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## A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO FILIPINO VETERANS.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. During World War II, the Philippines was a  
2 Commonwealth of the United States. Nearly 100,000 soldiers of  
3 the Philippine Commonwealth Army fought alongside United States  
4 and Allied forces for four long years to defend and reclaim the  
5 Philippine Islands from foreign aggression. Valiant Filipino  
6 soldiers fought, suffered, and died in some of the bloodiest  
7 battles of World War II, defending beleaguered Bataan and  
8 Corregidor, and thousands of Filipino prisoners of war endured  
9 the infamous Bataan Death March and years of captivity.

10           The sacrifices of Filipino soldiers played a vital role in  
11 the Allied victory in the Pacific as their numerous guerrilla  
12 actions provided United States forces with time to build and  
13 prepare for the Allied counterattack. Filipino soldiers fought  
14 side-by-side with United States forces to secure their island  
15 nation as the strategic base from which the Allied forces  
16 launched their final effort to bring an end to World War II.



1           Although Filipino soldiers exhibited tremendous courage and  
2 risked their lives to win the war in the Pacific, many of these  
3 soldiers were denied full veterans benefits, including burial  
4 benefits, which had been promised to them by the United States.

5           While Filipino soldiers meeting specific requirements were  
6 eventually provided with burial benefits at national and state  
7 veterans cemeteries at no cost, similar to other veterans of the  
8 United States Armed Forces, the wish of some Filipino soldiers  
9 who were living in Hawaii was that their remains be returned to  
10 their homeland. However, this benefit of returning the remains  
11 of Filipino soldiers to their homeland for burial was not  
12 provided to them. Many Filipino veterans have unsuccessfully  
13 petitioned for decades to have their relatives granted residence  
14 in Hawaii. These veterans are elderly and, with each passing  
15 year, the veterans are dying in Hawaii without the comfort of  
16 family members. Further, the cost of transporting their remains  
17 for burial in the Philippines increases as time passes.  
18 Accordingly, the legislature provided for burial grants to be  
19 given to qualifying Filipino veterans to honor their final  
20 wishes and assist with the return of their remains to their  
21 homeland for burial.



1           The Veterans Administration currently pays the full cost of  
2 burial benefits for World War II veterans; however, federal law  
3 fails to address the costs of transporting the remains of  
4 Filipino veterans to, and burial services in, the Philippines.  
5 A resolution has been introduced in the regular session of 2016,  
6 requesting Congress to amend the federal law to cover the costs  
7 of transporting the remains of eligible Filipino-American  
8 veterans of World War II to the Philippines and burial services  
9 in the Philippines.

10           Although burial grants for Filipino veterans are  
11 statutorily established under chapter 363, Hawaii Revised  
12 Statutes, the office of veterans' services has acknowledged that  
13 funding for the provision of these grants has been non-existent.  
14 As the number of surviving World War II Filipino veterans  
15 continues to dwindle, it is important that their sacrifices be  
16 recognized and their final wishes of being buried in their  
17 homeland be granted as many of these veterans only have family  
18 residing in the Philippines.

19           The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to the  
20 office of veterans' services for the provision of burial grants  
21 for Filipino-American veterans of World War II; provided that



1 the federal funds remain unavailable; and provided further that  
2 there remain eligible Filipino-American veterans living in the  
3 State.

4 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
5 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$75,000 or so much  
6 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2016-2017 for burial  
7 grants for Filipino-American veterans of World War II, which  
8 cover funeral and burial costs, including the cost of returning  
9 their remains to the Philippines for burial; provided that  
10 federal funding remains unavailable for this purpose; and  
11 provided further that there remain eligible Filipino-American  
12 veterans living in the State.

13 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the office of  
14 veterans' services for the purposes of this Act.

15 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2016.

16 ~~John M. M...~~ ~~...~~ ~~...~~  
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# H.B. NO. 2452

**Report Title:**

Filipino-American Veterans; Burial Grants; Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates funds for burial grants for qualifying Filipino-American veterans to provide funeral and burial services and transportation of their remains to the Philippines; provided that federal funds remain unavailable and there remain eligible Filipino-American veterans living in the State.

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