

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.