



# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 108<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

FRIDAY, November 21, 2003

## *House of Representatives*

# IMPROVING HEALTH CARE FOR OUR FILIPINO WWII VETERANS

**HON. BOB FILNER**  
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**MR. FILNER:** Madam Speaker, I also rise in support of S. 1156 as it comes to the House.

As I said yesterday on the floor of the House and I will say again to the chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the ranking member, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), if we take the benefits package that we passed yesterday and the health package that we will pass today, the sum together of these make this year one of the most productive years ever for benefits and health care for our Nation's veterans.

I want to congratulate our leadership on that.

Let me just speak quickly to two of the provisions in this bill. One of them provides access to the veterans medical facilities to all Filipino World War II veterans who legally reside in the United States. This is a benefit that comes from my bill, H.R. 664,

and for which I have been fighting for many years, and I thank all the folks involved, the gentleman from Connecticut (Chairman SIMMONS), the gentleman from Texas (Ranking Member RODRIGUEZ), as well as Veterans' Affairs Secretary Principi for bringing this to the floor today.

The Filipino soldiers during World War II helped us win the war in the Pacific, and their brave, courageous stands in the epic battles of Bataan and Corregidor, their critical participation in guerrilla warfare that slowed up the Japanese advance, caused them to suffer greatly after the war when the Congress of 1946 deprived them of the very benefits in both health and benefits that they had been promised.

These veterans are now in their seventies and eighties. Their most urgent need is health care. So it is with great joy that I urge my colleagues to vote for this bill. It will restore dignity and honor to these brave veterans where over 50 years of injustice

(over)

burns in their hearts. Their sons and daughters and they themselves, I know, are watching this floor today and are going to have great celebration when we pass this bill later on.

What we are saying here today is that these veterans are indeed United States veterans, and we are going to begin remedying the historical injustice that we inflicted upon them. We will make good on the promise of America for these brave veterans.

In addition, as has been mentioned, this bill contains major medical investments in

many areas of this country, including San Diego, California. The average health care facility in the VA is more than 50 years old. So we have to update these buildings. The building in San Diego is in dire need of seismic correction, and it is one of 60 projects that the VA has identified that need these seismic corrections. So we cannot turn our heads away without acting any longer. We cannot continue to leave VA patients and employees in harm's way.

For all these reasons and more, I urge passage of Senate bill 1156.