

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4015

As Reported By House Committee On:
State Government

Brief Description: Requesting the Philippines to keep its consulate open.

Sponsors: Representatives Veloria, Wineberry, Leonard, Johanson, Wang, Chandler, Miller, Wood, Shin, Quall, Rayburn, J. Kohl, Kessler, Dyer and Anderson.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
State Government, March 1, 1993, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Anderson, Chair; Veloria, Vice Chair; Reams, Ranking Minority Member; Campbell; Conway; Dyer; King; and Pruitt.

Staff: Bonnie Austin (786-7135).

Background: In February, the Philippine government announced that it will close its Seattle consulate, along with 11 other diplomatic posts around the world, by June 30, 1993. The Philippine government is implementing these cost-cutting measures due to an economy crippled by a \$29 billion foreign debt, the closure of United States military bases, and political instability.

There are approximately 65,000 Washington State residents of Philippine descent. This population is currently growing at a rate in excess of 1,000 persons a year.

The Philippines are a major buyer of Washington wheat and other agricultural products. The Philippines also export many products to Washington State, including electronics and clothing, and have a nearly \$300 million trade surplus with the state.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Washington State Senate and House of Representatives request that the Philippine government allow its Seattle consulate to remain open, and to consider downsizing staff and office space to cut costs.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: An incorrect numerical export reference was corrected.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: It is critical that this consulate remain open. The Philippine Consulate provides services relating to trade and business agreements, as well as visas and personal connections. We need to retain this consulate for economic development purposes. Washington is the Philippine's 10th largest trading partner. The consulate serves Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Idaho and Montana. We are not the moss on the top of North America, but a vital trading partner and the closest point in the United States to the Philippines. We should work to find a less expensive or free space for the consulate as we have for the Russian Embassy. The Philippines need to maintain a presence here to bridge the gap between the two cultures and teach us to be comfortable with each other. This will enhance both cultural exchanges and business prosperity.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Representative Veloria, prime sponsor (pro); Ralph Munro, Secretary of State (pro); Vincent A. Lawsin, Filipino-American Guild and Rizal Park (pro); Camilo de Guzman, Filipino Community of Seattle (pro); Senator Bluechel, Pacific Northwest Economic (pro); Roy Dela Cruz, Filipino-American Political Action Group of Washington (pro); Lorna Ovena, Tacoma Port (pro); Roger Bull, Ambassador (pro); and Representative J. Wood (pro).