

Patrick Ganio Sr., ACFV president As to be read by Mr. Avelino Asuncion, San Diego ACFV chairman

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Testimony of Mr. Patrick G. GANIO Sr.
National President, American Coalition for Filipino Veterans, Inc.
Before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, April 11, 2007
(Presented by Mr. AVELINO ASUNCION, San Diego Chapter Chairman)

Chairman Akaka, the honorable Sen. Daniel Inouye, and Committee members.

I am Patrick G. Ganio Sr. a Filipino American defender in the epic Battles of Bataan and Corregidor in the United States territory of the Philippines during World War II.

As the national president of the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans, I am greatly honored by your invitation. I am glad to testify on behalf of my fellow war veterans and 4,000 members to remedy a historical injustice of the 1946 Rescission Act. We Filipino veterans deserve full benefits under with the Equity bill S. 57 of Sen. Inouye. We deeply thank the Chairman for cosponsoring the Equity bill.

Mr. Chairman, FIRST, I would like to introduce our feisty Filipino American WWII veterans behind me today by having them stand up. They came very far to be here.

Over the past two decades, we lobbied for the full range of benefits under the G.I. Bill of Rights for all of us who served and bore the battle in defense of America. We Filipino veterans see the unjust and unfairness of the 1946 Rescission Act that the U.S. Congress passed. This law excluded most Filipino WWII veterans from receiving full recognition of their U.S. military service and VA benefits

We do not need to rehash this complex and emotional issue. Simply put, our service in U.S. Army Forces CANNOT be considered as "NOT ACTIVE" under current law. We Filipino veterans deserve to be treated as American veterans. The old reply of "budget constraints" to our request for Equity is not acceptable to us.

Let me recall some relevant facts:

- 1) The service we Filipino soldiers rendered in defense of the Philippines, then a U.S. territory, broke the Japanese 50-day timetable in 1942. We stood our ground in Bataan and Corregidor for a period of FIVE months and won America's admiration. General MacArthur noted the United States saved \$15 Billion dollars and thousands of American lives. During three years of Filipino resistance to Japanese occupation demonstrated our loyalty to our commander in chief, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and prevented enemy forces from reaching the United States mainland.
- 2) After the war, the Senate Appropriations Committee deliberated on the rehabilitation of the Philippines. Gen. Bradley, the Veterans Administrator, stated compensation benefit to Filipino

veterans would amount to \$3.2 B BILLION. But the committee only approved \$200 Million. Hence the savings of \$3 BILLION. Over the past sixty years, additional savings were made due to increasing deaths of my comrades who never tasted the health and pension benefits that they should have received. Sadly, many have died without the simple fairness of getting a pension while they lived in poverty. The reason: budget constraints. SORRY NO MONEY. (MORE)

PAGE 2 PATRICK GANIO Testimony

3) During this current battle against global terrorism, the natural calamities around the world, billions and billions of dollars are foreign aid flowed. But none for poor and disabled Filipino veterans who loyally served America.

Mr. Chairman, for the few of us remaining survivors, we hope and believe you won't forsake us. We are Filipinos by birth, Americans by choice. We served loyally as U.S. soldiers. What is the difference that prevents us from getting benefits that our American comrades receive? Is it discrimination as President Truman has said?

We appreciate that U.S. Congress has restored U.S. citizenship rights, VA burial benefits, war related injury compensation, and much needed VA health care. Our Filipino veterans in the United States now have their VA identification cards. However they are missing the last benefit.

Mr. Chairman, after a decade of our demonstrations and lobbying on Capitol Hill and arrests at the White House to call attention on our cause, we are at the last stage of our campaign for Equity. We want equitable VA pensions for our poor and elderly veterans.

The major difference between what a low-income disable American veteran receives in VA NON-service disability pension and a U.S. based Filipino veteran is about \$200 per MONTH.

Our Filipino veteran subsists on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) of \$600 and Food Stamps. An additional \$200 monthly would bring our veteran to above the poverty level and live in dignity in the U.S.

This \$200 dollars monthly income for the Philippine-based Filipino WWII veteran would bring him above abject poverty there and pay for much needed food, shelter and medicines. The Philippine Government has shared in their responsibility for providing an "old age pension" of less than \$100 per month. We estimate it would cost about \$22 MILLION yearly to provide this last benefit to less than 10,000 Filipino veterans in the U.S. and in the Philippines.

President Truman said on February 20, 1946 when he objected to the Rescission Act, " We have a morale obligation to care for the Philippine Army veterans."

Today, Mr. Chairman and honorable members of this committee, we ask for what is due us. Please give us a touch of your compassion and kindness: your act of simple justice. Pass our Equity bill.

THANK YOU.

We will be glad to answer your questions.

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