



H.R. 6897 – Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2008

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 6897 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Bob Filner (D-CA) on September 15, 2008. The Committee on Veterans Affairs ordered the bill to be reported, as amended, on September 17, 2008.

H.R. 6897 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 22, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 6897 establishes within the U.S. Treasury a Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund, the funds of which will be available to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Within one year of enactment, the Secretary must make a payment to any person who served in the Filipino armed forces under American control before July 1, 1946, or in the Philippine Scouts pursuant to the Armed Forces Voluntary Recruitment Act of 1945. Payments will be in the amount of \$15,000 for U.S. citizens and \$9,000 for eligible non-citizens.

H.R. 6897 provides that if an individual receives payment under this Act, it constitutes a release of any claims against the United States regarding related benefit services. Nothing in the bill prohibits a person from receiving benefits to which they are entitled based on a claim awarded before enactment of this Act.

This bill requires the Secretary to report to Congress annually on the compensation fund. H.R. 6897 also authorizes the appropriation of \$198 million for the purposes of the Act.

BACKGROUND

During World War II, Filipinos served in diverse military units, some of which were under the direct control of the U.S. Armed Forces. On July 26, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an Executive Order which called over 100,000 members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army under direct U.S. military control. The Philippines became a possession of the United States in 1898 as a result of the Spanish-American War.

Under current law, certain Filipino veterans receive reduced benefits and depending on where they reside often are paid benefits at reduced rates. These benefits include service-connected compensation benefits, survivor benefits, and burial benefits. Additionally, dependents' educational assistance is paid at \$.50 per dollar authorized, regardless of the veterans' residency. Since 1993, several bills have been introduced in Congress to restore full benefits for Filipino veterans.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has not produced a cost estimate for this legislation as of September 19, 2008.

STAFF CONTACT

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