

HJR

15

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



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Representative Gabrielle LeDoux

SPONSOR STATEMENT FOR CSHJR 15 Supporting the Filipino Veterans Equity Act and Filipino Veterans Reunification Act

This resolution from the Alaska State Legislature respectfully urges the United States Congress to pass the Filipino Veterans Equity Act and the Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act.

From 1898 until 1946, the Philippine Islands were considered a territory of the United States. During World War II the military forces of the Philippines were drafted into service under the command of American officers in the United States armed forces in the Far East to fight against the Japanese invasion. Filipino and American soldiers fought side-by-side in such battles as Corregidor. Many died during the 65-mile Bataan Death March, and those who survived were imprisoned under inhumane conditions.

Filipino World War II veterans were promised military benefits, but after the War the United States Congress passed the Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act of 1946. The act considered the services of Filipino World War II veterans not to be active service. This status change had the effect of denying Filipino World War II veterans the rights, privileges and benefits that American World War II veterans received.

There have been several attempts to reverse this injustice. In 1990, Filipino World War II Veterans were allowed to immigrate to the U.S. Many of them did and petitioned for their immediate families. In 2000, they were provided with military burial benefits and in 2003 they were provided long overdue medical and nursing home care from the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs.

The Filipino Veterans Equity Act and the Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act would correct a terrible injustice by: 1) providing veterans the full benefits they were denied; and 2) providing immediate relief for those veterans and their families who have waited for more than a decade with approved immigration petitions.

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: 1
 Bill Version: CSHJR 15(STA)
 (H) Publish Date: 4/11/2007

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): _____ Dept. Affected: _____
 Title WW II Filipino Vets: Benefits/Immigrations RDU _____
 Sponsor Representative Ledoux Component _____
 Requester House State Affairs Committee Component No. _____

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
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CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						
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FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type--Do not abbreviate)						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY2007) cost: 0.0
 Mark this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2008 budget proposal:

POSITIONS

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Prepared by: Nancy Manly, Committee Aide Phone 465-2794
 Division: House State Affairs Committee Date/Time _____
 Approved by: Representative Bob Lynn Date 4/5/2007
 Agency: Chair

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Representative Gabrielle LeDoux

MEMO

TO: REPRESENTATIVE GABRIELLE LEDOUX
FROM: CHRISTINE R. MARASIGAN, LEGISLATIVE AIDE *CRM*
SUBJECT: HJR 15, SUPPORTING FILIPINO VETERANS EQUITY & FAMILY REUNIFICATION
DATE: 4/13/2007

Upon your recommendation the following changes were incorporated into a CS for HJR 15:

Page 1, Line 7	<u>shoulder-to-shoulder</u> was added
Page 3, Lines 4-6	Lines 4-6 were deleted and replaced with: <u>COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable George W. Bush, President of the United States; the Honorable Richard B. Cheney, Vice-President of the United States and President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Harry Reid, Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Nancy Peolosi, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; the Honorable Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives; the Honorable John Boehner, Minority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives; the Honorable Daniel Akaka, Chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs; the Honorable Bob Filner, Chair of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Veterans' Affairs; the Honorable Sarah Palin, Governor of Alaska; the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress; and, by electronic transmission, all other members of the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives serving in the 110th United States Congress.</u>

Rationale: The first change emphasizes that the Filipino veterans fought alongside the Americans whereas just the word "with" could be construed as fighting against one another. The second change was recommended by Rep. Coghill to include more than just the Alaska Congressional delegation.



FILIPINO AMERICAN NATIONAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Inside every memory is a story waiting to be told...

National Office:
810 18th Avenue, RM 100
Seattle, WA 98122

Alaska Chapter:
2607 Kona Lane
Anchorage, AK 99517

TO: Members of the Alaska Legislature

The approval of HJR 15 by the members of the Alaska Legislature would be a very helpful addition to the increasing support for the passage of the Filipino Veterans' Equity Act and the Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act.

Filipinos have been part of Alaska's labor force for over 100 years. In 1903, as divers and crewmembers of the Cablesip Burnside, Filipinos began laying the communications cables between Alaska and Washington state. The work was completed a year later. This effort improved Alaska's ability to communicate with Seattle and the rest of the world.

From the early 1900s to the present, Filipinos have been working in the seafood canneries in Alaska. Prior to 1920 to the 1940s, they worked as ore sorters in the gold mines in Juneau and Douglas Island.

The 2000 U.S. Census enumerated over 16,000 Alaskans of Filipino heritage in Anchorage, Juneau, Kodiak, Fairbanks, Ketchikan, Sitka, Barrow, and other Alaskan communities. Generally, most Filipinos residing in Alaska work in the hospitals, the school districts, the post office, and other service-oriented industries. Few are self-employed. I'm one of the few. I am an attorney in Anchorage.

The history of Filipinos in Alaska dates as far back as 1788 when the first Filipino arrived here as a crewmember of the British fur trading ship, *Iphigenia Nubiana*. Various Filipinos arrived as crewmembers of a few other fur trading ships, as crewmembers of the Spanish ships exploring the Alaskan waters for the Northwest Passage under Alejandro Malaspina, and as crewmembers of whaling ships hunting for bowhead whales.

The background that led President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to conscript Filipinos to serve in the United States armed forces could be traced to Commodore George Dewey and the crew of his flagship, *USS Olympia*, and seven U.S. Navy

cruisers and gunboats in a surprise attack of the Philippines in the Battle of Manila Bay on May 1, 1898.

At that time, the Philippines was the weak link in the Spanish dominion and having exploited the Philippines for over 300 years and beset by Filipino patriots who aimed at overthrowing the Spanish regime, Spain was poorly equipped to repel any foreign invasion of the Philippines.

The transfer of foreign domination from Spain to a new foreign master, the United States of America, was resisted by Filipino patriots who had declared Philippine Independence on June 12, 1898, an event that was neither recognized by Spain nor the incoming U.S. colonial government. The short-lived bitter war between the Filipino patriots and the U.S. armed forces was nearly lost in history because it was overshadowed by America's victory that concluded the Spanish American War.

As early as the 1900s, the U.S. sent governors to run the Philippines. The U.S. Army had a major role in subduing the resistance and providing educational opportunities to Filipinos. Immigration to the U.S. was encouraged.

In 1934, the United States established the Philippine Commonwealth and promised the country's independence. On July 4, 1946, the Philippines was granted its independence and became a republic like the United States.

At the outbreak of World War II, the Philippines was invaded by Japan. Some historians believe that, but for the fact that the Philippines was then an American possession, it would not have been a major military target.

HJR 15 accurately narrates the action taken by President Roosevelt and the U.S. government with regards to conscripting Filipinos and later withholding from them veteran's benefits. The passage of the Filipino Veterans' Equity Act and the Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act would help to recognize the sacrifices made by these veterans and their families and provide for their well-deserved veteran's entitlements at a time when these valiant Filipino veterans are becoming fewer and fewer in number.

Alaska should be proud to support the effort of the sponsors of these two pending bills in Congress. I urge you to vote for HJR15. Thank you.

Thelma Buchholdt
President, Filipino American National Historical Society;
Member, Alaska State House: 1974-1982;
Author, *Filipinos in Alaska: 1788-1958*.

Christine Marasigan

From: John Cramer [John_Cramer@ak-prepared.com]
Sent: Tuesday, April 10, 2007 10:05 AM
To: Christine Marasigan
Cc: McHugh Pierre
Subject: Re: HJR 15

Christine, thanks for the email. Between McHugh and myself we will work on this. I have a personal attachment to what the Representative is wanting to do. My father is a Baton death march survivor. He used to tell me about the support they were given by the Filipinos even after arriving at the POW camp where he and others spent the next 46 months in captivity. I would be happy to testify if needed. Thank the Representative on behalf of my family.

We are "Ready to Serve"
John W. Cramer, Director
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Division of Administrative Services
(907) 428-6881
(907) 428-6027 (fax)
john_cramer@ak-prepared.com

Christine Marasigan <Christine_Marasigan@legis.state.ak.us> writes:
>Hi,
>Representative LeDoux has filed HJR 15 which would support the passage
>of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act and Filipino Veterans Family
>Reunification Act in Congress. I have attached a copy of the bill and the sponsor
statement.
>
>Our office has started to receive letters of support, this is the first
>time I've carried a resolution, would someone from your organization
>provide a position statement or testimony for such legislation?
>
>Thank you for your assistance.
>
>Christine R. Marasigan, Legislative Aide Representative Gabrielle
>LeDoux Alaska State Capitol Juneau, AK 99801
>Voice: (907) 465-6588
>Fax: (907) 465-4956
>

washingtonpost.com

Hope for Amends to Filipino Immigrants

Bills to Speed Children's Moves to U.S., Give Military Pensions Show Political Assertion

By N.C. Aizenman
Washington Post Staff Writer
Sunday, March 4, 2007; A06

Amid the wrangling over immigration reform, virtually everyone in Congress appears to agree on one point: Filipino-born veterans who fought alongside U.S. troops during World War II deserve a break.

Denied the right to immigrate to the United States until 1990, they came hoping that their children could follow them here later, just as other groups have done. But the adult children have been required to wait twice as long -- up to 16 years -- as anyone else. With the veterans often too old and sick to travel home, many have died while waiting to be reunited with their families.

Now, after several longtime backers have risen to key positions in Congress, Filipino American advocates are hopeful that legislation will be pushed through to exempt the veterans' children from the immigration delay. They also are optimistic about a potentially more controversial bill that would grant Filipino veterans military pensions.

About 5,000 veterans in the United States would stand to benefit from a change in immigration provisions, and an additional 10,000 in the Philippines could be eligible for pensions.

To many in the 2-million-strong Filipino American community, the issue represents a chance to cement their political identity in a nation where they have long felt invisible, even though Filipinos rank second, behind Mexicans, in the number of immigrants living in the United States.

"Historically, we Filipinos have always been looked down on as your little brown brothers -- as these acquiescent people who would just accept anything Uncle Sam would do to them," said Jon Melegrito, communications director of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations. "This is about asserting who we are as a people and how we served this country. . . . It's a call to action to stop acting like colonial slaves and to start acting like first-class citizens."

The effort builds on an association with the United States that dates to 1898, when the United States acquired the Philippines from Spain after winning the Spanish-American War.

Laws and discriminatory practices against all Asian immigrants kept Filipino numbers in the United States low through the first half of the 1900s. But in the Philippines, many residents were taught English and raised to think of themselves as something akin to Americans.

Celestino Almeda, 90, a veteran who lives in Alexandria, remembered that the director of his elementary school in Manila led students in a pledge of allegiance to the American flag every morning.

"We also celebrated all the holidays: Washington's birthday, Armistice Day," Almeda said. "In our mind, it was like America was our mother country."

When Japan invaded the Philippines in 1941, more than 200,000 Filipinos joined Americans in waging a

fierce resistance, enduring such hardships as the Bataan death march and the grueling guerrilla campaign that followed. Technically, the Filipino fighters were under overall U.S. command. But within months of the Allied victory, Congress stripped most of them of their rights as foreign veterans of U.S. forces -- including the opportunity to become U.S. citizens -- on the grounds that the Philippines was about to be granted independence.

Even so, the Philippines continued its close affiliation with the United States. Thousands of Filipinos joined the U.S. Navy, which until recently had major bases there. By 1970, there were more Filipinos in the U.S. Navy than in the Philippine Navy.

And, after 1965, when Congress repealed the nationality quota system that had practically prohibited Asians from immigrating, hundreds of thousands of Filipinos streamed in.

Ranging from unskilled workers and nannies to nurses and professionals who came in on occupational preference visas, the new arrivals immediately formed social, cultural and professional organizations. Before long, they were rising to prominent positions in government, unions and the military. Several won elected office, including in Prince George's County, where a sizable community settled.

Yet when it came to turning their clout into political activism on behalf of Filipino American causes, many of the immigrants hesitated, said Bing Cardenas Branigin, 50, a former regional chairman of the Filipino American federation.

"There was this sense that you shouldn't make trouble, that you shouldn't contradict the government," she said. "You should just pay your taxes and send your kids to school and keep quiet."

That began to change in the mid-1970s when anger spread over the repressive policies of the Filipino president, Ferdinand Marcos. As much as their opposition to Marcos galvanized the Filipino American community, it also caused rifts with those who supported Marcos.

After Marcos was ousted, community leaders looked to refocus their newfound energy on a more unifying issue. The fight for veterans' equity was a natural choice.

Since then, the veterans have won some of the benefits they lost after the war. Most notably, in 1990, Congress granted Filipino World War II veterans the same opportunity to naturalize offered to all other foreign nationals who served in the U.S. armed forces.

But the Filipino veterans remain ineligible for a military pension, forcing many of the more than 24,000 elderly veterans who became U.S. citizens after 1990 to live off food stamps and Supplemental Security Income payments.

Joaquin Tejada, 84, a former guerrilla fighter who survived two years resisting the Japanese from jungle hideouts, said he now struggles to get by with his \$545 monthly SSI check. The rent for the two-bedroom apartment he shares with another Filipino World War II veteran in Columbia Heights takes \$275.

"By the end of the month, it's hard to buy even basic food," said Tejada, who proudly sported an American flag tie during an interview.

Then there is the 16-year wait veterans face if they wish to bring over their adult children, an unintended consequence of the 1965 law lifting the quotas that had prevented most Asians from immigrating.

In their place, Congress introduced a complicated system meant to offer every country the same number of family reunification visas. But because Filipino applicants far outnumber the yearly slots allotted to them, they face the longest delays -- 22 years to sponsor an adult brother or sister, for instance, compared with 11 years for applicants of most other nationalities.

Candida Romulo, 72, said she and her husband, Bayani, a veteran who became a lawyer in Manila, would not have naturalized and moved to Oxon Hill had they known that the wait to sponsor their grown children would be so long.

"We did it because we wanted to give them the opportunities of living in this country. It was going to be our gift to them," Romulo said during an interview in a living room crammed with photographs of her four children.

Soon after the couple's arrival, Bayani developed a medical condition requiring frequent dialysis, making visits to the Philippines impossible. Because of their pending residency applications, his children were unable to get visas to visit him.

When Bayani suffered a severe stroke in September, his eldest son wasn't able to relay his final words to his father over the phone before he died.

"The receiver couldn't reach his bed in the ICU," Candida Romulo said. "So I told my husband, 'Your son says that he loves you very much and that he's so proud that you are his father.' My husband couldn't speak, but I could tell that he understood, because there were tears in his eyes."

Now Romulo worries that her son may never gain entry to the United States, because if a sponsor dies while the visa application is pending, there is a chance that the application will be annulled.

But she said she is still praying that Congress will pass the legislation for the sake of those veterans who remain alive.

"If that happens, I know my husband will be very happy about it, even if he is already in heaven," she said.

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THE POOR QUALITY OF THE ORIGINAL**

on an exercise regimen together.

Exercise prevents diabetes among people who don't have the disease and helps people with the disease control it better.

Boudreau also plans a fundraising event led by the group. The KCHC diabetes support group will raise pledges from the community and walk or run together during Kodiak's Chad Ogden Ultra-Marathon on May 27 during the Kodiak Crab Festival.

Boudreau calls it an "ultra-marathon

among the uninsured. This is happening nationwide, she said, because there is a tendency among people without much money to test themselves less often.

"The test strips are expensive, and a lot of patients should be testing themselves three or four times a day," she said.

More information on the support is available by calling Boudreau at Kodiak Community Health Center, 481-2481.

Mirror writer Scott Christiansen can be reached via e-mail at schristiansen@kodiakdailymirror.com.

and sometimes protected species.

The Fisherman's Marketing Association says about 100 trawlers are tied up in Oregon, Washington and California, including 23 in the Astoria-Warrenton area.

"The situation began in February when some of the fish companies unilaterally decided to lower the price they were paying to U.S. boats," said Pete Leipzig, executive director of the association.

"In some cases this occurred while they were out fishing," he said. "They'd go to the dock and find they weren't going to

Seafoods, a major Pacific Coast groundfish processor, did not immediately return phone calls seeking comment.

Kevin Dunn of Astoria, who operates the Iron Lady, joined the association when the price for petrale sole, the most valuable sole, went from more than \$1 per pound to 65 cents.

"You can see the position we end up being in if we don't use our limit — we lose it — and if we don't sell it, we don't get anything, so the processors get the fish

► See **TRAWLERS**, Page 8

Aging Filipino WWII vets forced to live apart from families

By **AUDREY McAVOY**

Associated Press Writer

WAIANA, Hawaii (AP) — Manuel S. Pablo crouched in foxholes to defend the Philippines against invading Japanese soldiers in World War II. He watched a Japanese guard stab one of his comrades to death with a bayonet during the Bataan Death March when the starving prisoner of war dared to ask for another bowl of rice.

Even though Pablo risked his life for the United States, which controlled the Philippines as a commonwealth at the time, his children cannot win approval to live with him in America during his retirement.

Scholars and veteran advocates say the policy reflects decades of neglect, dating to 1946 when

Washington broke wartime promises that Filipino soldiers could become U.S. citizens and enjoy the same pension and medical benefits as American troops.

It took Washington 45 years after the war to offer veterans a proper chance to obtain citizenship. And the Immigration Act of 1990 only allowed each veteran to bring one immediate family member to the United States with them, so many leave their children behind.

The shortcomings of that law have left the sons and daughters of the veterans with no choice but to get in line for immigration visas along with everyone else. On average, they must wait about 20 years because so many Filipinos hope to emigrate and the limits are set by nationality.

Pablo's three sons and four daughters have been on the waiting list since 1994, two years after he immigrated to Hawaii and became a U.S. citizen.

Today, thousands of elderly veterans — including those wounded in battle and awarded the Bronze Star and other medals — live their last years far from their children and grandchildren.

► See **FILIPINO VETS**, Page 8

Right: World War II Filipino veteran Manuel Pablo, 88, holds a Bronze Star and POW medal, March 6, at his home in Waianae, Hawaii. He was awarded the medals while serving the U.S. military in the Philippines during World War II. (AP Photo)



America's Last Frontier"

Today is:

Wednesday, March 21, the 80th day of 2007. There are 285 days left in the year.

Today in history:

In 1965, more than 3,000 civil rights demonstrators led by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. began their march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala.

Thought for today:

"Never lose your temper with the press. In the public is a major rule of successful life."

— Dame Christabel Pankhurst, English suffragist (1880-1958)

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MARCH 21, 2007

