13TH CONGRESS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
*First Regular Session*




**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**House Bill No.** 1120

INTRODUCED BY HON. CYNTHIA A. VILLAR

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Our veterans who fought valiantly and with honor alongside the American Forces during the World War II should be given adequate support in their struggle for their legitimate claims against the United States Government.

Filipino veterans of the World War II have outstanding claims against the United States Government for the restoration of their honor, dignity, rights, benefits and privileges as members of the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE). They felt they were deprived of these benefits by the enactment of the United States Rescission Act of 1946. These claims remain unsettled even after the American panel of the 1966 Joint RP-US Commission for the Study of the Philippine Veterans Problems referred them to the appropriate United States government agencies concerned more than twenty-five years ago.

On June 21, 1990, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs established an *ad hoc* Office of Veterans Affairs at the Philippine Embassy in Washington D. C. to address the settlement of these claims. This office was funded through the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office of the Department of National Defense. During the past years, the Office of Veterans Affairs in Washington D. C. marshaled and coordinated all efforts by the Philippine Government and the veterans' organizations in the Philippines and in the United States to pursue these claims. Several items of proposed legislation favorable to Filipino veterans of World War II have been introduced in the United States Congress but these have to be monitored and guided to successful completion.

This Bill seeks to formally institutionalize the Office of Veterans Affairs in the Philippine Embassy in the United States, to fix its term of existence and appropriate funds for its administration and operation. With the establishment of this Office, our veterans will be given the vehicle to pursue their claims more vigorously and finally convince the United States Government to address their unresolved claims conclusively.

For these reasons, I earnestly request for the approval of this Bill.

**CYNTHIA A. VILLAR**

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## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**House Bill No.** 1120

INTRODUCED BY HON. CYNTHIA A. VILLAR

**AN ACT TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN AN OFFICE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS IN THE PHILIPPINE EMBASSY IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, PRESCRIBING ITS FUNCTIONS, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:*

SECTION 1. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to pursue the claims of Filipino veterans of World War II and work for the full restoration of their rights, privileges and benefits from the United States Government.

SEC. 2. *Establishment of an Office of Veterans Affairs.* - For the attainment of this goal, there is hereby created an Office of Veterans Affairs in the Philippine Embassy in the United States of America mandated with the task of making formal representations, consultations and negotiations or otherwise cause the conduct of sustained and effective lobbying with appropriate offices of the legislative and executive branches of the United States Government and other agencies and entities which can enhance the favorable consideration of the claims of Filipino veterans. The Office of Veterans Affairs in the Philippine Embassy in the United States of America shall be in existence for five (5) years from the date of approval of this Act or until the Filipino veterans shall have availed of their legitimate claims.

SEC. 3. *Staffing.* - The Office of Veterans Affairs shall have a staff consisting of a head of office appointed by the President of the Philippines, two (2) administrative assistants assigned by the Secretary of the Department of National Defense (DND), and such other locally hired personnel as the head of office may find necessary. The Secretary of DND in consultation with the respective Committees on Veterans Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate shall submit a list of five (5) nominees from which the President of the Philippines shall choose the head of office to be appointed as a special representative with comparable diplomatic rank

SEC. 4. *Appropriations.* - The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations for the operational requirements of the *Ad Hoc* Veterans Affairs Office in Washington D.C. authorized under the budget of the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 5. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days from its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,