

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1420, HD1, RELATING TO FILIPINO VETERANS
BURIAL ASSISTANCE

PRESENTATION TO THE
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL, AND MILITARY
AFFAIRS

BY

MR. RONALD P. HAN
DIRECTOR OF STATE OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

March 14, 2017
1:15 p.m.

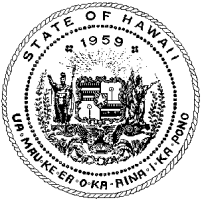
Good afternoon, Chair Nishihara, Vice Chair Wakai, and members of the Committee:

I'm Ron Han, Director of the State Office of Veterans Services (OVS). I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony **in support** of the concepts in House Bill 1420, HD1.

This measure appropriates funds for the burial grants for qualifying Filipino-American veterans to provide funeral and burial services and transportation of their remains to the Philippines.

The OVS supports the concepts and intent expressed in this measure as long as its implementation does not impact or replace the priorities set forth in the Executive Budget.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Hawaii's Veterans and their families.



HAWAI‘I CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 411 HONOLULU, HI 96813 · PHONE: 586-8636 FAX: 586-8655 TDD: 568-8692

March 14, 2017
Rm. 229, 1:15 p.m.

To: The Honorable Clarence Nishihara, Chair
and Members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety,
Intergovernmental and Military Affairs
From: Linda Hamilton Krieger, Chair
and Commissioners of the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission

Re: H.B. No. 1420, H.D. 1

The Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) has enforcement jurisdiction over Hawai‘i’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and access to state and state funded services. The HCRC carries out the Hawai‘i constitutional mandate that no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights. Art. I, Sec. 5.

H.B. No. 1420 H.D.1 appropriates funds to provide for burial grants for Filipino-American veterans of World War II, to cover funeral and burial costs, including the cost of returning their remains to the Philippines for burial.

The HCRC strongly supports H.B. No. 1420 H.D. 1. This appropriation is one small way that Hawai‘i can join the United States in efforts to pay a debt of gratitude and justice, attempting to remedy a history of injustice, broken promises, and discriminatory treatment suffered by a now dwindling generation of heroic Filipino Veterans who served under US command, were promised citizenship and veteran’s benefits, and to this day continue to suffer the consequences of broken promises and belated remedies.

During WWII, members of the Philippine Armed Forces served in the US Armed Forces in the war against Japan. They were among a broader class of non-citizens serving in the US Armed Forces who were offered naturalization as part of the 1942 enactment of the Second War Powers Act, which waived a number of usual naturalization requirements, including residence in the United States and literacy and education testing in English. The cut-off date for application was set at December 31, 1946.

The US authorized Vice Consul George H. Ennis in August 1945 to naturalize Filipino servicemen pursuant to the law. However, the applicability of the law to Filipino servicemen was questioned, and then Attorney General Tom Clark revoked Ennis' authority to naturalize in September 26, 1945. Eligible Filipino servicemen were then only able to naturalize from August through December, 1946. As a result, only about 4,000 out of more than 250,000 Filipino servicemen applied for and were granted naturalization during those few short months.

With the enactment of the Rescission Act in 1946, these Filipino Veterans who served under US Command were singled out and denied full and equal veterans status and benefits given to others.

This injustice spawned a host of litigated cases on behalf of Filipino Veterans, from the 1960s through the 1980s. Then, in 1990 Congress incorporated provisions for special naturalization for Filipino Veterans in the 1990 Immigration Act, followed by piecemeal legislation providing for limited benefits for Filipino Veterans, but not equity and full veterans benefits.

Many of those Filipino Veterans who naturalized since 1990 have waited for years for relative visas to become available, so their petitions to be reunited with their adult children in the United States can be approved and visas issued. Fewer and fewer remain with us, waiting, as those who fought under US command in WWII are now aged well into their 90s. The HCRC strongly supports H.B. No. 1420 H.D. 1, which provides for those who wish to return to the Philippines to be buried and reunited with their families in death, too late to be reunited in life.



Testimony in Strong Support of
HB 1420 HD1 RELATING TO FILIPINO VETERANS BURIAL ASSISTANCE
Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental and Military Affairs

March 14, 2017, 1:15

Chair Nishihara, Vice Chair Wakai and Committee Members

From: Amy Agbayani, Co-chair Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights (HFCR)
3432 B-1 Kalihi St. Honolulu, Hawaii, 96819

Subject: Relating to Filipino Veterans Burial Assistance

HFCR supports programs and policies that seek to fair treatment for individuals and communities. We strongly support HB 1420 HD1 which "Appropriates funds for burial grants for qualifying Filipino-American veterans to provide funeral and burial services and transportation of their remains to the Philippines; provided that federal funds remain unavailable and there remain eligible Filipino American veterans living in the State." The veterans living in our state do not have resources to transport their remains to the Philippines if that is their final wish. Although burial grants to cover this cost were statutorily established, there are no funds available.

We respectfully request you approve this bill that demonstrates Hawaii's recognition of our Filipino veteran's service and sacrifice. Thank you for hearing this bill and for the opportunity to offer our strong support.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2017 9:46 PM
To: PSMTestimony
Cc: lawrence.enomoto@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB1420 on Mar 14, 2017 13:15PM

HB1420

Submitted on: 3/10/2017

Testimony for PSM on Mar 14, 2017 13:15PM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Lawrence M.G. Enomoto, Major USAF Ret.	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I strongly urge this Committee to recommend that the 2017 Legislature appropriates funds for burial grants to qualifying Filipino-American veterans to provide funeral and burial services and transportation of their remains to the Philippines.

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HAWAII FILIPINO LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

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LATE

Date: March 14, 2017

To: Sen. Clarence K. Nishihara, Chair
Sen. Glen Wakai, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, & Military Affairs

Re: Testimony on H.B. 1420 HD1 – Filipino Burial Assistance – 3/14/17, 2 p.m.-Room 229

The Hawaii Filipino Lawyers Association (HFLA) appreciates the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong **SUPPORT** for H.B. 1420 HD1, which would provide financial assistance for the burial and funeral costs for Filipino-American veterans who served in World War II.

This funding is not only critical to lighten the heavy financial burden of transporting a veteran's remains to the Philippines – estimated to cost \$5,000 - \$12,000. It also serves as a symbolic gesture to help remedy a solemn injustice experienced by these brave and loyal servicemen - now in their 90s - as well as their families.

Promised citizenship and veterans' benefits in return for their service, these Philippine Nationals put their lives on the line in the US Armed Forces. Not until *after* these Filipino veterans made great sacrifices to serve our country, did we see legislation and a series of political decisions that stripped away the benefits earned and promises made by our federal government – measures that some have regarded as racist and discriminatory.

Although there have been a few legislative and policy gains to make good on America's commitment to these servicemen, these efforts have been slow-in-coming, burdensome to pursue, and falls far too short of what's been pledged and deserved.

It's been heart-breaking for our organization to learn about the sacrifices these veterans have made based on a well-founded expectation that the relevant petitions and visas needed to reunify families in the United States would be provided for, granted, and approved. Instead, they are aging here, alone, far from home and the family that would otherwise care for them.

We believe that passage of this bill will help rectify the indignity of this history; recognize the sacrifices made by these veterans and their families; and highlight the compassion with which our Aloha State understands their collective experience – which has too easily been forgotten on the national level. This measure is long overdue; and sadly, much too late for so many.

The purposes of the HFLA are: to promote participation in the legal community by Filipino lawyers; to represent and to advocate the interests of Filipino lawyers and their communities; to foster the exchange of ideas and information among and between HFLA members and other members of the legal profession, the Judiciary and the legal community; to encourage and promote the professional growth of the HFLA membership; to facilitate client referrals and to broaden professional opportunities for Filipino lawyers and law students.

LATE

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, March 13, 2017 3:32 PM
To: PSMTestimony
Cc: ccuaresma@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB1420 on Mar 14, 2017 13:15PM*

HB1420

Submitted on: 3/13/2017

Testimony for PSM on Mar 14, 2017 13:15PM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Beatrice Ramos Razon	Nursing Advocates and Mentors Inc.	Support	No

Comments:

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, March 13, 2017 3:31 PM
To: PSMTestimony
Cc: ccuaresma@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB1420 on Mar 14, 2017 13:15PM*

HB1420

Submitted on: 3/13/2017

Testimony for PSM on Mar 14, 2017 13:15PM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Charlene Cuaresma	National Federation of Filipino American Associations Region 12	Support	Yes

Comments:

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Filipino American Citizens League

Jake Manegdeg, President
P. O. Box 270126 * Honolulu, Hawai'i 96827

Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs
Hawai'i State Capitol, House Conference Room 229
March 14, 2017, 1:15 p.m.

LATE

Testimony in Strong Support of HB 1420 HD 1
RELATING TO FILIPINO VETERANS BURIAL ASSISTANCE

To: Chair Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair Glenn Wakai
Members of Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs
From: Jake Manegdeg, President, Filipino American Citizens League
Subject: Relating to Filipino Veterans Burial Assistance

My name is Jake Manegdeg. I am the president of the Filipino American Citizens League. The Filipino American Citizens League was formed over twenty years ago to contribute to the advancement of civil rights and social justice for minority groups, underserved populations, and vulnerable communities through education, advocacy, and social action.

The League strongly supports this bill, which “Appropriates funds for burial grants for qualifying Filipino-American veterans to provide funeral and burial services and transportation of their remains to the Philippines; provided that federal funds remain unavailable and there remain eligible Filipino-American veterans living in the State.”

This is important because the 1946 Rescission Act wrongly rescinded the full veterans benefits promised to them upon enlistment and completion of service to the U.S. Armed Forces. As a result of having family reunification withdrawn and delayed, veterans are aging alone and desire to be buried in the Philippines.

As a matter of parity with other WWII allied forces and the dignity of our elderly veterans, who sacrificed for our country, we urge you to support the passage of this bill. Thank you for hearing this bill and for the opportunity to offer our strong support.

Very Sincerely,

Jake Manegdeg
President
Filipino American Citizens League

LATE

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, March 13, 2017 3:27 PM
To: PSMTTestimony
Cc: ccuaresma@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB1420 on Mar 14, 2017 13:15PM*

HB1420

Submitted on: 3/13/2017

Testimony for PSM on Mar 14, 2017 13:15PM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Davelyn Quijano	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs
Hawai'i State Capitol, House Conference Room 229
March 14, 2017, 1:15 p.m.

Testimony in Strong Support of HB 1420 HD 1
RELATING TO FILIPINO VETERANS BURIAL ASSISTANCE

To: Chair Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair Glenn Wakai
Members of Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and
Military Affairs

From: Jean Jeremiah, Private Citizen

Subject: Strong Support of Filipino Veterans Burial Assistance

LATE

My name is Jean Jeremiah. I am speaking as a private citizen. I am proud to submit my full support of this bill. I served as former President of the Oahu Filipino Community Council, where many of our Filipino cultural events aimed to raise scholarship funds for deserving Filipino youth to pursue their education and career aspirations.

I support this bill because our Filipino WWII Veterans deserve the respect to have their last wish granted to be buried in the Philippines. I am still outraged that after their gallant service and sacrifice for freedom in the world and for our nation, the 1946 Rescission Act withdrew their veterans' benefits. In spite of decades of advocacy to reinstate their due benefits, including family reunification, Congress has rejected their requests until today. Consequently, some of our Veterans are facing their end of life stage isolated and poor. But let us also note that many of our Veterans have contributed to our State's economy in their prime years as hardworking laborers in Hawai'i's service industry with meager wages.

Your assistance with this bill asks for the State's compassion to do right by our veterans to utilize burial funds here to cover transportation and burial costs in the Philippines, so the last wish of our Veterans can be respected and honored.

Thank you for hearing this bill and for the chance to offer my strong support for its passage.

Very Sincerely,

Jean Jeremiah

LATE

Law Office of Abelina Madrid Shaw, AAL, LLC

810 Richards Street, Suite 960

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Phone: (808) 523-5979 Fax: (808) 523-5979

TO: Sen. Clarence K. Nishihara, Chair
Sen. Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair
Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs
Members: Rosalyn H. Baker, Les Ihara, Jr., Laura H. Thielen

FROM: Abelina Madrid Shaw, Esq.

DATE: March 14, 2017 (1:15 p.m.) Conference Room 229

RE: IN SUPPORT OF HB 1420, HDI (HSCR918) RELATING TO FILIPINO VETERANS
BURIAL ASSISTANCE

In 1992, after having served in WWII, many Filipino veterans of that war were allowed by the U.S. Government to become U.S. citizens. Middle-aged then, they came to Hawaii, assimilated into our way of life, with hopes of a better life for them and their children left behind.

While here, they have many life choices, but two most compelling options were:

- (1) to stay and die here in Hawaii and wait for their children to become U.S. Citizens;
- (2) to return to their homeland some day.

For the Veterans, now in their late 80's and early 90's, frail, but still hopeful, the options have become less realistic. Some will hang on to choose option (1), but some yearn to go home to be with grandchildren and not be alone.

Short of each of the above, the burial benefits that would allow for a more dignified burial has not been totally forthcoming. This bill will cover some of the attendant costs – costs now borne by their spouses or fellow Veterans' donations. While this legislature saw fit to provide for burial grants in Chapter 363, the funds authorized have been depleted. Initially, it raised hopes that either the Federal Government or the State would see that options for elderly Veterans may not really be options.

Support of this bill will promise a more dignified passing.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill.

LATE

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, March 14, 2017 8:25 AM
To: PSMTestimony
Cc: rtbernardo@yahoo.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB1420 on Mar 14, 2017 13:15PM

HB1420

Submitted on: 3/14/2017
Testimony for PSM on Mar 14, 2017 13:15PM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Roberto Bernardo	Philippine Consulate General	Support	No

Comments: On behalf of Consul General Gina A. Jamoralin, we wish to express support for this bill. Many of the remaining Filipino WWII veterans wish to be buried in their country of birth. This is one way to assist them and honor them for their service. Thank you.

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