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House of Representatives

RECOGNIZING AND HONORING FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERANS!

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER. I thank Congressman *Lantos* for your leadership in the fight for benefits, and your chairman, Mr. *Hyde*, and the sponsor of this legislation, Mr. *Issa*. Along with my colleague from San Diego County, Mr. *Issa*, we chair the Congressional U.S.-Philippines Caucus, and Mr. *Issa* is the prime sponsor of the equity bill which you talked about, H.R. 4574, to bring real justice to our Filipino American and Filipino veterans.

We all know, or we all should know, the impact of the Filipino soldiers on World War II. They endured the original Japanese advance. They held them up far beyond their calendar, allowed MacArthur and the U.S. Army to have more time. As guerillas, they kept the Japanese busy for the 4 years that they were occupied, and then helped prepare the way for General MacArthur's return and our eventual victory in the Pacific.

We know their great contribution to American history, but we have repaid this great contribution with words. My friend, the doctor

from Florida, said this is a long overdue resolution, and it is a fitting tribute.

Well, 10 years ago this body, or 10 years ago, President Clinton said this same thing: I urge all Americans to recall the courage, sacrifice and loyalty of Filipino veterans of World War II and honor them. Five years ago President Bush sent his greetings, which said the same thing: We thank you all for this work.

But nobody since 1946 has done what President Truman tried to say: I consider it a moral obligation of the United States to look after the welfare of the Filipino Army veterans. They were drafted into the American Army. They were promised benefits.

But in 1946, this Congress, only Mr. *Lantos* was here, I think, at the time, this Congress passed a Rescissions Act, which cut the benefits and cut the recognition that they were promised by President Roosevelt and President Truman.

This is wrong, my colleagues; and yet Mr. *Issa*, as the sponsor of this resolution, also is the sponsor of the real answer to this situation and the real tribute that we could pay to these veterans, all of whom now are in their 80s. They are a rapidly dwindling band of patriots. What they want is honor and dignity, and that is provided by H.R. 4574, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act. I hope that Mr. *Lantos* is right, that this resolution will pave the way. I am afraid it will be an excuse for not doing anything more.

Let us pass this resolution. It helps educate us and our constituents about the role of the Filipino veterans in World War II. But let us go further. Let us pass the Filipino Veterans Equity Act, which provides access to health care and access to pensions of those Filipinos who are eligible.

They don't have long to live, Madam Speaker. They want the honor and dignity that was denied them after World War II. So let us give a fitting tribute and let us do a long overdue action of this Congress. Let us pass H.R. 4574, which will be our true tribute to these brave men.

I thank Mr. *Issa* for introducing this resolution. Let us approve it, but let us move on beyond this and truly recognize those who contributed so much to this Nation's freedom and independence.