PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BEN CHANDLER

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 24, 2004

Mr. CHANDLER. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall Vote No. 75, on the motion to suspend the rules and pass, as amended, the Cowlitz Indian Tribe Distribution of Judgment Funds Act, I placed my card in the machine and for some reason my vote was not registered. Had my vote been recorded, I would have voted ''yes.''

ORGAN DONATION AND RECOVERY IMPROVEMENT ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. ERIC CANTOR

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Organ Donation and Recovery Improvement Act (H.R. 3926).

With the number of individuals who need organ donations far exceeding the number of available donors, it is imperative that we address this situation. This bill will help increase organ donations and recovery rates by providing grants for organ donation projects. This bill also improves and strengthens the organ procurement process. In addition, it supports individuals who make living donations by reimbursing expenses incurred when making their donation.

The United Network of Organ Sharing (UNOS) is based in Richmond, Virginia and serves as the clearinghouse for organ donations. On a daily basis, those who work at UNOS perform crucial work that helps save lives. They help give the gift of life. I am grateful to them and all they do.

This bill gives hope to those who desperately need new organs. I believe that hope goes a long way when you are facing tough situations. I admire the courage of those patiently waiting for organ donations. They are an inspiration to us all.

I thank my friend MICHAEL BILIRAKIS for his leadership on this important legislation, and I urge its passage.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR OUR FILIPINO-AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND FOR FILIPINO VETERANS ON FILIPINO VETERANS ACTION DAY

HON. ED CASE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 24, 2004

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker, and colleagues, good evening, aloha and mabuhay! I rise tonight, on this occasion of national Filipino Veterans Action Day, to express my strong and affectionate support for our great Filipino-American community, as well as for our honored Filipino veterans, both here and in the Philippines, who are so well represented by the American Council on Filipino Veterans, and to highlight just some of the challenges these communities still face and the opportunities we have to address them.

First let us remember that the relationship between the Philippines and our United States has never been stronger. Our modern-day bond began after the 1898 Spanish American War, continued through the commonwealth period into 1946, and strengthened when the independent Republic of the Philippines came into existence on July 4th of that year. For nearly 40 years, from 1907 to 1946, the Philippines in fact was represented in the U.S. Congress through nearly 15 different resident commissioners. Currently, we have a Filipino-American, Congressman BOBBY SCOTT, representing the 3rd District of Virginia. And one year ago, I was proud to be a charter member of the Congressional Philippines Caucus, which today boasts over seventy members.

Apart from the Philippines' continuing vital role in U.S. national security and economic interests in the Asia-Pacific region, our country also has a special relationship with the people of the Philippines. Many have migrated to the United States, in particular my home state of Hawaii, which commemorates the 100th anniversary of our first Filipino immigrants in 2006.

In fact, there are now nearly 2.5 million Filipino-Americans, with significant populations in California, Hawaii, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Washington, Texas, and Florida. In Hawaii alone there are nearly 300,000 Filipino-Americans, including roughly 140,000 in my Second Congressional District, the largest number of any congressional district in our country.

This community's contributions just in Hawaii are notable, in all facets of our society, from politics to business, from teaching to sports and movie stars, you name it. Former Hawaii Governor Ben Cayetano was the first Filipino-American governor ever elected in the United States; our state legislature today has 12 members: 6 senators and 6 representatives. Angela Baraquio became Miss America in 2001. We had Ben Agbayani in professional baseball and Tia Carrera in Hollywood. And let us not forget native daughters Jasmine Trias and Camile Velasco, two of just twelve of 2004's American Idol final contestants.

But perhaps the most vital and painful contribution of Filipinos to our country was the service, and sacrifice, of our Filipino veterans, who fought alongside our troops in World War II. Their heroic efforts were indispensable to the liberation of the Philippines led by General MacArthur and thus to Allied success in that great conflagration, and earned them a place in legend at the same table as, for example, our Japanese-Americans' 100th Infantry Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team.

Therefore, the contribution of the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans to designate today as Filipino Veterans Action Day is invaluable to assuring that we never forget. There have been similar efforts in Hawaii from community leaders like Hawaii State Representative Jun Abinsay, Joe Gonzales and Artemio Caleda, former and new presidents, respectively, of the World War II Fil-Am Vets and Ladies Auxilliary Hawaii Chapter, and Domingo Los Banos, a Sergeant with the 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment, U.S. Army, who later worked collaboratively with many others in Hawaii and the mainland in molding that great documentary on the Filipino veterans: ''An Untold Triumph.''

Let me turn now from what has been to what needs to be. Specifically, there are two issues which I believe Congress must address for both Filipino veterans and our Filipino-American community at large. One is veterans' benefits and the other is immigration.

VETERANS BENEFITS

We know that in 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt made a promise to the members of the Philippine Army and the Philippine Scouts who had fought and would fight for the Allies in World War II. Because they had made and would make the same sacrifices as U.S. servicemembers, President Roosevelt promised that they would receive the same veteran's benefits as those received by American veterans.

However, in the spring of 1946, just one year after the death of our 32nd President, the United States Congress went back on its promise. And that injustice stands uncorrected from that day to this, as these veterans pass increasingly from this earth along with their comrades-in-arms.

Last year, we did make some measure of progress by enacting into law H.R. 2297, legislation increasing VA benefits for U.S. resident Filipino veterans and making New Philippine Scouts living in the U.S. eligible for burial in VA national cemeteries. The House also passed H.R. 2357, which would provide VA nursing home and medical services to Commonwealth Army veterans and New Philippine Scouts residing in the U.S., assuming they-meet the same eligibility requirements as U.S. veterans.

But this is clearly not enough. That is why I am a cosponsor of H.R. 677, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act, which will deem all members of the Philippine Scouts and Philippine Army as qualified to receive the full benefits denied them nearly six decades ago.

As Secretary of Veterans' Affairs Anthony J. Principi wrote: ''The United States is indebted to Filipino veterans, whose heroism and self-sacrifice helped allies emerge victorious from World War II.'' As we all know, our Filipino World War II veterans are entering the sunset years of their lives. I implore my colleagues to get this bill out of committee and bring it to the floor for a vote this year.

IMMIGRATION

Our country has benefited from the fruits of a century-plus influx of Filipinos as new and productive citizens, and we can and should continue this rich heritage. However, our overall immigration policy has fallen particularly harshly and unfairly on legitimate Filipino immigration of late.

For example, in 1990, we provided a waiver from certain naturalization requirements for Filipino veterans, and many thereafter became proud citizens our country. But a huge gap was created when we did not also permit naturalization of the sons and daughters of these same veterans.

These are real-life issues, for the stories of families who have waited years to be reunited are heartbreaking. For example, a veteran and his wife living in Hawaii filed immigration petitions for two of their six adult children; they have waited over ten years for a visa to be issued to either. Another veteran petitioned successfully for his wife's immigration visa, but has not been as successful with the applications for their five adult children. Again, this family has been holding on for ten years with the hope that they will one day live in the U.S. as a complete family.

H.R. 3587, a bill I introduced in November of last year, would provide these sons and