A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO FILIPINO VETERANS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

- 1 SECTION 1. During World War II, the Philippines was a 2 Commonwealth of the United States. Nearly 100,000 soldiers of 3 the Philippine Commonwealth Army fought alongside United States 4 and Allied forces for four long years to defend and reclaim the 5 Philippine Islands from foreign aggression. Valiant Filipino soldiers fought, suffered, and died in some of the bloodiest 6 7 battles of World War II, defending beleaguered Bataan and 8 Corregidor, and thousands of Filipino prisoners of war endured
- 9 the infamous Bataan Death March and years of captivity.
- The sacrifices of Filipino soldiers played a vital role in
- 11 the Allied victory in the Pacific as their numerous guerrilla
- 12 actions provided United States forces with time to build and
- 13 prepare for the Allied counterattack. Filipino soldiers fought
- 14 side-by-side with United States forces to secure their island
- 15 nation as the strategic base from which the final effort by
- 16 Allied forces to bring an end to World War II was launched.

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1 Although Filipino soldiers exhibited tremendous courage and 2 risked their lives to win the war in the Pacific, many of these 3 soldiers were denied full veterans benefits, including burial benefits, which had been promised to them by the United States. 4 5 While Filipino soldiers meeting specific requirements were 6 eventually provided with burial benefits at national and state 7 veterans cemeteries at no cost similar to other veterans of the 8 United States Armed Forces, the wish of some Filipino soldiers 9 who were living in Hawaii was that their remains be returned to 10 their homeland. However, this benefit of returning the remains 11 of Filipino soldiers to their homeland for burial was not 12 provided to them. Accordingly, the legislature provided for 13 burial grants to be given to qualifying Filipino veterans to 14 honor the final wishes of these veterans and assist with the 15 return of their remains to their homeland for burial. 16 Although burial grants for Filipino veterans are statutorily established under chapter 363, Hawaii Revised **17** 18 Statutes, the office of veterans services has acknowledged that 19 funding for the provision of these grants has been non-existent. 20 As the number of surviving World War II Filipino veterans 21 continues to dwindle, it is important for their sacrifices to be

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- 1 recognized and their final wishes of being buried in their
- 2 homeland to be granted as many of these veterans only have
- 3 family residing in the Philippines. The purpose of this Act is
- 4 to appropriate funds to the office of veterans services for the
- 5 provision of burial grants for Filipino veterans of World War
- 6 II.
- 7 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
- 8 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much
- 9 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2015-2016 and the
- 10 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
- 11 2016-2017 for burial grants for Filipino veterans of World War
- 12 II, which cover funeral and burial costs, including the cost of
- 13 returning their remains to the Philippines for burial.
- 14 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the office of
- 15 veterans services for the purposes of this Act.

16 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2015.

INTRODUCED BY:

JAN 2 7 2015

LINTRODUCED BY:

JAN 2 7 2015

H.B. NO. 1119

Report Title:

Filipino Veterans; Burial Grants; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds for burial grants for qualifying Filipino veterans to provide funeral and burial services and transportation of their remains to the Philippines.

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