

revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on House Resolution 1287.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In conclusion, maybe as a segue to a bill we have in a couple minutes, this is a memorial to World War II veterans. For over 62 years, the Filipinos, who were drafted to fight in World War II and helped us win the battle in the Pacific, have not been granted the rights and benefits of being veterans of our Nation. They played a very important role, slowing up the Japanese advance, harassing them so that MacArthur could return, and continuing to help us fight the battle of the Pacific. We would not have won the battle in the Pacific as quickly as we did were it not for our Filipino World War II veterans.

I just want to say for the record that I and millions of people around the country regard this World War II Memorial on the Mall as also commemorating the contributions of the Filipinos who fought by our side in World War II.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1287.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FILIPINO VETERANS EQUITY ACT OF 2008

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6897) to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make certain payments to eligible persons who served in the Philippines during World War II, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6897

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The Philippine islands became a United States possession in 1898 when they were ceded from Spain following the Spanish-American War.

(2) During World War II, Filipinos served in a variety of units, some of which came under the direct control of the United States Armed Forces.

(3) The regular Philippine Scouts, the new Philippine Scouts, the Guerilla Services, and more than 100,000 members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army were called into the serv-

ice of the United States Armed Forces of the Far East on July 26, 1941, by an executive order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

(4) Even after hostilities had ceased, wartime service of the new Philippine Scouts continued as a matter of law until the end of 1946, and the force gradually disbanded and was disestablished in 1950.

(5) Filipino veterans who were granted benefits prior to the enactment of the so-called Rescissions Acts of 1946 (Public Laws 79-301 and 79-391) currently receive full benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, but under section 107 of title 38, United States Code, the service of certain other Filipino veterans is deemed not to be active service for purposes of such laws.

(6) These other Filipino veterans only receive certain benefits under title 38, United States Code, and, depending on where they legally reside, are paid such benefit amounts at reduced rates.

(7) The benefits such veterans receive include service-connected compensation benefits paid under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code, dependency indemnity compensation survivor benefits paid under chapter 13 of title 38, United States Code, and burial benefits under chapters 23 and 24 of title 38, United States Code, and such benefits are paid to beneficiaries at the rate of \$0.50 per dollar authorized, unless they lawfully reside in the United States.

(8) Dependents' educational assistance under chapter 35 of title 38, United States Code, is also payable for the dependents of such veterans at the rate of \$0.50 per dollar authorized, regardless of the veterans' residency.

SEC. 3. PAYMENTS TO ELIGIBLE PERSONS WHO SERVED IN THE PHILIPPINES DURING WORLD WAR II.

(a) COMPENSATION FUND.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—There is in the general fund of the Treasury a fund to be known as the "Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund" (in this section referred to as the "compensation fund").

(2) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.—Subject to the availability of appropriations for such purpose, amounts in the fund shall be available to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs without fiscal year limitation to make payments to eligible persons in accordance with this section.

(b) PAYMENTS.—During the one-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall make a payment to an eligible person who, during such period, submits to the Secretary an application containing such information and assurances as the Secretary may require.

(c) ELIGIBLE PERSONS.—An eligible person is any person who served—

(1) before July 1, 1946, in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, while such forces were in the service of the Armed Forces of the United States pursuant to the military order of the President dated July 26, 1941, including among such military forces organized guerrilla forces under commanders appointed, designated, or subsequently recognized by the Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, or other competent authority in the Army of the United States; or

(2) in the Philippine Scouts under section 14 of the Armed Forces Voluntary Recruitment Act of 1945 (59 Stat. 538).

(d) PAYMENT AMOUNTS.—Each payment under this section shall be—

(1) in the case of an eligible person who is not a citizen of the United States, in the amount of \$9,000; and

(2) in the case of an eligible person who is a citizen of the United States, in the amount of \$15,000.

(e) LIMITATION.—The Secretary may not make more than one payment under this section for each person described in subsection (f).

(f) ELIGIBILITY OF INDIVIDUALS LIVING OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES ENTITLED TO CERTAIN

SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS.—Receipt of a payment under this section shall not affect the eligibility of an individual residing outside the United States to receive benefits under title VIII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1001 et seq.) or the amount of such benefits.

(g) RELEASE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), the acceptance by an eligible person of a payment under this section shall be final, and shall constitute a complete release of any claim against the United States by reason of any service described in subsection (c).

(2) PAYMENT OF PREVIOUSLY AWARDED BENEFITS.—Nothing in this section shall prohibit a person from receiving any benefit to which the person is entitled based on a claim for which benefits are awarded before the date of the enactment of this Act.

(h) REPORTS.—The Secretary shall include, in documents submitted to Congress by the Secretary in support of the President's budget for each fiscal year in which payments are made from the compensation fund under this section, detailed information on the operation of the compensation fund, including the number of applicants, the number of eligible persons receiving benefits, the amounts paid out of the compensation fund, and the administration of the compensation fund.

(i) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall prescribe regulations to carry out this section.

(j) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATION.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the compensation fund \$198,000,000, to remain available until expended, to make payments under this section.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

□ 1215

Madam Speaker, this bill, rights a wrong that has existed for more than 60 years. Filipino servicemen played a critical role in the United States' victory in the Pacific during World War II.

They exhibited great courage, as we all know, in the epic battles of Bataan and Corregidor. Many died in the famous Bataan Death March. Those who survived, and others who escaped, continued to harass the Japanese as guerrilla units. When MacArthur returned, they joined in the victory of the retaking of the Philippines.

This bill would provide a one-time payment to the courageous Filipino soldiers who fought side-by-side with American GIs. There is no disputing the valiant service that these men provided in the Pacific.

Unfortunately, during a less-than-noble moment in our history, Congress passed the Rescission Acts of 1946, which stripped them of their veteran status and denied them the right of any benefit. While some veteran benefits have been restored for a few soldiers on a limited and piecemeal basis, for the large majority, they have never received a dime for their service. This is wrong.

When these men were called up to service by President Roosevelt, they were still considered Americans who were under territorial rule. Even if decades later, we must recognize the service of our Filipino soldiers and demonstrate the gratitude all of our soldiers deserve for doing what they were asked to do nobly and without complaint.

Let me remind you what President Truman said when he signed the so-called Rescission Acts, even though he disagreed with part of it. Truman said the passage and approval of this legislation "does not release the United States from its moral obligation to provide for the heroic Filipino veterans who sacrificed so much. Philippine Army veterans fought as American nationals under the American flag and under the direction of our military leaders."

H.R. 6897, as amended, will give a long overdue one-time payment of \$15,000 for U.S. citizens and \$9,000 for those who were citizens. By doing this, we will provide a small, yet meaningful, measure of recognition and thanks to these brave men who deserve far, far more.

It is time that this Congress and our Nation recognize their contributions to the successful outcome of World War II, recognize the injustice visited upon them and act to correct this injustice. To those who ask if we can afford to redeem this debt, I say we can't afford not to. The historical record remains blotted until we recognize these veterans.

I hope all my colleagues will join me in supporting these veterans and would reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, I respect such time as I may consume.

Let me start out in this discussion of this bill, H.R. 6897, that Mr. FILNER from San Diego has done a very exceptional job in his assiduous efforts to pass this bill. I admire him for his efforts.

I don't all together agree with him, and I will point to that in my speech, but this in no way implies that his efforts aren't appreciated for the Filipinos who fought for us in World War II and for those Filipinos who receive money who are not U.S. citizens because of this bill.

I would have to point out that he has said there are no benefits provided for the Filipino veterans. I have here an Overview of Filipino Veterans' Benefits, a report that indicates that, in fact, in 1946, \$200 million was authorized to give them benefits. So his statement is not entirely accurate.

We do have a report of Congress that shows money was authorized, \$200 million in 1946 was worth a lot of money. I think we should put that in perspective before we start discussing this further.

As pointed out, it is a lump sum payment to Filipino veterans of World War II subject to appropriations. Now, think about that for a second. There is

no money in here authorized for this. This is subject to appropriation. They have to find the money. We don't know where this money, roughly \$200 million, is going to come from.

I don't agree with the notion frequently put forth that there was a breach of promise put forth to the Filipino veterans by the United States Government, and that we must make some sort of belated payments to them for their service during World War II. The Congressional Research Service, as I pointed out, has provided an excellent objective and nonpartisan report on the Filipino veterans benefits from World War II.

It does not, as I pointed out, support the breach of promise theory that we often hear from my distinguished chairman and also, from a lot of Filipino veterans groups. Both the United States and the Philippine Governments are already providing benefits to many Filipino World War II veterans, so they are already getting benefits.

This bill is significantly different from the legislation that was previously marked up last July, H.R. 760, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007, and it also differs from the original language of the Senate-passed version of S. 1315. Both bills utilize funding from overturning the court decision in *Hartness v. Nicholson* to, among other things, pay pension benefits to Filipino veterans of World War II.

At least in that case they did attempt to find some money. So they had a legitimate way to get money to pay for this. That is not true in this bill today. It has taken out discretionary spending left to the appropriators, and the appropriators don't know where they are going to get the money either.

It's apparent from the legislation before us that my distinguished chairman took pause before moving forward. He listened, and this is a credit to him, he listened to the veterans service organizations who opposed the bill, his original bill. He listened to his colleagues on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and then he carefully drafted the bill that we have before us today.

It does not take money away from any other veterans group to pay for these funds, and it makes the payment of the lump sum subject to appropriation. This bill would authorize a payment of \$15,000 for World War II Filipino veterans who are United States citizens and \$9,000 for those who are not citizens of the United States and live in the Philippines.

I appreciate the committee accepting our ranking member, Mr. BUYER's amendment to the bill, which provides that payment of the lump-sum benefit would be final and constitute a complete release of any claim against the United States by those recipients that are covered under this legislation. However, World War II Filipino veterans would continue to receive benefits already awarded.

During discussions of the previously mentioned Filipino veterans equity

bills, which utilized offsets from overturning the Hartness decision, Ranking Member BUYER had staff contact the various veterans organizations regarding the use of these funds. The American Legion, AMVETS, and NAUS, strongly opposed using the Hartness funds to provide for the Filipino veterans. That was then, that was back then.

While their positions vary regarding overturning the Hartness decision, there are other organizations such as the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the Military Officers Association of America and the Gold Star Wives of America, believe that there are many higher priorities than additional benefits for Filipino veterans of World War II.

Why don't we talk about some of those higher priorities, because this is what the veterans service organizations feel strongly about. If you are going to give this money to the Filipinos, what about the higher priorities of these other people? How about improvements to the Specially Adaptive Housing Grant, the PVA; improvement to the Specially Adaptive Automobile Grant, PVA, increases to the mileage reimbursement rate, PVA and MOAA; increases in supplemental insurance coverage for disabled veterans, MOAA; increases to the DIC rate for American surviving spouses, GSW; increases to the maximum death benefit pension for the surviving widow of a veteran not entitled to a VA compensation, GSW.

Why, I would think, would we give \$200 million for Filipino veterans who are not even U.S. citizens while not providing a priority for these? Obviously, there are many, many higher priorities that we as a Nation at war should be meeting. We should be devoting our available resources to meeting the needs of our veterans and the returning warriors that are coming back from Afghanistan and from Iraq.

Now, during last Wednesday's markup session, Mr. BUYER, the ranking Republican member of the full committee offered, and then he had to withdraw, a second amendment to this bill, which would have authorized \$198 million to fund the VA veterans small business loan program that was terminated in 1986. Think of that, we could have, instead of this bill, we could have had the VA veterans small business loan program reenacted for all these veterans coming back from Afghanistan and from Iraq. Surely they could use this to help create jobs and start their own companies and provide for jobs for more Americans.

The program authorized VA to either guarantee a loan made by a vendor or make a loan up to \$200,000 for a veteran-owned small business. Sounds like a good idea to me. The original program gave preference to disabled veterans, and Mr. BUYER added a preference for members of the National Guard and Reserves, who have been ordered to active duty in support of the global war on terror.

Each of us on this committee has veteran constituents who are also

small business owners, and many of these veterans are members of the Guard or Reserves. Unfortunately, one of the prices many of these dedicated citizen soldiers have paid is being forced to close their small businesses, or at least seeing their small businesses decline significantly while they are serving on active duty.

Obviously this program for small business loans that was terminated in 1986 was good and could have been done at a higher priority than the bill we have this afternoon. So, simply said, by authorizing a loan program for veteran-owned small businesses, we would have been responding to that unintended consequence of their willingness to serve their Nation.

While the amendment was withdrawn due to procedural issues, it received such strong interest among the committee members that Mr. BUYER plans to introduce the amendment as a bill, just simply, later this week. We will all have a chance to vote on it, and I encourage any interested Member to contact either the VA Committee, Republican staff, or to cosponsor Mr. BUYER's bill. We should be looking for ways to better assist our Nation's veterans, obviously, and I know you and everybody in this chamber agrees with that, to help returning warriors, instead of settling these questionable claims.

I urge my colleagues, when they consider to vote for this bill, to consider the priorities of all the veterans. I, for one, in good conscience, have trouble supporting the passage of this bill, particularly in light of what we are seeing here this week, with the Treasury asking to raise the debt ceiling, asking for \$700 billion for Wall Street.

There are so many higher priorities for our Nation's veterans and for this bill. As I pointed out, we don't know where the funding for this bill is going to come from. With a price tag of almost 200 million, it's all subject to appropriations.

I conclude by saying while Filipinos of U.S. citizenship living in the United States will receive \$15,000, we are giving \$9,000 to Filipino veterans who are not citizens of the United States. If you take \$9,000 based upon the cost of living in the Philippines versus what it is here in the United States, the Filipino veterans at \$9,000 are getting a huge sum of money.

I can't, in good conscience say that this bill has a high priority than the ones we are talking about, and so I urge my colleague carefully look at this and to take into account the Overview of the Filipino Veterans Benefits report that shows they were authorized money of \$200 million in 1946. Indeed, I think if you look at the priorities, you will see there are other priorities we should consider first.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I would yield as much time as she may consume to the gentlelady from Guam (Ms. BORDALLO), who has been a strong

fighter on behalf of these Filipino veterans in her career in Congress.

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the time.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6897, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act. H.R. 6897 would recognize the valor of the Filipino veterans of the Second World War by providing a one-time payment to the surviving 18,000 Filipino soldiers who are scattered today and living throughout the United States and also in my own district in the Territory of Guam.

□ 1230

Madam Speaker, as a member of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus and the United States-Philippines Friendship Caucus, I strongly urge this House to pass H.R. 6897 and help restore due justice which is long overdue, over 60 years. Many attempts have been made by this Congress to correct this injustice, so it is time to close this chapter.

These are heroes who served shoulder to shoulder with our Nation's Armed Forces. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt drafted these brave Filipino soldiers during the height of the conflict between the Allies and the Imperial Japanese forces; and their presence turned the tide in battles such as Bataan and Corregidor.

Their bravery and loyalty to America was questioned by none. However, the Rescission Act of 1946 stripped these veterans of their veteran status.

As a Congress, Madam Speaker, we must recognize the service of these brave Filipino soldiers and correct this injustice once and for all. While I hope this Congress will restore full equity to our Filipino veterans, the lump sum payment proposed by this bill to the remaining 18,000 Filipino veterans is a step forward. I recognize the legislative constraints surrounding the passage of H.R. 6897, and I support its advancement in the legislative process.

I want to go on record this afternoon to commend Chairman FILNER of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee for his leadership on this issue, and I also commend Congressman MIKE HONDA and our Speaker, NANCY PELOSI, for their dedicated work on this bill.

It is the duty of this Congress to recognize the service of these Filipino veterans during World War II and to correct the injustice placed upon them so I urge us to vote "yes" on H.R. 6897 and to continue to work for full justice and equity for our Filipino veterans.

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers, so I yield back the balance of my time.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 6897, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, let me say this is an important bill for our Nation, for our moral standing, and for our historical standing. There has been a blot on our record for the last 62 years. We now have a chance to remove it.

I am surprised to hear from my friend, Mr. STEARNS, that he wants to play off one veteran against another and say there are higher priorities. That is what he and his ranking member objected to in our pay-for in S. 1315.

As we deal with the very real problems of our veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, we have 24 million other veterans to care for, whether they be from the Persian Gulf War I, Korea, Vietnam or World War II. We have injustices. I don't think the gentleman from Florida would have any problem dealing with the injustices from Vietnam where we have not honored our Agent Orange claims, and we will try to take care of that. I don't think he would have any problem honoring the atomic veterans of World War II who, involved in the testing of atomic weapons, were not told of the dangers and risks, and they have cancers today that they cannot get compensation for. We have to correct that.

So, yes, we are involved with the current veterans, but we also have to correct injustices of the past as we are trying to do here in this bill on Filipino veterans.

Madam Speaker, I misspoke when I said I didn't have any further speakers, and if Mr. STEARNS wants more time, he can take from us before Ms. RICHARDSON takes the floor.

Mr. STEARNS. That is very kind, and Dr. FILNER knows how much I respect him and have enjoyed working with him on the Veterans' Committee. We have been on trips together, and both our wives appreciate each other and understand our friendship.

I think I made my points. The only thing I would say to him, is he advocating that we give veterans benefits to soldiers in Vietnam who are not U.S. citizens? Is he suggesting that new program this afternoon, that we go back and identify all those veterans in Vietnam who are now Vietnam citizens, not U.S. citizens, that may have been pro-America back then?

Mr. FILNER. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. STEARNS. The time is yours. So I appreciate your consideration here. Actually, you might answer that question.

Mr. FILNER. What you ask, I think, has already taken place. We do, in fact, compensate those who were our allies, whether from Laos or Cambodia or Thailand.

But more importantly, in World War II, Mr. STEARNS, there were nationalities of 67 countries who fought in the war to help us. We have compensated the nationals who were not our citizens of 66 of those countries. Only one has not been, and that is the Philippines. It

is true that they got their independence after the war in 1946, and the \$200 million that you referred to was given to that new government. But they simply have not received the compensation and benefits that we granted to other nationals of World War II, to other nationals in Korea and Vietnam. There is a real historical precedent for all of that.

Mr. STEARNS. If the gentleman would yield, I would just add to that, it is 66 out of 66 because the overview of the Filipino Veterans Benefit Study showed that we authorized \$200 million in 1946 for the Filipinos. So actually you are correct, but the United States Government has already done this so this bill here is seeking to do something which has already been done.

Mr. FILNER. Reclaiming my time, Mr. STEARNS, if you were a Filipino veteran at the time, that money was awarded to the Government of the Philippines. I am not sure what they ended up giving back. But we are 62 years later. That would never have accomplished the analogous benefits that our brave veterans of World War II have received.

I would yield such time as she may consume to Ms. RICHARDSON from California, and thank her for being here.

Ms. RICHARDSON. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 6897, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act, and urge my colleagues to join last year's 116 cosponsors who felt strongly about the need for us to finally move forward and to act in a moral way.

I want to acknowledge Chairman FILNER for his leadership on bringing this legislation before us today. He has pleaded with all of us, Members of Congress, to do the right thing.

Being an American is more than standing up on Memorial Day and saluting the flag. Being American is also one who is willing to take the responsibility for those who have enabled us to have that freedom, and Mr. FILNER has never hesitated in my short 1 year of being here. He has constantly pleaded for us to finally make this right.

At the end of World War II, President Harry Truman stated it was a moral obligation of our Nation to look at the welfare of Filipino veterans. Well, here we are today in this great, incredible building, the House of Representatives, where our Nation has an opportunity, finally, a long overdue process, to fulfill our moral obligation.

Indeed, many would not be enjoying the freedoms that we have today if it were not for the courageous efforts of those 470,000 Filipino veterans that answered the call during World War II.

As a Nation, some tend to measure our war heroes based on the suffering. They suffered as well. I am not just giving a speech and reciting history. I have a large Filipino population in my district and it is without hesitation that they stand side by side on Memorial Day, Armed Services Day, and really have a desire for us to recognize the incredible commitment that they

did. In fact, 60,000 Filipino soldiers were forced to march 65 miles without food, water and medicine while they were being bayoneted and killed. They are our first class heroes, those who provided a service and didn't hesitate to do so.

Back in 1946, General Omar Bradley, the U.S. Administrator of Veterans' Affairs, put it best when he said "the service of the Filipino Commonwealth Army in the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II has met the definition of a U.S. veteran." Has met the definition of a U.S. veteran.

In my district, as I said, I have numerous Filipino veterans who in their golden years, we are not talking about, as our chairman said, 62 years ago. These are people who, men, women, children, have failed to have adequate benefits for a work that they did. Isn't that what this Congress is all about? That's what I believe it is about.

So, Madam Speaker, I join Chairman FILNER and all of us who look forward to passing finally this resolution, this resolution which will bring back not a stain in America but one we can look back and say yes, for those who helped us to have freedom, we recognize that and we are willing to do the right thing.

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I see my friend would like some additional time, and so I yield to Mr. STEARNS.

Mr. STEARNS. This is sort of a compliment in a way. H.R. 760, which you offered, was for roughly \$1.4 billion, as I recollect, give or take. This bill is for \$198 million. So you are to be commended in your perseverance for trying to pass the bill, you have reduced the amount from \$1.4 billion to \$198 million. But I would say to you in all respect, is this the timing that you want in the middle of a possible financial meltdown in America? That you want to give funds, taxpayer funds, to people in the Philippines who are not U.S. citizens? I just wonder whether the timing is appropriate here in Congress.

Mr. FILNER. I yield to Ms. RICHARDSON.

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. STEARNS, we are not just talking about people in the Philippines. We are talking about people who live in Carson, California, residents of mine, people who do not have health care benefits, people who do not have adequate pay for the work that they do. If we can spend billions of dollars, as will be coming before this House, \$700 billion to assist corporations of people who made millions of dollars, surely we can issue a check for work that has been done. All the more reason why they need the money today, because these are real people. These are not corporations. These are not presidents. These are people who are surviving on paychecks of \$500 and \$600 a month.

Mr. FILNER. I want to end the debate now. Mr. STEARNS, I appreciate it. You pointed out, by the way, the discrepancy in the funds between this one and my H.R. 760, which I think was

about \$900 million. You are right, this is not my first choice. This is a second choice brought about by the actions of those who opposed it and would not allow it to pass.

Mr. STEARNS. You spent a lot of time on the \$200 million from 1946. By my quick calculations, each of the quarter million veterans at the time would have received less than \$1,000 at that moment.

Madam Speaker, I think we have a historical record to correct. I strongly urge my colleagues to correct it.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 6897, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2008. I am very pleased to see so much enthusiasm in recognizing World War II Filipino veterans who have so long deserved our gratitude for their service to this nation. As Americans, we have a moral obligation to care for the veterans who have sacrificed so much to ensure that we here at home can continue to pursue the ideals that have been the foundation of our country for over two centuries.

For many years I have met with individuals of the Filipino community who have longed for acknowledgement of the sacrifices they made not only for their own land, but also ours. While these veterans were once eligible for benefits under programs administered by the Veterans' Administration, these benefits were stripped by the passage of the Rescission Acts of 1946. Since then, some of these benefits have been reinstituted, but not to the extent deserved.

The Philippine Islands were possessions of the United States through 1946 and the military forces of the Commonwealth of the Philippines were inducted by President Roosevelt under the command of the United States Armed Forces of the Far East. They were not just allies during the war who fought alongside our soldiers; they were our soldiers. My father, a late World War II Veteran, encountered combat in the Philippines and served with the Filipino veterans, whom he considered comrades in every sense of the word.

The passage of Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2008 is imperative to help close this chapter of our past. Most of the Filipino Veterans have already passed away with no adequate compensation or recognition for their service to this country, yet that should not keep us from acting today to ensure that those still left are acknowledged. I am pleased to see that H.R. 6897 is on suspension today and ask my colleagues to give it their support.

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, today I rise to speak in support of H.R. 6897, the "Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2008."

Recently Congress honored the 67th anniversary of President Franklin Roosevelt's military order conscripting the Philippine military forces into the service of the United States Armed Forces. On July 26, 1941, President Roosevelt said, "In this great struggle of the Pacific the loyal Americans of the Philippine Island are called upon to play a crucial role . . . I count on every Philippine man, woman, and child to do his duty. We will do ours."

H.R. 6897 recognizes the service of these veterans to our Nation and commitment of President Roosevelt.

In World War II, approximately 200,000 Filipinos served under the command of General MacArthur in the Far East, in guerrilla units,

and the Philippine Scouts. Their service to our country was a critical component to the allied success in the Pacific.

Approximately 13,000 survivors of the total estimated 200,000 Filipino World War II veterans now reside in the United States and in the Philippines, many of which are not receiving benefits they earned as servicemen for the U.S. military.

Since coming to Congress and as co-chairman of the U.S.-Philippines Friendship Caucus I have urged my House colleagues to support legislation providing equity to World War II Filipino veterans.

While not perfect, H.R. 6897 would make payments to those that have yet to receive recognition for their service to the United States.

With each passing year, there are fewer surviving Filipino veterans. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 6897 to give these veterans their long overdue recognition.

Mr. FILNER. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6897, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

VETERANS' BENEFITS ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2008

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 1315) to amend title 38, United States Code, to enhance life insurance benefits for disabled veterans, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The text of the Senate bill is as follows:

S. 1315

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Veterans' Benefits Enhancement Act of 2008".

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
Sec. 2. Reference to title 38, United States Code.

TITLE I—INSURANCE MATTERS

Sec. 101. Administrative costs of service disabled veterans' insurance.
Sec. 102. Modification of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance coverage.
Sec. 103. Designation of fiduciary for traumatic injury protection coverage under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance in case of lost mental capacity or extended loss of consciousness.

TITLE II—HOUSING MATTERS

Sec. 201. Home improvements and structural alterations for totally disabled members of the Armed Forces before discharge or release from the Armed Forces.

TITLE III—LABOR AND EDUCATION MATTERS

Sec. 301. Coordination of approval activities in the administration of education benefits.
Sec. 302. Waiver of residency requirement for Directors for Veterans' Employment and Training.
Sec. 303. Modification of special unemployment study to cover veterans of Post 9/11 Global Operations.

TITLE IV—COURT MATTERS

Sec. 401. Recall of retired judges of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.
Sec. 402. Additional discretion in imposition of practice and registration fees.
Sec. 403. Annual reports on workload of United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.
Sec. 404. Report on expansion of facilities for United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

TITLE V—OTHER MATTERS

Sec. 501. Clarification of purpose of the outreach services program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 502. Termination or suspension of contracts for cellular telephone service for servicemembers undergoing deployment outside the United States.
Sec. 503. Maintenance, management, and availability for research of assets of Air Force Health Study.
Sec. 504. National Academies study on risk of developing multiple sclerosis as a result of certain service in the Persian Gulf War and Post 9/11 Global Operations theaters.
Sec. 505. Comptroller General report on adequacy of dependency and indemnity compensation to maintain survivors of veterans who die from service-connected disabilities.

SEC. 2. REFERENCE TO TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE.

Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of title 38, United States Code.

TITLE I—INSURANCE MATTERS

SEC. 101. ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS OF SERVICE DISABLED VETERANS' INSURANCE.

Section 1922(a) is amended by striking "directly from such fund" and inserting "directly from such fund; and (5) administrative costs to the Government for the costs of the program of insurance under this section shall be paid from premiums credited to the fund under paragraph (4), and payments for claims against the fund under paragraph (4) for amounts in excess of amounts credited to such fund under that paragraph (after such administrative costs have been paid) shall be paid from appropriations to the fund".

SEC. 102. MODIFICATION OF SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE COVERAGE.

(a) EXPANSION OF SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE TO INCLUDE CERTAIN MEMBERS OF INDIVIDUAL READY RESERVE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (1)(C) of section 1967(a) is amended by striking "section

1965(5)(B) of this title" and inserting "subparagraph (B) or (C) of section 1965(5) of this title".

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Paragraph (5)(C) of such section 1967(a) is amended by striking "section 1965(5)(B) of this title" and inserting "subparagraph (B) or (C) of section 1965(5) of this title".

(b) REDUCTION IN PERIOD OF COVERAGE FOR DEPENDENTS AFTER MEMBER SEPARATES.—Section 1968(a)(5)(B)(ii) is amended by striking "120 days after".

SEC. 103. DESIGNATION OF FIDUCIARY FOR TRAUMATIC INJURY PROTECTION COVERAGE UNDER SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE IN CASE OF LOST MENTAL CAPACITY OR EXTENDED LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, develop a form for the designation of a recipient for the funds distributed under section 1980A of title 38, United States Code, as the fiduciary of a member of the Armed Forces in cases where the member is mentally incapacitated (as determined by the Secretary of Defense in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs) or experiencing an extended loss of consciousness.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The form under subsection (a) shall require that a member may elect that—

(1) an individual designated by the member be the recipient as the fiduciary of the member; or

(2) a court of proper jurisdiction determine the recipient as the fiduciary of the member for purposes of this subsection.

(c) COMPLETION AND UPDATE.—The form under subsection (a) shall be completed by an individual at the time of entry into the Armed Forces and updated periodically thereafter.

TITLE II—HOUSING MATTERS

SEC. 201. HOME IMPROVEMENTS AND STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS FOR TOTALLY DISABLED MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES BEFORE DISCHARGE OR RELEASE FROM THE ARMED FORCES.

Section 1717 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(d)(1) In the case of a member of the Armed Forces who, as determined by the Secretary, has a disability permanent in nature incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service, the Secretary may furnish improvements and structural alterations for such member for such disability or as otherwise described in subsection (a)(2) while such member is hospitalized or receiving outpatient medical care, services, or treatment for such disability if the Secretary determines that such member is likely to be discharged or released from the Armed Forces for such disability.

"(2) The furnishing of improvements and alterations under paragraph (1) in connection with the furnishing of medical services described in subparagraph (A) or (B) of subsection (a)(2) shall be subject to the limitation specified in the applicable subparagraph."

TITLE III—LABOR AND EDUCATION MATTERS

SEC. 301. COORDINATION OF APPROVAL ACTIVITIES IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF EDUCATION BENEFITS.

(a) COORDINATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 3673 is amended—
(A) by redesignating subsection (b) as subsection (c); and

(B) by inserting after subsection (a) the following new subsection (b):

"(b) COORDINATION OF ACTIVITIES.—The Secretary shall take appropriate actions to