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House of Representatives

GRANT EQUITY TO FILIPINO WWII VETERANS!

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the House of Representatives Committee on Veterans Affairs, I rise to urge my colleagues to support the gentleman from California (Mr. *Cunningham*) and myself who have reintroduced H.R. 302, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act. This bill addresses a 60-year-old injustice which has cut to the heart of each and every Filipino American in this Nation and which was acknowledged in the last congressional session by over 200 cosponsoring Members of Congress, many veterans service organizations, religious organizations and many State and local officials in addition.

Sixty years ago, Filipino soldiers living in the Philippines, which was a territory of the United States, were drafted into service during World War II by an executive order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, Filipino soldiers fought side by side with forces from the United States mainland, defending the American flag in the now-famous battles of Bataan and Corrigidor.

Thousands of Filipino prisoners of war died, both on the Bataan Death March and in

prisoner of war camps, at the rate of 50 to 200 a day. They endured 4 long years of occupation by the Japanese. The soldiers fortunate enough to escape capture, together with other Filipino citizens, fought guerilla war against the occupation forces. These guerilla attacks foiled the plans of the Japanese for a quick takeover of the region and allowed the United States the needed time to regroup to defeat the invading army.

After the liberation of the Philippines, the United States used the strategically located Commonwealth of the Philippines as a base from which to launch the final efforts to win the war in the Pacific.

With their vital participation so evident, one would assume that the United States would be grateful to their Filipino comrades, so it is hard to believe that soon after the war ended Congress voted in the 1946 Rescissions Act to take away the benefits and recognition that many Filipino World War II veterans were promised.

These veterans are now in their eighties and in need of health care. Many are dying each year. Their last wish is to be recognized as

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honored veterans of the United States Armed Forces. Please support H.R. 302 to restore the rescinded benefits to Filipino World War II veterans, many of whom have now become

citizens of the United States. Please cosponsor H.R. 302 to restore the dignity of Filipino World War II veterans for their defense of our common democratic ideals.