

STATE OF HAWAII  
OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES  
TESTIMONY ON H.B. 556, HD 1, RELATING TO VETERAN BURIAL GRANTS  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

MARCH 2, 2009

Good morning Chair Marcus Oshiro, Vice-Chair Marilyn Lee, and members of the House Committee on Finance.

I am Carswell Ross, Acting Director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS). We appreciate this opportunity to comment on HB 556, HD 1, which requires the office of veterans' services to pay directly to a mortuary for services and to transport the remains of a deceased veteran who joined the New Filipino scouts between 10/06/1945, and 06/30/1947, and died after 06/30/1994, to the Philippines upon submission of an unpaid invoice, as long as its implementation does not impact or replace the priorities set forth in the Executive Biennium Budget for Fiscal Years 2009-2010. We do not support the intent of this measure.

Our concern with this measure is that it provides a benefit to this group of veterans that is not provided to any other group of veterans. Filipino veterans who enlisted between 10/06/1945 and 06/30/1947 are presently eligible for burial in either a state or federal veterans cemetery, as are all honorably discharged veterans.

Additionally, the family or estate of any deceased veteran must pay for the transportation cost to bury a veteran in a veterans' cemetery even when located in the same state where the veteran passed. For instance, transportation for a veteran from a neighbor island who passes away on Oahu would be the responsibility of their family or estate. Transportation of remains is not a veteran's benefit.

Thank you for allowing me to present the Veterans' perspective on this issue. I will respond to any questions.