

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

IN HONOR OF HAZEL JOHNSON

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2007

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, this Saturday, March 10th, the Happy Hairston Youth Foundation, Inc. of Bay City, Texas, in my congressional district, will honor Ms. Hazel Johnson, the Executive Director of the Economic Action Committee of the Gulf Coast. I am pleased to join the Happy Hairston Youth Foundation, Inc. in honoring this remarkable woman.

For the past 17 years, Ms. Johnson has devoted herself to serving the residents of Matagorda County. The Economic Action Committee was created to ensure Matagorda County's homebound elderly and disabled citizens receive nutritional meals. Under Ms. Johnson's leadership, the Economic Action Committee has not only continued to fulfill its original mandate of meeting the nutritional needs of the elderly and disabled, but has expanded its function to deliver other vital services to Matagorda County's senior citizens.

Under Ms. Johnson's leadership, the Economic Action Committee began providing Matagorda County's low income seniors and citizens with disabilities with air conditioning, heating, refrigeration units, and cooking stoves. Without the efforts of Ms. Johnson, many of these seniors and disabled would not have safe appliances in their homes. Perhaps Ms. Johnson's most significant accomplishment is making sure that Matagorda County's low income seniors and disabled residents do not have to go without air conditioning during the hot and humid Texas Gulf Coast summers. Anyone who has spent a summer in the Texas Gulf Coast knows that air conditioning is a necessity. In fact, for the homebound, access to air conditioning can literally be a matter of life and death.

It is therefore my privilege to join my friends at the Happy Hairston Youth Foundation, Inc. of Bay City, Texas, in saluting Hazel Johnson and her efforts to improve the lives of the people of Matagorda County.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2007

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Madam Speaker, on March 13th I was unavoidably detained and missed rollcall vote numbers 121 and 122. Rollcall vote 121 was final passage of House Resolution 98, honoring the life and achievements of the late Dr. John Garang de Mabior, and had I been present, I would have voted, "aye." Rollcall vote 122 was final passage of House Resolution 149, supporting the goals of International Women's Day, and had I been present, I would have voted, "aye."

THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF H.R.
1287: FILIPINO VETERANS FAMILY
REUNIFICATION ACT

HON. MAZIE K. HIRONO

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2007

Ms. HIRONO. Madam Speaker, on the first of this month, I reintroduced the Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act (H.R. 1287), which will provide for the expedited reunification of the families of our Filipino World War II veterans.

This body has many times heard accounts of the bravery of the Filipino veterans: how they fought shoulder to shoulder with American servicemen; how they sacrificed for the same just cause. For too long, we have ignored the promise we made to those men to provide benefits and care equal to that provided to our own soldiers.

As the House prepares for debate on comprehensive immigration reform, let us remember the broken promises made to our Filipino World War II veterans and provide for a meaningful way to make amends by expediting the immigration petitions of their sons and daughters.

I would like to submit into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD an article that recently appeared in the Washington Post that humanizes the intent of my bill.

[From the Washington Post, Mar. 4, 2007]

HOPE FOR AMENDS TO FILIPINO IMMIGRANTS

(By N.C. Aizenman)

Amid the wrangling over immigration reform, virtually everyone in Congress appears to agree on one point: Filipino-born veterans who fought alongside U.S. troops during World War II deserve a break.

Denied the right to immigrate to the United States until 1990, they came hoping that their children could follow them here later, just as other groups have done. But the adult children have been required to wait twice as long—up to 16 years—as anyone else. With the veterans often too old and sick to travel home, many have died while waiting to be reunited with their families.

Now, after several longtime backers have risen to key positions in Congress, Filipino American advocates are hopeful that legislation will be pushed through to exempt the veterans' children from the immigration delay. They also are optimistic about a potentially more controversial bill that would grant Filipino veterans military pensions.

About 5,000 veterans in the United States would stand to benefit from a change in immigration provisions, and an additional 10,000 in the Philippines could be eligible for pensions.

To many in the 2-million-strong Filipino American community, the issue represents a chance to cement their political identity in a nation where they have long felt invisible, even though Filipinos rank second, behind Mexicans, in the number of immigrants living in the United States.

"Historically, we Filipinos have always been looked down on as your little brown brothers—as these acquiescent people who

would just accept anything Uncle Sam would do to them," said Jon Melegrito, communications director of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations. "This is about asserting who we are as a people and how we served this country. . . . It's a call to action to stop acting like colonial slaves and to start acting like first-class citizens."

The effort builds on an association with the United States that dates to 1898, when the United States acquired the Philippines from Spain after winning the Spanish-American War.

Laws and discriminatory practices against all Asian immigrants kept Filipino numbers in the United States low through the first half of the 1900s. But in the Philippines, many residents were taught English and raised to think of themselves as something akin to Americans.

Celestino Almeda, 90, a veteran who lives in Alexandria, remembered that the director of his elementary school in Manila led students in a pledge of allegiance to the American flag every morning.

"We also celebrated all the holidays: Washington's birthday, Armistice Day," Almeda said. "In our mind, it was like America was our mother country."

When Japan invaded the Philippines in 1941, more than 200,000 Filipinos joined Americans in waging a fierce resistance, enduring such horrors as the Bataan Death March and the grueling guerrilla campaign that followed. Technically, the Filipino fighters were under overall U.S. command. But within months of the Allied victory, Congress stripped most of them of their rights as foreign veterans of U.S. forces—including the opportunity to become U.S. citizens—on the grounds that the Philippines was about to be granted independence.

Even so, the Philippines continued its close affiliation with the United States. Thousands of Filipinos joined the U.S. Navy, which until recently had major bases there. By 1970, there were more Filipinos in the U.S. Navy than in the Philippine Navy.

And, after 1965, when Congress repealed the nationality quota system that had practically prohibited Asians from immigrating, hundreds of thousands of Filipinos streamed in.

Ranging from unskilled workers and nannies to nurses and professionals who came in on occupational preference visas, the new arrivals immediately formed social, cultural and professional organizations. Before long, they were rising to prominent positions in government, unions and the military. Several won elected office, including in Prince George's County, where a sizable community settled.

Yet when it came to turning their clout into political activism on behalf of Filipino American causes, many of the immigrants hesitated, said Bing Cardenas Branigin, 50, a former regional chairman of the Filipino American federation.

"There was this sense that you shouldn't make trouble, that you shouldn't contradict the government," she said. "You should just pay your taxes and send your kids to school and keep quiet."

That began to change in the mid-1970s when anger spread over the repressive policies of the Filipino president, Ferdinand

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

Marcos. As much as their opposition to Marcos galvanized the Filipino American community, it also caused rifts with those who supported Marcos.

After Marcos was ousted, community leaders looked to refocus their newfound energy on a more unifying issue. The fight for veterans' equity was a natural choice.

Since then, the veterans have won some of the benefits they lost after the war. Most notably, in 1990, Congress granted Filipino World War II veterans the same opportunity to naturalize offered to all other foreign nationals who served in the U.S. armed forces.

But the Filipino veterans remain ineligible for a military pension, forcing many of the more than 24,000 elderly veterans who became U.S. citizens after 1990 to live off food stamps and Supplemental Security Income payments.

Joaquin Tejada, 84, a former guerrilla fighter who survived two years resisting the Japanese from jungle hideouts, said he now struggles to get by with his \$545 monthly SSI check. The rent for the two-bedroom apartment he shares with another Filipino World War II veteran in Columbia Heights takes \$275.

"By the end of the month, it's hard to buy even basic food," said Tejada, who proudly sported an American flag tie during an interview.

Then there is the 16-year wait veterans face if they wish to bring over their adult children, an unintended consequence of the 1965 law lifting the quotas that had prevented most Asians from immigrating.

In their place, Congress introduced a complicated system meant to offer every country the same number of family reunification visas. But because Filipino applicants far outnumber the yearly slots allotted to them, they face the longest delays—22 years to sponsor an adult brother or sister, for instance, compared with 11 years for applicants of most other nationalities.

Candida Romulo, 72, said she and her husband, Bayani, a veteran who became a lawyer in Manila, would not have naturalized and moved to Oxon Hill had they known that the wait to sponsor their grown children would be so long.

"We did it because we wanted to give them the opportunities of living in this country. It was going to be our gift to them," Romulo said during an interview in a living room crammed with photographs of her four children.

Soon after the couple's arrival, Bayani developed a medical condition requiring frequent dialysis, making visits to the Philippines impossible. Because of their pending residency applications, his children were unable to get visas to visit him.

When Bayani suffered a severe stroke in September, his eldest son wasn't able to relay his final words to his father over the phone before he died.

"The receiver couldn't reach his bed in the ICU," Candida Romulo said. "So I told my husband, 'Your son says that he loves you very much and that he's so proud that you are his father.' My husband couldn't speak, but I could tell that he understood, because there were tears in his eyes."

Now Romulo worries that her son may never gain entry to the United States, because if a sponsor dies while the visa application is pending, there is a chance that the application will be annulled.

But she said she is still praying that Congress will pass the legislation for the sake of those veterans who remain alive.

"If that happens, I know my husband will be very happy about it, even if he is already in heaven," she said.

SUPPORTING THE GOALS OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

SPEECH OF

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 6, 2007

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, I am so pleased that the House is joining the global community in celebrating International Women's Day.

As a woman, a mother, and a grandmother, I see the amazing accomplishments women have made in my lifetime—including the first woman Speaker of the House.

However, we still have a lot of challenges ahead of us—women still face discrimination in the workplace, lack affordable healthcare, earn less than their male counterparts and struggle to pay for childcare.

I look forward to working with the new Democratic Congress to bring real change to the women and girls of this country and provide them a future of hope and optimism.

THANKING MICHAEL GORMAN FOR HIS YEARS OF PUBLIC SERVICE

HON. MICHAEL E. CAPUANO

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2007

Mr. CAPUANO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and to thank my District Director, Michael Gorman, for his years of public service. Mr. Gorman has worked by my side since I was first elected Mayor of Somerville, Massachusetts in 1989. Our city was facing difficult times: significant demographic changes and a potentially crippling cutback in state aid. Michael Gorman worked tirelessly to help me meet those challenges and to keep Somerville safe and neighborly as it became an increasing desirable place to live. We spent nine years together, improving the schools, providing dependable and cost-effective public services, diversifying the city's police and fire departments, creating green space and planting thousands of trees. His dedication to the City of Somerville was evident every hour of every day in the work he did and the causes he championed.

Mike was instrumental in helping me to make the decision to seek Congressional office. When I was elected in 1998, Mike agreed to bring his considerable talents to my District Office, serving as Director and utilizing his skills for the benefit of the entire 8th Congressional District.

For the past eight years, Mike has devoted himself to our constituents. Whether it has been helping an individual with a problem or articulating my policy positions to a community group, Mike has served the 8th Congressional District with distinction.

After almost two decades, Mike is leaving public service for the private sector. I wish him every success and thank him for his political acumen, his hard work, and his selfless dedication to the people he has helped me represent.

AUTHORIZING USE OF ROTUNDA FOR CEREMONY TO AWARD THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR TO THE TUSKEGEE AIR- MEN

SPEECH OF

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 6, 2007

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my full support for use of the Capitol Rotunda for the Tuskegee Airmen Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony. The bill to award the Gold Medal passed unanimously on February 28, 2006 with bipartisan support. This was a long time coming. The Tuskegee Airmen, along with their families and friends are very happy that they will finally receive the highest honor this great body can award. The President will present the Gold Medal on March 29, 2007. Other dignitaries and leaders will also be present to witness this very historical event.

The Tuskegee Airmen are a distinguished group of World War II African American veterans who fought against segregation and discrimination at home and the enemy abroad. Their fight was with dignity, steadfastness, and pride. After completing training in Tuskegee, Alabama, they bravely headed to Europe to defend their country. They completed 15,500 missions, destroyed 260 enemy aircraft, sank 1 enemy destroyer, and demolished numerous enemy installations. During their service, the Airmen earned 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 744 Air Medals, 8 Purple Hearts, and 14 Bronze Stars. That is remarkable.

The Tuskegee Airmen were trailblazers and paved the way for other African Americans to serve and defend the U.S. Their exemplary work and commitment demonstrated once again that African Americans were not only highly capable, but willing to serve and die for freedom. As a Korean war veteran, I'm honored to have benefited from their courage and service to the military and the Nation.

As I express my support for using the Capitol Rotunda to honor great men who have served our country, I must pay honor to the men and women who are on the battlefield today. We must never forget their immeasurable sacrifices. I urge you to support this resolution and to keep our troops and their families in your thoughts and prayers.

NO COMFORT FOR COMFORT WOMEN SURVIVORS OF WORLD WAR II

HON. VITO FOSSELLA

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2007

Mr. FOSSELLA. Madam Speaker, on January 31, 2007, my good friend and colleague, Mr. HONDA, introduced H. Res. 121 on Comfort Women, of which I am a proud co-sponsor. Given recent events, the necessity and imperative to pass H. Res. 121 by the full House of Representatives is now more important than ever. It is my hope that this non-binding resolution will signal to our friend and ally, the Government of Japan, that working to