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House of Representatives

THE BELLS OF BALANGIGA MUST RING AGAIN!

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support H. Con. Res. 481, legislation that I have just introduced, which urges the President to authorize the return of two church bells, currently on display at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming, to the people of the Philippines.

The New York City Council is expected to pass a resolution in support of this legislation on September 28th, 2006, the anniversary of a 1901 battle between Filipino and American soldiers in the town of Balangiga on the island of Samar, Philippines.

As a result of this conflict between Filipino and American troops, the bells in the church were taken to the United States as war trophies and have been on display ever since at F.E. Warren Air Force Base. I am introducing as a result of a vote by the Wyoming Veterans Commission to return the bells to the church in Balangiga.

The citizens of Balangiga have erected a memorial that includes the names of the Filipino and American soldiers who lost their lives in the 1901 incident, and the town honors these war dead on September 28th each year. The Filipino people have requested the return of the bells to the original setting in the Balangiga Parish where they could ring again, after 105 years of muteness, as a symbol of this bond.

The acts of conflict that surrounded the bells of Balangiga are not consistent with the friendship that is an integral part of the relationship between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States. Filipino soldiers have fought side by side with American troops in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, and the bells should more properly serve as a symbol of friendship and not of conflict.

I urge support of this resolution.