

HCR 298 HD1

Measure Title:

Urging the United States President, Senate, and House of Representatives to Enact Legislation to Expedite Immigrant Visas for Family Reunification of Certain Filipino Veterans of World War II

Report Title:

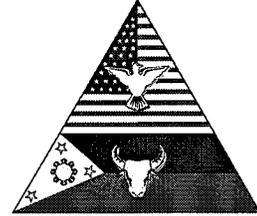
Filipino Veterans; Family reunification



WW II Fil-Am Veterans

HAWAII CHAPTER

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HCR 298 THE FILIPINO VETERANS FAMILY REUNIFICATION ACT.

PSM – April 24, 2009 - 9:00 a.m. CR 312

To: Sen. Wil Espero, Chair
Sen. Robert Bunda, Vice Chair and members of PSM

Chair Espero and distinguished members of the PSM committee. My name is Art Caleda, President of the W.W.II Fil-Am Veterans, Hawaii Chapter with almost one thousand five hundred veterans including veterans on the outer islands. On behalf of all the Filipino Veterans of WWII, we wish to testify in support of **HCR298** urging the United States president and senators and congress members to support the passage of legislation to expedite immigrant visas for family reunification of certain Filipino veterans of World War II.

Our own Hawaii Congressional delegation had introduced the FILIPINO VETERANS FAMILY REUNIFICATION ACT related to expediting visa approvals for the sons and daughters of certain Filipino veterans of World War II seeking justice and fairness for WWII Filipino Veterans. The Immigration Act of 1990 provided for U.S. citizenship to each veteran but excluded the veterans' dependants, unfairly requiring that each veteran submit an immigrant petition with supporting affidavits requesting that the veterans' dependents be permitted to live with the veteran.

We respectfully request the support of this distinguished body to help correct and rectify the injustice to WWII Filipino Veterans who fought and died shoulder-to-shoulder with their other American counterparts denying them their U.S. citizenship and just veteran benefits and rights. In fact, the Filipino veterans were bayoneted, gutted and murdered by the Japanese. Filipino Veterans paid a dear price for freedom.

After all, U.S. President William Clinton proclaimed several years ago that what mistakes made by the U.S. in regards to the WWII Filipino Veterans must be corrected by America. Here is a chance for our beloved state to show support and gratitude for the sacrifices made by our very own WWII Filipino Veterans who risked their lives and liberty to keep and preserve democracy and our American way of life.

On October 20, 1996, former President William Clinton and on July 26, 2001, President George W. Bush issued their respective presidential proclamations recognizing and honoring the vital role of the WWII Filipino Veterans in fighting side by side with their American counterparts to turn back the attacking enemy thus defending liberty and preserving democracy and U.S. freedom and way of life.

Finally, in 2009 President Obama signed H.R.1 that recognized of our military World War II service as Active service, since we fought side by side with our American comrades in arms in the Philippines, and would be eligible to receive benefits and rights provided by the U. S. Congress but our U.S. citizenship was not restored to all of us. Our children are not even allowed to visit us on our death bed or to gather our bodies for burial.

These benefits are the same provided to the 116,000 Allied Soldiers from 66 Allied countries who were like the Filipino soldiers drafted and inducted under the same set of rules and who participated in the war efforts to help win the war. How can we recognize and supported some of the WWII Filipino veterans who were active participants of the war, when we do not recognized and supported two third of the 200,000 Filipino soldiers that compose 70% of General Mac Arthur strong joint Armed Forces. The one-third strength that were killed, disabled or maimed were recognized and supported and were given by the US Veterans Administration.

In short it took a Filipino veteran to be disabled, maimed or killed before his service were recognized and be entitled to the benefits under the GI bill for rights and other benefits provided by the U.S. Veterans Administration. Those veterans who survived the Holocaust of war and continued the "fight" with limbs intact are now considered to have rendered service in the U.S. armed force for purposed of any U.S. law granting veterans' rights and privileges. We appeal again before this honorable committee to please review the disparity, the injustice, and help us see our children before we die. Time is no longer on our side as many of us passed away. We hope and pray that the passing of this resolution will assist in rectifying this grave injustice and reunification with our families. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support.

LATE TESTIMONY

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HCR 298 THE FILIPINO VETERANS FAMILY REUNIFICATION ACT. PSM – April 24, 2009 - 9:00 a.m. CR 312

To: Chair Wil Espero, Vice Chair Robert Bunda, members of PSM

ERNESTO TESORO

Chair Espero and distinguished members of the PSM committee. My name is ~~Atty. Philmund Lee, Legal Counsel~~ *Vile Jr.* of the W.W.II Fil-Am Veterans, Hawaii Chapter with almost one thousand five hundred veterans including veterans on the outer islands. On behalf of all the Filipino Veterans of WWII, we wish to testify in support of **HCR298** urging the United States president and senators and congress members to support the passage of legislation to expedite immigrant visas for family reunification of ~~our~~ Filipino veterans of World War II.

America's Dignity, America's Pride Can Only Be Restored By Equity, Re-Unification

We as loyal Americans are ashamed of what our country has done to our own American nationals and staunchest of allies after WWII. The debate about S. 1315, the Veterans Benefits Enhancement Act restores "veterans" benefits to Filipino veterans of WWII is not a partisan issue nor is it about helping needy WWII veterans to be recognized. It's really about helping America and helping Americans to restore their honor, dignity and credibility so we as a people can again stand up and honestly say, "I am proud to be an American."

One thing is for sure, if we continue to double cross your friends and allies, the U.S. will continue to fight all the international wars all alone. That has been the case in post WWII as recent history shows that U.S. soldiers are being killed by the hundreds of thousand in foreign wars while our allies stand on the side line since no ally can trust the U.S. to keep its promises.

After WWII, in War after war U.S. soldiers are carrying the brunt and burden of deaths unnecessarily; remember Korea, Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq, etc. If these are truly U.N. initiatives, then why is the Coalition Forces made up of only Americans and a very small handful of miscellaneous others? What happened to our allies and former comrades in arms? Why have they all abandoned us?

Americans support our armed forces and are grateful to the men and women who scarified their life and limbs to defend us. And the best way we can support those who fought so Americans can live free, is to keep our word to the very veterans who fought (and in many cases died) to preserve our American freedom, our way of life, including Filipino veterans of WWII.

When soldiers fighting for freedom and democracy fight and die for the U.S., they would like to rest assured that their families will be looked after when they are gone. But if the U.S. is infamous for breaking its promise the next minute, who will want to fight for the U.S. Recently, Pres. Bush award a fallen Filipino soldier U.S. citizenship posthumously. He is already dead so he can not get medical benefits and the question is "will his family have to go thru the same obstacle course the Filipino veterans of WWII?"

Will his family be treated like the family of the Filipino veterans of WWII? Having to wait until they are octogenarians before they can sponsor their sons and daughters and then another 25 years to wait in line. And if they die before they reach 105 years old, the petition is automatically cancelled. The poor Filipino veterans of WWII are residing in the U.S. with the flickering hope that someday, somehow, they will be able to see their sons and daughters alive before they can die.

But after what the U.S. has done to the Filipino veterans of WWII, can we really blame them. One minute you can be fighting shoulder to shoulder with U.S. armed forces under a combined unified force under the U.S. command and the next minute you are being bayoneted in the back by the U.S. If that is the way the U.S. treats its best of friends and staunchest allies, then who wants to help them? U.S. sons and daughters are being shot and killed in Afghanistan and Iraq all by them selves because the world can trust the U.S. to keep its word to its allies and coalition partners.

The vast majority of Filipino veterans of WWII who were promised U.S. citizenship and full veteran's benefits have passed away during and after the war. There is now only a very small handful of veterans still alive and can testify to this injustice. Lets all work together to right a grave injustice as true Americans regardless of party for the glory of America and all Americans.

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