

Filipino Veterans Not Impressed with the \$198-Million Compensation - MabuhayRadio

Written by Romeo P. Marquez

Tuesday, 17 March 2009 16:04 - Last Updated Tuesday, 17 March 2009 16:15

Spread over 63 years, the exact length of their struggle for equity and justice, the \$198-million allotted to pay Filipino veterans for their military service in World War II is literally a drop in the bucket. Better than nothing, many would say. But all it amounts to, in dollar terms, is a pitiful sum – less than \$20 a month – for risking life and limb in combat. The battles they had fought in during the war were brutal and painful. Postwar, their struggles continued, slowly, agonizingly, dragging them into the pits of injustice and finally finding succor sixty-three years later. The US will now compensate them for "damages for human suffering" – \$15,000 for US citizen veterans and \$9,000 for non-US citizen veterans.

.....

Filipino Veterans Not Impressed with the 198-Million Dollar Compensation; Congressman Filner, Other Supporters Claim Victory

By ROMEO P. MARQUEZ

Filipino veterans quietly celebrated what their supporters loudly proclaimed as their victory in a two-hour ceremony on Saturday that culminated with a grim reminder that their 63-year postwar struggle had come to an end and they, like ancient warriors, were just fading away from the scene.

The author is a member of the Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE), Asian-American Journalists Association (AAJA) and the National Press Club of the Philippines-USA.

Congressman Bob Filner (D-51st), meanwhile, apologized for the six-decades-old delay in meeting the demands of the veterans for justice and equity, saying "we're sorry to have come this late".

Less than a dozen veterans mostly in their late eighties and early nineties showed up at the event, and the few dressed in winter clothes and held canes limped up the three small steps into the cavernous Veterans Museum and Memorial Center in Balboa Park where the commemorative rite took place.

Filipino Veterans Not Impressed with the \$198-Million Compensation - MabuhayRadio

Written by Romeo P. Marquez

Tuesday, 17 March 2009 16:04 - Last Updated Tuesday, 17 March 2009 16:15

* PHILIPPINE VILLAGE VOICE - Redefining Community News
BREAKING NEWS - Exclusive
Volume 3, Issue No. 4 / News Without Fear or Favor /

. . . A community service of San Diego's Philippine Village Voice (PhilVoiceNews@aol.com or at 619.265.0611) for the information and better understanding of the public . . .

The enthusiasm shown by the event organizers failed to stir them from their seats. Not even the presence of Filner, their staunchest supporter and advocate; California Assemblymember Mary Salas and Philippine Consul General Mary Jo Aragon.

"Hindi equity ito. Pam-palubag loob lang ito," said 92-year-old Reynaldo Roque in Tagalog, to mean the lump sum payment was intended to appease them and was not what the veterans had been fighting for and expecting.

A total of \$198 million – inserted in the \$787 billion stimulus package signed into law last month by President Barack Obama – was to be disbursed for the less than 20,000 veterans remaining out of the nearly 200,000 Filipinos conscripted into the US armed forces during the Second World War. Under the stimulus package officially labeled American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, non-US citizen veterans were to be paid \$9,000 and US citizen veterans \$15,000. The law says the payment was for "damages for human suffering".

Filipino Veterans Not Impressed with the \$198-Million Compensation - MabuhayRadio

Written by Romeo P. Marquez

Tuesday, 17 March 2009 16:04 - Last Updated Tuesday, 17 March 2009 16:15

"It's too late too little," commented Patricia Guevara, co-coordinator of 20 volunteers belonging to the Filipino-American Veterans for Equity, a youth group helping and advocating for the veterans in San Diego and Los Angeles.

"Hindi equity ito. Pam-palubag loob lang ito," said 92-year-old Reynaldo Roque in Tagalog, to mean the lump sum payment was intended to appease them and was not what the veterans had been fighting for and expecting.

Indeed, at \$15,000 per person spread over 63 years, a US citizen veteran would receive only less than \$20 per month for his military service, or \$238 per year. No less pitiful is the non-US citizen veteran based in the Philippines who stands to get a mere \$11.9 per month, or \$142.86 per year for the last 63 years of waiting.

"Right now, it seems like it's the best offer," Ms. Guevara said. Her group is also advocating payment for the widows

On the other hand, Congressman Filner said "we have to see this as a great victory" and a recognition by the US government of their military service. The Rescission Act of 1946 had stripped Filipino veterans of full benefits even when the Philippines was a colony of the United States and the military draft had been ordered by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Filipino Veterans Not Impressed with the \$198-Million Compensation - MabuhayRadio

Written by Romeo P. Marquez

Tuesday, 17 March 2009 16:04 - Last Updated Tuesday, 17 March 2009 16:15

Congressman Filner said the lump sum payment was "a belated thank you gift" to the Filipino veterans.

An official of the American Coalition of Filipino Veterans in San Diego, Manuel T Cannu, said his group would continue to wage the struggle, this time for benefits for the widows. The stimulus package stipulates, however, that acceptance of the money by the veterans "shall constitute a complete release of any claim against the United States".

Businessman Tony Olaes and eight community organizations, including a money-courier company, hosted the event billed as a "victory at last celebration" in honor of the veterans.

While some of the sponsors are financially well-off and could have easily afforded a meaningful luncheon meal, the food served the veterans and other guests consisted of slices of chicken adobo, two scoops of rice, a sprinkling of string beans and carrots, and leche flan mixed in a styrofoam container.

The Council of Philippine American Organizations (COPAO), which has yet to account for the \$27,000 missing from its coffers, spearheaded the event. # # #

Filipino Veterans Not Impressed with the \$198-Million Compensation - MabuhayRadio

Written by Romeo P. Marquez

Tuesday, 17 March 2009 16:04 - Last Updated Tuesday, 17 March 2009 16:15

* This Breaking News is sent by Romeo P. Marquez, editor, Philippine Village Voice, San Diego, California. Mailing address: P.O. Box 2118, La Jolla, CA. 92038. Volume 3, Issue no. 4, March 16, 2009.

[Joomla SEO powered by JoomSEF](#)