

STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES
TESTIMONY ON HCR 253/HR 216 URGING THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO EXPEDITE PAYMENT OF WAR BENEFITS TO FILIPINO VETERANS WHO FOUGHT IN WORLD WAR II BUT WERE SUBSEQUENTLY DENIED THEIR ENTITLED BENEFITS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE PUBLIC SAFETY & MILITARY AFFAIRS
March 24, 2011

Good morning Chair Henry Aquino, Vice Chair Ty Cullen and members of the House Committee on Public Safety & Military Affairs.

I am Gregory Jackson, Director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS). We appreciate the opportunity to comment on HCR 253/HR 216 urging the President of the United States and the United States Congress to expedite payment of war benefits to Filipino veterans who fought in World War II, but were subsequently denied their entitled benefits.

Since our WWII Filipino American veterans were given U.S. citizenship; health benefits and burial in our veterans cemeteries nationwide, the President of the United States signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 on February 17, 2009, authorizing the release of a one-time, lump-sum payment to eligible World War II (WWII) Philippine veterans.

These payments were made through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from a \$198 million appropriation established for this purpose. An eligible veteran may receive a one-time \$15,000 compensation payment if they are a United States citizen and a one-time \$9,000 payment if they are not a United States citizen. To be eligible, an individual must have: 1) served in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines before July 1, 1946, while such forces were in the service of the Armed Forces of the United States; 2) served as a member of of the organized guerrilla forces under commanders appointed, designated, or subsequently recognized by the Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, or other competent authority in the Army of the United States; or 3) served in the Philippine Scouts under Section 14 of the Armed Forces Voluntary Recruitment Act of 1945. Additionally, the individual must have been discharged or released from service under conditions other than dishonorable.

As of December 2010 the VA reports that more than 17,500 applicants were approved and paid this one-time compensation. However, some applicants may still be pending final decision or awaiting full compensation, for example because of difficulty obtaining documentation for their claim, questions over citizenship, other questions over eligibility criteria, or because the applicant has filed a notice of disagreement. I support the intent of these resolutions.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this resolution.