

By JOSEPH G. LARIOSA

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CHICAGO (*jGLi*) – Hawaii Sen. Daniel K. Inouye (D), a World War II recipient of a Medal of Honor who championed the passage of the Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation (FVEC) bill into law, died Monday (Dec. 17) at the age of 88. He died of respiratory complications at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, with his wife and son at his side.

As chairman of Senate appropriations committee, Mr. Inouye was so powerful that when some Filipino veterans advocates sought for the overturn of the Rescission Act of 1946 that would grant full benefits to the Filipino World War II heroes, Mr. Inouye put his foot down, saying that the FVEC “lump sum payment was and still is the best benefit we could have ... and represents a small token of acknowledgement and appreciation to the remaining Filipino World War II veterans for their sacrifices and contributions made in defense of our nation.”

The lump sum payment of \$15,000 was granted to each of the Filipino veterans, who are U.S. Citizens, while the \$9,000 one-time payment was given to those, who are not U.S. Citizens, in a rider Sen. Inouye fought so hard to include in the stimulus package known as American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 that President Obama signed into law.

A pending bill, H.R. 210, the Filipino Veterans Fairness Act of 2011, that has generated 96 co-sponsors in the House, has languished for a long time as no other senator would come up with a counterpart bill in the Senate to supplement the bill introduced by Rep. Jackie Speier [Ca-12] as a result of Senator Inouye’s vocal opposition to the measure.

However, if the new White House interagency group headed by Cabinet Secretary Christopher Lu would be friendly to the Filipino veterans, it is very

likely that other Senators might take up the cudgels for full equity on behalf of the veterans now that Senator Inouye is gone.

## **“DON’T DISMISS FILVET CLAIMS”**

Only recently, a Filipino veterans advocacy group in Las Nevada (FAVFA-Nevada), however, has called upon the “White House Inter-Agency Committee to halt dismissing any and all claims filed or requiring any further appeals to be responded to while or until the new White House Committee, Cabinet Sec. Christopher Lu, announced, studies the issues involved and approves use of Philippine government documents either by Presidential Executive Order or legislation pending in the U.S. Senate or Congress.”

Luke Perry and Ceasar Elpidio said, “We have found that claims are now being pushed into final stages of dismissal during a time when it appears there may come a change in the regulations or laws that have denied WW II Filipino veterans from being recognized and it is necessary to have a moratorium on the closing of claims so that if changes occur the claims now pending may have the full opportunity to become certified to be recognized as U. S. Veterans and receive any and all compensation from programs available to all veterans.”

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Earlier, Sen. Den Heller (R-NV) filed an amendment to S. 3254, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), to protect the Nevada veterans. One of these amendments would establish a process for Filipinos who fought alongside the U.S. military during World War II and have documentation to work with military historians so they can receive proper benefits for their service.

After World War II, the U.S. Army created the Approved Revised Reconstructed Guerilla Roster of 1948, also known as the "Missouri List," based on individuals who came forward after the war to receive healthcare. This list has been used by the military to verify those who served alongside U.S.

troops in the  
Philippines

. It is possible that some Filipinos who fought were not added to this list and could be improperly denied benefits.

Senator Heller introduced the Filipino Veterans Fairness Act in September urging the Department of Defense to work with Filipinos denied veteran benefits. He is now introducing similar legislation as an amendment to the NDAA. There are an estimated 24,000 Filipino veterans, who are denied to receive the FVEC, when their names were not located in the "Missouri List" at the National Personnel Records Center

in  
St. Louis

## SECOND-LONGEST SERVING SENATOR

Senator Inouye won his ninth consecutive term in 2010 and was the second-longest-serving senator in the chamber's history, trailing only Sen. Robert Byrd of West Virginia. Inouye was a senator for all but three of Hawaii's 53 years as a state and had served as its first House member before that.

“Sen. Daniel Inouye never wavered in his life-long commitment to the cause of Filipino World War II veterans, which he championed with passion and persistence during his nearly 50 years of service in the U.S. Congress” says NaFFAA National Chairman Eduardo Navarra. “He was a strong advocate for justice on behalf of our veterans who were unfairly denied official recognition and rightful benefits as U.S. veterans when Congress passed the Rescission Act in 1946.”

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At the time of his death, Senator Inouye was serving as Senate President Pro-Tempore and Chairman of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee. The most senior member of the Senate, he was third in line of presidential succession after Vice President Joe Biden and House Speaker John Boehner.

Meanwhile, Philippine Ambassador to the United States Jose L. Cuisia, Jr. said, “The Philippines Monday expressed its profound sorrow over the passing this afternoon of Sen. Daniel Inouye—its strongest champion in the United States Congress.

“Senator Inouye was more than just a friend of the Philippines. We grieve over his passing because the Filipino people have embraced him as one of their own.

“Senator Inouye believed that the US has shortchanged the Philippines with its unfulfilled promise to Filipinos who were drafted in 1941 to serve alongside US soldiers in World War II and he wanted to make up for that.”

Senator Inouye was also the main sponsor of the Save Our Industries Act, a bill that will allow the export to the US of Philippine apparel made of American fabrics. This legislation aims to increase jobs and exports income for both countries. # # #

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