

TWENTIETH CONGRESS)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Introduced by Representative Rufus B. Rodriguez and
Representative Maximo B. Rodriguez, Jr.

House Bill No. 4729

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill mandates the establishment and maintenance of an Office of Veterans Affairs in the Philippine Embassy in the United States of America (USA) to ensure that the Filipino veterans shall receive the benefits and privileges due them.

As of June 2007, the Philippine Veterans Affairs logged 249,987 pensioners. 183,274 are receiving their old age pension; 16,995 their disability pensions; and 39,718 pensions were released. Of the ones receiving their old-age pension, 158,022 receive their benefits through the bank while the remaining number receives theirs through snail mail. Despite the veterans receiving compensation for their service to the country, they have yet to collect their full benefits and privileges from the American government with whom they fought and served to obtain independence and peace.

This bill seeks to establish and maintain an Office of Veterans Affairs in the Philippine Embassy in the United States of America to represent, negotiate and lobby for the rights of the Filipino veterans with the appropriate US offices. The office shall be maintained for five years after its date of establishment or until the Filipino veterans shall receive their benefits and privileges, the time of which shall exceed another five years.

The office shall be headed by an appointee of the President of the Philippines. Other staff members include two administrative assistants assigned by the Secretary of the Department of National Defense and other locally hired staff members. For its first year, the necessary funds shall be provided through the budget of the Department of Foreign Affairs. The amount necessary to continue the implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

To ensure that the Filipino veterans enjoy their twilight years with the aid of their benefits and privileges, the urgent approval of this measure is earnestly sought.


RUFUS B. RODRIGUEZ


MAXIMO B. RODRIGUEZ, JR.

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING THE OFFICE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS IN THE
PHILIPPINE EMBASSY IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, PRESCRIBING ITS
FUNCTIONS AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared the policy of the government 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 policy, 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 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, the time of which shall not exceed another five (5) years.

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 and such other locally hired personnel as the head of office may find necessary. The Veterans Federation of the Philippines shall submit a list of five (5) persons who could head the Office of Veterans Affairs and one of whom shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines as a special presidential representative who shall have a 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 upon its approval.

Approved,