



June 15, 2017

The Honorable Johnny Isakson, Chairman Senate Veterans Affairs Committee The Honorable Jon Tester, Ranking Member & Members of the Committee Senate Russell Bldg. Room 412 Washington DC 20510 Submitted for the June 15, 2017 Hearing

RE: The Filipino Veterans Promise Act S. 111

Dear Chairman Isakson, Ranking Member Tester and Committee Members:

On behalf of the members and leaders of the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans, a national advocacy organization, I proudly endorse this timely bill: the Filipino Veterans Promise Act (S. 111) introduced by Senator Dean Heller and Senator Mazie Hirono.

S. 111 would require the Secretary of the Defense Department “to establish a process to determine whether individuals claiming service in the Philippines during World War II are eligible for certain benefits despite not being on the Missouri List.” And thus recognize Filipino soldiers who served in the U.S. Army in WWII but were denied their Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation (FVEC) benefit. This bill would help resolve the estimated 4,525 appeals for FVEC like in the cases of Mr. Celestino Almeda, age 100, and several of our members in their nineties.

In 1946, more than 200,000 of these Filipino soldiers were honorably discharged by the U.S. Army, provided with U.S. official documentation and were paid by the Philippine Commonwealth Army of the United States Army. Unfortunately, thousands of our Filipino heroes were denied official recognition and veteran benefits because they were not included in so called “1948 Missouri List” of the U.S. Army.

If enacted into law, this bill would compel the U.S. Army and the VA Departments under administrative authority of the Secretary of Defense to revise and update their policies and procedures and thereby recognize the meritorious claims of thousands of Filipino veterans and surviving spouses. The FVEC Compensation fund has about \$56 million remaining and sufficient to cover future awards.

Over the past two decades, there have been several congressional hearings and laws passed on the Filipino WWII veterans’ recognition and VA benefits program and deal with the US Army stubborn refusal to correct their administrative policy of limiting recognition to the so called “Missouri list.” We urge your committee to adopt the April 10, 2013 recommendation of **The White House “Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Interagency Working Group”** and approve S.111. See copy of IWG memo and a list of vital reference documents to be provided to your committee.

We deeply appreciate your committee’s hearing on the Heller-Hirono sponsored bill. We applaud our bipartisan co-sponsors. We urge your Committee to support and mark up S. 111. Congress can pass this legislation to fix a historical wrong and correct an incomplete official list of our heroes.

Maraming salamat or many thanks!

Sincerely yours,

ERIC LACHICA, Executive Director for ACFV leaders:

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