefits for our Filipino veterans of World War

II, and we thank Congressman Filner who has been such a long time advocate for this measure and been a very strong part of the Veterans Affairs Committee.

I also want to thank my colleagues who are here today, Congressman Rohrabacher and Congressman Cunningham, Congresswoman Patsy Mink, Congresswoman McDonald, and I think there are some others of our—oh, and our delegate Robert Underwood from my favorite island, Guam, where I spent many, many long months fighting on behalf of our Nation, along with Filipinos.

As you may know, most of us have been long-time advocates of Filipino veterans in the Congress. For the past several Congresses, I have introduced legislation to provide full veterans benefits, full veterans benefits to our Philippine comrades in arms from World War II, and it was Harry Truman who paved the way for that and regrettably subsequent Congresses have rejected it. I have long believed that our Filipino veterans were unjustly stripped of their benefits, which, by law, they were entitled to as a result of the Rescission Act of 1946. They fought side by side with our troops in the Philippines as we fought and tried to defend our people from the invasion by the Japanese.

In recent years, those of us who championed the cause of the Philippines, including my colleagues who were here at the witness table, they won several small but important victories. In 1996, President Clinton issued a proclamation honoring the survivors and children of Filipino veterans in World War II. And in 1999, our Congress permitted those veterans receiving SSI benefits to keep their payments upon return to their homeland to the Philippines, with a 25 percent reduction. And finally, in the year 2000, Congress elected to raise disability and indemnity compensation payments to Filipino veterans who were U.S. citizens living in our country to a level equal to their American counterparts.

Today, our subcommittee is reviewing legislation that makes two important changes to benefits for Filipino veterans. First, it permits Filipino veterans residing in our Nation to use the VA medical system for nonservice-connected treatment. And I want to commend our committee for enhancing that opportunity. Second, it extends full compensation rates for widows and dependents and those veterans who became eligible for the rate increase several years ago. The widows and dependents have been inadvertently excluded when the rate increase was approved for veterans with service-connected injuries.

Furthermore, it's my understanding that the Department of Veterans Affairs, through VA Secretary Principi, and we thank him for his efforts and his support, has agreed to reinstate the \$500,000 annual grant to the government of the Philippines for the purchase and maintenance of hospital equipment at the Veterans Memorial Center in Manila. I think that is a great step forward as well. I am pleased that the administration and the House Veterans Committee have moved to address this issue at a time when American and Filipino forces are once again fighting side by side against a common enemy in the ongoing war on terrorism.

I commend Secretary Principi for giving this important issue the attention it deserves. Secretary Principi's interest and activism on this issue stands out in stark contrast to the VA of the prior ad-

ministration. While we often received assurances from prior secretaries that they were generally supportive of our efforts, Secretary Principi was the first to sit down with Congressional Members and work out a sound negotiated result.

Mr. Chairman, our Filipino veterans played a vital role in the war in the Pacific and for far too long, neither their wartime service nor our debt to them was properly acknowledged. This subcommittee has the opportunity to further the cause of justice today, and I am grateful, Mr. Chairman, that you have agreed to examine this important issue in this timely and appropriate measure, and I want to express my gratitude to both you, Mr. Chairman, and to the members of your subcommittee, for permitting us to participate in this hearing, and we hope to see, finally, justice to our Filipino veterans. God bless.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Gilman appears on p. 68.]

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Filner.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Gilman, I know you may have to leave, but I just wanted to say, you added stature as chairman of the International Relations Committee to this cause when you don't have very many Filipino Americans in your district, and it is because you believe in this issue and you care about it. I just want to thank you, and I know the whole Filipino community around the country thanks you. You have been incredible on this issue. Your heart is backed up with your energy, and we thank you so much.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Filner, and we can't thank you enough for reminding all of us in the entire Congress of what we should be doing to do justice to our Philippine veterans. Please forgive me if I have to run onto another meeting. Thank you very much.

Mr. MORAN. I thank the gentleman from New York and recognize the gentlewoman from Hawaii.

**STATEMENT OF HON. PATSY T. MINK, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF HAWAII**

Mrs. MINK. Thank you very much Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee. I appreciate so very much the opportunity to revisit this issue that is so close to so many of my constituents. I know that of all the issues that we have to deal with in Hawaii, that this is one which absolutely no one in the entire State is opposed to or has any reservations over. It is for them and for me a matter of simple justice. And it is very difficult to go back home, as we must do from time to time, and encounter these World War II Filipino veterans who are now aging very rapidly and try to explain to them why it is that the government of the United States has failed to honor its commitments and obligations made to them when they volunteered in the service of the United States.

So this step today, which is endorsed by Secretary Principi and by the President himself, is probably the first largest sign that we are moving forward, not all the way, but what this legislation represents to me and I think to all of the Filipino veterans in my State which number in the thousands, is that now at least there is this feeling that the thousands of Filipino individuals who came forward to answer the call of the President to serve not only their

homeland but the people of the United States, that they are going to be recognized as veterans.

More than any of the individual benefits which we have been able to grant them over the years, nothing is more important to them than the status of being finally dealt with as a veteran who served the Nation, that served the United States and its people because of the call of President Roosevelt and that is a proud moment. So it is with a great sense of emotion and gratitude and hope that I appear before this committee, not to recite all the problems and issues that they have had to face with, but that it has been 57 years since the war ended.

And these constituents who are mine and who are all over the country, are now aging. They are into their 80s. We simply must act or it may be too late. It is already too late for many who have passed away. And so I call upon this committee to rapidly pass this legislation, get it before the full committee, and to the House under suspension so that we can send it over to the Senate, where I am sure our colleagues over there will take due attention to it. My hope is that all of this could be done before the Fourth of July. It is a principal moment which the people of the Philippines celebrate together with the United States, and it would be an extremely exhilarating celebration for the people of the Philippine veterans constituency to be able to stand up at these events in my State and all of the United States to celebrate their recognition as veterans who served alongside all the other Americans and who fought valiantly, who died, who suffered all kinds of unspeakable agony, but who did so at the invitation and request of the President of the United States.

To this day, I don't understand why the Congress repealed it, repealed the promise, but if we can undo that damage we did in 1946, it would be a great day of celebration. So I hope that the committee will do that and we will have a chance to celebrate the joining together of these two great people. Thank you very much.

Mr. MORAN. I thank the gentlewoman from Hawaii for appearing before our subcommittee today and for her remarks. I recognize the gentleman from California, Mr. Cunningham.

Mrs. MINK. May I ask that my statement be placed in the record in full.

Mr. MORAN. Without objection so ordered.

Mrs. MINK. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Congresswoman Mink appears on p. 72.]

STATEMENT OF HON. RANDY "DUKE" CUNNINGHAM, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I would like to thank my colleague, Mr. Filner, for being the tip of the spear on this and working through this program. I offered a similar bill 12 years ago and through—to be fair, both through Republican and Democrat administrations, we didn't go anywhere. Tony Principi worked on my campaign. He lives in my district. He is now Secretary Principi and off my campaign because he has got to stay bipartisan. But I went to Tony and talked about how impor-

tant this bill was. I am not going to repeat what the bill goes through and what it gives us. But I will tell you, Mr. Rodriguez, like the Hispanic caucus has said, per population the Hispanics have won more medals of honor, had more medals of honor winners than any other group. They are deserving of veterans' benefits

And the Filipinos, look at their history, not just there in the Philippines, but also in Vietnam. I served in combat with Filipinos from Ramirez that used to fix my double egg, double cheese, double fries burger every night, to the guys that used to load bombs on my airplane to deliver our ordinance in Vietnam. They have been right with us. During Desert Storm they fought with us. And as a matter of fact, the ones that volunteered, if they had been killed, their families would have been deported back to the Philippines. That was wrong as well and we corrected that.

But thanks to the Secretary for listening, for George W. Bush, who I went to and said this is important and would get support. I sit on the appropriations committee and I know, Mr. Chairman, we have got a lot of things to do. But time is time and a promise made should be a promise kept. And this is the time in the Congress to do that. I would like to thank Mr. Fritz Friedman and Lou Diamond Phillips for traveling all this way. Lou Diamond is right at the end of a movie and starting another one and his time is valuable as well.

But I just wanted to add a little heart to this thing. Let me tell you a little bit about the Filipino people. Once I was in a friend's boat. I was stationed in the Philippines for 2½ years at San Miguel. That's not where they make the beer. It is a communications station. My job was the defense of the Philippines and Korea including Exercises Team Spirit and Tangent Flash. During one of those trips, our boat was actually shipwrecked, caught in a typhoon. We were cast up on the shore and a village took us, with just blue jeans and a T-shirt on, housed us, fed us, got us back to our base.

And I asked people, "try that in Los Angeles, to end up shipwrecked and see what happens to you." This points to the generosity of the Filipino people. And I would ask you to look in our cities and I am sure that my colleague from Hawaii would agree, if you look at their homes they are beautiful. Not that they have a lot of money but they invest in their children. They invest in education. And if you look at the Asian community, that is a community that fills our colleges and our universities. This is what they have given to us, and now it is time for us to give back a promise that we promised them a long time ago.

Mr. Chairman, I want to tell you, you have my highest professional and personal support of this bill. It is only a start. It is not what we wanted as far as the total bill, and we need to do more when we are out of this war on terrorism. When you look at their war on terrorism and what they have done just last week, the Filipinos supporting us in that type of memorial, it is time for us to get off our duff and pass this bill.

I want to thank you again, Mr. Filner, Mr. Fritz Friedman, Lou Diamond Phillips and this committee for what you are doing. God bless you.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Cunningham, thank you.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Cunningham appears on p. 76.]

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Rohrabacher.

STATEMENT OF HON. DANA ROHRABACHER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, too, to Congressman Filner. He has put enormous time and effort into this, and I have tried to be a little bit helpful, but to be fair about it, he has put an enormous amount of time into this and deserves our appreciation, our appreciation, because he is doing what is right and he is making sure that America is doing what is right.

And let's get one thing very clear right off the bat: We are not giving anything. We are not talking about giving anything to anybody. We are talking about paying an overdue debt to the heroes of World War II who earned what we are giving them. So it is not a gift by any stretch of the imagination. These are veterans benefits that these brave men earned a long time ago. These are the heroes of both the American people and the Filipino people. And our action in paying off this debt also expresses an official recognition and an official appreciation for their courage and their service.

Let me just note that these brave Filipinos who fought side by side with Americans during the Second World War saved the lives of many Americans. My father happened to have been involved in the liberation of the Philippines, and he told me over and over as a young person that Filipinos he worked with were his best friends and how much he counted on them, and how much he loved the Filipino people. So he flew DC 3s up and down during the liberation, and at times, people would be out behind enemy lines clearing these little runways. And clearing those runways, by doing that, they put their lives at risk.

Also in my family, my great uncle Lou, Lou is great uncle to my wife, is a survivor of the Bataan Death March. And Uncle Lou has told me on many occasions how, during that death march, the Japanese guards were so brutal and the conditions were so horrible, but as they marched along—and by the way, they weren't just American troops there. Filipinos troops were right there as part of this death march. And the Philippine citizens along the road would try to help them. Both the Filipino troops and the American troops were being held in such terrible—treated in such a terrible way, and they would throw little cartons of fruit or a little container of water, and the Japanese guards would kill them in response to their attempt to try to help these prisoners of war.

This was the type of expression of the heart and soul and the solidarity of spirit that the Filipino people have with the people of the United States. And I think that it has been a great sin and a black mark on our soul that we didn't return that appreciation after the war and especially with these heroic people who fought side by side with our own defenders. So we are trying to make up for that black mark now.

And let me just say that we have stood side by side and we are standing side by side. I was in the Philippines just less than 2 weeks ago just prior to the rescue attempt. And I must say now,

the rescue attempt, the rescue. And Filipino troops went and rescued three hostages that were being held hostage by terrorists who were connected with the al Qaeda network who are our enemies. Two of those hostages unfortunately were killed during the attempt. But one American lady was freed, and now because of their bravery, the bravery of these Filipino troops, that woman's children are not orphans today and she is back home in Kansas.

So we have a lot to be appreciative of and to be grateful for, not just in the past but for that friendship that stands even today and for what they have done for us in the past and what they would do for us today.

And this action we are taking today by giving justice to these brave people just a little bit too late, I hope that they will take the apologies with that, that it is a little late, but I know that they will appreciate it and it will be recognized now that we are treating them as heroes as they deserve.

We are not giving them anything, we are providing what they have earned a long time ago. Thank you very much.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you, Mr. Rohrabacher.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Rohrabacher appears on p. 77.]

Mr. MORAN. Ms. Millender-McDonald.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-MCDONALD, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Thank you. I am heartened by the presentations of my colleagues who sit by me here at this table. And I would like to first thank the members of this committee, especially Bob Filner who has been absolutely a champion of the cause of our Filipino constituents.

I would like to welcome the Ambassador of the Philippines here, along with my constituents who have traveled thousands of miles to be here to witness justice in the making.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you and the ranking member for the invitation to come before you today to address the subcommittee on Filipino veterans' benefits. It is also important for me to recognize the strong bipartisan work performed by this subcommittee on behalf of our Nation's Filipino veterans. As a constituency, our Nation's Filipino veterans are far too often ignored and, to a degree, marginalized when we should be extolling the work and sacrifices that they have made for this Nation.

Two years into our new century, we reflect with great pride on all of our Nation and what our Nation has accomplished in the last 224 years since we first declared our independence. Today we are in the midst of a war on terrorism. But, as it has been for generations, America shines as a beacon of democracy, freedom, and opportunity for peoples around the world.

The blessings we rejoice for today were won at great cost. Millions of young men and women who stepped forward in times of crisis and conflict to defend our Nation and uphold our values around the world sacrificed their lives. The 20th century will forever be known as the American century, not only because of our economic strength, military might or technological prowess, but also because

of the character, determination, and the amenable spirit our people demonstrated time and again.

Filipino Americans who fought and died on the same battlefields of World War II joined American sons and daughters in these great struggles. They brought honor and pride to our Nation and are proud to be called veterans of World War II. The issue now, Mr. Chairman, is not their willingness to serve, to fight and to die, but, rather, is America willing to bring fairness and equity to those who served this Nation?

As you may recall, President Franklin Roosevelt ordered Filipino Americans to serve in 1941. More than 140,000 Filipino soldiers fought, suffered, and in many instances died in the same manner and under the same conditions as other members of the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II. In the years following the war, many of these veterans were denied health care, pension benefits, and in some cases a proper military burial.

I am honored that as many as 600 Filipino veterans live within my congressional district and have repeatedly brought attention to the plight of those veterans.

I have called on my colleagues to support a House resolution that I introduced that recognizes the contributions of Filipino veterans, and urge that they receive due diligence for their many sacrifice.

In addition, I am proud to co-sponsor H.R. 491, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2001, which would also extend benefits to members of the Filipino Commonwealth Army and the Special Philippine Scouts who served during World War II or performed occupation duties in the Pacific after the war ended.

So I am pleased to join my dear friend, Representative Filner, in cosponsoring this bill because this bill will focus on VA medical care for Filipino World War II veterans who live in the United States.

In addition, this new legislation has the support of Secretary Principi and the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Secretary Principi has been extremely helpful in meeting with me in Washington about this issue, and then he appeared at a town hall meeting in my district to discuss this topic with my constituents. And I am pleased that he is committed to addressing this issue that has been long overlooked with this group of veterans.

Our agreement or disagreement with political policy and economic pressures should never diminish our love and profound respect for the men and women who chose duty over personal safety and went into battle-torn areas carrying our flag. We should have resources to take care of those Filipino veterans who have sacrificed on behalf of our Nation.

It was President Lincoln who called on all Americans to care for him who should have borne the battle. I urge the subcommittee to right the wrong visited upon these Americans, because when this Nation called upon them, these men answered that call. It is absolutely disgraceful that our country has waited so long to give them what they have earned. I will not stop until they get what they rightfully deserve. Thank you.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Congresswoman Millender-McDonald appears on p. 80.]

Mr. MORAN. Thank you very much. Mr. Underwood.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD,
MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM THE TERRITORY OF GUAM**

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And first of all, I want to ask unanimous consent to enter my statement into the record.

Mr. MORAN. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. UNDERWOOD. After all of these stirring statements, I am trying to find a way to say something that is absolutely unique and adds to the intensity of why this is such a right thing to do. I want to congratulate Mr. Filner and all of my colleagues here. But, you know, Bob has been enormously diligent in his efforts and has devoted basically almost a career to this effort. And, you know, it is with profound admiration, not only gratitude for his efforts but profound admiration for the way he has conducted himself and the way that he has led on this issue that many of us are here today.

I represent Guam, which historically is linked to the Philippines in many, many ways. We both came under the United States in 1898 and we both endured enemy occupation of similar brutality during World War II. It is in that spirit and it is with that sense of admiration for the experiences of the Filipino people that I think the people of Guam are so profoundly behind and supportive of any effort to grant full recognition and full veterans' status for these World War II veterans.

It is instructive to remember that the Filipino veteran, like any other veteran, not only put their life at risk and risked their fortunes and their future in the defense of their country and in defense of both flags, both the Philippine and the U.S. Flag, but that they were also defending a homeland, and they were also in many ways putting their own families at risk as well.

It is important to understand that at the same time that they were fighting in a war, they were also putting their own families and their own fortune, literally their own personal existence, at stake in that. And it is the kind of struggle and the kind of experience that I think the people of Guam fully understand, undergoing an enemy occupation of similar brutality during World War II.

Of course this is the right thing to do, and of course it is long overdue. And, similarly, it is not the final step in this long process. But this is such a marvelous day and a wonderful time to celebrate and congratulate all of those involved, including Secretary Principi and especially our visitors from the Philippines who have not just struggled long and hard, but do so with a dignity and with a sense of purpose that is awe inspiring. I don't know how else to characterize it. They carry themselves with such dignity, despite the fact that they not only fought in World War II, but they have had to fight to get the kind of recognition they deserve.

So, first of all I want to tell them maraming salamat po (thank you) for all of your endurance, and we will prevail in the final analysis. Thank you very much.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Underwood, thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Underwood appears on p. 83.]

Mr. MORAN. I thank all of my colleagues for their testimony here today and for their presence with our subcommittee.

Let me see if any subcommittee members have any questions of any of our colleagues. Mr. Filner.

Mr. FILNER. Just briefly, Mr. Chairman. I would say especially to the new members, Mr. Miller and Mr. Boozman, who I thank for being here, I don't think you are going to see in your time in Congress so many Congresspeople of both parties so committed and staying, for the duration of a hearing and being involved at a personal level in so many ways. This is very unique, and I think testifies to the moral certitude of the issue.

I want to say, especially to Congressman Cunningham, as I said to Congressman Gilman and Congressman Rohrabacher, we have differed on most of the things that concern us in Congress over the last decade, but, again, you are willing to go out on a limb on this one and work together. And I think that says something for the issue, it says something about you. I so appreciate that. It is bipartisanship in the true meaning of the word; that is, you decide it doesn't matter who is carrying the issue, you care about the issue, you work together, and I think it says something about the way we ought to be working on a lot of things. And, again, it bespeaks of your goodness and your qualities of who you are.

Lastly, I want to say especially to the witnesses and to the audience, this has been a little bit of a love fest today. We are all in support of this, but this battle is not over, and people are going to have to keep working. And we are going to need the Congressmembers here to talk to their friends and the chairpeople and the ranking members that they know, the administration people. This is not over yet. It is not over until it is over. Until we see this bill on the President's desk being signed, we are going to have to continue on.

So, although we are all together today, there are still people who for various reasons, some good, some not so good, will oppose this or don't care if it dies without their involvement. So let's keep working.

We have set a basis for cooperation together. You have been incredibly eloquent. I listened to you today and at the press conference we had a couple of days ago. Each day each person gets more eloquent. It is because you really care. You are speaking from the heart, and I think that is very important. But we are going to have to stick together in the months ahead. Thank you so much.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Boozman.

Mr. BOOZMAN. No.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Evans.

Mr. EVANS. No questions.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Miller.

Mr. MILLER. No.

Mr. MORAN. We thank our colleagues for joining us. We now welcome the third panel to the hearing this afternoon. This panel consists of Mr. Lou Diamond Phillips, and Mr. Fritz Friedman, both of Los Angeles, CA. We welcome these two very distinguished and talented individuals to our panel today.

STATEMENTS OF LOU DIAMOND PHILLIPS, ACTOR AND FILIPINO VETERANS ACTIVIST, LOS ANGELES, CA; AND FRITZ FRIEDMAN, CHAIR, ASSEMBLY FOR JUSTICE, LOS ANGELES, CA

Mr. Phillips, I understand that you have asked that a short videotape be played for our subcommittee. If there is no objection, I am going to allow that to happen. That would be in order.

STATEMENT OF LOU DIAMOND PHILLIPS

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you, sir. With your kind indulgence, this videotape, which has been mentioned before, represents, you know, our involvement in this cause. It was produced by Mr. Fritz Friedman. It also represents the sentiments and the heartfelt desires of Rob Schneider and Dean Devlin who underwrote this venture. So with your kind indulgence, please.

[Videotape played.]

Mr. MORAN. Thank you very much for that presentation. The committee would welcome your 5-minute statement.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you, sir. First of all, let me say I know that I am preaching to the choir in many instances. And please do indulge and forgive me if I repeat the words of my esteemed colleagues in this venture. We didn't get a chance to compare notes.

So, Mr. Chairman, and to members of the committee, my name is Lou Diamond Phillips, an American citizen of Filipino descent. I am proud to say that I come from a family with relatives on both sides who have performed military duty in the service of this country. I have five Filipino uncles who have proudly served in the U.S. Navy, two of whom went on to become staff members at the White House under President Nixon. And both my father and stepfather were also sailors in the Navy; my stepfather, George Phillips, having served two duties in Vietnam. My father was so proud of his military affiliation that he named me after a war hero of the Second World War, Gunnery Sergeant Lou Diamond, a Marine legend in the Pacific Theatre.

I stood proudly beside my mother, Lucita, as her witness when she took her oath of citizenship to become an American. Like many immigrants who choose to become citizens of this country, my mother and the remainder of her Filipino family have become proud and contributing members of the American society, eagerly embracing the opportunities that this great country has provided their families.

They have watched their children, first generation Americans, as they became doctors, lawyers, and teachers. And I myself realize that my career in the film industry would probably not have been possible anywhere else in the world, and for that I am eternally grateful. I truly believe in America as a shining light, as the symbol in the world for democracy and freedom. And it for these reasons and many more that today I consider it not only my privilege but my duty to speak for the Filipino veterans of World War II.

Now, as you know, President Franklin Roosevelt drafted the Commonwealth Army soldiers of the Philippines, who were United States Nationals, into American military service on July 26th of 1941. And many of these soldiers were still teenagers, yet they briefly answered the call to battle, fighting side by side with their

American allies. They were farm boys from different parts of the world. They became fast friends and comrades, brothers in arms. And many thousands paid the ultimate price.

For those Filipinos who survived the horrific battles and the ghastly conditions of the infamous prisoner-of-war camps, the promise was made by the American government that they would be considered U.S. veterans with active service by the Veterans' Administration and therefore be entitled to all of the benefits that that designation entailed.

However, as we all know, a scant 5 years later, after victory in the Pacific was assured, these guarantees were rescinded by the U.S. Government on February 18, 1946 when it enacted the Recession Act, Public Law 79-301, now U.S. Code section 101, title 38. Effectively, this action seemed to deny the involvement of the Filipino soldiers in the war effort, and certainly was a poor repayment for the loyalty shown by the Filipino people. In fact, many war historians and American veterans of the Pacific Theatre have noted that if not for the contributions of the Commonwealth Army soldiers, the Filipino guerillas and scouts, and even the Filipino citizens who served as spies and couriers for U.S. Intelligence, the tide of the war—which at the time of conscription was in a desperate state—may not have turned toward an American victory. The brave contributions of the men and women of the Philippines cannot be quantified and certainly should not be diminished.

In the 60 years since official recognition of the Filipino veterans was withdrawn, a few positive steps have been made in reparation. In 1990, 26,000 Filipino veterans were naturalized as U.S. citizens under the 1990 Immigration and Naturalization Act because of their U.S. Military service.

Additionally, under Public Law 106-419, they may be buried in VA national cemeteries as U.S. Veterans; however, while they live, they are denied eligibility to be patients in the VA hospitals. And many of these men are well into their eighties and beyond. They are now certainly in need of the kind of medical attention that the VA benefits would provide.

But perhaps even more importantly, they desire as their last wish the recognition that they so richly deserve for the sacrifices that they made in the fight for freedom and democracy.

Now, I know a little something about Filipino culture. We are a proud people. It is my observation that many Filipinos would rather have the respect of their families and their communities than have material gain.

Since 1990, an estimated 12,000 Filipino veterans have died waiting for recognition for the single greatest achievement of their lives. We are now losing these brave men, once young and passionate fighters, now infirm and without a strong voice of their own, at the alarming rate of up to five men a day. Time continues to run out for the ones who remain, and a posthumous award in the form of a military burial can only be considered the next best thing.

Please, let us celebrate these men while they still live. It is important to note that U.S. Recognition of these veterans would not just be a token gesture. There are presently an estimated 13,849 Filipino veterans who reside in the United States and another 46,050 who live in the Philippines. That is nearly 60,000 families

that will be impacted by your decision, nearly 60,000 men whose wives and children and grandchildren will know without qualification that their husbands and fathers were heroes.

Additionally, and certainly not unimportantly, with the passage of those bills before you, those men and women in the twilight of their lives will be eligible to receive veterans benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs, benefits such as VA health care at VA hospitals, outpatient clinics, and nursing homes in the U.S., including a clinic in Manila, and a monthly permanent disability pension if they are poor and disabled.

Now, I hasten to remind you that these benefits are not new prizes to be awarded, but guarantees that need to be reinstated after our government promised and then rescinded this status after services had been rendered in good faith.

Today, we can right a wrong and pay respect where it is long overdue. Please join your colleagues in the speedy passage of these bills. S. 1042 was introduced by Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, a World War II veteran, and cosponsored by nine Senators.

H.R. 491 was introduced by Representative Benjamin Gilman of New York, another World War II veteran, and Representative Bob Filner of California, and has 49 cosponsors in the House.

H.R. 4904 was introduced by Representative Bob Filner and cosponsored by Moran of Kansas, Evans of Illinois, Gilman of New York, Scott of Virginia, Cunningham of California, Pelosi of California, Rohrabacher of California, Mink of Hawaii, Millender-McDonald of California, Lofgren of California, and Underwood of Guam.

In closing, I am reminded of the words of General Douglas MacArthur when he said to the Filipino people and to his American troops hopelessly entrenched in the islands, "I shall return." it is my belief that he did not mean that he would return empty-handed. It is my hope that he intended to return the loyalty, commitment, and respect shown to him and to America by the Filipino people. We have before us an opportunity to uphold the word of America and continue to be a shining light of democracy and fairness.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, as a concerned American citizen, as a son of our military system, and as a person of Filipino descent, I humbly thank you for your diligence and your wisdom in this matter. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Phillips, thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Phillips appears on p. 85.]

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Friedman.

STATEMENT OF FRITZ FRIEDMAN

Mr. FRIEDMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I would like to thank the Veterans' Affairs Committee for giving me this opportunity to address you this afternoon on this Filipino American veterans issue. I couldn't possibly follow Lou with a summary, the historical summary and a factual summary, so I am not even going to try. The facts are there and you know what they are. I would, however, like to take a short period of time and just share with you the sentiments of one American. That is me.

Now, you know I was born in Manila, I was raised in Boston, I went to some very good schools, and ultimately I got the job that I really wanted in Hollywood, a big senior position at a big studio. I have a great time. I self-define as an American. And I also self-define as a very proud Filipino.

In this particular world, which is kind of cynical, I still continue to believe in the basic premises and tenets of the American system. And I can't forget my faith. So imagine my bewilderment, shock, and subsequent anger when I read in the Los Angeles Times about 5 years ago about this Filipino veterans battle to gain their basic benefits promised to them by Roosevelt. It just seemed so very clear to me that a promise had been made and now a promise was not being fulfilled. And even as a child I knew that whether you were an individual or a country, you keep your word.

I also thought it was very interesting that I found out about this 5 years ago. I didn't know anything about this before that. And I also know that a lot of people don't know much about this. So what I decided to do was to take my anger and my frustration and my bewilderment and create this organization called the Assembly for Justice. It is a Los Angeles-based group of Filipino Americans who share with me their concern about this issue.

And I decided to bring with me those marketing skills that I learned in my current job, and that is dealing with the media and dealing with personalities and movie stars like Lou. Now, luckily, I had a lot of friends who were stars and they were of Filipino heritage, Lou being the one I have known the longest; and, of course, Rob Schneider, Tia Carrera, and Dean Devlin, the producer of such films as Independence Day, the Patriot and, one of my favorites, Godzilla. And together the game plan was simply to use their celebrity to raise these issues to a broader market, to a broader group of people in this country. And I think that together we were, through a series of special events, personal appearances, able to raise this issue up a notch. I am grateful to all of them for that. Also, with the help of other Filipino Americans like Mona Pasquel, Eric Lachika, and Susan Maquindang.

Now, my purpose here is to personally thank those of you who have supported this bipartisan movement to fulfill a promise as made by this country to those men and women whose contributions were critical in our country's victory over the axis powers. Those fabled battles such as Bataan and Corregidor certainly are up there with the battles of Normandy and Guadalcanal. God only knows what would have happened without these Filipino soldiers.

So thank you to the 200 Senators and Congressmen and Congresswomen from both parties who have signed on for this passage, and, of course, my special thanks to Congressman Benjamin Gilman and our own Congressman, Bob Filner, for their leadership.

To those who do not support the bill or are sitting on the fence, I would just like to remind them that there are many people in this country who find their inability to see the need to remedy the situation as, shall we say, totally perplexing. What possible reason could there be to not give benefits to soldiers who have served this country so well?

You know, this country is about freedom, equality, and integrity. We all know that. When I read some of the reasons given for de-

priving these men and women of the rightful benefits, I am frankly at a loss and simply appalled.

You know, I am fond of repeating a little aphorism when dealing with the press and about telling the truth. And that little aphorism goes: You can't put lipstick on a pig and pass it off as Catherine Deneuve. For those people I just realized who don't know who Catherine Deneuve is, she is a very beautiful French actress. And you know, you can do as much as you want on an issue, but if you are spinning that issue, believe me, I think those people who are spinning it are going to look dizzy, frankly.

So all I can say is that the issue is here and I am delighted that so many people realize that. You know, 2 days ago, I spoke to some of the Filipino veterans when I gave this little lecture in Los Angeles. And they wanted me to tell you, when I told them that I was coming here, to please, please, do not pass this bill out of pity. What they need is acknowledgment that their service was valuable and honored. And that is their right and that is what they want to pass on to their families, their legacy.

The passage of this bill, and hopefully H.R. 491 next year, would be an important step towards giving these men and women the ultimate benefit, and that is respect.

So thank you very much.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Friedman, thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Friedman appears on p. 89.]

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Phillips and Mr. Friedman, thank you very much for being with us. There has been some questioning—just in recent days here in Washington, DC—of the value of celebrity witnesses before Congress. I would like to commend you for taking the time to be with us in what clearly appears to me to be an issue that you care very strongly about. I am always pleased when any American of any nationality and background is willing to talk about the importance of our country, the opportunities that it provides. I was very much moved by your testimony, and I thank you for that today.

It is clear, you are not just here as a celebrity, you are here as an American citizen who cares very deeply about this issue and I am grateful for that. Mr. Filner.

Mr. FILNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the way you understood their presence here. I think it is exactly correct. And I want to just personally again thank Mr. Diamond and Mr. Friedman. You spent all day. I think you have had a fun time, but, more important, you showed hundreds and hundreds if not thousands of people that we met today—you have educated them about this issue. You have shown your commitment, and that helps to assure ultimate justice here. So I thank you, and I hope you will convey our respect and thanks to Rob Schneider and Ms. Carrera and Mr. Devlin. We are going to need you again.

I think you are giving lie to the sense that everybody in America is in it for themselves, and we have all of these self-aggrandizing people in various industries that only care about what they are doing and their own material benefits. But that you care about something else: about people around you, your society, and justice.

It is very important, especially to the young people that you have come into contact with. I was watching the reaction of young peo-

ple, especially young women, and I was watching the way that they were reacting. When they found that you were here for a serious purpose, that made them think a little bit more. And that is an important, important contribution.

As I said earlier to my colleagues, this battle is not over. Your being here allowed us to set a certain marker that we needed to do something by this date, and you are all going to be here and give us the benefit of some of the publicity that you can garner.

I guess my question is are you prepared to come back when we need you? We might have battles in the Senate. We haven't won the battle in the House yet.

Mr. PHILLIPS. I think one of my greatest strengths in my career is my stupidity and ignorance. When I was asked about 4 years ago to start on this march by Fritz, I was asked by a reporter how long will I be involved with this cause. Without thinking about it, and perhaps quite naively, I said, until it is finished. And so, yes, sir, you will see me again. And you will see my colleagues and comrades until this is done.

Mr. FILNER. Thank you. And thank you for the incredible experience of watching how you changed people's minds and educated them today. Thank you so much.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Miller.

Mr. MILLER. I too want to echo the chairman's comments about celebrity witnesses and the perception that many on the Hill have as to their real intentions of being here.

One of the things—and there was a comment made by the ranking member about Mr. Boozman and I being two of the newest Members here. I would also draw attention to the fact that we are here because we do care and want to learn very much about this issue. I can tell that, you know, this is not something that you are doing to further your career; this is something you believe in.

As you were talking and I was looking back across the crowd of folks, the smiling faces of the veterans that are sitting out there that have lines on their face but still a very bright glint in their eye, something that you said in your testimony brought it all home: when you said that you know the Filipino people desire respect of their families and their communities.

I also think these veterans deserve the respect of a very grateful Nation. And it is not too often that we have the opportunity to right a wrong, but this is certainly one of those.

Mr. Friedman, I wasn't on the fence, wasn't even close to the fence when I came in here. But I am not on the bill. I will be on the bill after we leave. It is important that we do keep the promise not only to those Filipino Americans and those veterans that served this country, but I also, having requested to be on this committee when I was elected to Congress, that we keep the promise that has been made to all of the men and the women that have served and defended this country and the freedom that we enjoy today. And thank you for your testimony.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you, Mr. Miller. Our vice chairman, the former chairman of this subcommittee, has joined us. Mr. Stearns, any comments?

Mr. STEARNS. No, thank you.

Mr. MORAN. We appreciate very much again your interest, your time, and your day here on Capitol Hill. We look forward to working with you as we pursue this issue. Thank you.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you.

Mr. MORAN. Our next panel is Mr. Resty Supnet, President of the Filipino World War II Veterans Foundation of San Diego County, accompanied by Mr. Romy Monteyro; Mr. Patrick Ganio, President of the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans; Ms. Susan Espiritu Maquindang, Executive Director of the Filipino-American Service Group; and Ms. Lourdes Santos Tancinco, President of the San Francisco Veterans Equity Center.

I would like to welcome this panel. Thank you very much for your time. We look forward to hearing your testimony.

STATEMENTS OF RESTY SUPNET, PRESIDENT, FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERANS FOUNDATION OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY, ACCOMPANIED BY: ROMY MONTEYRO; PATRICK GANIO, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN COALITION FOR FILIPINO VETERANS; SUSAN ESPIRITU MAQUINDANG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FILIPINO-AMERICAN SERVICE GROUP; AND MS. LOURDES SANTOS TANCINCO, ESQ., PRESIDENT, SAN FRANCISCO VETERANS EQUITY CENTER

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Monteyro is going to testify on behalf of Mr. Supnet.

STATEMENT OF RESTY SUPNET

Mr. MONTEYRO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Romy Monteyro. I am a retired colonel of the Philippine Army. But previous to that, I served 4 years in the U.S. Navy. I am obviously not a World War II veteran. I am here to represent Resty Supnet, the president of the World War II Filipino Veterans Federation of San Diego County.

Hunger, disease and death were common. Pillage, rape and other violent abuses were routine. Captured Filipino and American soldiers were savagely tortured. Some were put to death with a bayonet or sword just to save a bullet. A bullet was more precious than human life. All this was also true with civilians suspected of rebellious acts. It didn't make a difference with the cruel occupiers whether they were young or old, or even pregnant women; no one was spared.

The suspects were brought before interrogators who routinely employed inhumane methods of extracting information from helpless victims. Two examples of these were pulling fingernails with a pair of pliers, one after the other, until the hapless victims either talked or passed out. Another form of torture was the water cure, where water is hosed into the mouth, and then stomping on the stomach. Other times suspects were threatened with the death of their parents, spouses, children, brothers, sisters or anyone close to them. These threats, more often than not, were carried out.

Such were the atrocities committed in the Philippines by the Japanese occupiers during World War II. It has been more than half a century since the Imperial Military forces of Japan lorded it over my native land, but the painful memories still linger in my 75-year-old mind.

My father was a businessman who was tortured by the dreaded Kempeitai or secret police, the Japanese version of the German Gestapo, after his unsuccessful attempt to deny ownership of a revolver. Someone must have tipped off the enemy that he had a gun. He was beaten so severely that shortly after, he became seriously ill and subsequently died. The lack of proper medical attention and medication contributed to my father's untimely demise. Our general store was looted early in the war. Later on, our house was burned to the ground. Like others who refused to cooperate with the enemy, my family lived in misery and constantly in fear of our lives.

I was barely 16 years old when I joined the guerrilla movement in Northern Luzon on May 7, 1943. Guerrillas were organized throughout the Philippines after the fall of Bataan and Corregidor on April 9 and May 6, 1942, respectively. These resistance fighters were later on integrated into the U.S. Army Forces in the Philippines, or USAFIP.

In his proclamation honoring the Filipino veterans, then-President Bill Clinton said, "Their many guerrilla actions slowed the Japanese takeover of the Western Pacific region and allowed U.S. Forces time to build and prepare for the allied counterattack on Japan."

I was privileged to have been one of the seven Filipino veterans selected to witness President Clinton sign the proclamation.

As guerrillas, we were on the wanted list of the Japanese, dead or alive. Our identities were not known to the enemy unless someone told them. Unfortunately, there were a few of our countrymen, perhaps forced by threat of death or starvation, who turned informants. It was part of our duty as guerrillas to seek and destroy those informants before they could do further damage to the resistance movement. Thus, when we found out that one of them was from our hometown, I personally set a trap for his capture.

The Japanese somehow learned that I played a major role in the disappearance of their spy. In no time, I was taken into custody. I was interrogated and tortured by a certain Captain Hamasaki, the garrison commander. He wanted me to name those who are in the roster of guerrillas in our area. I told him nothing in spite of the terrible pain he inflicted on me.

God must have given me strength and courage that day because I was able to hang on. Frustrated in his attempt to extract information from me, my tormentor repeatedly hit me with his 2-foot-long steel baton. I thought my end has come. But thanks to God, for unknown reasons, the Japanese captain had me released before I lost consciousness.

Making sure no one was following me, I returned to our command center. I was later assigned to a camouflaged outpost where I could observe the enemy's activities and relay them to headquarters. Armed with Springfield '03 rifles of World War I vintage, captured enemy weapons and homemade bombs, we ambushed Japanese convoys. We harassed the enemy wherever and whenever we could, with what weapons and explosives we could get our hands on.

Days, weeks and months passed. Inevitably, we became physically weak due to lack of proper nutrition. We seemed to be hun-

gry all the time. Our ranks were also ravaged by disease and there was no medicine available. But we kept on, we persevered, inspired by the promise of General Douglas MacArthur to return.

And return he did. On October 20, 1944, he landed on Leyte at the head of the American liberation forces, and the bloody recapture of the Philippines began. At last we had modern weapons to fight with. We were supplied by plane and by submarine, off-loading the much-needed supplies practically under the noses of the Japanese, who were no more than five miles away. The provisions included medicines and a new type of food the GIs called K-rations.

With our morale high and physical strength recovered, we fought on while waiting for the U.S. Forces to land in our area. We didn't have to wait too long. About 2 months after the Leyte landing, we met with American forces and guided them in the northward movement in Luzon. By February 1945, Japanese resistance was fast collapsing, eventually ending with the surrender of its main army, headed by General Tomoyuki Yamashita, the conqueror of Singapore and Malaya.

With the end of our guerrilla activities, I was eager to go home and resume my studies. But out of ignorance of a misinformed youngster, I neglected to report to the Army Processing Center to get my discharge papers. I didn't think they were that important. But I would soon realize that they were the only documents that could be used to verify my guerrilla service.

After graduating from high school on April 18, 1946, I enlisted in the Philippine Scouts, a regular unit of the U.S. Army. On September 24, 1947, I received a Dependency Honorable Discharge certificate per my own request. My father was gone and that left me as the principal breadwinner of the family of three younger brothers and one younger sister. My pay in the Philippine Scouts was not adequate for our support.

Forty-five years later I immigrated to the U.S. And subsequently took my oath of allegiance as a naturalized American citizen on April 10, 1992. I have been active in veterans affairs, especially in the effort to pass the equity bill. I was commander of AMVETS Post No. 1946 and currently Commander, Filipino World War II Veterans Federation of San Diego County.

It has been 57 years since World War II ended. Today is a special day for Filipino veterans. This is the first time that we are afforded the opportunity to speak on issues concerning us before a congressional committee, this one specifically relating to our health care. We are very thankful indeed.

But more than just health care, it is my fervent hope that my testimony before this august body would stir the distinguished lawmakers here present to turn their eyes on a much larger need. For a long time now, we have been hoping and waiting for the passage of the equity bill which would give us parity with our American comrades in arms in World War II. We fought side by side against a common enemy. We served under the same Commander in Chief and commanding general.

We suffered together the pain of inhumane atrocities visited upon us by a cruel enemy. We Filipinos rallied to the Stars and Stripes when the order was issued. We marched into battle and endured the bitter taste and humiliation of defeat and untold hard-

ships as prisoners of war. But when the opportunity presented itself, we continued to fight until victory was won. But while we Filipinos marched into battle with American soldiers, we were not allowed to join the victory parade. Our services were declared, in 1946, in the infamous Rescission Act, as “not” service rendered in the U.S. Armed Forces. I wonder if we fought as members of the Japanese Army?

This is discrimination, pure and simple.

Mr. STEARNS (presiding). Can I ask you to summarize? Are you almost finished? We have a 5-minute opening statement rule and your time has expired. But I want to give you ample time. Do you have much more?

Mr. MONTEYRO. Just two more paragraphs, sir.

This is discrimination, pure and simple. If America only recognized our wartime service, we would not be here today, begging you to give us the benefits now long overdue. There aren't many of us left, and our numbers continue to dwindle every day. Soon we will all be gone. Will Uncle Sam wait until there are only just a handful of us so that his deep pockets may not be deprived of the few dollars due us?

In all fairness, Congress must admit that the passage of the equity bill is long overdue. Its immediate passage is not only a noble thing to do, it is the only right thing to do, in keeping with the long American tradition of fairness and justice for all.

Mr. STEARNS. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Supnet appears on p. 91.]

[The prepared statement of Mr. Monteyro appears on p. 96.]

Mr. MORAN. Ms. Maquindang.

STATEMENT OF SUSAN ESPIRITU MAQUINDANG

Ms. MAQUINDANG. Good afternoon. First of all, I would like to thank the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health, Chairman Jerry Moran, Honorable Congressman Bob Filner, and members of the committee and your staff for allowing me to testify today.

My name is Susan Espiritu Maquindang. I am the daughter of a Filipino World War II Veteran. I am also the Executive Director of the Filipino-American Service Group, Incorporated, FASGI. We are a nonprofit social service agency that provides social services to low-income and homeless individuals from the Asian Pacific Islander population in Los Angeles County. FASGI started in October of 1981, when a homeless Filipino World War II veteran with mental health problems was found sleeping in the garage of Mrs. Remedios Geaga, one of the founding members of our agency.

Since then, FASGI has assisted thousands of Filipino American World War II veterans for various services.

I am concerned that my presentation will in part be perceived as a complaint against those who have actually tried to correct a wrong committed over a half century ago. It is my impression that this subcommittee, and indeed most Members of the current Congress, have tried to correct the wrong created by the Rescission Act of 1946.

That puts me in the awkward position of asking for a morally necessary solution to a problem which has festered for five decades.

Worse still, I am here asking that some of the reforms you instituted be altered because they have consequences no one intended.

Please bear with me. I trust your good intentions and your good faith. The problem is that you cannot restore health to people who have lived 55 years without adequate medical care. When the U.S. Turned its back on the Filipino American veterans in the late 1940s, the decision had health consequences on the men who were left without care.

Cognizant of this reality, FASGI obtained a grant from California Wellness Foundation and California Endowment to study the health of the sample population of Filipino American veterans who are still alive and living in Los Angeles.

The result is the study which I sent to you last week, which I am again offering for your information. You have it in your file.

This is the only study of its kind. It documents several unique issues:

First, there is a very high rate of depression and an even a more alarming instance of suicidal thoughts. While such psychological dysfunctions are common among all older people, the rates among Filipino American veterans are much higher. Unfortunately, the diagnosis is almost as painful as the disorder.

In an effort to create some minimal care for the Filipino American veterans of World War II, Congress enabled the population to immigrate to the U.S. And obtain citizenship. In doing so, each emigrating veteran is also eligible for medical care and for other welfare benefits. This was far less than they were promised in 1942, but better than nothing at all. Unfortunately, requiring them to come to the U.S. Dislocates them from friends, family and culture. The results are depression, and even suicide.

The problem is that each of these men, now all in their late seventies and early eighties, find themselves having to make a terrible choice. They can get competent medical care while living in the United States which is a foreign culture to them. The cultural adjustment is painful. It causes stress and depression in their daily lives.

Alternatively, they can return to the Philippines and live in a society they understand and know and have the comfort of lifelong friends and relatives. In doing so, however, they give up most of the medical care they need. Requiring such a choice of men who have been repeatedly denied their lawful entitlement is cruel and unnecessary.

Those wishing to return to their homes should be provided with medical care in the Philippines—and the Filipino World War II veterans who are residing in the Philippines as well. That may be a difficult pill to swallow, but it is the only realistic choice for a major portion of the World War II veterans.

Second, many of these men have medical problems which would not be nearly as severe if they had been treated earlier. Had they received the benefits promised, they would have gotten earlier medical diagnosis and intervention and their blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, and other diseases would not be as serious as today.

In short, they now need more care than otherwise necessary. Again these issues need to be addressed.

Finally, there is very little time to act. The World War II veterans are now in their 70s and 90s, and over 2,500 die each year. If Congress doesn't act soon, there will be no one left.

Phrased another way, each day the remedy is delayed, nearly 10 more Filipino-American Veterans slip beyond the reach of your assistance. This is your last chance to correct a wrong. While it is now half a century old, I believe you are men of good intention; and now it is time for those intentions to be converted into law. The passing of H.R. 491 is a big step toward the process of giving full benefits they really deserve.

Mr. STEARNS. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Maquindang appears on p. 101.]

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Ganio, welcome.

STATEMENT OF PATRICK GANIO

Mr. GANIO. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of this committee, fellow veterans, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

My name is Patrick Ganio, Sr., National President of the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans. I am a World War II veteran, a survivor of Bataan and Corregidor, a former prisoner of war, a recognized guerilla and a Purple Heart Medallist for wound in combat during the liberation campaign of the Philippines in 1945.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity given me to testify before your committee on the issue of whether or not Filipino World War II veterans are to be extended health care benefits in the United States and in the Philippines. It is my great honor to be invited. In speaking before this honorable committee, I represent over 4,000 of my members across the United States and in the Philippines represented by our very leader in the Philippines, Colonel Manuel Ocampo.

Outright, Mr. Chairman, it is my view that, with respect to public policy to care for those who fought the battle, that our government is bound to provide health care to our veterans wherever they choose to live, be here in the United States or in the Philippines. Where our generals and the World War II veterans are in the twilight of their lives, health care is an urgent need.

We have before this honorable committee today two legislation, H.R. 4904 and S. 392 that offers health care to our Filipino veterans. As well, we expect the same excuse of budgetary constraint.

On the problem of funding, Mr. Chairman, I wish to offer some historical facts of our service to America that is savings of the American dollar, that this is a feat in U.S. Military history that saved 15 billions of dollars and thousands of American lives. Then for the purpose of legislating the Recission Act of 1946, General Omar Bradley, then the veterans' administrator, reported to the committee I wish to make a \$3.2 billion compensation benefits for Filipino veterans as special obligation before they grant them independence of the Philippines.

Congress provided only \$200 million. What about the savings in years that we were not given any benefit at all and the savings made by reason of mortality for years of crusading for the benefits we deserve? Certainly many have passed away. When our war on

terrorism came to pass, billions and billions of dollars poured into foreign aid but none to Filipino veterans.

Mr. Chairman, how much more sacrifice do you want us to make so that this government can save more dollars before we can be able to get the benefits we deserve? Or how many more of us surviving would you want to pass away, if not for all of us to die in the next 5 years just to save America's dollars?

Pardon me, Mr. Chairman, for asking these questions. We appreciate your patience and interest to give us the opportunity to be heard in this forum, a process we certainly cannot find in any other political systems.

Mr. Chairman, notwithstanding the Recission Act, the validity of our military service for purposes of rights, privileges and benefits for service-connected disability, survivors benefits, is implicitly recognized. To us, this is not the real issue. The issue is whether or not this government, Congress and the administration of this great Nation as in the past can ever in conscience have the moral will to give us what we deserve in the light of due justice which this great country stands for.

Mr. Chairman and the honorable members of this committee, we appeal for your support for approval into law our legislation on health care and with the modest pension or the medical allowance of hundred dollar a month for Americans' needs of our veterans in the Philippines for medicine and travel to medical centers and hospital which, if done, will be a triumph of due justice. What we are asking now, Mr. Chairman, I am sure may just be a drop in the bucket of what we save for America for this very issue indeed as American nationals.

We believe you have not forgotten us. We believe you won't let us down. We hope that President Bush will finally resolve our long-standing benefits claim to right the wrong done to us. For justice delayed is justice denied. God bless America.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ganio, with attachment, appears on p. 105.]

Mr. STEARNS. Ms. Tancinco, your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF LOURDES SANTOS TANCINCO, ESQ.

Ms. TANCINCO. Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the subcommittee, good afternoon.

My name is Lourdes Santos Tancinco. I represent the National Network on Veterans Equity, which is a coalition of different organizations advocating for veterans equity. We have submitted different resolution in a statement which I have previously submitted and request, Mr. Chairman, that that be made a part of the record.

Mr. STEARNS. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. TANCINCO. I also represent the San Francisco Veterans Equity Center, which is an agency that serves the needs of thousands of Filipino World War II veterans in the San Francisco Bay area. I am also an attorney practicing immigration law.

Since 1993, I have provided pro bono legal services to countless of these veterans. In this capacity, I have witnessed unfortunate plight of our Filipino veterans.

You already know the facts. Our Filipino veterans fought under the American flag during World War II, as ordered by President Roosevelt. After the war, this Congress passed the Recission Act of 1946 which stripped Filipinos of status as U.S. Soldiers, taking away the military benefits they deserve. In 1990, a law passed which gave the Filipino veterans their U.S. Citizenship. That is after half a century of struggle to obtain their right to citizenship.

Since then, 26,000 veterans, mostly in their 70s and 80s, have come to the United States. Leaving their status back home to find a better life, these veterans found themselves not in greener pastures but in tiny hotel rooms in the red light district of San Francisco.

When they come to me for legal aid, they tell me about the hardships of having not enough resources, of no one to go to for help. Like most people their age, they suffer from pneumonia, high blood pressure, heart ailments, diabetes and cancer; and because majority of these veterans from no family here, I have had to take care of these veterans personally.

In 1998, a few of us in the communities established the Veterans Equity Center to respond to the needs of these veterans. To date, we have served over 1,100 Filipino veterans in the Center. We have seen many of our veterans suffer from anxiety and depression, but despite their dire situation, the Filipino veterans choose to live proudly. Their memories of the homeland and stories of bravery during the war sustain them through their daily lives.

Except for a handful with service-connected disabilities, the majority of these veterans are covered under Medicare and Medi-Cal, not under the VA system except for service-connected disabilities. Most of them rely on SSI payments. Many of our veterans have died alone in their hospital beds in their \$400 month hotel rooms and even on the streets.

One of our clients at the Center was sickly and decided to go back to the Philippines. He could not afford to live alone in his physical condition, and his SSI payment was not enough to pay for health care. On his way home to the Philippines, he died on the plane.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of this subcommittee, each time a Filipino veteran dies, we in the Filipino community feel the loss and the pain, knowing that we as a nation let our veterans die without true recognition. It is a given that the greatest generation is diminishing in numbers, that the figures on who are still residing here and who are in the Philippines may no longer be accurate.

At the Veterans Center we have witnessed how fast this population decreases. The recently introduced health care bill for Filipino veterans, H.R. 4904, addresses the issue of health care; and we appreciate the continuing commitment of our representative, Representative Filner and Mr. Chairman, commitment to the welfare of the veterans. We support this bill. But the Filipino veterans deserve more.

Representative Gilman and Representative Filner have also introduced H.R. 491. This will restore the Filipino soldiers of World War II their U.S. Veteran status. The effects of the Recission Act of 1946 should now be reversed. Let our veterans enjoy the last

years of their lives with dignity. Our veterans risked their lives and made untold sacrifices to defend our freedom, the freedom that you and I enjoy.

Mr. STEARNS. Thank you very much.

Ms. TANCINCO. Just one more paragraph.

Like the Navajo code talkers who are finally getting worldwide recognition for their service and valor during World War II, the Filipino World War II, ours and yours, too, deserve to be recognized and given the justice they rightfully deserve.

Thank you for the time and opportunity to testify.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Tancinco, with attachments, appears on p. 111.]

Mr. STEARNS. Let me thank our witnesses for their opening statements and your advocacy for a very, very important cause and your taking your time to come here and particularly you are coming from San Francisco and I know you are very busy, too. So we appreciate the opportunity to hear your comments.

I now recognize the ranking member, Mr. Filner.

Mr. FILNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just some observations, if I may.

I think all of your statements were very articulate and also pointed to the fact that we have more to do. Even if we pass H.R. 4904, which I hope we will, that is just a step. I think many of us recognize that and will continue to work for this cause.

There has been a lot of thanks going around earlier in the day. What has kept this issue alive is the veterans and their supporters, their organizations, their sons and daughters. Romy Monteyro, for example, has written many columns about this and not always agreed with me, but he has worked to make sure the public is kept informed and understand that this is a real issue. To all of your organizations and the people you represent, some of whom you saw in the film who actually went to jail on behalf of their beliefs, we thank all of you for all of your work.

I want to mention the person who introduced me to the cause, General Tagumpay Nanadiego, who was the special representative of the President of the Philippines on behalf of veterans, who worked out of the Filipino embassy. He wanted to be here today and just could not make it.

I do want to thank someone who has worked in my office for 10 years on this issue, Sharon Schultze, who has worked day and night with me on these issues for a long time. So thank you, Sharon, for all the work you have done.

We take to heart your sense that we have to do more, and we thank you for bringing us this far.

If any of you want to comment on anything more—just give another minute or so. Anything else you would like to say?

Ms. TANCINCO. Representative Filner and all members of the subcommittee, I think we would just like to emphasize just what you have said, that if and when H.R. 4904 is passed, we will be back here testifying on the full equity for the Filipino veterans.

Ms. MAQUINDANG. We appreciate your assistance and support. We are looking forward for your full support for H.R. 4904.

Mr. GANIO. Also, on behalf of Filipino veterans we give our thanks to the members of the committee and all of us who support

us who is present this afternoon and to everybody and the Members of Congress have been very supportive to our cause, particularly Congressman Gilman, Congressman Filner and Senator Inouye and many more. Thank you very much.

Mr. MONTEYRO. I just want to apologize for the overtime. I did not realize that the red light was on, and thank you for the time that you gave me. I hope you invite me again when the equity bill is on the floor. Thank you very much.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Boozman?

Mr. BOOZMAN. I don't have any questions, and I would like to thank the panel for your testimony and for being here.

Mr. STEARNS. I will have the next panel and thank you.

Our final panel today represents three major veterans' organizations. We have Ms. Joy Ilem from the Disabled American Veterans; Mr. Richard Weidman, Vietnam Veterans of America; and Mr. Jim Fischl of the American Legion.

We welcome our witnesses and look forward to your opening statements, and if you would just have a seat.

STATEMENTS OF JOY J. ILEM, ASSISTANT NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS; RICHARD WEIDMAN, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA; AND JIM FISCHL, DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION, THE AMERICAN LEGION

Mr. STEARNS. Ms. Ilem, if you are ready, we will have you start at your convenience.

STATEMENT OF JOY J. ILEM

Ms. ILEM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee. Good afternoon. We appreciate the opportunity to appear before you and present the views of the Disabled American Veterans concerning health care for Filipino World War II veterans within the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The Health Care for Filipino World War II Veterans Act would in part authorize VA to provide hospital, nursing home care and medical services on the same basis as for U.S. Veterans, for Commonwealth Army veterans or new Filipino scouts who reside in the United States and our citizens lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States. This legislation would expand eligibility and provide equity of access to VA health care for this deserving group of Filipino veterans. Its purpose is beneficial, and we do not object to favorable consideration of this measure by the subcommittee.

DAV recognizes the historic contributions made by Filipino veterans during World War II as members of the U.S. Armed Forces. Measured in these terms, we believe these veterans should be granted access to the VA health care system and that additional resources should be provided to VA to deliver those services.

However, we are concerned about the current state of the VA medical care system, specifically the inability of the Department to provide timely health care services to veterans, including service-connected veterans, at many VA facilities. VA has reported that it

has reached capacity at many facilities as a result of rising costs for health care and increased demand for medical services.

Despite our continuing efforts to obtain an adequate budget for VA health care, the cumulative effects of insufficient health care funding have now resulted in the rationing of medical care. Without question, Filipino World War II veterans deserve access to VA health care. However, introducing more veterans into the VA places further strain on an already overburdened and underfunded system.

Congress must address these issues if it plans to expand VA health care to more veterans. We believe the situation has reached a critical point, and we have asked the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee to consider a proposal to shift VA medical care funding from a discretionary to a mandatory program. We believe this will eliminate the year-to-year uncertainty about funding levels that have prevented VA from being able to adequately plan for and meet the growing needs of veterans seeking treatment. Clearly, we are indebted to Filipino veterans for their sacrifices and contributions during World War II.

In closing, we want to thank the subcommittee for holding this hearing and for your concern for the health and well-being of many elderly Filipino veterans. Your efforts to address their needs and provide the recognition they deserve is admirable.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement; and I will be happy to answer any question that you or any members of the subcommittee may have. Thank you.

Mr. STEARNS. Thank you, Ms. Ilem.

Mr. FILNER. I think for the record you might want to make a correction. Your statement says to shift VA medical care from a discretionary to mandatory. I think your oral statement said the reverse. So, for the record, I want to—

Mr. STEARNS. Unanimous consent, your statement will be corrected.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ilem appears on p. 121.]

STATEMENT OF JIM FISCHL

Mr. FISCHL. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

The American Legion appreciates the opportunity to present our testimony here today and would like to commend Mr. Filner for all his work that he has done on this bill.

I will briefly attempt to summarize our feelings on this bill. So much has been said and I will try not to repeat everything.

For the last 55 years Filipino World War II veterans have sought equal recognition of their military service rendered under the flag of the United States during World War II. They fought and died alongside American soldiers and yet still they struggle today to be recognized for their contributions and their sacrifice.

It is estimated that one million Filipinos fought for the United States during World War II. Today, there are less than 60,000 of these veterans still living. They have, over the course of many years, among other things, won eligibility for U.S. Citizenship and expanded their access to health care and burial benefits for certain Filipino veterans.

While the American Legion is pleased with the progress that has already been made with respect to World War II Filipino veterans, much more remains to be done. We urge the enactment of legislation that would extend improvements of compensation, pension and health care benefits of these veterans, irrespective of their present country of residence.

The American Legion has in the past supported legislation that, if enacted, would provide veterans of the Filipino Commonwealth Army, recognized guerillas and their Filipino scouts the same war-time status and benefits as U.S. Veterans. They bled on the battlefield for America. They died while defending the U.S. flag. It is time to correct the inequities.

As the previous speaker has put it so well, it is about integrity, it is about honor, it is about respect. There is little that I can add to all that has been said so well today, but I would like to say that the American Legion and its 2.8 million members are solidly behind the proposals of this bill, and we very much look forward to celebrating victory, and we intend to celebrate that victory.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Fischl appears on p. 122.]

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Weidman.

STATEMENT OF RICK WEIDMAN

Mr. WEIDMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We also join all of the witnesses here today in commending you, commending you, Chairman Moran, Mr. Filner certainly and Mr. Evans and many other folks for their staunch support in pushing forward on these proposals for what really is a matter of simple justice.

I would also like to make a comment, if I may. There was some discussion earlier prior to your arriving, sir, about celebrity witnesses. I had the opportunity to speak briefly with His Excellency, Albert Del Rosario; and just to correct the record a little bit, he feels exactly the same way that we at Vietnam Veterans of America feel, which is the real celebrity who was here today, even though not always regarded that way by our friends in the fourth estate, are the World War II veterans sitting behind me. That is who should be recognized.

Vietnam Veterans of America supports provisions of both H.R. 4904 and urges the House to go further and support the provisions of H.R. 491. One of our founding—in fact, the founding principle of Vietnam Veterans of America is that no generation of American veterans shall abandon another generation of American veterans. Vietnam veterans in this country know what it is like to be unjustly left out. We fought for our own place and to take care of our own folks, but, by God, we are not going to abandon our fathers. We are not going to abandon our uncles from Korea, our fathers from World War II, our sons and daughters from the Gulf War, or our veterans who will be exiting the military subsequent to the Afghani operations, and that includes our spiritual fathers in the Philippine scouts who fought so bravely alongside many of our biological fathers.

My dad served in China, Burma, India and then in the Pacific during World War II and, therefore, had the opportunity to serve

with Filipino scouts and told me many stories about that when I was a kid. It is time to fulfill the covenant. And I use the word covenant and we at Vietnam Veterans of America use the word covenant advisedly. It is deeper than a contract. It is deeper than a promise. It is a covenant between the people of the United States and our citizens and allies, in this case, the Filipinos, whom we asked to put up life and limb in defense of the Constitution of the United States to make sure that wherever they are harmed by virtue of military service, whether it is health-wise, economically, emotionally, that we do everything humanly possible to make them as whole as possible; and we would argue that includes our brethren.

The law of 1946 was grossly wrong. It was the same people who on the Subcommittee on Veterans in 1944 tried to kill the GI bill because they did not want to treat people of color correctly, and that prevailed in committee by one vote, and we would urge this committee and the Congress as a whole as well as the Senate to strike that wrong and move forward on what really are American values towards fulfilling that covenant that American people have with our veterans.

One last thing, we would be remiss if we did not say a couple of things about resources. Mr. Filner, you noted that "it ain't over until it's over," quoting that famous New York Yankee. I am a Yankees fan, being from New York. But being over is not having it signed by the President. Fulfillment in reality is having adequate funding for the VA system to function to all the persons, all the veterans and certain spouses who the Congress has authorized to use that system. It takes the dough to make it go.

Mandatory spending is something that VVA strongly favors, but if I may suggest there are more steps beyond H.R. 491. Our experience with legislation is that, every time we think we have got it, someone moves it; and we will have to take further steps to address the specific problems of Filipino veterans. It does no good to give folks access to a health care system that isn't working for anyone; and, therefore, we pledge not only to work with our Filipino brethren but very closely with this committee in order to ensure that there is the money to have a strong system and access to a system where it is, in fact, a benefit.

I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Weidman appears on p. 124.]

Mr. STEARNS. I thank the witnesses for their comments and their articulate presentation, and Mr. Filner is recognized.

Mr. FILNER. Just a few observations, if I may.

I accept your definition, Mr. Weidman, of it ain't over until it is over, even though you are a Yankee fan. Someone of your humanity—

Mr. WEIDMAN. I also root for the Knicks when they aren't playing the Yankees.

Mr. FILNER. I grew up with the Brooklyn Dodgers, so we just hated the Yankees, as you know. But I think the sum total of your statements that I would take as follows:

Number one, I applaud your courage in taking this stance; and we will need you to work on your membership who may not fully understand it. That is, if you don't understand the issue, it may

look like we are giving money that we don't have to somebody else; and that is a situation we hope you will join us to help us educate people.

Secondly, you are absolutely right. If you don't have a system that is adequately funded for all of us, then we are not helping the Filipino-Americans either. So our charge is to do it all right and include in that—the veterans we have spoken of today to make sure the system is funded for everyone. And I appreciate your constantly keeping that before us as our charge.

Thank you all for your testimony.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Boozman? Mr. Evans?

Well, let me conclude. There are many stories of heroism in the Filipino community. However, I would like to remind the audience of one that I believe exemplifies the courage and spirit the guerillas showed. It is described vividly in the book *Ghost Soldiers* by Hampton Sides.

On January 30, 1945, a group of U.S. Rangers and two bands of Filipino guerillas stormed through Japanese lines 60 miles north of Manila to the prison camp of Cabanatuan. While the Rangers freed the 486 emaciated, tortured POWs, the guerillas held off nearly 800 Imperial Japanese Army troops. Then the Rangers trudged back to the Filipino guerillas, carrying the weakest POWs on their backs. Meanwhile, the guerillas orchestrated the entire community into an organized escape caravan, using ox-carts pulled by carabow grinding along behind the lines to safety.

I have here a photograph of that Ranger battalion and their Filipino guerilla brothers. By unanimous consent, I make it part of the record.

(See p. 144.)

Mr. STEARNS. I think we can all safely say at least those POWs, if not the entire civilization of this world, owes a debt of gratitude to the Filipino World War II soldiers; and we ought to pay that debt. On behalf of the chairman, Mr. Moran, I conclude our subcommittee; and I thank all of for your attendance.

[Whereupon, at 5:30 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

I

107TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 4904

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 11, 2002

Mr. FILNER (for himself, Mr. MORAN of Kansas, Mr. EVANS, Mr. GILMAN, Mr. CUNNINGHAM, Ms. PELOSI, Mr. ROHRABACHER, Mrs. MINK of Hawaii, Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD, Ms. LOFGREN, Mr. SCOTT, and Mr. UNDERWOOD) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A B I L L

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve benefits for Filipino veterans of World War II and surviving spouses of such veterans, 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 "Health Care for Fili-
5 pino World War II Veterans Act".

1 **SEC. 2. ELIGIBILITY FOR HEALTH CARE OF CERTAIN ADDI-**
2 **TIONAL FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERANS**
3 **RESIDING IN THE UNITED STATES.**

4 The text of section 1734 of title 38, United States
5 Code, is amended to read as follows:

6 “(a) The Secretary shall furnish hospital and nursing
7 home care and medical services to any individual described
8 in subsection (b) in the same manner, and subject to the
9 same terms and conditions, as apply to the furnishing of
10 such care and services to individuals who are veterans as
11 defined in section 101(2) of this title. Any disability of
12 an individual described in subsection (b) that is a service-
13 connected disability for purposes of this subchapter (as
14 provided for under section 1735(2) of this title) shall be
15 considered to be a service-connected disability for purposes
16 of furnishing care and services under the preceding sen-
17 tence.

18 “(b) Subsection (a) applies to any individual who is
19 a Commonwealth Army veteran or new Philippine Scout
20 and who—

21 “(1) is residing in the United States; and

22 “(2) is a citizen of the United States or an
23 alien lawfully admitted to the United States for per-
24 manent residence.”.

1 **SEC. 3. RATE OF PAYMENT OF DEPENDENCY AND INDEM-**
2 **NITY COMPENSATION FOR SURVIVING**
3 **SPOUSES OF CERTAIN FILIPINO VETERANS.**

4 (a) **RATE OF PAYMENT.**—Subsection (c) of section
5 107 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by insert-
6 ing “, and under chapter 13 of this title,” after “chapter
7 11 of this title”.

8 (b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendment made by
9 subsection (a) shall take effect on the date of the enact-
10 ment of this Act and shall apply to benefits paid for
11 months beginning on or after that date.

12 **SEC. 4. RATE OF PAYMENT OF COMPENSATION BENEFITS**
13 **FOR NEW PHILIPPINE SCOUTS RESIDING IN**
14 **THE UNITED STATES.**

15 (a) **RATE OF PAYMENT.**—Section 107 of title 38,
16 United States Code, as amended by section 3(a), is further
17 amended—

18 (1) in the second sentence of subsection (b), by
19 striking “Payments” and inserting “Except as pro-
20 vided in subsection (c) or (d), payments”; and

21 (2) in subsection (c)—

22 (A) by inserting “or (b)” after “subsection
23 (a)” the first place it appears; and

24 (B) by striking “subsection (a)” the second
25 place it appears and inserting “the applicable
26 subsection”.

1 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
2 subsection (a) shall take effect on the date of the enact-
3 ment of this Act and shall apply to benefits paid for
4 months beginning on or after that date.

5 **SEC. 5. BURIAL BENEFITS FOR NEW PHILIPPINE SCOUTS.**

6 (a) BENEFIT ELIGIBILITY.—Subsection (b)(2) of sec-
7 tion 107 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—
8 (1) by striking “and”; and
9 (2) by inserting “, 23, and 24 (to the extent
10 provided for in section 2402(8) of this title)” after
11 “1312(a)”.

12 (b) BENEFIT RATE FOR CERTAIN PERSONS IN THE
13 UNITED STATES.—Subsection (d) of such section is
14 amended—

15 (1) in paragraph (1), by inserting “or sub-
16 section (b), as the case may be,” after “subsection
17 (a)”;

18 (2) in paragraph (2), by inserting “, or whose
19 service is described in subsection (b) and who dies
20 on or after the date of the enactment of the Health
21 Care for Filipino World War II Veterans Act” in the
22 matter preceding subparagraph (A) after “this sub-
23 section”.

1 (c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 2402(8) of
2 such title is amended by inserting “or 107(b)” after
3 “107(a)”.

4 (d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by
5 subsection (a) shall apply with respect to deaths occurring
6 on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

○

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MORAN

I welcome witnesses and others in attendance at this Subcommittee hearing to deal with issues related to certain Filipino veterans' difficulties with access to VA health care. I thank Subcommittee Ranking Member Bob Filner for his advocacy in helping establish the basis for this hearing.

Nearly 60 years ago, our fathers and mothers celebrated the end of a terrible war that nearly consumed the whole world. The United States and its allies were victorious, winning freedom over tyranny. Later they witnessed the greatest economic development in recorded history. And today, we enjoy the fruits of all the plenty made possible by veterans in the field and by those back home who produced the means for victory.

Early in the war in the Philippine Islands, then a U.S. possession, our military forces experienced devastation and surrender—but eventually they achieved victory, and that victory was aided immeasurably by tens of thousands of Philippine people who fought with us, who protected our troops, suffered alongside them, and who, as much as anyone, helped earn the Allied victory over the Japanese celebrated on August 15, 1945. As some of our witnesses at today's hearing actually remember, the world breathed much easier after that day.

The Filipinos who worked with our soldiers and marines suffered huge casualties, but they persevered and asked nothing but the freedom of their own people from domination by an outside enemy.

A few of these brave soldiers from that era now live in the United States with us. Several thousands have immigrated here, and they do look to us, in a land of plenty, for humane treatment near the end of their lives.

I believe we can do something to repay their patriotism and sacrifice to freedom by enacting a bill that my colleague Mr. Filner introduced with my cosponsorship, H. R. 4904, the "Health Care for Filipino Veterans Act." Today's hearing is intended to examine some of the issues that this bill and others that are before the Congress would advance, and I look forward to hearing the witnesses on these matters.

I would note for the record that this is an auspicious occasion for several reasons, one of which is that this is the first time an ambassador of a foreign nation has testified before this Subcommittee, and we are honored to have His Excellency, Ambassador Albert del Rosario here to represent his nation before our Subcommittee. Also on the panel, we welcome the Honorable Anthony Principi, U.S. Secretary of Veterans' Affairs. We appreciate your attendance and look forward to your testimonies.

We are also honored to have seven Members of Congress here to testify today, as follows:

Honorable Randy "Duke" Cunningham, of California;
 Honorable Benjamin Gilman of New York;
 Honorable Patsy Mink, from the State of Hawaii;
 Honorable Juanita Millender-McDonald of California;
 Honorable Dana Rohrabacher of California; and,
 Honorable Robert A. Underwood from the Territory of Guam

We appreciate the attendance at this hearing of Mr. Lou Diamond Phillips and Mr. Fritz Friedman, both of Los Angeles, California, and we welcome them to the Subcommittee.

Another witness panel represents organizations concerned about benefits for Filipino veterans, and we appreciate their attendance. They are:

Mr. Resty Supnet, President of the Filipino World War II Veterans Foundation of San Diego County, accompanied by Mr. Romy Monteyro;
 Mr. Patrick Ganio, President of the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans;
 Ms. Susan Espiritu Maquindang, Executive Director of the Filipino-American Service Group; and
 Ms. Lourdes Santos Tancinco, President of the San Francisco Veterans Equity Center.

Our final panel today represents three major veterans' organizations. We have Ms. Joy Ilem from the Disabled American Veterans; Mr. Richard Weidman of Vietnam Veterans of America; and Mr. James Fischl of the American Legion.

We appreciate the valuable insights offered by all at this hearing. World War II ended a long time ago, but as we have heard from these witnesses, the war has a very high cost and here we are, 60 years after the fact, still dealing with the effects of war. This hearing helps us build knowledge about these issues of importance to these veterans, to the Administration, and hopefully before this Congress adjourns, we will be able to deal with some of these matters through legislation

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN FILNER

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for holding this hearing on the issue of health care for Filipino World War II veterans within the Department of Veterans Affairs. I also want to thank my colleagues for being here today.

This is not a normal year. Last September, we discovered anew how important are our freedoms and our liberties, and we have gone to war to defend these freedoms. Likewise, in 1941, we discovered how vulnerable we were, we went to war to defend our nation, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt drafted into the service of the United States Armed Forces the military forces of the Philippines because the Philippines was, at that time, a territory of the U.S.

Neither is this a normal hearing. It is the culmination of almost 60 years of struggle for justice, equity, and honor. After being called to service, the Filipino soldiers of World War II served side-by-side with forces from the United States mainland, exhibited great courage at the epic battles of Bataan and Corregidor, were instrumental in contributing to the successful outcome of the war—after which they were unceremoniously deprived of the veterans' benefits due them by the Congress of 1946.

During this year's Memorial Day concert at the Capitol building, the veterans of the Bataan Death March were recognized and honored. Many in the Death March were soldiers from the United States and many were Filipinos, equally brave and equally suffering. It is proper to recognize and honor these veterans. But while those from the United States are receiving veterans' benefits, many of their Filipino counterparts are not.

In my testimony during the hearing on this issue in 1998, I stated that only 75,000 Filipino World War II veterans were still living. Today there are only 60,000 still alive. The greatest hope of these veterans in their 70s and 80s and the hope of their children and grandchildren is that the honor and benefits that were rescinded in 1946 be granted before the deaths of *all* of the Filipino veterans. There is scarcely a Filipino family today in either the United States or in the Philippines that does not include a World War II veteran or the child of a veteran. I have spoken to literally hundreds and hundreds of Filipinos who were involved in our war effort. I've been to the Philippines. I commemorated Bataan Day on Mount Samat. I visited the POW camp at Tarlac. Today, we must think of justice, of morality, and of dignity. We must take action to establish our honor and the honor and dignity of these brave veterans.

This fight has always been a bi-partisan fight! Senator Inouye has been a leader on this issue. The distinguished Congressman, Benjamin Gilman, and I have worked together through many years to introduce Filipino veteran legislation. The Chairman of this Subcommittee, Mr. Moran, has been quick to support the bill that we have before us today. The Chairman and Ranking Member of the Veterans Affairs Committee, Mr. Smith and Mr. Evans, have been co-sponsors of legislation to correct this problem. My colleague from San Diego, Mr. Cunningham, has been an advocate for Filipino veterans from the very beginning. And you can see before you that the Members testifying are from both sides of the aisle. We are working together to remedy historical injustice and to make good on the promise of America.

Today, the Secretary of the Veterans Affairs Department, Secretary Principi, will be testifying in support of the bill that is before us. I want to especially thank the Secretary for his commitment and dedication to a solution that we can all get behind.

Certainly, H.R. 4904, Health Care for Filipino World War II Veterans (the bill before us) does not accomplish everything. H.R. 491, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act does that, and the passage of H.R. 491 is the ultimate goal. But H.R. 4904 is a significant step. It will provide access to health care for Filipino veterans in the United States, many of whom are ill and desperately in need of assistance. Coupled with the Secretary's promise to provide \$500,000 of medical equipment each year to the Veterans Memorial Hospital (VMMC) in the Philippines, we can begin to address the injustices inflicted by Congress in 1946.

Today we will hear from a wide diversity of witnesses—from the Philippine Ambassador, our friends from Hollywood, Members of Congress, our veterans service organizations, the Secretary of the VA, and undoubtedly most importantly, from Filipino veterans organizations and Filipino veterans themselves. We will learn, first hand, why this issue is so important.

Again, I thank the Chairman and the Committee for allowing us to focus on the contributions of Filipino World War II veterans, in the best American tradition of honor and justice.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN JEFF MILLER

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I am pleased to be with you today. Mr. Ambassador, Mr. Secretary, I would like to thank each of you and the other distinguished members of the panels present, for taking the time to speak with us today. Your input is invaluable as we work toward what is right and best for Filipino veterans of World War II and our nation as a whole.

The VA operates the largest integrated healthcare system in the United States, and is therefore one of America's greatest resources. This is something that we should be very proud of and a resource that we should be eager and willing to use in order to address the challenges that our nation currently faces in ensuring that our duty to our nation's Filipino veterans is fulfilled.

I represent the First Congressional District of Florida. My district is home to five military installations and the largest retired veteran population in our great nation. The issues of importance to veterans across the country are the utmost priorities to many thousands of my constituents. As a member of this committee, I have an opportunity to honor my commitment to serve my country and address these issues on behalf of the veterans of Florida's First District.

Thousands of Filipino men and women responded to President Roosevelt's call for help to preserve peace and democracy in the Philippines. In their battle to restore their independence, the courageous young men and women of the Philippine Islands suffered deeply. These men and women of Filipino-American heritage have not received the benefits provided to their American compatriots with whom they fought side-by-side. Today, some 60 years later, the members of this Committee, our counterparts in the Senate, the VA, and our President have a duty to work vigorously to ensure that the health care needs of Filipino veterans are met.

Again, I thank you all for your testimony today and for your assistance as we do *our duty* for many of our nation's finest.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. LANE EVANS, RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to be here today to offer my support for this landmark legislation to recognize and honor Filipino veterans. H.R. 4904 represents an important, long-overdue victory for a courageous group of combat soldiers.

Early in Bob Filner's congressional career, I conducted a hearing in San Diego on the service of Filipino veterans. We have been deeply moved by the personal accounts of Filipino veterans. I salute Mr. Filner for his leadership. He has been a constant champion over time for the cause of Filipino veterans. I also salute the gentleman from New York, Ben Gilman, for his steadfast support.

I commend Secretary Principi for his leadership. The Secretary has embraced this legislation and has given in his personal commitment. We must seek the high ground and do the right thing for our Filipino comrades in arms. Filipino veterans were there for America when the U.S. called on them half a century ago. Filipino soldiers are there today—standing shoulder to shoulder with our troops in the war against terrorism. We have a debt that must be paid to those who sacrificed much for our freedoms.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

STATEMENT BY SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE before the
House Subcommittee on Health, Committee on Veterans' Affairs
June 13, 2002

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

May I commend you and members of the Committee for holding this hearing on the "Health Care for Filipino World War II Veterans Act." You will be pleased to know that I recently introduced a companion measure in the United States Senate. I also want to commend and thank your colleagues, in particular, Congressmen Bob Filner and Benjamin Gilman, for sponsoring the legislation and for their continued support of Filipino World War II veterans.

Many of you are aware of my continued advocacy on the importance of addressing the plight of Filipino World War II veterans. During the April recess, I had an opportunity to visit the Philippines in my capacity as Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense. Upon landing at Manila Airport, I had my delegation immediately transported to Corrigador for the purposes of reminding ourselves that there was a time when Filipinos stood side by side with American soldiers to fight the common enemy, and that we fought and died together.

As an American, I believe the treatment of Filipino World War II veterans is bleak and shameful. The Philippines became a United States possession in 1898, when it was ceded from Spain following the Spanish-American War. In 1934, the Congress enacted the Philippine Independence Act (Public Law 73-127), which provided a 10-year time frame for the independence of the Philippines. Between 1934 and final independence in 1946, the United States retained certain powers over the Philippines, including the right to call all military forces organized by the newly-formed Commonwealth government into the service of the United States Armed Forces.

The Commonwealth Army of the Philippines was called to serve with the United States Armed Forces in the Far East during World War II, under President Roosevelt's July 26, 1941, military order. The Filipinos who served were entitled to

full veterans' benefits by reason of their active service with our armed forces. Hundreds were wounded in battle and many hundreds died in battle. Shortly after Japan's surrender, the Congress also enacted the Armed Forces Voluntary Recruitment Act of 1945 for the purpose of sending Filipino troops to occupy enemy lands, and to oversee military installations at various overseas locations. These troops were authorized to receive pay and allowances for services performed throughout the Western Pacific. Although hostilities had ceased, wartime service of these troops continued as a matter of law until the end of 1946.

Despite all of their sacrifices, on February 18, 1946, the Congress enacted the Rescission Act of 1946, now codified as Section 107 of Title 38 of the United States Code. The 1946 Act deemed that the service performed by these Filipino veterans would not be recognized as "active service" for the purpose of any U.S. law conferring "rights, privileges, or benefits." Among other things, Section 107 denies Filipino veterans access to health care, particularly for non-service connected disability, and pension benefits. Section 107 also limits service-connected disability and death compensation to 50 percent of what is currently received by their American counterparts.

On May 27, 1946, the Congress enacted the Second Supplemental Surplus Appropriations Rescission Act, which duplicated the language that had eliminated Filipino veterans' benefits under the First Rescission Act. Thus, Filipino veterans who fought in the service of the United States during World War II have been precluded from receiving most veterans' benefits that had been available to them before 1946, and that are available to all other veterans of our armed forces regardless of race, national origin, or citizenship status.

Also, in recognition of their contributions during World War II, the Congress, in March of 1942, amended the Nationality Act of 1940, and granted Filipino citizens the privilege of becoming United States citizens. The law expired on December 31, 1946. However, many Filipino veterans were denied the opportunity to apply for the naturalization benefit because of an executive decision to remove the naturalization

examiner from the Philippines for a nine-month period. The nine-month absence of a naturalization examiner during the filing period was the basis of numerous lawsuits filed by Filipino World War II veterans. On July 17, 1988, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that Filipino World War II veterans had no statutory rights to citizenship under the expired provisions of the Nationality act of 1940.

During the 101st Congress, I authored legislation that granted naturalization to the Filipino World War II veterans. The bill was made a part of the Immigration Act of 1990, which was signed into law on November 29, 1990. Approximately 24,375 veterans took advantage of the naturalization provision, which expired in February, 1995. The naturalization benefit did not, however, confer any veterans' benefits.

Through the Health Care for Filipino World War II Veterans Act and other legislative measures, some strides have been made in correcting the injustices committed against Filipino veterans of World War II. However, more needs to be done to provide equal treatment for the service and sacrifice made by these brave individuals who are already in their twilight years. Of the 120,000 that served in the Commonwealth Army during World War II, there are approximately 59,899 Filipino veterans currently residing in the United States and the Philippines. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Filipino veteran population is expected to decrease to approximately 20,000, or roughly one-third of the current population by 2010.

Throughout the years, I have sponsored several measures to rectify the lack of appreciation America has shown to those gallant men and women who stood in harm's way with our American soldiers and fought the common enemy during World War II. It is time that we, as a nation, recognize our long-standing history and friendship with the Philippines.

Heroes should never be forgotten or ignored; let us not turn our backs on those who sacrificed so much. Let us now work to repay all of these brave men and women for their sacrifices by providing them the veterans' benefits they duly deserve.

Statement of Senator Barbara Boxer
Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on Health Care for Filipino Veterans of World War II
June 13, 2002

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to testify before the Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health. It is an honor to speak to you in support of justice for Filipino veterans of World War II. If ever there has been a case of justice delayed equaling justice denied, this would be it. These veterans sacrificed greatly for the defense of our country, and we owe them a debt that can never be fully repaid.

I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the Ranking Member, my good friend Representative Filner for addressing this very important issue.

Mr. Chairman, thousands of Filipinos fought courageously for the United States during World War II. At the time of the war the Philippines was a United States territory, and the Filipinos who fought alongside American Servicemen were promised full veterans benefits in exchange for their service. After the war, though, these veterans received only a fraction of the benefits that they had been promised.

Over the years, I have strongly supported the rights of these veterans. In the 105th Congress, I cosponsored S. 623, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act. In the 106th Congress, I cosponsored S. 381, to allow Filipino Veterans of World War II to receive a limited SSI benefit. And in both the 106th and the 107th Congress, I was proud to cosponsor the Filipino Veterans Benefits Improvements Act,

that would make Filipino veterans of World War II eligible for VA health benefits and disability compensation.

In the 106th Congress, several laws were enacted to provide limited benefits to these brave men, including SSI benefits and VA medical benefits for service-connected disabilities. While these benefits are a step in the right direction, they do not fulfill the promises made to these soldiers.

I appreciate the efforts of the many legislators, including Senator Inouye and Representatives Filner, Mink, and Gilman, to authorize comprehensive health benefits to the Filipino Veterans of World War II. I applaud the work that has been done so far, and I look forward to the day when Congress gives to these veterans what should have been given to them more than 50 years ago.

For too many years, the Filipino community has rallied for justice for its World War II veterans. It is my sincere hope that we can provide this before another year passes. Let us not forget those who fought so valiantly for the freedom that we enjoy today.

June 13, 2002

Statement of Rep. Barbara Lee

Veterans Affairs Health Committee Hearing on Filipino World War II Veterans

I would like to thank Representative Filner for giving me the opportunity to address the importance of restoring health care benefits to Filipino World War II veterans. I also want to thank the Chairman for holding this hearing on an issue that affects a large Filipino population in my Congressional district.

Today, there are approximately 14,000 surviving Filipino WWII veterans in California, most of whom live in poverty.

When Congress enacted the Rescission Act of 1946, limiting Filipino veterans' eligibility for disability benefits associated with service, it limited their death compensation, and denied the members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army from being recognized as veterans of the United States armed forces.

Despite their military service under the support and command of the United States, our Filipino veterans have been denied benefits.

The Filipino veterans deserve to be properly honored. I am proud to be a cosponsor of H.R. 491, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2001. This bill states that certain services performed before July 1, 1946, in the organized military forces of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts, are to be considered as active military service for purposes of eligibility for veterans' benefits.

The Philippine Commonwealth Army and the special Philippine Scouts deserved these benefits long ago and have suffered from this injustice for far too long. These veterans are in dire need of fundamental health care. We cannot continue to support the status quo and allow our veterans to go without the benefits they deserve.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 491 and to support Filipino veterans who fought in World War II.

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Testimony of Representative Zoe Lofgren in support of HR 4904

More than 60 years ago, on July 26, 1941, brave Filipino men answered President Roosevelt's call to arms and served with great distinction in our war in the South Pacific against the Japanese. They didn't hesitate nor did they ask what was in it for them. The Japanese were particularly cruel to Filipino soldiers, punishing them more harshly for having the courage to stand with America. Indeed, many historians have credited their service with having helped to turn the tide in our favor against the Japanese.

What was their reward for answering President Roosevelt's call? They were abandoned, their sacrifices disgraced as the US denied them the same rights that had been given to other World War II veterans. Before the "Rescission Act," enacted on February 18, 1946, these soldiers were considered U.S. veterans by VA laws.

According to a US Department of Veteran Affairs Study released in January 2001 there were 13,849 Filipino vets residing in the US, and some 46,000 living in the Philippines. Today, there are only about 12,000 veterans left in the US and about 35,000 in the Philippines. I have met with many of these veterans who have settled in my district, in and around San Jose, California. Whenever I meet with them, I am always been impressed by how these proud men still believe they will achieve justice, even in the twilight of their lives.

How can we help achieve the justice they earned with their blood and sacrifice? We can correct this injustice by officially acknowledging their honorable service during World War II. We can help them to receive the full veterans benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs they fought for.

U.S. law argues that they deserve the benefits they seek. Because of the 1990 Immigration and Naturalization Act, some 26,000 of these veterans were naturalized in recognition of their honorable service in World War II. As a result of Public Law 106-419, Filipino veterans who reside in the U.S. may be eligible for full VA burial benefits. If we can recognize their service at the time of their death, why can't we recognize their service while they are still alive?

These men have earned VA health care at VA hospitals, outpatient clinics and nursing homes in the U.S. as well as a clinic in Manila. I congratulate my colleagues, subcommittee chairman, Mr. Moran of Kansas and subcommittee ranking member, Mr. Filner of California for their dedicated efforts to address this inequity. I am proud to support these brave men and I urge this committee to act favorably on this important legislation.

**Statement of Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi
House Committee of Veteran's Affairs, Subcommittee on Health
Health Care of Filipino World War II Veterans
June 13, 2002**

Chairman Moran, thank you for holding this hearing on the health care of Filipino World War II Veterans. I commend the leadership of my colleague from California, Representative Bob Filner for his tireless work to restore overdue benefits for Filipino Veterans.

The people of the Philippines played a vital role in the outcome of World War II. Fighting a ruthless enemy, which at one point controlled most of East Asia, countless Americans and Filipinos sacrificed their lives to uphold democratic principles. Central to allied victory in the Philippines, and therefore in the Pacific theater, were the courageous efforts of Filipino soldiers, scouts and guerillas.

In 1945, some Filipinos came under U.S. military command as special scouts. U.S. law at the time dictated that any person serving actively in the military would be considered a veteran for benefit purposes and these Filipinos should have been eligible for full veteran's benefits. Shortly after the war however, Congress passed the Rescission Act of 1946, which revoked the full benefits eligibility of these soldiers, even though other Filipino soldiers who they fought side by side with eventually became eligible.

The Rescission Act is a scar on the historical record of the United States. In a time of war, we asked for and received the commitment of these Filipino soldiers to serve under U.S. authority. They were fighting for their country, but they were also fighting for the United States.

Under the leadership of Representative Filner, Representative Patsy Mink, Representative Ben Gilman, and others, Congress has restored partial benefits to many Filipino Veterans, but they still have significant health care needs. I am honored to represent a strong and proud Filipino community, and I know well the challenges facing the Filipino Veterans. One of these veterans, Mr. Castro, is a 77-year-old Filipino World War II Philippine Scout who was severely injured and now receives service-connected disability compensation. Mr. Castro was granted United States citizenship in 1993 and came to America in 1996. Mr. Castro receives less than \$100 from the VA for his service-connected disability, and qualifies for Supplemental Security Income, which makes him eligible for Medicare and MediCal.

In January of 1998, Mr. Castro was diagnosed with a heart disease that required a quadruple bypass. His surgery and treatment were paid for by Medicare and MediCal, because his illness is not related to his service-connected disability, and he can not be admitted to a VA Hospital.

Today, Mr. Castro lives in a single resident occupancy hotel in a run down neighborhood. He does not have any family here to help him. If Mr. Castro could return to the Philippines, he would have the family support he desperately needs. But if he goes home, he will only be eligible to receive 75% of his SSI and his service-connected disability compensation would be

reduced to about \$90. His medical condition requires costly medication and may require hospitalization. Mr. Castro is afraid that he will not have enough money to sustain his life.

Recently, Congressman Filner has introduced the Health Care for Filipino World War II Veterans Act, H.R. 4904, which would provide access to VA medical care for Filipino World War II veterans who live in the United States and are United States citizens or legal permanent residents. The passage of Representative Filner's bill would give Mr. Castro access to VA medical care in the United States.

I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of Representative Filner's bill, which is a good start to providing health care to our deserving Filipino Veterans. In addition to passing H.R. 4904, I urge the members of the Committee to fulfill the commitment the United States made over half a century ago, by passing H.R. 491, the Filipino World War II Veterans Equity Act. This bill would restore all the benefits that were taken away by Congress in the 1946 Rescissions Act.

We should act to provide the necessary and deserved reparations to these proud servicemen. We should honor the dedicated service of these men of war. These courageous soldiers answered our Nation's call to duty in a time of need, and now it is the duty of the United States Government to fulfill our long overdue commitment to them.

Thank you for conducting this important hearing today. I look forward to working with you to give our Filipino veterans the benefits that they deserve.

Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard
Veterans Affairs Committee Hearing: Filipino World War II Veterans Health Care
June 13, 2002

I AM PLEASED TO JOIN MY COLLEAGUES IN SUPPORT OF RESTORING FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERANS' ACCESS TO THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION (VA) HEALTH CARE SYSTEM.

THIS IS AN ISSUE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE FILIPINO-AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND SHOULD BE TO THIS CONGRESS AS WELL.

THESE SOLDIERS FOUGHT HONORABLY AND VALIANTLY WITH THE UNITED STATES ARMED SERVICES DURING WORLD WAR II.

FOR ALMOST FOUR YEARS, DURING THE MOST INTENSE AND STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT PHASES OF THE WAR, MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND FILIPINOS FOUGHT SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH THE ALLIED FORCES TO RECLAIM THE PHILIPPINES FROM JAPANESE OCCUPATION.

THEY EXHIBITED GREAT COURAGE DURING THE BATTLES OF BATAAN AND CORREGIDOR AND WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC.

THESE BRAVE MEN ANSWERED THE CALL TO SERVICE FROM PRESIDENT FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT AND WILLINGLY RISKED THEIR LIVES AND WELL BEING IN DEFENSE OF FREEDOM.

IF THESE ACTIONS DID NOT EARN THESE MEN THE SAME HEALTH BENEFITS AS THOSE PROMISED AND GIVEN TO OTHER MEN & WOMEN WHO FOUGHT IN DEFENSE OF OUR COUNTRY I DO NOT KNOW WHAT POSSIBLY COULD.

IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT OUR GOVERNMENT PROMISED THESE SOLDIERS FULL BENEFITS, IN 1946 THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RENEGED ON ITS PROMISE AND LIMITED THE BENEFITS THAT THE PHILIPPINE COMMONWEALTH ARMY AND THE SPECIAL SCOUTS COULD RECEIVE.

AS OUR COUNTRY FOCUSES ITS ATTENTION ON WORLD WAR II THROUGH THE CONSTRUCTION OF A MEMORIAL RECOGNIZING THE COURAGEOUS EFFORTS OF ALL OUR WORLD WAR II VETERANS; AND AS WE CONTINUE TODAY TO SEND YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN INTO HARM'S WAY IN THE CURRENT WAR ON TERRORISM, THERE IS NO BETTER TIME TO HONOR OUR WAR TIME COMMITMENTS TO THE FILIPINO WAR VETERANS AND RESTORE THEIR ACCESS TO THE VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM.

OF COURSE, THIS IS JUST ONE SMALL STEP. WE MUST WORK TO CORRECT ALL PAST INJUSTICES AND RESTORE FULL BENEFITS TO ALL FILIPINO WAR VETERANS.

CLEARLY, THE FILIPINO VETERANS WHO FOUGHT, BLED, AND SUFFERED ALONGSIDE AMERICAN TROOPS DESERVE THE RECOGNITION AND COMPENSATION THEY WERE PROMISED AND HAVE WAITED FOR IN VAIN FOR THE PAST FIFTY YEARS.

AS A CO-SPONSOR OF THE HEALTH CARE FOR FILIPINO WWII VETERANS ACT WHICH WOULD RESTORE THESE BENEFITS TO THESE DESERVING VETERANS, I AM PROUD TO ADD MY SUPPORT TO RESTORING ACCESS TO THE V.A. HEALTH CARE SYSTEM – THE NEXT STEP ON THE WAY TO FULL BENEFIT EQUITY.

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Testimony of Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Before the Subcommittee on Health
of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Hearing on Health Care for Filipino World War II Veterans
June 13, 2002

Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Filner, and Members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to have the opportunity to appear before you today to talk about the issue of restoring VA health care benefits for Filipino World War II veterans.

I am proud to be a co-sponsor of Rep. Filner's bill. I believe this bill is a step in the right direction; it begins to correct a problem that Congress is long overdue in addressing.

Over 60 years ago, in 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an Executive Order that called 140,000 Filipino soldiers into duty. They fought valiantly under U.S. command and with forces from the United States mainland. The Army of the Philippine Commonwealth and the Philippine Scouts fought in such epic battles as Bataan, Corregidor and the Philippine Liberation campaign. These soldiers were instrumental in helping achieve peace and freedom in the Pacific.

Deplorably, in return for their service and sacrifice, Congress in 1946 passed the Rescission Act. The Rescission Act was a rider to a supplemental appropriations act that mandated service rendered by Filipino veterans under the U.S. flag during World War II "shall not be deemed active service for purposes of any law of the United States conferring rights, privileges, or benefits" except for those who died, were injured, or were disabled. As a result of the Rescission Act, Filipino veterans were singled out not to receive benefits, benefits which were given to the French, Italian, German, and allied veterans who also served under the U.S. flag.

Since that time, Filipino veterans and their families have longed and hoped for justice. Today, there are only about 12,000 surviving Filipino American veterans in the U.S. and 35,000 Filipino veterans in the Philippines. According to Eric Lachica, Executive Director of the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans (ACFV), Filipino veterans, most of them in their 70s, are dying at a 57 per cent higher rate than their American comrades. They need their benefits – including health care – now, when it matters most.

In 1990, a law was passed awarding citizenship to Filipinos who had fought on the side of the United States in World War II. As a result of that legislation, about 26,000 aging veterans were naturalized as US citizens. But there was nothing in the legislation about veterans benefits. The new citizens, if they were poor, were eligible only for welfare payments on the same basis as non-veterans.

It is time that we begin to end this shameful chapter in American history, and correct the wrong that was perpetrated in 1946 by the Congress. Mr. Filner's bill begins that process by, for example, providing hospital, nursing home care and medical services for some Filipino veterans in the same manner, and under the same conditions, as other U.S. veterans.

I commend Rep. Filner, Rep. Gilman, Rep. Mink, and all of the other members who have been involved for their efforts to correct this injustice. Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Filner, I thank you for holding this hearing and thank you for your courtesy in allowing me to participate.

MAXINE WATERS
 MEMBER OF CONGRESS
 35TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

CHIEF DEPUTY WHIP

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Testimony
Congresswoman Maxine Waters
Subcommittee on Health
House Committee on Veteran's Affairs
Thursday, June 13, 2002

Throughout my career, I have worked hard to ensure that those who bravely fought to defend our nation received medical care and other benefits they need and deserve. Beginning in 1941, millions of individuals put their lives on hold and served bravely in World War Two to protect the United States from its enemies. After war ended, many returned home; they attended college on the GI bill, received medical care and other benefits they were entitled to as veterans.

However, the Filipinos who fought alongside of our troops did not receive the same treatment. Thousands joined the war effort and they fought bravely and greatly contributed to the war effort. They assumed that when their service was over, they would receive the same benefits as other veterans. Unfortunately, this turned out to be a false assumption.

Legislation passed by Congress in 1946 specifically excluded Filipinos from receiving full veterans benefits. While some Filipino veterans became eligible for disability benefits when they were injured, they often received half of what was provided for American veterans. And, even though there is a large population of Filipino veterans living in the United States, the practice of providing reduced benefits continues. This puts a significant strain on our nation's health system and is just plain unfair.

To address this problem, I cosponsored H.R. 491, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act. This bill, sponsored by Representative Gilman, would allow these veterans to become eligible for benefits under the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The legislation would help thousands of individuals receive the benefits they deserve and ensure that they are cared for.

I am pleased that this subcommittee is working on another bill, *The Health Care for Filipino World War II Veterans Act*. I commend Representative Filner and the rest of this subcommittee for recognizing the importance of this issue and working to address it. This bill will go a long way in helping Filipino veterans living in the United States. They will have access to the quality health care that the VA provides, a great relief for many.

Veterans have fought hard to protect our freedom and way of life and we should do everything possible to ensure that they are taken care of. This is just one step in addressing the many needs of our veterans, but it is a crucial step. I urge this committee to continue their important work and provide the assistance our veterans deserve.

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ALBERT DEL ROSARIO BEFORE
THE VETERANS' AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH, 13 JUNE 2002.

Mr. Chairman, I am grateful for your kind invitation to appear before your distinguished committee and for your earnest desire to address a mistake and injury committed more than half a century ago.

Our two nations owe the veterans of World War II a lasting debt of gratitude for their sacrifice, bravery and faith beyond words. I am here today, not only at your behest, but because my life was saved by men very much like the old, yet unbowed, warriors now present in this room. My testimony comes firsthand.

In the battle for the liberation of Manila, after my father had been imprisoned and tortured, our home was razed by retreating Japanese soldiers. I was five years old at the time. I was wounded in one arm and a leg and had been knocked totally unconscious by a shrapnel wound to the head. My sister suffered serious wounds in her back as well. We were left for dead amidst the ruins. A band of guerrillas discovered us, bleeding profusely, and brought us to a neighbor's shed. We spent the night painfully alone until the guerrillas were able to return for us at dawn. They brought us to a hospital for treatment. It was several days later before my grandfather finally found us.

On July 26, 1941 U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an order inducting all military forces of the Commonwealth of the Philippines into the U.S. Forces Far East (USAFFE) under the command of Gen. Douglas MacArthur. They were made to swear allegiance to the US Constitution. For more than four months, after the outbreak of war in December 1941, Filipinos fought side by side with Americans as U.S. soldiers, commanded by American officers, under the American flag. When Gen. Jonathan Wainwright surrendered his forces to the Japanese in May 1942 after a heroic struggle on Bataan and Corregidor, Filipinos were warned they faced court-martial if they refused to lay down their arms. More than 65,000 Filipinos and 10,000 Americans started out on the Bataan Death March. Nearly a third did not complete the march, having died by the wayside. Of those who made it to the camps, an estimated one half of the prisoners perished under brutal captivity.

Still loyal to the American flag and hopeful of MacArthur's promise to return, more than 200,000 Filipinos carried on a guerrilla struggle against the Japanese. The guerrillas fought according to American battle plans, sometimes under

American officers and were resupplied by American PT boats and submarines. They risked their lives, family and property to keep faith with the United States. For all intents and purposes, even before the guerrillas were officially inducted into the Commonwealth Army in October 1944, these units were fighting under American command. The Philippine effort occupied and depleted the Japanese Imperial Army of forces it badly needed elsewhere to consolidate its hold on the region.

Whether Commonwealth Army or “recognized guerrilla”, US records show these Filipino forces were strategically indispensable to the Allied War effort in the Pacific. Moreover, prior to the passage of the Rescission Act of 1946, these men proudly considered themselves, and were considered by the United States Government, as U.S. soldiers.

The shameful Rescission Act stated that service rendered by Filipino veterans “were not to be considered service for the purpose of veterans’ benefits,” effectively stripping them of benefits under the GI Bill of 1944. These benefits ranged from immigration privileges to healthcare and burial costs. Additionally, despite the fact that Filipino veterans had already paid portions of their salaries towards veterans’ insurance and pensions, the Act stipulated that they were to be paid such pensions at only half their value. As such, the Act did something even the Japanese could not do. It insulted their worth as men.

Although the Rescission Act has been amended several times, its basic provisions still stand. Filipino veterans, even if they became US citizens, would still not be eligible for full benefits. Those who have elected to remain in the Philippines are at an even greater disadvantage.

Gentlemen, it was an Act of Congress that trivialized these veterans’ contributions and deprived them of their due. It is appropriate therefore that Congress act to address this injustice. There are fewer Filipino World War II veterans everyday. Most are in poor health, several are destitute. You are in a position to ensure that their last days be comfortable and that they die with dignity. Please keep faith with them. They deserve no less.

**Statement of
The Honorable Anthony J Principi
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
on VA Health Care for
Filipino World War II Veterans
Before the
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U. S. House of Representatives**

June 13, 2002

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for this opportunity to speak to the Subcommittee regarding health care for Filipino veterans. With me today is Mr. Jack Thompson, Deputy General Counsel.

Before I address the subject of today's hearing, let me first reiterate what has been said concerning last November's meeting between President Bush and President Arroyo of the Philippines. In commemorating the 50th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty, they reaffirmed the strength and warmth of bilateral relations and agreed that the alliance of the United States and the Philippines remains vital to both nations, particularly in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Their meeting was characterized by sincerity and candor and heralded a new era of comprehensive cooperation and friendship between the United States and the Philippines. President Bush also agreed to review the services and benefits that the United States provides for Filipino veterans, and that review has already yielded results.

Mr. Chairman, I am second to none in my admiration of the sacrifices made by Filipinos during World War II. These brave soldiers were called on to defend the Philippine people against superior forces, and, in the face of what should have been a devastating loss, they performed magnificently. The world is indebted to Filipino veterans for their contribution to the Allied victory in World War II.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has long recognized the unique status and contributions of Filipino veterans. During World War II, the Philippine Islands was a U.S. territory, and its troops fought under U.S. command. There has been no other similar arrangement in recent American history. The special circumstances of Filipino veterans have also been recognized in law. Soon after World War II, legislation was enacted making disabled Filipino veterans and their

survivors eligible for compensation at the rate of one Philippine peso for each dollar of compensation authorized. A later change authorized compensation at half the rate paid to U.S. veterans and survivors. In late 2000, Congress increased the rate of compensation for certain Filipino veterans and expanded access to health care and burial services.

Specifically with regard to health care, prior to October 27, 2000, the law authorized VA to provide care in the Manila Outpatient Clinic only for the service-connected conditions of U.S. veterans. The term "U.S. veterans" includes members of the Old Philippine Scouts. With enactment of Public Law 106-377 in October of 2000, Congress authorized VA to begin providing care in the clinic for the non-service-connected conditions of those same U.S. veterans. Filipino veterans, however, including Commonwealth Army veterans and New Philippine Scouts, are not eligible for VA health care in the Philippines. The Philippine Government provides health care to eligible Filipino veterans.

The law regarding care of Filipino veterans residing in the United States also changed. Prior to the enactment of Public Law 106-377, VA was authorized to provide care in the United States only for the service-connected conditions of Commonwealth Army veterans, members of recognized guerilla groups, and New Philippine Scouts. Public Law 106-377 authorized VA to begin providing hospital care, nursing home care, and medical services to veterans of the Commonwealth Army and recognized guerilla forces who have service-connected disabilities on the same basis as U.S. veterans. In short the change allowed these veterans to seek care for their non-service-connected conditions. The change in law did not expand eligibility for New Philippine Scout veterans. They continue to be eligible for care in the United States only on a discretionary basis (within the limits of VA resources) and only for service-connected disabilities.

Mr. Chairman, legislation currently pending before the House and the Senate would further expand benefit eligibility for Filipino veterans and their survivors. In that regard, I am pleased to inform the Committee that, in our April 25 letter, addressed to Chairman Rockefeller of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, on S. 1042, the Department expressed the Administration's support for the following enhancements in benefits to Filipino veterans and their survivors:

- payment of the full service-connected disability compensation rates to former new Philippine Scouts who reside in the United States and are either citizens of the United States or are aliens lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States and payment of the full dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) rates to surviving spouses of veterans of the Commonwealth Army, recognized guerillas, or New

Philippine Scouts who reside in the United States and are either citizens of the United States or are aliens lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States; and

- providing comprehensive care on the same basis as for U.S. veterans for veterans of the Commonwealth Army, recognized guerilla forces and New Philippine Scouts who are residing in the United States and are either citizens of, or aliens lawfully admitted for permanent residence in, the United States, regardless of whether they have service-connected disabilities.

We note that these increases in payments of compensation and DIC are subject to PAYGO requirements of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 and our support of expansion of health care eligibility is conditional on Congress providing the funding necessary for implementation and remaining within the total discretionary spending levels in the President's FY 2003 budget.

Mr. Chairman, VA continues to work with the White House to explore opportunities to enhance our assistance to Filipino veterans. Section 1731 of Title 38 authorizes the President to assist the Republic of the Philippines in fulfilling its responsibilities in providing medical care and treatment for Commonwealth Army veterans and new Philippine Scouts. I am working to utilize this authority to provide grants of equipment, as well as assistance in installation and maintenance of the equipment, to the Philippine government to improve care at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center in Manila. I anticipate the equipment grants would be for \$500,000 per year.

Mr. Chairman, we look forward to working with Congress to provide appropriate benefits and services for this deserving group of individuals. I personally support the proposal to include former members of the New Philippine Scouts in the ranks of Filipino veterans who are eligible for burial benefits. I believe enactment of legislation to provide for those benefits is possible if the number of beneficiaries, and hence the cost of enactment, is so small that enactment would not trigger the PAYGO requirements of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990.

This concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or members of the Subcommittee may have.

.....STATEMENT OF REP. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN
JUNE 13, 2002

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
FILIPINO VETERANS BENEFITS

MR. CHAIRMAN, I WANT TO THANK YOU AND THE MEMBERS OF THE HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE THIS HEARING TODAY TO EXAMINE THE NEWLY INTRODUCED LEGISLATION, H.R. 4904. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO YOU FOR INVITING ME TO TESTIFY BEFORE THIS SUBCOMMITTEE ON A SUBJECT DEAR TO MY HEART, BENEFITS FOR FILIPINO VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II.

AS MANY OF YOU MAY KNOW, I HAVE LONG BEEN AN ADVOCATE OF FILIPINO VETERANS IN THE CONGRESS. FOR THE PAST SEVERAL CONGRESSES, I HAVE INTRODUCED LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE FULL VETERANS BENEFITS TO OUR FILIPINO COMRADES IN ARMS FROM WORLD WAR II. I HAVE LONG BELIEVED THAT THESE VETERANS WERE UNJUSTLY STRIPPED OF THESE BENEFITS, WHICH THEY WERE BY LAW ENTITLED TO, AS A RESULT OF THE RECISSION ACT OF 1946.

BEFORE I ADDRESS THE SPECIFICS OF THE LEGISLATION BEING CONSIDERED IN THIS HEARING, I WOULD LIKE TO BRIEFLY REFLECT UPON THIS HISTORY OF THIS ISSUE.

ON JULY 26, 1941, PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT ISSUED A MILITARY ORDER, PURSUANT TO THE PHILIPPINES INDEPENDENCE ACT OF 1934, CALLING MEMBERS OF THE PHILIPPINE COMMONWEALTH ARMY INTO THE SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES FORCES OF THE FAR EAST, UNDER THE COMMAND OF LT. GENERAL DOUGLAS MacArthur.

FOR ALMOST FOUR YEARS, OVER ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND FILIPINOS, OF THE PHILIPPINE COMMONWEALTH ARMY FOUGHT ALONGSIDE THE ALLIES TO RECLAIM THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS FROM JAPAN. REGRETTABLY, IN RETURN, CONGRESS ENACTED THE RECISSION ACT OF 1946. THIS MEASURE LIMITED VETERANS ELIGIBILITY FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES AND DEATH COMPENSATION AND ALSO DENIED THE MEMBERS OF THE PHILIPPINE COMMONWEALTH ARMY THE HONOR OF BEING RECOGNIZED AS VETERANS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES.

A SECOND GROUP, THE SPECIAL PHILIPPINE SCOUTS CALLED "NEW SCOUTS" WHO ENLISTED IN THE U.S. ARMED FORCES AFTER OCTOBER 6, 1945, PRIMARILY TO PERFORM OCCUPATION DUTY IN THE PACIFIC, WERE SIMILARLY EXCLUDED FROM BENEFITS.

THESE MEMBERS OF THE PHILIPPINE COMMONWEALTH ARMY AND THE SPECIAL

PHILIPPINE SCOUTS SERVED JUST AS COURAGEOUSLY AS THEIR AMERICAN COUNTERPARTS DURING THE PACIFIC WAR. THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS HELPED TO DISRUPT THE INITIAL JAPANESE OFFENSIVE'S TIMETABLE IN 1942, AT A POINT WHEN THE JAPANESE WERE EXPANDING UNCHECKED THROUGH THE WESTERN PACIFIC.

THIS DELAY IN THE JAPANESE PLANS HELPED TO BUY VALUABLE TIME FOR THE SCATTERED ALLIED FORCES TO REGROUP, REORGANIZE AND PREPARE FOR CHECKING THE JAPANESE ADVANCE IN THE BATTLES OF THE CORAL SEA AND MIDWAY. MANY HAVE FORGOTTEN HOW DARK THOSE DAYS BEFORE THE VICTORY AT MIDWAY REALLY WERE.

THESE ACTIONS ALSO EARNED THE FILIPINO SOLDERS THE WRATH OF THEIR JAPANESE CAPTORS. AS A RESULT, MANY OF THEM JOINED THEIR AMERICAN COUNTERPARTS IN THE BATAAN DEATH MARCH, AND SUFFERED INHUMANE TREATMENT WHICH REDEFINED THE LIMITS OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

DURING THE NEXT TWO YEARS, FILIPINO SCOUT UNITS, OPERATING FROM MOBILE ISOLATED BASES IN THE RURAL INTERIOR OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, CONDUCTED AN ONGOING CAMPAIGN OF GUERRILLA WARFARE, TYING DOWN PRECIOUS JAPANESE RESOURCES AND MANPOWER.

IN 1944, FILIPINO FORCES PROVIDED VALUABLE ASSISTANCE IN THE LIBERATION OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS WHICH IN TURN BECAME AN IMPORTANT BASE FOR TAKING THE WAR TO THE JAPANESE HOMELAND. WITHOUT THE ASSISTANCE OF FILIPINO UNITS AND GUERRILLA FORCES, THE LIBERATION OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS WOULD HAVE TAKEN MUCH LONGER AND BEEN FAR COSTLIER THAN IT ACTUALLY WAS.

IN A LETTER TO CONGRESS DATED MAY 16, 1946, PRESIDENT HARRY S. TRUMAN WROTE: "THE PHILIPPINE ARMY VETERANS ARE NATIONALS OF THE UNITED STATES AND WILL CONTINUE IN THAT STATUS AFTER JULY 4, 1946. THEY FOUGHT 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. THEY WERE COMMISSIONED BY US, THEIR OFFICIAL ORGANIZATION, THE ARMY OF ITS PHILIPPINE COMMONWEALTH WAS TAKEN INTO THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES ON JULY 26, 1941. THAT ORDER HAS NEVER BEEN REVOKED AND AMENDED. I CONSIDER IT A MORAL OBLIGATION OF THE UNITED STATES TO LOOK AFTER THE WELFARE OF THE FILIPINO VETERANS."

IN RECENT YEARS, THOSE OF US WHO CHAMPION THE CAUSE OF FILIPINO VETERANS HAVE WON SEVERAL SMALL, BUT IMPORTANT VICTORIES. THIS PROCESS BEGAN IN 1996 WITH THE ISSUANCE OF A PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION HONORING THE SERVICE AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF FILIPINO VETERANS IN WORLD WAR II. IN SUBSEQUENT YEARS, THE CONGRESS ELECTED TO RAISE DISABILITY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION PAYMENTS TO FILIPINO VETERANS WHO WERE U.S. CITIZENS LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES TO A LEVEL EQUAL TO THEIR AMERICAN COUNTERPARTS. FOLLOWING THIS, THE CONGRESS THEN PERMITTED THOSE FILIPINO VETERANS RECEIVING SSI PAYMENTS TO KEEP THESE PAYMENTS UPON RETURN TO THE PHILIPPINES, WITH A 25% REDUCTION.

TODAY, WE ARE HERE TO DISCUSS A BILL THAT MAKES THREE IMPORTANT CHANGES TO BENEFITS FOR FILIPINO VETERANS. FIRST, IT PERMITS FILIPINO VETERANS RESIDING IN THE U.S. TO USE THE VA MEDICAL SYSTEM FOR NON-SERVICE CONNECTED TREATMENT.

SECOND, IT EXTENDS FULL COMPENSATION RATES FOR WIDOWS AND DEPENDENTS OF THOSE VETERANS WHO BECAME ELIGIBLE FOR THE RATE INCREASE SEVERAL YEARS AGO. THE WIDOWS AND DEPENDENTS HAD BEEN INADVERTENTLY EXCLUDED WHEN THE RATE INCREASE WAS APPROVED FOR THE VETERANS WITH SERVICE-CONNECTED INJURIES.

FINALLY, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, THROUGH SECRETARY PRINCIPI, HAS AGREED TO REINSTATE THE \$500,000 ANNUAL GRANT TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PHILIPPINES FOR THE PURCHASE AND MAINTENANCE OF EQUIPMENT AT THE VETERANS MEMORIAL CENTER IN MANILA.

I AM PLEASED THAT THOSE OF US WHO HAVE CHAMPIONED THE CAUSE OF OUR FILIPINO WORLD WAR II BROTHERS, HAVE BEEN ABLE TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH BOTH THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION AND THE HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE TO OFFER A VIABLE SOLUTION TO ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF THIS IMPORTANT GROUP.

IT IS FURTHER FITTING THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE COMMITTEE HAVE MOVED TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE AT A TIME WHEN AMERICAN AND FILIPINO FORCES ARE FIGHTING SIDE BY SIDE AGAINST A COMMON ENEMY IN THE ONGOING WAR ON TERRORISM.

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO COMMEND THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION, AND IN PARTICULAR, SECRETARY PRINCIPI, FOR GIVING THIS ENTIRE ISSUE THE ATTENTION IT DESERVED. FAR TOO LITTLE PROCESS WAS MADE IN THE 1990S IN PART BECAUSE OF A SENSE OF INDIFFERENCE, IF NOT HOSTILITY, FROM THE PRIOR ADMINISTRATION ON THE ISSUE OF FILIPINO VETERANS. WHILE WE OFTEN RECEIVED ASSURANCES FROM PREVIOUS SECRETARIES THAT THEY WERE GENERALLY SUPPORTIVE OF OUR EFFORTS, SECRETARY PRINCIPI WAS THE FIRST TO SIT DOWN WITH MEMBERS AND WORK TOWARDS A NEGOTIATED RESULT.

MR. CHAIRMAN, THESE VETERANS PLAYED A VITAL ROLE IN THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC, AND FOR FAR TOO LONG, NEITHER THEIR WARTIME SERVICE, NOR OUR DEBT TO THEM, WAS PROPERLY ACKNOWLEDGED. THIS SUBCOMMITTEE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO FURTHER THE CAUSE OF JUSTICE TODAY, AND I AM GRATEFUL THAT YOU HAVE AGREED TO EXAMINE THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE, AND THIS TIMELY AND APPROPRIATE MEASURE.

I WANT TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO BOTH YOU MR. CHAIRMAN, AND THE MEMBERS OF THIS SUBCOMMITTEE, FOR PERMITTING ME TO TESTIFY AT THIS HEARING.

MINORITY WHF-AT-LARGE
 DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS
 EDUCATION TASK FORCE
 Co-Chair

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 EDUCATION AND THE
 WORKFORCE

SUBCOMMITTEES:
 21ST CENTURY COMPETITIVENESS
 BANKING MEMBER
 WORKFORCE PROTECTION

GOVERNMENT REFORM

SUBCOMMITTEES:
 ENERGY POLICY, NATURAL RESOURCES
 AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS
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Testimony by
CONGRESSWOMAN PATSY T. MINK OF HAWAII
 Before the Veterans Affairs Health Subcommittee
 In Support of Health Care Benefits for Filipino Veterans

June 13, 2002

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee,

I want to thank you for granting me the opportunity to discuss World War II Filipino veterans' health care benefits and to express my strong support for the Health Care for Filipino World War II Veterans Act.

Before World War II, the Philippines had been a U.S. possession for 42 years. Located off the coast of mainland Asia, Filipinos found themselves a short distance from the hostilities that would soon draw the whole world into a war to avenge the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and the atrocities in the European Theater.

The U.S. asked the Philippines to help America fight the long and difficult battles to come. When President Roosevelt issued Military Order No. 1 on July 26, 1941, nearly 200,000 Filipinos responded. They responded without hesitation to defend their homeland and to answer the call for help.

From 1941 to 1945, Filipino soldiers fought alongside American soldiers. They defended Bataan and Corregidor, which helped ensure General MacArthur's ultimate victory. Thousands of Filipino prisoners of war endured the infamous Bataan Death March, and many more died in prisons.

When the Filipino soldiers joined with America in its struggle to defend freedom, the members of the Commonwealth Army expected to receive their benefits at the end of the war. When the Philippines was forced to form guerrilla forces during the Japanese occupation, these brave soldiers also expected to receive their benefits.

After the war, the U.S. Congress established the New Philippine Scouts by enacting the Armed Forces Voluntary Recruitment Act (Public Law 79-190) in October 1945. From

1945 through 1946, the New Philippine Scouts helped defend the Philippines as the nation worked to rebuild itself.

President Roosevelt promised that Filipino veterans would become U.S. citizens and thus have the same benefits given to all other U.S. veterans. In October 1945 General Omar Bradley, Administrator of the Veterans Administration, reaffirmed that they were to be treated like all other American veterans and would receive full benefits. But the U.S. Congress broke this promise to the Commonwealth Army and the recognized guerrilla forces by enacting the Rescission Act (Public Law 79-301). Congress broke the promise to New Philippine Scouts when it passed the Second Rescission Act (Public Law 79-391).

The Rescission Acts stated that the World War II service of Filipinos shall not be deemed to be service in the military or national forces of the U.S. or any component thereof. Exceptions only were given to those who died, were maimed, or were separated from active service due to physical disability.

Since passing the Rescission Acts, the U.S. government has done little or nothing to recognize the service of these World War II Filipino soldiers.

Actions Taken to Improve Filipino Health Benefits

Year	Law	Description
1948	Public Law 80-865	Authorized the construction of the Veterans Memorial Hospital in Manila.
1963	Public Law 88-40	Allowed the Veterans Memorial Hospital in Manila to care for non-service connected conditions of Filipino and U.S. veterans.
1973	Public Law 93-82	Authorized U.S. assistance to help the Philippine government provide medical care to Filipino veterans.
1981	Public Law 97-72	Reauthorized U.S. assistance to help the Philippine government provide medical care to Filipino veterans.
1990	Public Law 101-649	Made certain Filipino veterans who served during World War II eligible for U.S. citizenship.
1999	Public Law 106-169	Expanded U.S. income-based Social Security disability benefits to certain World War II veterans, including Filipino veterans of World War II who served in the organized military forces of the Philippines.

Year	Law	Description
2000	Public Law 106-377	Allowed Commonwealth Army veterans and veterans of the recognized guerrilla forces to receive disability compensation at the full statutory rate and visit VA medical facilities for those disabilities, if they are permanent legal residents.
2000	Public Law 106-419	Provided full burial benefits for Commonwealth Army veterans and veterans of the recognized guerrilla forces if they are permanent residents of the U.S. and meet certain other entitling conditions.

Even after passing multiple bills to correct the injustice of the Rescission Acts, there is still much work to do to help Filipino veterans legally residing in the U.S. New Philippine Scouts are denied most non-health care benefits and all health care benefits for non-service connected injuries. The surviving spouses of veterans from the Commonwealth Army and the guerrilla forces do not receive full dependency and indemnity compensation rates.

VA Benefits for Filipino Veterans Legally Residing in the US

Benefit	Commonwealth Army	Recognized Guerillas	New Philippine Scouts
Health Care for Service Connected Disabilities	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*
Health Care for Non-Service Connected Disabilities	Yes*	Yes*	No
Outpatient Care for Service Connected Disabilities	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*
Outpatient Care for Non-Service Connected Disabilities	Yes*	Yes*	No
Service Connected Disability Compensation	Yes	Yes	Yes (Half Rate)
Non-Service Connected Disability Pension	No	No	No
Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)	Yes (Half Rate)	Yes (Half Rate)	Yes (Half Rate)
Death Pension	No	No	No
Burial Allowance	Yes	Yes	No

* Subject to enrollment prioritization and resource availability.

I sponsored H.R.594 in the 107th Congress to amend the Social Security Act and allow World War II Filipino veterans to obtain health care benefits through Medicare. Under my bill, qualified World War II Filipino veterans living in the U.S. would be entitled to Medicare Part A benefits and the option to enroll in Part B. With the current veterans' health care system (TRICARE) using Medicare as a primary insurer, my bill would have provided a ready basis for providing full health care benefits to all surviving World War II Filipino veterans living in the U.S.

Congressman Filner has introduced a bill that will provide health care benefits to Filipino veterans living in the US. I am pleased to be a cosponsor of this bill and to hear that the Administration supports it.

Congressman Filner's bill will provide VA medical care to World War II Filipino veterans who live in the U.S. and are U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents. It will provide the full dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) rates to surviving spouses of Filipino veterans, and the bill includes benefits for New Philippine Scouts.

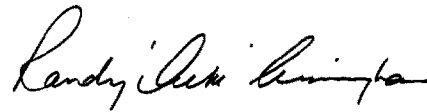
For more than fifty years Filipino veterans have been denied veterans' benefits they earned during World War II. Fewer than 14,000 Filipino veterans live in the U.S. and that number is rapidly falling. Now is the time to fulfill our obligation to these brave veterans. They are entitled to VA health care benefits same as any other veteran.

Testimony in support of Filipino veterans' health care.
Randy "Duke" Cunningham
13 June 2002

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity to speak about Filipino veterans' health care today. This issue is one of the most important subjects that we will discuss this session. As a member of the Appropriations and Intelligence committees, I am fully aware of the other issues that we face. Defense spending, our response to terrorism, making America safer, social security, Medicare, prescription drugs, immigration, and energy policy all capture the headlines and the minds of most Americans. I contend, however, that there is healthy debate that must occur to reflect the will of the American people as to how we address those issues. The subject we are talking about today is different. It does not capture the headlines and few Americans are even aware of it. And it requires no debate to determine the only honorable and right course of action.

When we went to war in 1941, the people of the Philippines, then an American Commonwealth, went with us. Under Executive Order by President Roosevelt, the 4000,000 men of the Philippine military were called on to join our forces under General Douglas MacArthur. They faithfully fought with us throughout the war. They walked side by side with us during the Bataan Death March, dying at a rate exceeding that of the American troops. After the war, we passed legislation that denied these brave men status as US veterans, denying them access to veterans' benefits. I am proud to count myself among the many that feel this was wrong and not worthy of our Nation's honor.

I believe that a promise made is a debt unpaid, and it is far past the proper time to correct this longstanding wrong. I call on this body to pass H.R. 491 and officially recognize service in the Philippine Commonwealth Army and the New Philippine Scouts during WWII as worthy of VA benefits. Such recognition would allow Filipino WWII veterans to receive VA health care, give them access to non-service connected disability benefits, and give their surviving spouses dependency indemnity compensation. Recently, the Department of Veterans' Affairs has proposed a partial implementation of portions of H.R. 491. These portions would extend the above-mentioned benefits to the approximately 11,000 Filipino WWII veterans that are living in the United States. I encourage the passage of legislation to accomplish this. While this would get us partway to our goal, I still firmly hold the passage of the rest of H.R. 491 in my sights as our final goal. This would ultimately affect the 34,000 Filipino WWII veterans who live in the Philippines. Failure to take action is a stain on our national character. As Americans we can and must set a higher standard.



Testimony of Congressman Dana Rohrabacher

“Healthcare for Filipino Veterans of World War II”

Subcommittee on Health

House Veterans Affairs Committee

June 13, 2002

Mr. Chairman:

During the dark early years of the Japanese Army’s onslaught in the Pacific Theater during World War II, the most loyal allies of the United States were Filipino soldiers and guerilla fighters. Trapped behind enemy lines the Filipino and American combined forces waged heroic harassment and sabotage raids against superior Japanese forces. The Filipino guerillas and civilian population paid a very heavy price for their resistance, suffering massacres, torture and slave labor in prison death camps.

I urge the Committee to support S1042, “the Filipino Veterans Improvement Act,” and HR491, “the Filipino Veterans Equity Act,” offered by my friend, Ben Gilman, who not only is the former distinguished Chairman of the House International Relations Committee, but is also a veteran of the World War II Pacific Theater, who as a member of the Army Air Corps flew a number of combat missions over Japan. This legislation would amend title 38, United States Code, to deem individuals who served in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts to be eligible for health care benefits under programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The Filipino veterans who would be covered under this legislation served the United States honorably. Even before Pearl Harbor, as the clouds of war gathered in the Pacific, on June 26, 1941 President Franklin Roosevelt drafted Philippine Commonwealth Army soldiers who were U.S. nationals into American military service. At that time, the Philippines was a de facto colony of the United States. During and immediately after the war, Filipino soldiers were considered by our Veterans Administration as U.S. veterans with "active" service. However, in 1946, the law was changed which denied them the rights of other U.S. veterans.

However, under the 1990 Immigration and Naturalization Act, 26,000 Filipino veterans of World War II were naturalized as U.S. citizens because of their war time service. Under U.S. law, if they die, they may be buried as U.S. veterans in national cemeteries. I believe, out of fairness to those remaining elderly veterans who served our country and protected our freedom during wartime, that they also be permitted eligibility at U.S. Veterans Hospitals and clinics, if they choose to seek service at those facilities.

I have very strong feelings about fairness for the Filipino veterans because of my own family's experience in the Philippines during the War. My father flew missions up and down the Philippines as a pilot with the U.S. Marine Corps. He often told me about his respect for the Filipinos he fought alongside, and, "I don't know of finer friends of the United States, than the Filipinos I met during the war."

Another member of my family, my wife's Uncle Lou, who gave her hand to me at our wedding, is a survivor of the Bataan Death March where thousands of American and Filipino prisoners of war perished or were murdered by their brutal Japanese captors. Uncle Lou told me that as the American prisoners, who were dying of thirst and starvation, passed through little villages, ordinary Filipinos risked their lives to throw

food and water to the prisoners. Some were caught in their acts of mercy by the Japanese. They were bayoneted or beaten to death.

Mr. Chairman:

Out of fairness to U.S. veterans who happen to be Filipino, and to demonstrate friendship to people from a country that is proving to be among our most trustworthy allies in the war against terrorism today, I urge the Committee to support this long-overdue legislation.

**Congresswoman Juanita Millender-McDonald
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Testimony before the Subcommittee on Health**

**Thursday, June 13, 2002
Cannon HOB 334**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to publicly thank Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Filner for the invitation to address the subcommittee on Filipino veterans benefits. It is also important for me to recognize the strong bipartisan work performed by this subcommittee on behalf of our nation's veterans. As a constituency our nation's veterans are far too often ignored and to a degree marginalized when we should be extolling the work and sacrifices that they have made for this nation.

Two years into our new century, we reflect with great pride on all that our nation has accomplished in the 224 years since we first declared our independence. Today, we are in the midst of a war on terrorism, but, as it has for generations, America shines as a beacon of democracy, freedom, and opportunity for peoples around the world.

The blessings we rejoice in today were won at great cost. Millions of young men and women who stepped forward in times of crisis and conflict to defend our nation and uphold our values around the world sacrificed their lives. The 20th century will forever be known as the American century, not only because of our economic strength, military might, and technological prowess, but also because of the character, determination, and indomitable spirit our people demonstrated time and again.

Filipino Americans, who fought and died on the same battlefields of World War II, joined America's sons and daughters in these great struggles. They brought honor and pride to our Nation and are proud to be called veterans of World War II. The issue now, Mr. Chairman, is not their willingness to serve, to fight, and to die, but, rather, is America willing to bring fairness and equity to those who serve this nation.

As you may recall, President Franklin Roosevelt ordered Filipino Americans to service in 1941. More than 140,000 Filipino soldiers fought, suffered, and in many instances, died in the same manner and under the same conditions as other members of the United States Armed Forces during World War II. In the years following the war, many of these veterans were denied health care, pension benefits, and in some cases a proper military funeral.

I am honored that as many as 600 Filipino veterans live within my Congressional District and have repeatedly brought attention to the plight of these veterans. I have called on my colleagues to support a House Resolution that I introduced that recognizes the contributions of Filipino veterans and urges that they receive due diligence for their many sacrifices. In addition, I am a proud cosponsor of H.R. 491, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2001, which would also extend benefits to members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army and the Special Philippine Scouts who served during World War II or performed occupation duty in the Pacific after the war ended.

Last week, I was delighted to cosponsor the bill offered by my colleague from California, Rep. Filner. This bill will focus on

VA medical care for Filipino World War veterans who live in the United States. In addition, this new legislation has the support of Secretary Principi and the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Secretary Principi has been extremely helpful meeting with me in Washington about this issue and then appearing at a town hall in my district to discuss this topic with my constituents, and I am pleased that he is committed to addressing this overlooked group of veterans.

Our agreement or disagreement with political policy and economic pressures should never diminish our love and profound respect for the men and women who chose duty over personal safety and went into battle-torn areas carrying our flag. We should have resources to take care of those Filipino veterans who have sacrificed on behalf of our nation.

It was President Lincoln who called on all Americans "to care for him who shall have borne the battle." I urge the subcommittee to right the wrong visited upon these Americans, because when this nation called on them these men answered that call. It is an absolute disgrace that our country has waited so long to give them what they have earned. I will not stop until they get what they rightfully deserve.

**CONGRESSMAN ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
FOR FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERANS**

JUNE 13, 2002

Mr. Chairman:

I appreciate the opportunity to testify at this important hearing to discuss the restoration of veterans' benefits for Philippine veterans of World War II. I stand in support of the Health Care for Filipino Veterans of World War II Act, introduced by Congressman Bob Filner, ranking member of this subcommittee. I also applaud his steadfast diligence to this issue and your commitment, Mr. Chairman, to honor the valiant service of Filipino soldiers who fought alongside and under the command of the United States Armed Forces during World War II. I am also supportive of H.R. 491, the Filipino Veterans' Equity Act, jointly introduced by Congressman Gilman and Congressman Filner, which would provide full restoration of veterans' benefits to members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army and the Philippine Scouts.

The resolution of this issue has been long overdue as it has been 60 years since more than 140,000 Filipino soldiers who fought under the command of General Douglass MacArthur of the United States Armed Forces in World War II were promised the same veterans benefits given to American soldiers. Today approximately 13,000 Philippine-born veterans living in the United States and some 35,000 veterans living in the Philippines are in their twilight years still awaiting their just compensation and most importantly the restoration of their dignity as honored veterans of World War II.

As it was for my district of Guam, the Philippine Islands became a possession of the United States in 1898, when it was ceded from Spain following the Spanish-American War despite their prior declaration of independence from Spain. In fact this week marks the celebration of the 104th anniversary of the Philippine Declaration of Independence.

In 1902, Congress granted the Philippines the right to elect two Resident Commissioners, who were non-voting delegates to Congress. During the periods under which the Philippine Islands were a territory of the United States, 13 Resident Commissioners served the U.S. House of Representatives and were among the first Asian Pacific Americans to Congress.

In 1934, Congress enacted the Philippine Independence Act, which provided a 10-year time frame for the independence of the Philippines. With the advent of World War II, the implementation of this act was delayed until 1946. During the time between 1934 and 1946, our nation retained certain powers over the Philippines, including the right to call all military forces organized by the newly formed Commonwealth government into armed service under the United States flag.

When President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued an Executive Order on July 26, 1941 calling the members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army into the Service of the U.S. Armed Forces of the Far East, more than 140,000 Filipinos volunteered and fought alongside American soldiers under the U.S. flag against the onslaught of Japanese Imperial Forces. Philippine forces fought on the front lines of the Battle of Corregidor and at Bataan.

Despite of all of their sacrifices and the commitment made to extend veterans' benefits to these courageous soldiers by President Roosevelt, Congress voted to rescind promise on this commitment when it passed the Recission Act of 1946, stripping these benefits away from Filipino veterans. Despite this gray period in our history, Filipinos have remained the closest ally of the United States standing shoulder-to-shoulder with U.S. Armed Forces in World War II and as our closest ally in this war against terrorism.

Today we have before us the opportunity to right a wrong committed decades ago when the Recission Act denied Filipino veterans of their just and noble service to the defense of this country and the Asia-Pacific region. Although much has been discussed on this issue and some progress has been made in the effort to restore some of the benefits denied by the Recission Act, Filipino veterans of World War II are literally dying in the fight to receive the just recognition and compensation they have awaited most of their lives. This Congress along with the support from the Administration has now seized the opportunity to restore the dignity of these veterans with the restoration of health care benefits and burial services to these veterans.

I also ask that this subcommittee solidify President Bush's commitment to Philippine President Arroyo to provide assistance for the modernization of the Veterans' Memorial Medical Center in the Philippines and provide for the deployment of medical missions to the Philippines supported by Veterans Affairs medical personnel. I also urge this subcommittee to further the restoration of veterans' benefits for World War II veterans living in the Philippines.

My district of Guam has the distinction of being the closest U.S. jurisdiction to the Philippines. Being the closest U.S. neighbor to the Philippines, our island has a large population of Filipinos who make up nearly 30 percent of the island's population. Our large citizenry of Filipino veterans are indeed dying in wait for the restoration of these benefits. Let us not deny them any longer the honor and recognition they deserve. Let us fulfill our solemn commitment.

Mr. Chairman, I join my colleagues today in support of this measure and urge your leadership in moving this legislation towards final passage and enactment.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Prepared statement of Lou Diamond Phillips

To the Members of the Veterans Affairs Committee:

My name is Lou Diamond Phillips, an American citizen of Filipino descent. I am proud to say that I come from a family on both sides who have performed military duty in the service of this country. I have five Filipino uncles who have proudly served in the U.S. Navy; two of whom went on to become staff members of the White House under President Nixon. Both my father and stepfather were ACX sailors in the Navy; my stepfather, George Phillips, having served two tours of duty in Vietnam. My father was so proud of his military affiliation that he named me after a war hero of the Second World War, Gunnery Sergeant Lew Diamond, a Marine legend in the Pacific Theatre.

I stood proudly beside my mother, Lucita, as her witness when she took her oath of citizenship to become an American. Like many immigrants who choose to become citizens of this country, my mother and the remainder of her Filipino family have become proud and contributing members of the American society, eagerly embracing opportunities that this great country has provided their families. They have watched their children, first generation Americans, as they became doctors, lawyers and teachers. I, myself, realize that my career in the film industry would probably not have been possible anywhere else in the world and, for that, I am eternally grateful. I truly believe in America as a shining light, as the symbol in the world for democracy and freedom. It is for these reasons, and many more, that, today, I consider it not only my privilege but my duty to speak for the Filipino Veterans of World War II.

As many of you know, President Franklin Roosevelt drafted the Commonwealth Army Soldiers of the Philippines who were United States Nationals into American Military Service on July 26, 1941. Many of these soldiers were still teenagers. Yet, they bravely answered the call to battle, fighting side by side with their American allies. Farm boys from different parts of

the world became fast friends and comrades; brothers in arms. Many thousands paid the ultimate price. For those Filipino soldiers who survived the horrific battles and the ghastly conditions of the infamous prisoner of war camps, the promise was made by the American government that they would be considered United States Veterans with "active service" by the Veterans Administration and, therefore, be entitled to all of the benefits that that designation entailed.

However, a scant five years later, after victory in the Pacific was assured, these guarantees were rescinded by the U.S. government on February 18, 1946, when it enacted the "Rescission Act" (public law 79-301 now U.S. code sec. 101, title 38). Effectively, this action seemed to deny the involvement of the Filipino soldiers in the war effort and, certainly, was a poor repayment for the loyalty shown by the Filipino people. In fact, many war historians and American Veterans of the Pacific Theatre have noted that, if not for the contributions of the commonwealth Army Soldiers, the Filipino guerillas and the scouts and event the Filipino citizens who served as spies and couriers for U.S. Intelligence, the tide of the war, which at the time of conscription was in a desperate state, may not have turned toward an American victory. The brave contributions of the men and women of the Philippines cannot be quantified and certainly should not be diminished.

In the sixty years since official U.S. recognition of the Filipino Veterans was withdrawn, a few positive steps have been made in reparation. In 1990, 26,000 Filipino Veterans were naturalized as U.S. citizens under the 1990 Immigration and Naturalization Act because of their U.S. military service. Additionally, under public law, PL 106-419, they may be buried in VA National Cemeteries as U.S. Veterans. However, while they live, they are denied eligibility to be patients in the VA Hospitals. Many of these men are well into their eighties and beyond. They are now certainly in need of the kind of medical attention that the VA benefits would provide. But, perhaps, even more

importantly, they desire as their last wish the recognition that they so richly deserve for the sacrifices that they made in the fight for freedom and democracy.

I know a little something about the Filipino culture. We are a proud people. It is my observation that many Filipinos would rather have the respect of their families and their communities than have material gain. Since 1990, _____ Filipino Veterans have died waiting for recognition for the single greatest achievement of their lives. In the last two years alone, we have lost _____ more. Time continues to run out for the ones who remain, and a posthumous award in the form of a military burial can only be considered the next best thing.

Let us celebrate these men while they still live. It is important to note that U.S. recognition of these veterans would not just be a token gesture. There are presently an estimated 13,849 Filipino Veterans who reside in the United States and another 46,050 who live in the Philippines. That is nearly 60,000 families that will be impacted by your decision. Nearly 60,000 men whose wives and children and grandchildren will know, without qualification, that their husbands and fathers were heroes.

Additionally, and certainly not unimportantly, with the passage of these bills before you, these men in the twilight of their lives will become eligible to receive Veteran's benefits from the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs. Benefits such as VA Health Care at VA hospitals, out patient clinics and nursing homes in the U.S., including a clinic in Manila and a monthly permanent disability pension if they are poor and disabled. I hasten to remind you that these benefits are not new prizes to be awarded, but guarantees that need to be re-instated after our government promised and then rescinded this status after services had been rendered in good faith.

Today, we can right a wrong and pay respect where it is long overdue. Please join your colleagues in the speedy passage of these bills; S. 1042 was

introduced by Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI) a WWII veteran and co-sponsored by nine Senators: Akaka (D-HI), Allen (R-VA), Boxer (D-CA), Feinstein (D-CA), Clinton (D-NY), Sarbanes (D-MD), Miller (D-GA), Durbin (D-IL) and Murray (D-WA). H.R. 491 was introduced by Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-NY), another WWII Veteran and Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA) and has 49 co-sponsors in the House.

In closing, I am reminded of the words of General Douglas McArthur when he said to the Filipino people and to his American troops hopelessly entrenched in the islands, "I shall return." It is my belief that he didn't mean that he would return empty-handed. It is my hope that he intended to return the loyalty, commitment and respect shown to him and to America by the Filipino people. We have before us an opportunity to uphold the word of America and continue to be a shining light of democracy and fairness.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Testimony Before The House and Senate

By Fritz Friedman

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Veterans Affairs Committee:

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today. After months of working on this bill and a full day of testimonies, I don't think that you need to hear more facts and so I won't bother with them. Instead, I thought that you might want to hear one American's opinion on this Veteran's issue.

The first time I heard about this veteran's issue was about 5 years ago when I read a Los Angeles Times piece on these Filipino American veterans. Frankly, I couldn't believe what I was reading. After having read the facts, it seemed so clear to me that a promise had been made to a group of people and that promise was subsequently rescinded on what seemed to me to be convenient and unreasonable premises.

Mulling the situation over, I frankly became angry. I had to do something and so, I subsequently founded an organization – The Assembly For Justice – made up for people who wanted to help in this fight. My contribution was to apply some of the skills, which I have cultivated in my day job as a publicist to try to bring the issue to a more mainstream level of awareness. I also wanted to use my relationship with actors to help raise the profile of this cause. Thanks greatly to friends like actors such as Lou Diamond Phillips, Rob Schneider, and Tia Carrerre and producer Dean Devlin – all of whom are of Filipino heritage – we did succeed in bringing awareness up a few notches. But that still wasn't enough. I believe that we have moved in the right direction in terms of giving these veterans of Filipino descent their rightful benefits.

My purpose in coming to Washington, DC, is to personally thank those of you who have supported the bi-partisan decision to fulfill the promise of President Roosevelt to these men whose contributions were critical in this country's successful victory over our adversaries.

Fabled battles in which they fought such as Bataan and Corregidor are certainly in the same league as Normandy and Guadalcanal. Without the participation of these Filipino veterans, one could only imagine what the outcome could have been for the world. So thank you to the more than 200 Senators and Congressmen and women of both parties who have acknowledged the need to make good on a promise.

I would also like to remind those who have not come out in support of this veterans bill that to many people, their unwillingness to give funding to these old men and women is totally perplexing. And the burden of proof rests on their shoulders to deny these benefits to these men.

As an American, I am appalled that the very crystal clear importance of keeping one's word –either as an individual or as a country - is what is at the core of this issue. Ignoring a promise made to any group without a clear and substantial reason goes against anything that I have come to believe is at the essence of this country - freedom, equality and integrity. Many of us are befuddled trying figure out what logical reason exists to deny these veterans benefits, which are so clearly theirs, and no such rational explanation seems to exist.

I am fond of repeating an amusing aphorism when dealing with the truth - And that is “You can't put lipstick on a pig and pass it off as Catherine Deneuve.” That there are some instances when the truth is so obvious that the only thing that happens when you spin that story is that people get dizzy. On the whole, smart people know when something isn't quite right.

In this instance it is clear to many Americans that it is our duty to keep our country's word – to insure that these veterans are treated honorably and fairly. The integrity of our nation in the minds of millions of people are dependent on this act of good faith and goodwill.

The passage of this bill and, hopefully, HR 491 next year would be a wonderful first step towards resolving this issue.

Thank you.

(Testimony to be delivered before the House Veterans' Affairs subcommittee on Health on June 13, 2002 at 3:30 p.m., Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C.)

In All Fairness
By Resty Supnet

Hunger, disease and death were common. Pillage, rape and other violent abuses were routine. Captured Filipino and American soldiers were savagely tortured. Some were put to death with a bayonet or sword just to save a bullet. A bullet was more precious than human life. All this was also true with civilians suspected of rebellious acts. It didn't make a difference with the cruel occupiers whether they were young or old, or even pregnant women. No one was spared.

The suspects were brought before interrogators who routinely employed inhumane method of extracting information from helpless victims. Two examples of these were pulling fingernails with a pair of pliers, one after the other, until the hapless victims either talked or passed out. Another form of torture was the "water cure", where water is hosed into the mouth and then stomping on the stomach. Other times suspects were threatened with the death of their parents, spouses, children, brothers, sisters or anyone close to them. These threats, more often than not were carried out.

Such were the atrocities committed in the Philippines by the Japanese occupiers during World War II. It has been more than half a century since the Imperial Military forces of Japan lorded it over my native land, but the painful memories still linger in my 75 year old mind.

My father was a businessman, who was tortured by the dreaded *Kenpeitai* or secret police, the Japanese version of the German *Gestapo*, after his unsuccessful attempt to deny ownership of a revolver. Someone must have tipped off the enemy that he had a gun. He was beaten so severely that shortly after he became seriously ill and subsequently died. The lack of proper medical attention and medication contributed to my father's untimely demise. Our general store was looted early in the war. Later on, our house was burned to the ground. Like others

who refused to cooperate with the enemy, my family lived in misery and constantly in fear of our lives.

I was barely 16 years old when I joined the guerrilla movement in Northern Luzon on May 7, 1943. Guerrillas were organized throughout the Philippines after the fall of Bataan and Corregidor on April 9 and May 6, 1942, respectively. These resistance fighters were later on integrated into the *United States Army Forces in the Philippines or USAFIP*.

In his proclamation honoring the Filipino veterans, then President Bill Clinton said, "Their many guerrilla actions slowed the Japanese takeover of the Western Pacific region and allowed U.S. forces time to build and prepare for the allied counterattack on Japan."

I was privileged to have been one of the seven Filipino veterans selected to witness President Clinton sign the proclamation.

As guerrillas, we were on the wanted list of the Japanese, dead or alive. Our identities were not known to the enemy unless someone told them. Unfortunately, there were a few of our countrymen, perhaps forced by threat of death or starvation, who turned informants.

It was part of our duty as guerrillas to seek and destroy those informants before they could do further damage to the resistance movement. Thus, when we found out that one of them was from our hometown, I personally set a trap for his capture.

The Japanese somehow learned that I played a major role in the disappearance of their spy. In no time, I was taken into custody. I was interrogated and tortured by a certain Captain Hamasaki, the garrison commander. He wanted me to name those who are in the roster of guerrillas in our area. I told him nothing, in spite of the terrible pain he inflicted on me. God must have given me strength and courage that day because I was able to hang on. Frustrated in his attempt to extract information from me, my tormentor repeatedly hit me with his two foot long steel baton. I thought my end has come. But thanks to God, for unknown reasons, the

Japanese captain had me released before I lost consciousness.

Making sure no one was following me, I returned to our command center. I was later assigned to a camouflaged outpost where I could observe the enemy's activities and relay to them to headquarters.

Armed with Springfield '03 rifles of World War I vintage, captured enemy weapons and homemade bombs, we ambushed Japanese convoys. We harassed the enemy wherever and whenever we could, with what weapons and explosives we could get our hands on.

Days, weeks and months passed. Inevitably we became physically weak due to lack of proper nutrition. We seemed to be hungry all the time. Our ranks were also ravaged by disease and there was no medicine available. But we kept on—we persevered, inspired by the promise of General Douglas MacArthur to return.

And returned he did! On October 20, 1944 he landed on Leyte at the head of the American liberation forces. And the bloody recapture of the Philippines began.

At last we had modern weapons to fight with. We were supplied by plane and by submarine, off loading the much-needed supplies practically under the noses of the Japanese who were no more than five miles away. The provisions included medicines and a new type of food, the GIs called K-rations.

With our morale high and physical strength recovered, we fought on while waiting for the U.S forces to land in our area. We didn't have to wait too long. About two months after the Leyte landing, we met with American forces and guided them in their northward movement in Luzon. By February 1945, Japanese resistance was fast collapsing, eventually ending with the surrender of its main army headed by General Tomoyuki Yamashita, the conqueror of Singapore and Malaya.

With the end of our guerrilla activities, I was eager to go home and resume my studies. But out of ignorance of a misinformed youngster, I neglected to report to the Army Processing Center to get my discharge papers. I didn't think they were that important. But I would soon realize that they were the only documents that could be used to verify my guerrilla service.

After graduating from high school on April 18, 1946, I enlisted in the Philippine Scouts, a regular unit of the U.S. Army. On September 24, 1947 I received a Dependency Honorable Discharge certificate per my own request. My father was gone and that left me as the principal breadwinner of the family of three younger brothers and one younger sister. My pay in the Philippine Scouts was not adequate for our support.

Forty-five years later I immigrated to the U.S., and subsequently took my oath of allegiance as a naturalized American citizen on April 10, 1992. I have since been active in veterans' affairs especially in the effort to pass the Equity Bill. I was commander of AMVETS Post No. 1946 and currently Commander, Filipino World War II Veterans Federation of San Diego County.

It has been 57 years since World War II ended. Today is a special day for Filipino veterans. This is the first time that we are afforded the opportunity to speak on issues concerning us, before a congressional committee, this one specifically relating to our healthcare. We are very thankful, indeed!

But more than just healthcare, it is my fervent hope that my testimony before this august body would stir the distinguished lawmakers here present to turn their eyes on a much larger need. For a long time now, we have been hoping and waiting for the passage of the Equity Bill which would give us parity with our American comrades in arms in World War II. We fought side by side against a common enemy. We served under the same commander-in-chief and commanding general.

We suffered together the pain of inhumane atrocities visited upon us by a cruel enemy. We Filipinos rallied to the Stars and Stripes when the order was issued. We marched into battle,

endured the bitter taste and humiliation of defeat and untold hardships as prisoners of war. But when the opportunity presented itself we continued to fight, until victory was won. But while we Filipinos marched into battle with American soldiers, we were not allowed to join the victory parade. Our services were declared, in 1946, in the infamous Rescission Act, as "not" service rendered in the U.S. Armed forces. I wonder if we fought as members of the Japanese Army!

This is discrimination pure and simple. If America only recognized our wartime service, we would not be here today, begging you to give us the benefits now long overdue. There aren't many of us left, and our numbers continue to dwindle every day. Soon we will all be gone. Will Uncle Sam wait until there are only just a handful of us so that his deep pockets may not be deprived of the few dollars due us?

In all fairness, Congress must admit that the passage of the Equity Bill is long overdue. It's immediate passage is not only a noble thing to do—it is **the only right thing** to do, in keeping with the long American tradition of fairness, and justice for all.

President Harry S. Truman did not agree with the Rescission Act of 1946, but was forced to sign it. Recognizing however, the injustice that Act heaped upon the Filipino veterans, his comment was, "this does not relieve us of our **moral obligation** to the Filipino war veterans", or words to that effect. President Truman acknowledged the wrong done to the Filipino veterans. Is it not now time for America to correct that wrong? To restore to us, our dignity, honor, and self-respect?

May God, in His infinite wisdom and mercy guide you to do what is right!

The speaker
is Col. Romeo M. Monteyro, PA (Ret.), in his capacity as adviser of, and spokesman
for the Filipino World War II Veterans Federation of San Diego County, CA.)

.....and justice for some!

By Colonel Romeo M Monteyro PA (Ret.)

Every first Monday of the month, at the Seniors Center in Mira Mesa, San Diego, a group of Filipino-American World War II veterans meet regularly. The aging members, who fought valiantly and without regard to personal safety, for the U.S. and its territory, the Philippines, during World War II, dutifully recite the "Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America", before discussing the business of the day.

The pledge ends with, "With liberty and justice for all." In their particular case however, American citizens, just like you and I, "justice for all" does not necessarily apply. It would be more appropriate for them to end the pledge of allegiance with,"and justice for some." Why?

Today, sixty years after they were inducted into the U.S. Army on orders of then President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and after suffering the dire consequences of that lawful order, the United States government continues to discriminate against them. The fact that they have become U.S. citizens seems to be of no importance to the U.S. Congress.

These veterans, despite the many setbacks of the past, continue to hope for justice. Their champions in the U.S. Congress, Representative Bob Filner and Senator Daniel Inouye, himself a victim of racial prejudice, true to their pledge, re-filed the Equity Bill in the 107th Congress. If passed, it would finally rectify the injustices mercilessly wreaked upon them by that infamous public law rider, the Rescission Act of 1946.

These hapless veterans, drowning in frustration and hopelessness merely clutched at the proverbial straw so it seems, when the face to face discussion between former President Bill Clinton and then Philippine president Joseph Estrada produced no tangible commitment on the part of the U.S. president, to alleviate their sufferings. President Clinton's instruction to the USVA and the Office of Budget Management was merely to study ways these veterans could be assisted, within the framework of existing laws. But with the Rescission Act of 1946, hanging over the heads of both Federal agencies like the

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mythical *Sword of Damocles*, the report on the study, submitted just days before Clinton stepped down from office, as expected, simply put the veterans back on square one.

The attitude and sympathy, if we can call it that, of President Bill Clinton towards these veterans were ambivalent at best. Some years back, when a group representing Filipino veterans asked him what he intends to do to about the Equity Bill, his reply was a non-committal "we will continue to look at it." But when he (belatedly) awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor to a group of World War II veterans of Japanese and Filipino descents, his remark was a heart-rending, **"rarely has a country been so well served by a people it has so ill treated."** Well said, indeed!

It seemed then, that President Clinton changed his mind about the Filipino veterans. Did he finally recognize their heroism as well? What, if any, is the difference between their heroism and that of the Medal of Honor recipients? Did they not all fight in defense of America? When the president said, **"they risked their lives above and beyond the call of duty. And in so doing, they did more than defended America. In the face of painful prejudice, they helped to define America at its best."** he was praising their bravery and devotion to duty and acknowledging their worthy contributions in making this country, the greatest nation on earth. At the same time Clinton also admitted that there was **"painful prejudice"**.

The question: What did he do about correcting the prejudice, which in the case of the Filipino veterans translates to injustice? Was he just being polite to President Estrada, or was he sincere in his desire to correct the injustice? But Clinton is now history, and the struggle goes on.

For a time the veterans were also assisted by the Philippine government in the person of retired AFP Lieutenant General Raul Urgello, who succeeded retired Brigadier General Tagumpay Nanadiego as head of the Office of Veterans Affairs, (OVA) Philippine Embassy. Both of them worked with the U.S. Congress on behalf of all Filipino World War II veterans.

But why the need for champions and lobbyists? Or for that matter, to seek relief from the highest court of the land, if all else fails? These aged former freedom fighters

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are Americans, whose equal treatment by the government they so unselfishly served is mandated by the U.S. Constitution! They were technically Americans when they were called to active duty to defend America in 1941, and many of them are naturalized U.S. citizens now. They were called to combat duty by an American president, (Franklin D. Roosevelt) in his capacity as president of the U.S. and its territories, and Commander-in-Chief of all its armed forces. The Filipino members of the then Philippine Commonwealth Army, the Philippine Constabulary and their reserve components were integrated into the U.S. Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE). They and their American counterparts were commanded in battle by an American general, the legendary Douglas MacArthur.

The enemy bombs, shells and bullets, which killed or maimed many of the less fortunate among their comrades-in-arms, did not discriminate as to their color. The flag that was lowered by the enemy--the Stars and Stripes--under which these warriors fought so bravely-- was the same flag raised after victory was won--the American flag.

In the dire consequences of war: death, hunger and disease. In the righteous indignation of feeling abandoned, by America, during the battles for Bataan and Corregidor. In enduring the torturous "Death March" that followed the humiliation of surrender and the cruelty of incarceration by a merciless and sadistic enemy, these Filipino veterans were brothers with their American comrades-in-arms. But in the victory that ultimately saw their redemption from a common enemy, sadly, they had no share. They had not part.

Because while their American brothers-in-arms, who survived the war were given full veterans benefits, theirs was rescinded! As far as the Rescission Act of 1946 was concerned, they were aliens, and therefore disqualified. But the other aliens who served in the U.S. armed forces in World War II, from 16 foreign countries, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, were extended full veterans benefits and U.S. citizenship.

The original law which gave all of those who fought for America in World War II, full benefits, enacted in 1945, was attached a rider, the Rescission Act of 1946, which specifically excluded the Filipinos of the Philippine Commonwealth Army and of the resistance movement. The reason: They were not American citizens during their

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military service, and therefore not a responsibility of America. What about all the other aliens who served under the American flag? Were they Americans when they served during the war? Why were their privileges and rights not denied? Technically, all Filipinos who served in the U.S. armed forces in World War II were U.S. citizens, the Philippines then being a Commonwealth of the United States of America, much like Puerto Rico, then and today. And Puerto Ricans who served in the war were extended recognition as U.S. veterans and given full benefits.

This is discrimination, pure and simple! In the land of the free and the home of the brave, freedom rings --even freedom from prejudice. And the Constitution of this great country guarantees justice for all. To the World War II American veterans of Filipino extraction however, there is no freedom from racial bias, and it is only "justice for some". And it will continue to be so, until Uncle Sam, in the goodness of his big heart, finally recognizes the unselfish sacrifices made by these, his most unfortunate nephews!

Isn't it long overdue for Congress to grant these hapless veterans full equity? Look at them. They are in the twilight of their lives. They have only a few years left on this earth. Their comrades who went ahead of them brought to their graves the bitter feeling of being abandoned by America, to whom they dedicated the best time of their lives, fighting to keep her free, during her darkest hours.

How much will it take in terms of dollars to give these brave warriors of the past their rightful dues? Old age pensions and health benefits to augment what the U.S. citizens among them receive from Social Security, and old age pensions and health benefits for those who are still in the Philippines, some 70,000 all together. Is that really too much for Uncle Sam who spends billions of taxpayer dollars bailing out other countries and people who never fought in defense of American freedom? How many more years will these veterans live and how much will their benefits cost Uncle Sam?

But is it really a question of money? Equal recognition would, in a larger sense bring back the dignity and honor taken away from them by the very country they so unselfishly served.

How loyal were the Filipinos to America, in World War II, and even now?

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In closing allow me to tell you the story of three very brave Filipinos who gave their lives for America.

The name Tomas Claudio, alas, is only known to Filipinos, who consider him a hero. Yet Tomas Claudio was killed in action in Europe during World War I, as a member of the American Expeditionary Force to France. He died for America.

And then there was Buenaventura Bello, a non-combatant. He was principal of a high school in the northern part of the Philippines when the Japanese invaded. When the enemy came to his school, he was ordered to lower the American flag, and replace it with that of the enemy's. He refused. Even when threatened with death, he still refused. Bello was hanged on the very flagpole, which flew the Star Spangled Banner, which he refused to lower. He too, died for America.

Last but definitely not the least, was Jose Abad-Santos, the Chief Justice of Philippine Supreme Court in 1941. Manuel L. Quezon, the president of the Philippine Commonwealth left him in-charge of the government, when the latter escaped to Australia upon orders of President Roosevelt. The Japanese Army caught up with him in Malabang, Lanao, in Mindanao. The enemy's request was simple: Renounce allegiance to the United States, and pledge allegiance to Japan. Abad-Santos refused. He chose death by firing squad rather than betray America. On the eve of his death, one of his sons was with him. He told the young lad, "Do not cry, my son. Show the enemy that you are brave. It is not often that a man is given a chance to die for his country." His country, which he refused to betray, was not the Philippines, but the United States of America.

How loyal are the Filipinos to America? You tell me!

One glorious day, victory against "**painful prejudice**" shall be upon these unsung heroes. Relying heavily on the intervention of God Almighty, these veterans pray that the hardened hearts of our national lawmakers and the new commander-in-chief may soon melt and show them compassion. On that day of victory, I will meet with these veterans and I will hear them recite the pledge of allegiance. At that time they will rightfully say, "...with liberty and justice for all."

With God on their side, who could go against them?

**STATEMENT OF
SUSAN ESPIRITU MAQUINDANG
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
OF THE
VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
OF THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JUNE 13, 2002**

Good Afternoon! First of all, I would like to thank the Veteran's Affairs Subcommittee on Health, Chairman Jerry Moran, and the honorable member, Congressman Bob Filner, and your staff for allowing me to testify today.

My name is Susan Espiritu Maquindang, a daughter of a Filipino World War II veteran. I am the Executive Director of Filipino American Service Group Inc. (FASGI), a non-profit community-based agency that provides social services to low-income and homeless individuals from the Asian Pacific Islanders (API) population in Los Angeles County. FASGI started in October 1981, when a homeless Filipino World War II veteran with mental health problem, was found sleeping in the garage at the home of Mrs. Remedios Geaga, one of the founding members of our agency. Since then, FASGI has assisted thousands of Filipino American World War II veterans in various services such as temporary shelter, health and mental health referrals, case management, client advocacy, food distribution, information and referral, and adult education classes. In 1995, FASGI opened it's transitional housing for homeless seniors, and has provided transition services to independent living for more than three hundred World War II veterans.

I am concerned that my presentation will, in part, be perceived as a complaint against those who have actually tried to correct a wrong committed over half a century ago. It is my impression that this subcommittee, and indeed most member of the current Congress, have tried to correct the wrongs created by the Recession Act of 1946.

That puts me in the awkward position of asking for a morally necessary solution to a problem, which has festered for five (5) decades. Worse still, I am here asking that some of the reforms you instituted be altered because they have consequences no one intended.

Please bear with me. I trust your good intentions and your good faith.

The problem is that you cannot restore health to people who have lived 55 years without adequate medical care. When the US turned its back on the Filipino-American Veterans in the late 40's, that decision had health consequences on the men who were left without care.

Cognizant of this reality, the Filipino-American Service Group, Inc. (FASGI) obtained a grant from California Endowment and California Wellness Foundation, to study the health of a sample population of Filipino-American Veterans who are still alive and living in Los Angeles.

The result is the study which I sent you last week, and which I am again offering for your information.

This is the only study of its kind, and it documents several unique issues.

First, there is a very high rate of depression and an even more alarming instance of suicidal thoughts. While such psychological dysfunctions are common among all older people, the rates among Filipino-American Veterans are much higher.

Unfortunately, the diagnosis is almost as painful as the disorder.

In an effort to create some, minimal care for the Filipino-American Veterans of World War II, Congress enabled that population to immigrate to the US and to obtain citizenship. In doing so, each emigrating Veteran is also eligible for Medicare and for other welfare benefits. This was far less than they were promised in 1942, but better than nothing at all. Unfortunately, requiring them to come to the US dislocates them from friends, family and culture. The results are depression and, even, suicide.

The problems is that each of these men, now all in their late 70's and early 80's, find themselves having to make a terrible choice:

- They can get competent medical care, while living in the US, which is a foreign culture to them. The cultural adjustment is painful, and imposes stress and depression on their daily lives.
- Alternatively, they can return to the Philippines and live in a society they understand and know, and have the comfort of lifelong friends and relatives. In doing so, however, they give up most of the medical care they need.

Requiring such a choice of men who have been repeatedly denied their lawful entitlements is cruel and unnecessary. Those wishing to return to their homes should be provided with medical care in the Philippines. That may be a difficult pill to swallow, but it is the only realistic choice for a major proportion of the World War II Veterans.

Second, many of these men have medical problems, which would not be nearly as severe if they had been treated earlier. Had they received the benefits they were promised, they would have gotten earlier medical diagnosis and intervention, and their blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, and other diseases would not be as serious today.

In short, they now need more care than would otherwise be necessary. Again, this issue needs to be addressed.

Finally, there is very little time left to act.

Most World War II Veterans now between 75 and 90, and over 2,500 die each year. If Congress does not act soon, there will be no one left. Phrased another way, each day this remedy is delayed, nearly 10 more Filipino-American Veterans slip beyond the reach of your assistance. This is your last chance to correct a wrong, which is now half a century old. I believe you are men of good intention, and now it is time for those intentions to be converted into law.

Thank you.

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman, Subcommittee on Health
House of Representatives Veterans Affairs Committee
338 Cannon Building
Washington DC 20515

FAX: 202 226-4536
Attn: John Bradley

Testimony before the Sub-Committee on Health of the
House Veterans Affairs Committee
June 13, 2002

By Patrick G. Ganio, Sr. National President
American Coalition for Filipino Veterans

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members of this Committee, Fellow Veterans, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good afternoon.

My name is Patrick G. Ganio, Sr., National President of the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans. I am a WWII Veteran, a survivor of Bataan and Corregidor, a former Prisoner of War, a recognized guerrilla and a Purple Heart Medallist for wound in combat during the liberation campaign of the Philippines in 1945.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity given me to testify before your Committee on the issue of *“whether or not Filipino WWII Veterans are to be extended healthcare benefits here in the United States and in the Philippines.”* . It is my great honor to be invited. In speaking before this honorable committee, I represent over 4,000 of my members across the US and those in the Philippines.

Outright, Mr. Chairman, it is my view that *healthcare is a must to be extended to our veterans wherever they choose to live* under public policy *“to care for those who bore the battle, their widows, and their orphans”* which our government is *morally and duty bound to provide*. But notwithstanding this policy, every benefit claim has ever been passed through the *rational criteria of the Rescission Act which I have no doubt the members of this Committee are familiar.*

From the legislative history of the Act even as the Finance Committee was dealing with surplus appropriation, there was the motive to give or limit the benefits to Filipino veterans. More so when the VA Administrator, General Omar Bradley report **\$3.2-B** which to the Committee was a huge amount to provide.

This estimate was made by the *VA Study Committee* was made on the fact that the *military service of the organized forces of the Commonwealth of the Philippines* as part of the *United States Forces*. The basis was on two opinions of the *Attorney General*. In one, *Filipino servicemen are entitled to benefits from the National Service Life Insurance for serving in the US military (VA Case 491, March 1941)*. The other was, *Filipinos taken prisoners of war or were missing in action during the war are entitled to benefits under the Missing Persons Act of 1943 because they were in the service of the US military*.

Mr. Chairman: The Senate Finance Committee sought for the VA report to make the proper legislation to meet the Federal obligation to the Filipinos before the grant of their independence on July 4, 1946. Because of the huge obligation of \$3.2-B report. Congress endeavored to find the *rational basis* to justify the intent to *limit the benefits*. Thus, Congress decided to give *\$200-M* benefits only for *service connected disability, death and survivors benefits*. *The savings therefore was \$3.0 billion*.

It appears Mr. Chairman that the controversial provision of this *Act* turned to become the *legal screen* or excuse to *deny or limit Filipino Veterans claim* requiring big or considerable cost. The *naturalization law* for *Filipino WWII veterans* was approved not just for our military service but because there was no appropriation required. The *Special Veterans Benefits (SSI) was approved to save 25%* from the *Social Security Income* currently enjoyed. There was no *new or additional budget required*. Where not all qualify because many were not residing in the United States at the time of the passage of the SVB Act on December 14, 1999 is another saving. Subject further to the *means test* some more do not qualify, hence more savings are *made by the Federal Government*. Plus the *billions of dollars savings* in years that we haven't been given any benefit beyond what is allowed by the *Rescission Act*.

Mr. Chairman: How much more sacrifice do you want us to make for this government to *save more dollars before you decide to give us the benefits we deserve? Or how many more of us surviving would you want, if not, all of us to die to save America's dollars?*

When we stood our ground in the battles of Bataan and Corregidor

without America's aid and support that never came, we accomplished our delaying mission that saved billions of dollars and thousands of American lives. What do all these savings contributed to America mean to us 60 years later today when as war veterans we could not even be given more than palliative benefits?

Mr. Chairman, when our *war on terrorism* came to pass, billions and billions of dollars poured to *foreign aid, but not to Filipino veterans*. What we are asking now to fund our *healthcare* and *pension* may comparably be a drop in the bucket of Federal savings from which we seek benefits in years of crusading for *our right to equitable benefits*.

Pardon me for asking these questions. We only appreciate your patience to listen given us the opportunity to be heard in this forum , a process we cannot find in any other political system.

Otherwise, we can but *find solace* from the *tribute of great men like Premier Winston Churchill of England and General Douglas MacArthur*, who, after our epic defense of our freedom in the *battles of Bataan and Corregidor*, remarked: *"No army in the world has done so much with so little."*

Why? Outnumbered **4 to 1**, **without America's promise of aid and support that never came**, with antiquated weapons and arms of the first world war vintage, ill-trained, ill-equipped, ill-fed, no food, no supply nor medicine we fought with incredible endurance against both the enemy and the malarial elements in days and sleepless nights of jungle fighting in the rugged mountains of Bataan. *Our spirit was our only strength; our hope, courage, and convictions our weapons; our faith and devotion to duty, honor, and country is the soul of our determined effort that broke the enemy's time table of 50 days to secure the Philippines which extended to 150 days of resistance with uncommon valor.*

Our defense was a feat in US military history in MacArthur's words: *"Saved for the United States billions of dollars and thousands of American lives. And in a more profound tribute to us the fighting bastards of Bataan, he said: "I do not know the glory of their birth. What I do know is the glory of their death, their faith in their hearts and in their lips the hope that we will go on to victory."*

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Mr. Chairman: Notwithstanding the discriminating provision of the *Rescission Act*, the *validity of our military service for purposes of right, privilege, or benefits for service connected disability, death, and survivors benefits is implicitly recognized*. To us this is not the real issue. The issue is *“whether or not this government, Congress and the Administration of this great nation as in the past, can in conscience have the moral and political will to give us what we deserve in the light of true justice which our country stands for.*

Mr. Chairman and the honorable members of this Committee: My last appeal is for your support and endorsement for approval of our bill on health care with the modest *pension or call it the medical allowance* of \$100 a month for emergent needs of our veterans in the Philippines for *medicine and travel to medical centers or hospital*, which if done will be a triumph of *true justice*.

I wish to point out that of the surviving eligible Filipino veterans we have today, some 25% will no longer qualify because of the *means test*. And before these benefits we seek are finally given, *increased old age mortality is a factor*, hence, the question I posed above is in order. Ultimately, the funding requirement we need therefore will not be much as reported by our *CBO*.

Mr. Chairman: We trust in your compassionate leadership. We trust in the leadership of our President. We pretty well know what our elderly former *President George Bush, Sr.* begun with his approval of our *naturalization on November 19, 1990* of which I have had the privilege to witness the signing ceremony at the White House. We hope and pray that under the leadership of his son, now our *President George W. Bush, Jr.*, *our long standing issue of our veterans claims will be over. We trust in his leadership and the leadership of this Congress and Secretary Anthony Principi of the Department of Veterans Affairs to get justice done and triumph at last.*

We seek your compassion to our plight in the few remaining days of our lives. We need *healthcare most. We need the resources to live with decency and honor to be remembered as America’s war heroes. Our age and scars of the war have weighed down on our physical and emotional life to keep fit for the remaining days of our lives. We need both healthcare and the resources now, not later, for tomorrow we may have passed away without*

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the taste of justice we fought for and defended. And when this is meant and done, it can be said that America cares. We believe you have not forgotten us. We believe that you won't let us down. We believe that our leaders will have the moral as well as the political will to do justice, to right the wrong done to us. For justice delayed is justice denied. God bless America. Thank You.

PATRICK G. GANIO, SR.
ACFV, Washington DC,
June 13, 2002

ACFV is a non-profit organization and does not receive any Federal funds or grant.

RESUME of Patrick Ganio Sr.

Patrick Ganio Sr. is the national president of the ACFV Inc., and the founder of the Filipino Veterans Families Foundation, Inc. that led the campaign that passed the 1990 naturalization bill for Filipino WWII Veterans in 1990. Since then, Ganio has continued to lead the fight for rights to full veterans' benefits under the GI Bill of Rights.

Ganio, Sr., is an 81-year-old World War II veteran and a retired educator. As a Purple Heart medal recipient, he is one of the remaining survivors of the epic battles in Bataan and Corregidor in the Philippines in the World War II.

Captured and taken Prisoner of War in the fall of Corregidor on May 6, 1942, he survived the enemy death camp at the infamous prisoners' concentration Camp O'Donnell, Capas, Tarlac. After the war, he was a member of the Philippine Army Reserve with the rank of Major. He is now a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Uniformed Volunteer Service.

As a civilian after the war, he completed his university education at the National University and the University of the Philippines that took him into education where his role and interest focused on the molding of the youth. Over 30 years of public service, he retired as a teacher of Mathematics and Physics.

- End-

FACT SHEET
U.S. Filipino World War II Veterans

How many U.S. Filipino WWII veterans are there?

According to a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Study released on January 9, 2001, there are an estimated **13,849 who reside in the United States and 46,050 who live in the Philippines.**

What are the relevant categories of Filipino veterans?

Members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army, Recognized Guerillas, and New Scouts who have war related injuries (service connected) and those without war related (non-service-connected) illnesses.

What do they want?

Official recognition of their honorable U.S. military service during World War II and the eligibility to receive full veterans benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs such as **VA health care** at VA hospitals, outpatient clinics and nursing homes in the U.S. including a clinic in Manila and a monthly **permanent disability pension (\$796+ per month) if they are poor and disabled.**

How will they get VA benefits?

If Senate bill S. 1042, the "Filipino Veterans Benefits Improvement Act" and/or House bill H.R. 491, the "Filipino Veterans Equity Act" are passed by Congress, they will be eligible for veterans benefits.

Why should U.S. Filipino veterans be given official recognition?

First, President Franklin Roosevelt drafted the Commonwealth Army soldiers who were U.S. nationals into American military service on July 26, 1941. Second, before the "Rescission Act" (Public Law 79-301 now U.S. Code Sec. 101, Title 38) was enacted on February 18, 1946, Filipino veterans were considered U.S. veterans with "active service" by the VA. Third, 26,000 of them were naturalized as U.S. citizens under the 1990 Immigration and Naturalization Act because of their U.S. military service. Fourth, under Public Law PL 106-419, if they died, they may be buried in VA national cemeteries as U.S. veterans. However, while they live, they are denied eligibility to be patients in VA hospitals.

Who are the supporters of their bills?

S. 1042 was introduced by Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI), a WWII veteran, and co-sponsored by **9 Senators Akaka (HI), Allen (R-VA), Boxer (D-CA), Clinton (D-NY), Sarbanes (D-MD), Miller (D-GA) and Sen. Murray (D-WA)** are supporters. H.R. 491 was introduced by Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-NY), a WWII veteran, and Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA) and has **49 cosponsors** in the House. **FAX your Senators in Washington to CO-SPONSOR S. 1042 and President Bush at FAX: 202 456-2461 to support S. 1042.**

What are the estimated costs and benefits?

Benefits & Population Estimates USVA 1/9/01 (CBO 10/3/2001)	SENATE bill S. 1042 "Benefits Improvements Act" COST	HOUSE bill H.R. 491 "Equity Act" Annual COST
VA Health Care for 12,900 U.S.-based eligible Filipino veterans	\$12.1 Million (C.B.O. \$2 M)	\$12.1 Million
VA Health Care for 35,550 Philippine-based eligible veterans	\$0.5 Million (for Manila VA Outpatient Clinic)	\$35.5 Million (\$1,000 per year/veteran)
NON-service-connected Disability Pension for 12,900 U.S.-based vets.	\$2.2 Million (C.B.O. \$1 M) (\$775 per month) (400 vets qualify)	\$2.2 Million
NON-service Disability Pension for 35,550 Philippine-based vets.	\$42.6 Million (C.B.O. \$40 M) (\$100 per mo. to match R.P. pension)	\$266 Million (\$775 per mo. in R.P.)
Dependency Indemnity Compensation	\$2.1 Million 360 WIDOWS (CBO 0.5M)	\$35.8 Million U.S. & R.P. widows
New Phil.Scouts Full SC Compensation	\$0.5 Million for 128 Scouts U.S.-based	Unknown
TOTAL COST	\$ 60 MILLION (CBO \$44.5 M)	\$352 MILLION

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Statement of
Lourdes Santos Tancinco, Esq
President, San Francisco Veterans Equity Center
Co-Chair, National Network For Veterans Equity

On
The Filipino Veterans Issue: Health Care and Recognition

Before the
Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health
June 13, 2002

Washington, D.C.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Lourdes Santos Tancinco. I represent the San Francisco Veterans Equity Center and the National Network on Veterans Equity. The San Francisco Veterans Equity Center is the only nationwide service agency catering exclusively to the needs of the Filipino World War II veterans. It was established in the City of San Francisco through the collaboration of community members and advocates concerned with the plight of the Filipino veterans. As of today, we have personally served over 1,000 veterans.

The National Network for Veterans Equity is a loose coalition of different organizations including various Asian Pacific American organizations advocating justice and equity for our Filipino veterans. Resolutions urging support for H.R. 491 (Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2001) from the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NAFFAA), Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) and the City of San Francisco are attached as supporting documents to this statement.

I am also an attorney practicing immigration law in San Francisco CA. Since 1993, I have provided pro bono legal services to countless veterans in my individual capacity, and in my capacity as supervising attorney for the free legal clinic of the Veterans Equity Center.

I. INTRODUCTION: Status of the Filipino World War II Veterans

Ladies and gentlemen of the committee, we stand for Filipinos veterans who fought under the US Armed Forces during World War II, but were deprived their US veterans status under the Rescission Act of 1946.

Though thousands of Filipino soldiers have been naturalized as US citizens after half a century of struggle to fight for their right to US citizenship, a host of other urgent issues remain to be

addressed.

Your honors, I have seen the unfortunate plight of our Filipino veterans living in the United States relating to their health problems and their struggle for recognition.

II. HEALTH CARE ISSUE

It was only a decade ago that majority of the Filipino veterans arrived in numbers in various part of the country as naturalized citizens. Several thousand Filipino veterans remain in the Philippines unable to naturalize due to failing health and lack of resources. Approximately, 3,000 Filipino veterans live in San Francisco and other cities in the bay area. Those who have had the courage, determination, and resources to make it here despite the odds chose to spend the rest of their lives here because they are living their dream of US citizenship.

Unfortunately, citizenship came to them only in 1990, these Veterans who have recently immigrated are now in their late 70s and 80s. They now suffer from ailments common among senior citizens, such as, pneumonia, high blood pressure, heart ailments, diabetes and cancer.

In the San Francisco bay area, veterans who have health problems seek badly needed medical treatment, not under the Veterans Administration system, but under Medicare and the California Department of Social Services welfare program. In California, where thousands of veterans live, majority of these veterans rely on SSI payments.

Only a handful of veterans who have service connected disability, fall under the Veterans Administration health care system. Even veterans with service connected disabilities are denied eligibility by the Veterans Administration due simply to failure on their part to present evidence to prove their service connected disabilities. Those Veterans with service connected disabilities are also denied access to Veterans Administration for their non service connected ailments.

Due to the lack of assistance and proper health care, many of our veterans are dying alone in their hospital beds, in their hotel rooms, and even accidentally on the streets.

In the year 2000, hundreds of Filipino soldiers took advantage of the law that allow them to take their SSI welfare check to the Philippines. However, whatever advantage there is in terms of the USS - PHP exchange rate is offset by the difficulty of obtaining health care in the Philippines. For this reason, many of them have since returned to the United States.

It is a tragic, if not cruel irony to see our Veterans after more than half - century finally able to reach the US, only to fall into further neglect, despair and hopelessness.

Allow me to share with you a few of these stories:

Mr. Dela Cruz

Mr. Dela Cruz is a member of a recognized guerilla forces who saved several American soldiers during the war. I met him in one of my free legal clinics. Since his discharge from the USAFFE in 1946, Mr. Dela Cruz never gave up hope of coming to the United States and receiving recognition as US veteran. He has since been naturalized as US citizen, and he has carried this with much pride and dignity.

Mr. Dela Cruz became very sickly and at one point decided to go back to the Philippines. After a few months, he returned to the US in worse health. I asked him why he returned, and he said that while in the Philippines he heard that the equity bill had passed, and that they will be finally recognized as US veterans.

This not only shows that many of our veterans are already enveloped by the fog of old age. But, more importantly, this illustrates how desperate, urgent and important it is for people like Mr. Dela Cruz to be recognized as a US veteran. For him, and the rest of our Filipino veterans, his recognition as a US veteran and being treated equally like any US veteran is their last hope of living out the rest of their lives with dignity.

Mr. Jose

Another client in the legal clinic is Jose. He was in his early 80s when his hotel room in San Francisco caught fire. In spite of being very weak and sickly, Jose left the temporary shelter provided by the Red Cross. He walked a few miles back to his burned hotel room, to look for his cherished possession: his "US naturalization certificate". He passed out after he finally obtained his certificate. He did all he can to obtain this certificate because to him, this is a symbol of hope for the veterans benefit from the US government, that he so desperately longs for.

Jose left briefly for the Philippines and returned in 1999. He was already very sickly and forgetful at the time. Since he did not know where he was going and who to call, the airport police brought Jose to a hospital where he was mistaken as having a mental disease. Someone brought the incident to our attention, and we ran to the hospital to find out who this man was. When Jose saw me, he uttered my name, and yelled Attorney! as if asking for help. We arranged to take him out of the hospital and arranged for a board and care home to attend to his needs.

One other client we had at the Veteran Equity Center who also went back to the Philippines because he was sickly and that he could not afford to live alone in his physical condition, did even not make it, he died on the plane.

The confusion arising from what actually they are entitled to as Veterans and what they actually deserve lead to other consequences: Veterans suffer from anxiety and depression. Veterans' spouses, who themselves have their own needs, are also affected. In her desperation, one veteran spouse in San Francisco jumped out of a five - story building and died as a result.

III. RECOGNITION AS US VETERANS & H.R.491

It is a given that the Greatest Generation is diminishing in numbers and that the figures on who are still residing here and in the Philippines may no longer be accurate. At the Veterans Equity Center we have witnessed how fast this population decreases especially during the winter season.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, we are talking here of Veterans who risked their lives and made untold sacrifices to defend our freedom. During the time the Veterans were conscripted into the United States Armed Forces, they willingly gave their lives and risk everything to fight with the Americans against a common enemy. During the war when the circumstances presented itself to the Filipino soldiers this government classified them as US military soldiers. After the war, these Filipino soldiers were declassified as US soldiers because of the 1946 Rescission Act. The effects of Rescission Act of 1946 should now be reversed and that the Veterans be allowed to enjoy the last years of their lives with dignity. The Filipino World War II veterans deserve to be treated equally, justly and fairly.

We believe that the cruel fate I have described can only be corrected, and this continuing despair finally ended, by passing the HR 491 which will give our Filipino veterans world war II veterans benefits, benefits that were unjustly denied them. Fifty six years of struggle should end.

We commend Representative Gilman and Representative Filner for their leadership in introducing the HR 491, the Filipino Equity Bill of 2001 which we hope will finally correct the inequity to Filipino veterans.

The Filipino soldiers' courage and heroism at Corregidor, during Bataan death march, and through the Japanese occupation of the Philippines stand as shining examples of bravery and dedication to the cause of freedom. In return for the sacrifices made by the Filipino soldier in world war II, they ask no more than to be treated justly: to be re-characterized as US veterans, be allowed to live in dignity, and enjoy the freedom that we all share and which they helped defend, at the risk of their own lives. The Filipino soldiers like their American comrades are our heroes and we like to remember them as such. Every time we witness a Veteran die we feel the pain, not so much of the loss but because America allowed the Veterans to die without due recognition. The Filipino Veterans deserve justice and their equity now.

We are concerned of the failing health of the Veterans and we would like to see them live as long as possible. The proposed health care bill addresses this issue. We are grateful to the committee for the proposed health care benefits. However, we continue to advocate for Veterans equity. We would like to see them live and enjoy the benefits of being a US citizen. We would like to see them live the day when they be given recognition as US veterans and are treated justly and equally with pride and honor.

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Resolution No. _____

TOWARDS U.S. VETERANS STATUS FOR FILIPINO VETERANS OF WWII

WHEREAS, the Philippine Islands was a territory of the United States until July 4, 1946 and the United States had control over Philippine nationals and its internal affairs. The Philippines Commonwealth had no function in matters of foreign affairs and could not declare war nor surrender its forces.

WHEREAS, on July 26, 1941, U.S. President Roosevelt issued a Military Order and invoked his powers under Section 2(a)(12) of the Philippine Independence Act (P.L. No. 77-127 Section 10(a)) 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."

WHEREAS, World War II is remembers as The Good War that President Roosevelt claimed to have defended the great human freedoms against the encroachment and attack of the dark forces of despotism.

WHEREAS, Filipino soldiers fought during World War II under the American flag and under the direction and control of United States military leaders pursuant to President Roosevelt's July 1941 Military Order.

WHEREAS, shortly after the war in 1946, the U.S. Congress passed the Rescission Act which specifically mandates that services rendered by Filipino World War II veterans . . . "shall not be deemed to have been active military, naval, or air service for the purposes of any law of the United States conferring rights, privileges or benefits . . ."

WHEREAS, the legislative rider appended to the 1946 Rescission Act denies U.S. military status and benefits to those veterans who fought under the command of officers of the U.S. Armed Forces in the Philippines.

WHEREAS, the significant and adverse impact of the 1946 Rescission Act is its unjust discrimination against Filipino soldiers of World War II by denying them eligibility for equal benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

WHEREAS, Filipinos are the only national group singled out for denial of full U.S. veterans status while the soldiers of more than 66 other U.S. allied countries, who were similarly inducted into the service of the Armed Forces of the United States during World War II, were granted full U.S. veterans status.

WHEREAS, the United States government has yet to fully restore the rights, privileges and benefits guaranteed, then taken away from Filipino soldiers of WWII.

WHEREAS, the gallantry, loyalty and sacrifices of Filipino veterans of WWII, who fought for freedom and democracy in the Armed Forces of the United States, deserves recognition and their honor and dignity restored.

WHEREAS, there is pending legislation in the U.S. Congress (HR 491) that will restore full United States veteran's status to Filipino WWII veterans.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) support the correction of the grievous act of institutional injustice and discrimination leveled against Filipino WWII veterans by amending the 1946 Rescission Act.

RESOLVE FURTHER, that the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) supports the restoration of full United States veteran's status to Filipino WWII veterans by supporting the introduction of legislation to this effect.

RESOLVE FINALLY, that the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) supports the on-going campaign of the last twelve years for full equity and justice for Filipino WWII veterans in a coordinated effort among Filipino American veterans, community leaders and all who believe in the justness of this cause, by advocating and working for equity through a comprehensive legislative, judicial and public education campaign.

Adopted on October 1, 2000 Las Vegas, Nevada

Luisa Antonio
Franco F. Arcebal
Faustino B. Bacig
Jeanne Batallones
Enrique dela Cruz
Fr. Prisco Entines
Mars Estrada
Lillian Galeo
Capt. Pat Ganio
Eric Lachica
Bea Menor
Joe Montano
Dioscoro R. Recio
Bill Sorro
Lourdes Santos Tancinco
Mayanne Teodoro

Berkeley JAAC Chapter

**Resolution to Support Full Military Benefits for
Filipino World War II Veterans**

Whereas over 200,000 Filipinos fought heroically for the United States of America during World War II and suffered tremendous casualties and torture at the hands of the Japanese army.

Whereas the United States government promised these Filipino soldiers that they would receive citizenship and full military benefits in exchange for their brave service, then withdrew the pledge shortly after the war.

Whereas over 17,000 of the Filipino Veterans, many of whom are low-income and disabled, currently reside in the United States and have still not received the full military benefits promised by the United States government.

Whereas the Filipino Veterans deserve to be honored and revered for their service and sacrifice in fighting against Fascism and Totalitarianism.

Whereas the United States government has yet to fully apologize and make reparations for the tremendous injustice that occurred when the promise of fully military benefits and citizenship was broken.

Whereas the Japanese American Citizens League is a civil rights organization dedicated to fighting civil rights violations and injustice wherever it may be found.

Therefore, let it be resolved that the Japanese American Citizens League support the Filipino World War II Veterans in their fight for full military benefits and any other reparations they deserve for the injustice they suffered at the hands of the United States government.

RESOLUTION URGING FOR THE EQUAL TREATMENT
OF FILIPINO VETERANS OF WWII

Passed by OCA National Board
JULY 28, 2001

WHEREAS the Filipino World War II veterans are the only group of alien veterans out of a total of 66 countries denied their benefits, and

WHEREAS at the time of war, the Philippines was a United States territory and thus the Filipino veterans were in fact United States nationals entitled to the protections of the Constitution and laws, swearing allegiance to the United States Flag and also served in the United States Armed Forces of the Far East (USAFFE) under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, and

WHEREAS history depicts that with the help of the Philippine Scouts fighting in the Pacific, the American troops were able to better prepare for the final battle defeating the Japanese, thus demonstrating that the Filipinos' help greatly aided the American efforts during WWII, and

WHEREAS the 1946 Rescission Act denied(ies) the Filipino Veterans of WWII the right to claim benefits promised to them, and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Organization of Chinese Americans urges full support of the veterans' struggle for just benefits due from fighting for and under the United States Armed Forces, and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Organization of Chinese Americans urges all Americans to defend and support the cause of the Filipino World War II Veterans, and especially all communities which have historically felt the pains inflicted upon them from institutional racism, and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Organization of Chinese Americans advocates for legislation rectifying the Rescission Act of 1946 and restoring the veterans' benefits.

FILE NO.

RESOLUTION NO.

1 [Equity for Filipino Veterans of World War II.]

2

3 **Resolution urging President Bush and the United States Congress to amend the**
4 **1946 Rescission Act to provide equity for Filipino veterans of World War II.**

5 WHEREAS, The Philippine Islands was a territory of the United States until July 4, 1946 and
6 the United States had control over Philippine nationals and the country's internal affairs; and

7 WHEREAS, The Philippines Commonwealth had no function in matters of foreign affairs and
8 could not declare war or surrender its forces; and.

9 WHEREAS, On July 26, 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued a Military Order
10 and invoked his powers under section 2(a)(12) of the Philippine Independence Act (P.L. No. 77-127
11 Section 10(a)) to "call and order into the service of the Armed Forces of the United States ... all of the
12 organized military forces of the government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines"; and

13 WHEREAS, Filipino soldiers fought during World War II under the American flag and under
14 the direction and control of United States military leaders pursuant to President Roosevelt's July 1941
15 Military Order; and

16 WHEREAS, Shortly after the war in 1946, the U.S. Congress passed the Rescission Act which
17 specifically mandates that services rendered by Filipino World War II veterans "shall not be deemed to
18 have been active military, naval or air service for the purposes of any law of the United States
19 conferring rights, privileges or benefits..."; and

20 WHEREAS, The legislative rider appended to the 1946 Rescission Act denies U.S. military
21 status and benefits to those veterans who fought under the command of officers of the U.S. Armed
22 Forces in the Philippines; and

23 WHEREAS, The significant and adverse impact of the 1946 Rescission Act is its unjust
24 discrimination against Filipino soldiers of World War II by denying them eligibility for equal benefits
25 administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, Filipinos are the only national group singled out for denial of full U.S. veterans
status while the soldiers of more than 66 other U.S. allied countries, who were similarly inducted into
the service of the Armed Forces of the United States during World War II, were granted full U.S.
veterans status; and

WHEREAS, The United States Government has yet to fully restore the rights, privileges and
benefits guaranteed, then taken away from Filipino veterans of World War II; and

WHEREAS, The gallantry, loyalty and sacrifices of Filipino veterans of World War II, who
fought for freedom and democracy in the Armed Forces of the United States, deserves recognition and
their honor and dignity deserves restoration; and

WHEREAS, There is no pending legislation in the U.S. Congress that will restore full U.S.
veterans' status to Filipino World War II veteran; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors supports the correction of the
grievous act of institutional injustice and discrimination leveled against Filipino World War II veterans
by amending the 1946 Rescission Act; and, be it

SUPERVISOR DALY, SANDOVAL
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

*STATEMENT OF
JOY J. ILEM
ASSISTANT NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
OF THE
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
BEFORE THE
HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
JUNE 13, 2002*

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) on legislation to extend Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care benefits to certain members of Filipino military units that fought along side the United States Armed Forces during World War II.

Since 1946, the United States Congress has limited the range of VA benefits for veterans of the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, recognized guerrillas units, and New Philippine Scouts. We appreciate the Subcommittee's concern that many of these Filipino veterans are now elderly and in need of hospital care and medical services. The Health Care for Filipino World War II Veterans Act would, in part, authorize VA to provide hospital and nursing home care and medical services to Commonwealth Army veterans or new Philippine Scouts who reside in the United States and are citizens or lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence, in the same manner and subject to the same terms and conditions as apply to eligible United States veterans.

This legislation would thereby expand eligibility and provide equity of access to VA health care for this deserving group of Filipino veterans. Although DAV does not have a resolution from our membership in support of this issue, we recognize the historic contributions made by Filipino veterans during World War II as members of the United States Armed Forces. Measured in these terms, we believe Filipino veterans of World War II should be granted access to the VA health care system, and that additional resources be provided to VA to deliver those services.

As the Subcommittee is aware, VA is currently having difficulty providing treatment to all veterans seeking health care, including service-connected disabled veterans. The extension of health care benefits to an additional group of veterans places further stress on an already overburdened and under-funded system. Year after year federal funding has failed to keep pace with medical care inflation and the mounting financial burden for veterans health care caused by rising costs and increasing demand for medical services. The cumulative effects of years of unpredictable and inadequate funding have had a devastating and irreversible impact on the VA medical system and resulted in rationing of care. This has severely hampered timely access to quality health care for our nation's sick and disabled veterans, including our most severely disabled service-connected veterans. We believe this situation has reached a critical point and we ask the Subcommittee to carefully consider our proposal to shift VA medical care from a discretionary to a mandatory funding program. Making veterans' health care funding mandatory would eliminate the year-to-year uncertainty about funding levels that has prevented VA from being able to adequately plan for and meet the demands of veterans seeking treatment.

If veterans' health care were a mandatory program, the government would have to provide sufficient funding for the VA to treat those enrolled veterans who meet the statutory requirements for care. Veterans would not have to fight for adequate funding in the budget and appropriations process every year as they do now. The DAV will continue working with members of Congress and others to build support for our efforts to ensure a reliable, adequate level of funding for VA medical services which is essential to fulfilling our nation's moral obligation to care for America's sick and disabled veterans.

We thank the Subcommittee for holding this hearing today and providing DAV the opportunity to express our views on this measure to extend VA health care benefits to members of Filipino military units that fought along side the United States Armed Forces during World War II. We appreciate your efforts to ensure that this unique group of veterans receives the recognition they rightfully deserve.

STATEMENT OF
 JAMES R. FISCHL, DIRECTOR
 VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION
 THE AMERICAN LEGION
 BEFORE THE
 SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
 COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
 UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
 ON
 HEALTH CARE FOR FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERANS

JUNE 13, 2002

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

The American Legion is pleased to have the opportunity to provide testimony regarding issues relating to health care for Filipino World War II veterans within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

When World War II broke out, the Philippine Islands were a Commonwealth of America, governed by, and subject to, the laws of the United States of America. On July 26, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sought the help of Filipino soldiers in the fight against the Axis Powers. By proclamation, all armed forces of the Philippine Commonwealth Army were called upon to serve in the United States Armed Forces. During World War II, some four hundred thousand Filipino soldiers served under American command, including the Old Philippine Scouts, the Commonwealth Philippine Army, the Guerillas, and later the New Philippine Scouts.

One year after the surrender of Japanese Armed Forces in the Philippines, the United States Congress passed the Surplus Appropriations Rescission Act as amended by Public Law 79-301 on February 18, 1946, which denied the rights, benefits and privileges initially promised to the Filipino soldiers. After nearly five years of fighting and dying alongside American soldiers in the Philippine Campaign, their service to the United States and their contribution to the eventual success of the Allied war effort was significantly denigrated by the passage of this Act.

The Filipino fighting men and women who responded to President Roosevelt's call to arms consisted of the following:

- ◆ Regular Philippine Scouts (Old Scouts) – enlisted and served in the United States armed forces before October 6, 1945.
- ◆ Commonwealth Army of the Philippines – The Philippine Army was established in 1935 as part of the preparation for Philippine independence. Ordered to serve under United States control by President Roosevelt from July 1941 through June 30, 1946.
- ◆ Special Philippine Scouts (New Scouts) – Served under United States control after October 6, 1945. Used as occupation troops throughout South East Asia.
- ◆ Recognized Guerrillas – Declared to be part of the “organized forces of the Philippines” by the Philippine President in 1944. They were composed of members of recognized guerrilla units operating from April 1942 through June 1946. The United States Army reconstructed the rosters of these units and closed the rosters to new additions in 1949.

Today, there are approximately 13,800 surviving Filipino American veterans living in the United States and 46,000 Filipino veterans residing in the Philippines. For the last 55 years, Filipino World War II veterans have sought equal recognition of their military service rendered in the United States Army during World War II.

Current law does not fully recognize the contributions of Filipino veterans of World War II, nor does it provide them equal benefits. The American Legion, however, has supported

legislation that, if enacted, would provide veterans of the Philippine Commonwealth Army, Recognized Guerillas, and New Philippine Scouts, the same wartime status and benefits as United States veterans. The American Legion has long supported efforts to enact legislation extending improvement of compensation, pension, and health care benefits to World War II Filipino veterans, irrespective of their present country of residence. While The American Legion is pleased with the newly enacted laws that aid certain service-disabled Filipino veterans residing in the United States to expand their access to health care and burial services and increases rates of compensation paid to them, we feel more must be done. The American Legion supports the passage of legislation that would appropriate funding to reduce the inequities, and increase the benefits of Filipino veterans, so that they are equal to those of America's World War II veterans.

Title 38 United States Code, §107 (a) states:

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 not be deemed to have been active military, naval, or air service for the purposes 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, except benefits under...

Legislation pending in the 107th Congress affecting Filipino veterans, specifically, H.R. 491, the *Filipino Veterans' Equity Act* would repeal section 107 of title 38, United States Code and grant equal benefits to Filipino World War II veterans. Additionally, S. 1042, the *Filipino Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2001* would provide eligibility for VA health care and permanent disability pension benefits to Filipino American veterans. It would also provide additional benefits to Filipino veterans residing in the Philippines.

The Filipino soldiers fought valiantly under the American flag, with the United States Armed Forces. These aging veterans now need and deserve the benefits they earned by virtue of their service to America. Indeed, they believe so strongly in this that, in the past, they have gone so far as to chain themselves to a statue of their former commander, General MacArthur, and refused to eat in protest to the inequity of the treatment of Filipino World War II veterans.

At a time when the men and women of America's military forces have once again been called upon to defend this nation, we must continue to demonstrate a commitment to care for those who have previously borne the battle.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement.

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STATEMENT OF

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

Submitted By

**Rick Weidman
Director, Government Relations**

Before The

House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health

Regarding

**Health Care of Filipino World War II Veterans within
the Department of Veterans Affairs**

June 13, 2002

Vietnam Veterans of America

House Veterans Affairs
Subcommittee on Health
June 13, 2002

Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Filner, and other distinguished members of the subcommittee, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is pleased to appear here today in support of amending title 38, United States Code which would improve benefits for Filipino veterans of World War II and their surviving spouses.

Before I begin my testimony I would like to take this opportunity to wish the Filipino veterans who are here today a Happy Independence Day. It was 104 years ago yesterday on June 12, 1898, when the country was finally freed from the bondage of Spanish colonial rule, which lasted almost four centuries.

Mr. Chairman, VVA strongly believes that those brave Filipino veterans of World War II who were drafted into service by President Franklin D. Roosevelt over sixty years ago are entitled to benefits that they were promised.

Under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, these Filipino soldiers fought side-by-side with forces from the United States mainland, defending the American flag in the now-famous battles of Bataan and Corrigidor. Thousands of Filipino prisoners died, both on the Bataan death March and in prisoner of war camps. The Philippines endured four long years of occupation, and after its liberation, the United States used the strategically located Commonwealth as a base from which to launch the final efforts to win the war.

With the vital participation of Filipino soldiers so evident, VVA finds it hard to believe that, soon after the war ended, the Congress of 1946 unceremoniously deprived many of the Filipino veterans of benefits and veterans' status. Prior to enactment of the "Rescission Act" on February 18, 1946, Filipino veterans were considered veterans by VA law.

Congress has an opportunity at this hearing today to correct a wrong that was perpetuated on these brave veterans almost sixty years ago. During World War II, Filipino nationals were called into military service by Executive Order of the President and fought valiantly under U.S. command to help achieve peace and freedom in the Pacific. After the war, the United States made grants to the Philippine government to provide for the needs of these veterans. In addition, some are eligible for benefits under the United States veterans system. However, many of these deserving veterans living in the United States are currently not eligible for such benefits.

VVA recognizes the leadership of this Committee to ensure that these brave men who served at our side as staunch allies are treated properly today, correcting a wrong done in 1946. VVA particularly thanks and commends the Honorable Bob Filner, who has been tenaciously pursuing this issue for several years. His strong leadership and hard work helped us arrive at this hearing today.

VVA would also like to take this opportunity to commend U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi on his two-day trip this past April to the Philippines. The visit was notable as the first visit to the Philippines of a U.S. Cabinet official under the administration of President George W. Bush and as the first-ever official visit of a

Vietnam Veterans of America

House Veterans Affairs
Subcommittee on Health
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Veterans Affairs Secretary to this country, where Filipino and American soldiers fought shoulder-to-shoulder in World War II.

Noting the U.S. debt to Filipino veterans of World War II, the Secretary began his official visit with a trip to Corregidor, where he lauded "the heroic Filipino men and women who sacrificed so much to liberate their beloved country and who helped the allies emerge victorious from World War II." He noted that the 60th anniversary of the infamous Bataan Death March was recently observed in both countries and praised the Philippines for the "extraordinarily fruitful contributions" it has been making to the international war on terrorism.

During his round of meetings in Manila, Secretary Principi met with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and thanked her for the Philippine government's support in the global war against terrorism. He also pledged to work with the U.S. Congress on expanded eligibility for VA healthcare and increased benefits for Filipino veterans and for the restoration of a grant in the form of medical equipment for the Veterans Memorial Medical Center (VMMC) in Quezon City. The visiting American official also met with the Administrator of the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office, Commodore Artemio Arugay, and with representatives of veterans' groups.

The Secretary also laid a wreath at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial, met with U.S. Ambassador Francis J. Ricciardone and other Embassy Officials and paid a call on the officers and 200 Filipino employees of the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs' Manila Regional Office and Outpatient Clinic, where he inspected the operation of the Department's sole overseas office.

The Manila Office dispenses each month over \$11 million dollars in benefits to eligible veterans and an additional \$8 million monthly in Social Security benefits. More than 5,000 veterans living in the Philippines receive compensation from this office, and nearly 1,000 more receive pension benefits. An additional 6,300 dependents of eligible veterans receive dependency and indemnity compensation, and another 3,300 receive death pensions.

In formal remarks at an April 16 luncheon jointly hosted by the U.S. Veterans Affairs Office and the Veterans Federation of the Philippines in Manila, Secretary Principi cited efforts in the United States to significantly expand the kinds of benefits offered to Filipino veterans of World War II. He noted that in 1999, the U.S. Congress offered a special Social Security benefit to Filipino veterans of World War II and allowed eligible veterans to return to the Philippines and retain 75 percent of that benefit.

In 2000, Commonwealth Army veterans and veterans of Recognized Guerilla Forces were offered veterans disability compensation at the full statutory rate if they are permanent legal residents of the United States. Other veterans became eligible to receive VA health care if they are permanent U.S. residents receiving disability compensation from the VA Department. Also in 2000, Commonwealth Army and Recognized Guerrilla veterans became eligible to be buried in VA national cemeteries if they were permanent residents of the U.S. at the time of their deaths.

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Secretary Principi acknowledged that there are other VA benefits for which Filipino veterans and their families -- in the Philippines and in the U.S. -- would like to be eligible. He stated that the U.S. Congress has several proposals now under consideration, noting that should these become law, they will be implemented "promptly, efficiently, and effectively."

In 1990 a law was passed awarding citizenship to Filipinos who had fought on the side of the United States in World War II. As a result of that legislation, about 26,000 aging veterans were naturalized as US citizens. But there was nothing in the legislation about veterans benefits. The new citizens, if they were poor, were eligible only for welfare payments on the same basis as non-veterans.

VVA believes the passage of the U.S. Rescission Act of 1946, which stated that military work of Filipino soldiers, scouts and guerrillas was not considered active service in the U.S. armed forces, was incorrect and this proposed legislation will address some of the flaws in that law.

Mr. Chairman, the long struggle staged by Filipino veterans demanding equity in their treatment by the United States has gone on for more than half a century. VVA strongly believes because of the aging population of the Filipino veterans there is an urgent need for this legislation. These aging Filipino soldiers who fought under the US flag in World War II must be helped now, when it matters most, before they all die.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes the testimony of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA). I will be more than happy to answer any question that the committee may have.

TESTIMONY
of

Richard Jones, AMVETS National Legislative Director

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

On behalf of AMVETS National Commander Joseph W. Lipowski, I am pleased to submit written testimony on providing the same level of health care benefits to certain Filipino World War II veterans residing in the Philippines as those received by veterans who reside in the United States.

We are certainly mindful of the brave and historic contributions made by Filipino nationals during World War II. Their actions as part of the allied effort are legendary. Measured in these terms, we believe Filipino veterans of World War II certainly deserve our grateful appreciation for their heroic contributions they made during the war effort, regardless of where they may reside. And, in a fiscally unconstrained environment, AMVETS would most assuredly support allowing these individuals access to appropriate veterans health care.

However, as the members of this Subcommittee fully appreciate, VA funding for the current year is extraordinarily tight. A case in point is the fiscal year 2002 VA appropriation. Shortfalls in VA's medical care budget of nearly \$400 million have already forced the Department to the brink of curtailing services affecting American veterans. Only a last minute call from White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card to VA Secretary Anthony Principi avoided a scheduled December announcement to bar new enrollments of veterans from the healthcare system.

Although we certainly value the contributions and sacrifices made by our Filipino comrades in arms during World War II, we believe the interests of American veterans must continue to come first. We would certainly prefer a fiscal climate where both the interests of Filipino and American veterans could be satisfactorily accommodated.

It appears to us, however, that providing health care benefits to Filipino veterans would use resources that might otherwise be available to support American veterans. We recognize the difficult choices with which you must deal.

However, without additional funding, we believe that our longstanding commitments to our own veterans should take priority in a choice between expanding benefits to Filipino veterans or restoring funding support to American veterans' programs.

AMVETS supports the goal of providing health care benefits to Filipino World War II veterans. We want every veteran who has an injury or illness incurred in the defense of America to receive appropriate, world-class health care. Our veterans deserve no less.

AMVETS remains concerned, however, about the resources currently available to the VA health care system. The challenges faced by VA and the veterans served are not easy. Clearly, the health care system is in dire need of additional funding caused by years of inadequate budget proposals. With current year appropriations already determined to be less than required to meet the challenges that face the system, it is difficult to see a positive effect on our veterans by extending benefits to Filipino veterans, at this time.

Mr. Chairman, the common theme in efforts to provide appropriate health care for our veterans today and into the future is that our veterans are indeed special. They are a unique national resource to whom we owe an enormous debt of gratitude for their service, their sacrifice, their patriotism and their unswerving dedication to America.

In sum, AMVETS firmly believes, as stated in *The Independent Budget*, that adequate funding remains the central issue challenging the future of the VA healthcare system.

This concludes our statement. Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue, and thank you, as well, for your support of veterans.

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STATEMENT OF

WENDY LAWRENCE, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

SUBMITTED TO

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WITH RESPECT TO

HEALTH CARE OF FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERANS

WASHINGTON, D.C.

JUNE 13, 2002

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

On behalf of the 2.7 million men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and our Ladies Auxiliary, I wish to express our sincere appreciation for the opportunity to submit our views regarding the health care of World War II Filipino veterans within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The history of the World War II Filipino veteran has been an arduous one to say the least. Permit me to present some relevant background. The Philippine Islands became a possession of the United States as a result of the Spanish American War. The Philippine Independence Act, enacted by Congress in 1934, however, gave the Philippines commonwealth status providing for an eventual independence within ten years. The United States continued to retain certain sovereign powers that included calling the Commonwealth's armed forces into the military service of the United States.

On July 26, 1941 an executive order was issued by President Roosevelt calling members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army into the service of the United States Armed Forces of the Far East. More than 100,000 Filipinos volunteered. These Filipino veterans fought side by side with American soldiers under the command of General Douglas MacArthur. Their battles were fought in the front lines of Corregidor and at Bataan. They suffered the same injuries as American soldiers. They were tortured and held as prisoners of war as they journeyed along the Bataan Death March. These men maintained their loyalty to the United States during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines and their guerilla tactics delayed the Japanese advances across the Pacific.

The Philippines became an independent nation July 4, 1946. That same year, U.S. laws were passed that specifically limited benefits available to those who served in the Philippine Commonwealth Army, New Philippine Scouts and recognized guerilla forces. Benefits in these armed forces were

limited to compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors. Those who qualified were paid at the rate of 50 cents on the dollar. The United States did provide \$200 million to the Philippine Army to help pay benefits to its soldiers as part of an economic plan for allocating financial assistance to the Philippines.

Despite sacrifices made by the Philippine Commonwealth Army and the Philippine Scouts, the 79th Congress passed the Rescission Act of 1946, which declared their service as "not active," for purposes of receiving all VA entitlements, thus denying these allied soldiers benefits to which they were initially entitled to receive. This Act also denied members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army and Philippine Scouts the honor of being recognized as veterans of the United States Armed Forces.

In an effort to assist Filipino veterans of World War II, Congress amended the Nationality Act of 1940 to grant Philippine Commonwealth and Philippine Scout veterans the privilege of becoming United States citizens for having served in the United States Armed Forces of the Far East.

The Congress has recently taken action to improve benefits for World War II Filipino veterans through *The Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2000*. This Act expands access to health care and burial services and increases rates of compensation paid by the VA. Only Filipinos who served in the U.S. Armed Forces and Old Philippine Scouts had been receiving VA compensation and benefits equal to those of U.S. veterans. Now the Philippine Commonwealth Army and Philippine Scouts who served along side American troops who have an existing service-connected disability are guaranteed access to VA health care--granted they reside in the U.S. as either citizens or permanent registered aliens.

The VFW supports legislation that seeks to restore full veterans' benefits to certain military forces of the Philippine Commonwealth Army and the Philippine Scouts. Our 102nd National Convention approved VFW National Resolution 658, "Benefits For Filipino Veterans and Scouts Who Served With The U.S. Armed Forces During WWII." A copy is attached to this statement for your information. The VFW supports legislation introduced in this Congress that seeks to address the issue of health care to the veterans of the Commonwealth Army and Philippine Scouts. Many of these veterans are departing this life every day. Our responsibility as a grateful nation is to do the right thing and restore full benefits to these veterans, even at this late point in time.

President Roosevelt called these veterans to military service under the command of the U.S. Army; they fought along side American forces. Every veteran who fought under the American flag in WW II should be treated equally. When President Truman signed Public Law 79-301 it included the First Rescission Act of 1946, he stated, "...They (Philippine Army veterans) are nationals of the United States and will continue in that status until July 4, 1946...I consider it a moral obligation of the United States to look after the welfare of Philippine Army veterans." Our government can and must fulfill this obligation in the judgment of the VFW.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, this concludes the VFW's testimony. We again thank you for allowing us to submit our views for the record on this very important and sensitive topic. Thank you.

Filipino Civil Rights Advocates (FilCRA)

National Office
310 - 8th Street, Suite 308
Oakland, CA 94607

Written Statement Submitted by Lillian Galedo
Co-chair Filipino Civil Rights Advocates

Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health
June 13th Hearing on HR 491, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act

What Price Freedom?

National Council

Teresita Baulista
Oakland, CA

Michelle Baulista
Berkeley, CA

Enrique dela Cruz
Los Angeles, CA

Lillian Galedo
Berkeley, CA

Joe Montano
Wa., D.C.

Chris Punongbayan
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Cathi Tactaquin
Alameda, CA

Ermene Vinluan
New York, N.Y.

I am the Co-chair of Filipino Civil Rights Advocates (FilCRA), a national organization that has fought for the past eight years for the right of Filipino World War II veterans to equal status in the eyes of the U.S. government.

Soon after thousands of Filipino veterans of WWII immigrated to the US to claim their newly won right to citizenship, Filipino WWII veterans marched in Veterans Day and Memorial Day Parades in cities across the country. But this 'recognition' is little more than symbolic. In reality, Filipino Veterans of WWII do not have recognition where it matters, in the eyes of the U.S. Government and agencies like the Veterans Administration.

Historically, WWII is remembered as the war against fascism - "the good war". Even though America experienced the war as close as Pearl Harbor, as a nation we remain relatively ignorant of the Pacific 'theater' of WWII against Japan. We think of the Pacific 'theater' as having been fought and won in the South Pacific. In the U.S. those great battles are remembered to be Guadalcanal, Wake Island, Midway, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and Guam.

We have very little appreciation for the debt we owe the Filipino people. As a colony of the U.S. Filipinos were inducted into the U.S. military by Executive Order. They fought alongside Americans, under the same commander, for the same reasons - to stop fascism. The most sustained campaign against Japanese tyranny was fought in the Philippines. The Filipino people's resistance against Japan's invasion and subsequent occupation of the Philippines provided the U.S. the opportunity to rebuild our forces after Pearl Harbor and rethink our strategy. Filipino resistance also forced the Japanese to maintain resources in

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the Philippine occupation, diminishing their ability to defend themselves in other parts of the Pacific.

Risking everything so we in the U.S. wouldn't experience the terror of war on our soil, the Filipino military -- regular and guerrilla alike -- fought against overwhelming odds to spare Americans the agony of war. Because Filipinos fought the Japanese so courageously in Luzon, Americans did not have to fight the war in Monterey, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

The cost of war for the Filipino people was 300,000 dead, a hopelessly damaged infrastructure and a devastated economy. For this sacrifice our government in 1945 legislated that their service did not constitute service in the U.S. military!

Today Filipino Veterans of WWII, who are in their late 70's and 80's, are living in poverty and unappreciated in the U.S. This poverty is at the root of their substandard living conditions, their separation from a supportive family network, poor health, low self-esteem and in some cases depression.

In our community's struggle to correct this injustice the U.S. government is telling us that it will "cost too much" to compensate those soldiers who fought for our freedom. How do we place a price tag on freedom from fascism? How in a period of heightened patriotism, and increased military spending, can Americans turn our backs on Filipino soldiers who displayed supreme patriotism? Surely, a government that appreciates the fact that America remained a free country after WWII will find the resources to compensate those who made it possible.

Increases in health services will not repay this debt. Filipino Veterans of WWII, should be granted full military status, entitling them to equal benefits and the recognition they rightfully deserve. This is best addressed by the passage of HR 491 in the 107th Congress.

Respectfully submitted,

Lillian Galeo
FilCRA, co-chair

FilAmVets

Filipino American Veterans, Inc.

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Testimony of Brigadier General Tagumpay A. Nanadiego Armed Forces of the Philippines (Ret)

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, Good Afternoon:

I am Tagumpay A. Nanadiego, a retired brigadier general of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, 83 years old, permanently residing at 6716 East Canyon Ridge, Orange, CA 92869, and now the National Commander of the Filipino American Veterans, Inc. (FilAmVets), based in Los Angeles, California.

I was a reservist age 22 years, private in the Philippine Army of the Commonwealth of the Philippines when I was inducted into the United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) on December 16, 1941.

Typical of young Filipino soldiers who answered the call, and ordered into the service of the Armed Forces of the United States under a Military Order issued by President Frankling Delano Roosevelt on July 26, 1941:

I fought alongside with Filipino and American soldiers in Bataan Peninsula, Philippines from late December, 1941 to April 8, 1942. We numbered about 78,000 - 12,000 Americans and 66,000 Filipinos.

On April 9, 1942 on orders of General Edward King and in the agony of defeat, we surrendered to the enemy, and in the afternoon of the same day, I started to walk the infamous "Death March".

Seven thousand to 10,000 perished in that "Death March" either were bayonated to death by our heatless captors or died on the wayside for hunger and exhaustion under the blistering April sun.

We were incarcerated in Camp O'Donnell, Tarlac, and were treated like pigs. We rested on plain bamboo floors without mat, no pillows and mosquito nets to ward off mosquitoes at night and swarms of flies during the day. I wrote an article on the inhuman treatment given to us by our captors in an article entitled, "Camp O'Donnell: A Four-Month Nightmare in the Philippines" for The Stars and Stripes of April 8-14, 1996.

In the concentration camp, we numbered about 70,000 on the first day. Malaria, dysentery, and beri-beri took the lives of about 200 prisoners every day, which reduced our number to half.

I was released on April 29, 1942. Sick and emaciated, I was a horrible sight to see, so much so, that my father who met me at the Capas railroad station could not recognize me nine feet away. The Japanese authorities released me to my father in August, 1942 who brought me home where I managed to recuperate.

I joined the guerrillas, was attached to the Alamo Scouts in 1944, and was recognized Captain by the 6th Army, U.S.A. in 1945.

Today, because of my disabilities as an Ex-Prisoner of War, I had been awarded by the Department of Veterans Affairs under Claim No. 30 154 101 the following monthly pensions, to wit: \$47.40 effective April 1, 1988; adjusted to \$48.00 on December 1, 1998; to \$98.00 since October 27, 2000; to \$101.00 on December 1, 2000; and finally to \$103.00 effective December 1, 2001.

I have no complain about the \$103.00 monthly pension which I have been receiving because I feel that I am blessed, blessed because I was inducted into the service of the USAFFE as a lowly private, but came out as a guerrilla captain when I was released to the Philippine Army in 1946; fought alongside with Filipino and American troops, surrendered to the enemy in the agony of defeat; walked the 65-miles "Death March"; starved

and mistreated during my incarceration in Camp O'Donnel, and came out thru the horrors alive; released to the Philippine Army and commissioned in the Reserve Force as 2nd lieutenant, and rose thru the military ladder to become a brigadier general after thirty three years of faithful service. But I care about my fellow Filipino WW II Veterans, particularly those who have chosen to remain Filipinos to live and die in the Philippines. As the existing laws and bills focus on more benefits to Filipinos who became Americans or decided to live permanently in the United States, I am reminded of the words of the late President of the Republic of the Philippines Ramon Magsaysay who often said **"those who has less in life should have more in law". The Filipino World War II Veterans in the Philippines have less in life.**

I have been privileged to serve as Head of the Office of Veterans Affairs and as Special Presidential Representative in the Philippine Embassy in Washington D.C. I was tasked with a mission to work for the restoration of full benefits that were taken away from the Filipino WW II Veterans by the Rescission Acts of 1946. It is a matter of common knowledge and are borne by the records that the Rescission Acts of 1946 were enacted because the Filipino WW II Veterans were over 300,000 and the cost of funding the benefits was estimated at \$3.2 billion then. It is a matter of common knowledge also that the Filipino WW II Veterans have dwindled to about 40,000 - 50,000 now, and the fund requirement will not cost billions now. In other words, the reason for the enactment of the Rescission Acts of 1946 is no longer there.

Guided by the Filipino American Veterans, Inc. (FilAmVets), and complying with their wishes, I urge that the Rescission Acts of 1946 should now be repealed, and the benefits enjoyed by their American counterparts and the 116,000 who joined the United States Army should now be made available to the Filipino WW II Veterans regardless of their present citizenship and residence.

I plead that the aging Filipino WW II Veterans now in the eighties be made to enjoy what is due them by reason of their loyalty and service under the American Flag during World War II. In plain, that H.R. 491 be enacted by the 107th U.S. Congress - this Congress. It would be tragic if death, the inexorable leveler will end their claims for benefits. By then, it can be truly said and rightly so, that "justice delayed, is justice denied".

(Signed) **TAGUMPAY A. NANADIEGO**
 Brigadier General, AFP (Ret)
 Canyon Road
 National Commander

June 13, 2002
 6716 East
 Orange, CA 928-69
 U.S.A.

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June 6, 2002

Attn: John Bradley
Fax (202) 226-4536

Representative Jerry Moran
Chairman, Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Veterans Affairs
335 Cannon House Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Representative Moran:

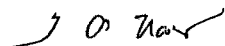
Thank you for inviting me to testify at the hearing scheduled on June 13, 2002.

I feel honored by your invitation and thank you for your concern and interest in the health care and benefits of the Filipino Veterans of World War II.

I had occasion to testify at a hearing presided by Representative Bob Stump held in the same place four years ago. I was relatively young then (79) and in fairly good health. I am not that young anymore and I am suffering from ailments related to my service in Bataan, my exposure to the elements during the 65-miles Death March, aggravated by my incarceration in the hell that was Camp O'Donnell.

I regret I cannot attend the hearing as scheduled. May I just send you my statement for the record?

Sincerely,



Tagumpay A. Naradiago
Brigadier General, AFP (Ret)
National Commander

TAN:cpp

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Representative Jerry Moran
Chairman, Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Veterans Affairs
335 Cannon House Building
Washington DC 20515

Chairman Moran and Members of the Committee, Good Afternoon

Although I was not invited to testify, nor submit a written testimony on June 13, 2002 regarding the Filipino World War II Veterans health care and benefits hearing, please allow me to submit my testimony on behalf of these defenders of freedom and democracy, as a son of a veteran, and a proud American.

My name is Cesar P. Patulot, 60 years old, the eldest son of the late Silvino M. Patulot. My father joined the guerrillas, and was a recognized captain of the Philippine Commonwealth Army a component of the United States Army. He was mortally wounded during WW II in Cavinti, Laguna, Philippines, and was awarded a Purple Heart Medal. I immigrated to the United States with a degree in B.S. Chemical Engineering, and became a naturalized American citizen in 1978. My wife Evelyn Zuniga-Patulot, RN, is a NICU specialist with Loma Linda Medical Center, whose father, Antonio Zuniga is of Mexican American Navajo Indian ancestry, was an American soldier who fought in the Liberation of the Philippines during WW II. We are married for 32 years and have four children, the eldest of which, Adonis Caesar is a U.S. Marine Desert Storm veteran.

I am a very proud American, and am presently the chairman of the Filipino International Legal Defense & Educational Fund Foundation, Inc. (FILDEF), a non-profit, non-sectarian and non-political California corporation. FILDEF's mission is to protect the civil rights, among others, of Filipinos and those with Philippine ancestry worldwide. FILDEF is helping the cause of the Filipino WW II Veterans in its fight to restore their full U.S. veterans benefits regardless of their current citizenship and residency, and committed to fight **to repeal the 1946 Rescission Acts (Section 107 (a) and (b) of Title 38 U.S.C.)**.

We appreciate your committee's kind effort and the interest in the health care and benefits of the Filipino WW II Veterans, especially in their twilight years.

However, allow me to share with our committee the common feeling of these aging heroes, their

widows, survivors and sympathizers to the veterans' cause, and that is, to immediately correct this long overdue injustice, unfair and immoral treatment to these brave heroes.

On July 26, 2001, FILDEF submitted to President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Speaker J. Dennis Hastert, Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, Members of the 107th U.S. Congress and Secretary Anthony J. Principi of the Department of Veterans Affairs, among others. The petition was signed by numerous veterans and their love ones, organizations, sympathizers to the veterans' cause and political leaders from several states.

For the record, a copy of the petition "**to repeal the 1946 Rescission Acts (Section 107 (a) and (b) of Title 38 U.S.C.)** and restore the full U.S. veterans benefits to all Filipino WW II Veterans regardless of their present citizenship and resident now, was likewise endorsed by former Philippine President Fidel V. Ramos, is enclosed for your committees' perusal and kind consideration of the 107th U.S. Congress.

For your committees's information also, I am the national executive director of the Filipino American Veterans, Inc. (FilAmVets), the national veterans organization.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, we pray and hope that you will follow your clear conscience to correct the injustice done to these defenders of freedom and democracy by the 79th U.S. Congress when the discriminatory Rescission Acts of 1946 were enacted for plain economic reasons.

God bless you all and God bless America. Long live our Filipino World War II Veterans.

Sincerely yours,



Cesar P. Patulot, Chairman
Filipino International Legal Defense & Educational Fund Foundation, Inc. (FILDEF)

CC: President George W. Bush
Secretary Anthony J. Principi
Filipino American Veterans, Inc. (FilAmVets)
Global University, Inc.
American Legion
Veterans of Foreign War
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Philippine Embassy, Washington D.C

Enclosed

CPP: clp

SANTOS for BOE 2002
5524 Assmebly Ct. Suite 11
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(916) 393-1019 / 690-3079

June 17, 2002

To the Honorable Congressman Bob Filner:

I am submitting this written testimony into the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Healthcare hearing on Health Care for WW II Filipino Veterans Act (HR4904).

My name is Tom Santos. I reside in Elk Grove, California. I am 51 years old. I was born in the Philippines, but I have been a naturalized U.S. citizen since I was ten years old. My father worked as a civil servant for the U.S. Air Force. My brother served in the U.S. Navy. I served in the U.S. Air Force.

I also have an interest in politics. Currently, I am the California Democratic Party's nominee for the Board of Equalization in District 2. During the 2000 elections, I was the Democratic nominee for Congress in the 11th district. And in 1998, I was the Democratic nominee for the Board of Equalization, also in district 2.

Most recently, I served as vice-chair of the Democratic Party's Veterans Caucus, which was then chaired by long-time political activist, and my friend, Tom Swann. With Tom Swann, Dennis O'Dell (caucus Legislative Committee Chair), and myself, we successfully campaigned to include the equity bill and benefits issues for the Filipino WWII veterans into the Democratic Party's official platform for 2002. We also actively lobbied for the support of numerous House Representatives and U.S. Senators to support this legislation in Congress.

I am testifying on behalf of and in support of the Filipino veterans who fought with the American soldiers during World War II in the Philippines. These are the veterans who were drafted into service by executive order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. At the time, the Philippines was a territory of the United States. The Filipinos who joined were promised that they would be entitled to the same benefits and recognition that U.S. soldiers universally possess.

Tens of thousands of Filipinos joined and sacrificed their lives to fight for and defend the American democracy. Thousands died in combat, thousands more were wounded. However, shortly after the war ended and the American democracy still intact, Congress passed the Rescissions Act of 1946, which effectively denied the surviving Filipino veterans the rights and privileges that were promised to them.

Today, about 11,000 of these Filipino veterans live in the U.S., and approximately 34,000 are still living in the Philippines. They are now in their late 70's and 80's. How much longer do they have to wait before they receive the recognition that they so deserve but have been denied by the U.S. Congress over the past 50 years? How many of them will live to see it?

I urge you to repeal the Rescission Act of 1946, pass the HR4904 package and the pending HR491 Equity Bill for all the Filipino WWII veterans, and put a dignified closure to this most revolting act of injustice inflicted upon all Filipinos.

I sincerely thank the members of this committee for your time and compassion. God Bless.

**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS, ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS**

**SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE FILIPINO CIVIL RIGHTS ADVOCATES,
CHICAGO CHAPTER AND THE MIDWEST NETWORK FOR VETERANS EQUITY**

June 10, 2002

Chairman Moran and distinguished members of the House Subcommittee on Health and the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, we thank you for the opportunity to offer our perspective on the horrific plight of Filipino WWII veterans who are in desperate need of adequate veterans benefits, especially in the arena of health care, medical assistance, and pension benefits. We, the Chicago Chapter of the Filipino Civil Rights Advocates along with the Midwest Network for Veterans Equity, are pleased to submit our observations and recommendations on behalf of the surviving Filipino veterans of WWII, many of whom are in their 70's, 80's and 90's.

For nearly 60 years, the United States has carried out a grave injustice against Filipino soldiers and war heroes. As a direct result of the Rescission Act of 1946, Filipino Veterans of WWII continue to this day, to be turned away from much needed veterans health care and pension benefits. It was the Rescission Act which stripped *previously eligible* Filipino WWII veterans of the U.S. veteran benefits that they earned in the battlefields of WWII as members of the U.S. Armed Forces of the Far East. Pursuant to an Executive Order of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1941, over 200,000 brave Filipino soldiers were drafted into military service to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces of the Far East to defend an American Commonwealth -- the Philippines.

In 1941, the Philippines was still a U.S. territory and most importantly, Filipinos were American nationals. That year, before hardly an American had ever heard of Pearl Harbor,

President Roosevelt called into the service of the U.S. Armed Forces all of the Armed Forces of the Commonwealth of the Philippines. Over 200,000 Filipino men subject to President Roosevelt's Order fought side by side with American soldiers through some of the most horrific battles of World War II to defend an American territory and the bedrock principles of freedom and democracy.

Poorly supplied -- many poorly trained because their training was cut short by the outbreak of the war, and poorly equipped -- some going into battle with only surplus equipment from World War I -- these men were vastly outnumbered, but never outfought. With no hope of replenished supplies or reinforcements, after the surrenders of Bataan and Corregidor, nearly a hundred thousand men, approximately 70 % of them Filipino, suffered the pain, cruelty, and degradation of the Bataan Death March. One account states that one would come across the corpse of a comrade every fifteen paces. To put that into some perspective, the Bataan Death March route would be akin to walking from Chicago all the way to Milwaukee.

And yet, how were these Filipino soldiers rewarded for their service? In 1946, Congress passed the Rescission Act of 1946, which stated, in relevant part, that the service of Filipino soldiers would not be deemed "active service under any law of the United States conferring rights, privileges or benefits." As a result of this legal fiction, many Filipino Veterans, now in their 70s, 80s and 90s, live in dire poverty and loneliness, without the much-needed health and pension benefits afforded their fellow American comrades of World War II.

A federal bill, H.R. 491, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act, would restore full recognition of the military service of Filipino Veterans of World War II. We urge this Committee to join those of us calling for Congressional action to correct this historic injustice, including the Illinois Cook County Board of Commissioners, City Council of Chicago, and

Village of Skokie, which have all passed resolutions in full support of Congressional passage of the Equity Act. To date, this movement for full equity for Filipino veterans has garnered the support of nearly half of the Illinois congressional delegation as co-sponsors of H.R. 491.

With each passing day, we lose dozens of heroes of World War II, both Filipino and American alike. These Filipino veterans, by their efforts and sacrifices, truly are members of what has justly been referred to as "The Greatest Generation." Recently we had the experience of watching a group of Filipino veterans recite the Pledge of Allegiance to this Nation and its flag. The irony was most poignant as they recited its last three words -- "justice for all." Not "some," not "many," not "most" -- but "all." Justice demands nothing less than full equity for these veterans now. Time is running out for America to do the right thing. In answer to President Roosevelt's call to service over 60 years ago, Filipino soldiers never for one moment hesitated from imperiling their own lives in defense of the United States. This nation owes a great debt to these fine men that won't be retired by putting flags on their headstones and flowers on their graves. Now, more than ever, the sacrifices of Filipino Veterans of World War II demand recognition by Congressional passage of the H.R. 491, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act.

Respectfully Submitted,

Filipino Civil Rights Advocates
Chicago Chapter
5051 Main Street
Skokie, Illinois 60077

Midwest Network for Veterans Equity
6459 N. Oakley Street
Chicago, Illinois 60645

Photograph taken by Carl Mydans for LIFE Magazine, as reported in Return to the Philippines, Rafael Steinberg, World War II Time-LIFE Books, Alexandria, VA, submitted for the record by Congressman Stearns

Flushed with success, joining U.S. Rangers and Filipino guerrillas return to their homes in 488 American soldiers from a Japanese prison camp at Cabanatuan. Located 60 miles to the north of Manila. On the night of January 30, 1945, after the Rangers had fought through 25 miles of enemy-held territory to Cabanatuan, they crushed the 130-man garrison in less than an hour and removed the prisoners, including the weakest ones on their backs. A Japanese soldier was killed. The U.S. losses were protected by guerrillas who held off nearly 800 Japanese troops.

