

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4002

As Passed House:

March 9, 2001

Brief Description: Asking that the federal government provide veterans' benefits owed to Filipino veterans.

Sponsors: By Representatives Veloria, Campbell, Cody, Pennington, Cox, Kessler, Woods, Kenney, Romero, Bush, Keiser, Schoesler, Armstrong, Clements, Delvin, Santos, McIntire, O'Brien, D. Schmidt, Tokuda, Haigh, Edwards, Darneille, Schual-Berke and Talcott.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 2/9/01 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/9/01, 98-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requests that Congress and the President amend the 1946 Rescission Act to restore Filipino veterans full United States veteran status with military benefits.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives McMorris, Republican Co-Chair; Romero, Democratic Co-Chair; Miloscia, Democratic Vice Chair; Schindler, Republican Vice Chair; Haigh, Lambert, McDermott and D. Schmidt.

Staff: Catherine Blinn (786-7114).

Background:

The United States took control of the Philippines from Spain in 1898 and Congress established a territorial government there four years later. By 1916 Congress had indicated its intention to eventually grant the islands their independence. In 1934 Congress passed the Philippine Independence Act, which, pending full independence, authorized the Philippines to adopt a constitution and organize a government. The Philippines did so in 1935 and established the Philippine Army.

The Independence Act contained a provision crucial to the status of approximately 200,000 to 300,000 World War II veterans of the Philippine Army. The Independence Act authorized the United States to maintain armed forces in the Philippines and upon order of the President to call all military forces organized by the Philippine government into the service of the United States armed forces. On July 26, 1941 just prior to the beginning of World War II, President Roosevelt exercised this authority by calling the Philippine military forces into the service of American armed forces. After the outbreak of war, Congress authorized \$269 million to mobilize, train, equip, and pay the Philippine Army, and gave General MacArthur authority to allocate expenditures for these purposes.

Congress passed the First Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act on February 18, 1946 shortly after the conclusion of the war but before the Philippines became an independent state on July 4, 1946. The Rescission Act provided an appropriation of \$200 million for the benefit of the postwar Philippine Army, but ordered that service by the Philippine military organizations "shall not be deemed to have been active military, naval, or air service" for purposes of most veterans benefit programs. As a result, most Philippine veterans of World War II are statutorily ineligible for all United States veterans' benefits, except for certain service-connected disability and death benefits.

Summary of Bill:

The Senate and House of Representatives of the state of Washington petition the President and Congress of the United States to amend the Rescission Act of 1946 to restore Filipino veterans full United States veteran status with military benefits.

Rulemaking Authority: No express authority.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Testimony For: Filipino soldiers fought valiantly alongside U.S. forces in World War II, and experienced high casualty levels. General MacArthur recognized and commended the efforts and endurance demonstrated by Filipino soldiers during the war. However, Filipino veterans were never recognized for their service following Allied victory. The most prominent reason given in 1946 for excluding Filipino veterans from U.S. veterans' benefit programs was to avoid upsetting the Filipino economy. This amendment would not only restore the veterans' rights and benefits, but would restore the dignity that these veterans lost over 50 years ago. Restoring Filipino veterans' full U.S. veteran status with military benefits is especially important now because Filipino veterans are dying at a

rapid rate. Although a movement to amend the Rescission Act has been active in Washington, D.C. since 1990, California is the only other state to pass a similar memorial.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Veloria, prime sponsor; Representative Buck; Miebeth R. Bustillo-Hutchins, Commission of Asian Pacific American Affairs; Bert Caoili, Filipino Community; Manuel Divina, Filipino American Political Action Group of Washington; Julio Joaquin, Filipino War Veterans of Washington; Presciliano A. Credo, World War II veteran; Amador M. Montero, World War II veteran; and Camilo de Guzman, Filipino Community.