

## A Message for Memorial Day: "No Veteran Left Behind" - MabuhayRadio

Written by Luisa M. Antonio

Sunday, 27 May 2007 09:56 - Last Updated Sunday, 27 May 2007 15:05

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**San Francisco, CA**---As the nation celebrates Memorial Day and commemorates those who courageously sacrificed their lives during past wars, California Sen. Diane Feinstein specifically mentioned the cause of the Filipino World War II veterans in a public statement.

The original 200,000 Filipino World War II veterans who fought side by side with the US veterans are now mostly octogenarians and barely 20,000 are alive. For more than half a century, the Filipino World War II veterans have been seeking for just-and-equal recognition as US veterans. The Filipino World War II Veterans Equity Act of 2007 (HR 760 and S 57) is still pending before the US 110th Congress garnering more supporters each week.

*“As we celebrate the Memorial Day we remember in particular, Filipino veterans who fought bravely during World War II and who are still fighting for full recognition .”* This is the recent public statement of Senator Feinstein and she continues to emphasize that “in times of war, the military says, ‘ *We will leave no soldier behind on the battlefield.’ When they come home, we must leave no veteran behind when it comes to delivering our promises* .”

Last week, Speaker Nancy Pelosi publicly announced her support for Filipino World War II veterans in a meeting held with community leaders in San Francisco on May 20, 2007. After Luisa M. Antonio, executive director of the San Francisco Veterans Equity Center, presented the veterans issue, Speaker Pelosi reiterated her full support for the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007 (HR760).

In a recent development on May 23, 2007, Sen. Daniel Akaka, chairman of the Senate Veterans Committee, presented his amendment to the Comprehensive Immigration Reform which

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contains a specific provision benefiting surviving Filipino veterans who are naturalized US citizens. In a very moving speech in support of the Filipino veterans, the more-than majority of the senators present agreed to pass the Senate Amendment 1186 on May 24, 2007 by a vote of 87-9.

Most of the legislators present were thankful to Sen. Daniel Akaka for sponsoring the amendment that will exempt the sons and daughters of naturalized US citizens from the numerical visa limitations and make their visas available immediately. With the passage of this amendment in the Senate, the Family Reunification Act for Filipino Veterans is now incorporated in both Senate and House versions of the Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill. Hopefully, these bills will be reconciled in Conference this June and be passed eventually passed into law.

In the meantime, Reggie Baldonado, a Filipino World War II veteran and SF Commissioner on Veterans Affairs urged the community that *"the advocacy for the full recognition of our Filipino World War II veterans remains a strong priority for most us grassroots organization and individuals who believe in justice and equity for all veterans"*

Atty. Lou Tancinco, chairperson of the National Network for Veterans Equity and Chair of the Veterans Equity Center, emphasized that the support for HR 760 and S 57 should continue to grow as momentum increases. *"It is important,"* according to Tancinco, *"That the Equity Act of 2007 be approved by both houses of Congress this summer together with the Family Reunification Act, which is incorporated in the greater proposed Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act"*. She

continues that only *"when all these bills are passed, we can truly say that indeed no veteran was left behind"*

**Editor's Note:** *The National Network for Veterans Equity is a coalition of different organizations, associations, and individuals from across the country concerned with the plight of Filipino veterans and who the support of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007(HR 760 and S. 57). NNVE has gathered support from various individuals, organizations, state, and local governments to advocate for the restoration of the full veterans status to Filipino World War II Veterans.*

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