

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

February 16, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to request your immediate action to rescind efforts by the Trump administration to terminate the Filipino World War II Veterans Parole (FWVP) Program. In addition to rescinding this executive action, we seek your continued support for passage and enactment of the Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act. We understand that provisions addressing the plight of Filipino veterans are included in the United States Citizenship Act you sent to Congress. We welcome this recognition of their unique situation and would like to work with you to fully address this issue.

More than 250,000 Filipino soldiers responded to President Roosevelt's call-to-arms in the Philippines and elsewhere and fought for the U.S. during the Second World War. Many of these brave individuals returned from the War only to be denied many of the benefits promised for their service. It was not until President George H.W. Bush signed the Immigration Act of 1990 that these proud and brave Filipino veterans were awarded U.S. citizenship. Today, there are only a few thousand Filipino veterans still alive and residing in the United States. In October 2017, Congress finally awarded them the Congressional Gold Medal to honor their service on behalf of our country in World War II.

However, Filipino veterans who received and accepted U.S. citizenship were separated from their children and family members who were caught in the decades-long backlog of immigration visas. Today, many of these Filipino veterans are still waiting to reunite with their family members as they grow older and require additional care and support.

The Obama Administration created the FWVP Program in 2016 to allow Filipino veterans to petition for humanitarian parole for their children and siblings who have been approved for immigration visas but remain stuck in the backlog. Family members who meet the conditions of the program were issued parole to reside in the U.S. until their immigration visas are available for an adjustment of status. USCIS set the FWVP Program for an initial period of five years, subject to renewal.

In August 2019, the Trump Administration announced its intention to terminate the FWVP program amidst an ongoing review into categorical parole programs administered by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Shortly after, Members from both the House and Senate

wrote letters to then-Acting Director Cuccinelli urging him to rescind that decision due to its negative impacts on Filipino World War II veterans and their families. These letters also highlighted that FWVP is not a categorical parole program. Rather, determinations are discretionary and made on a case-by-case basis, as evidenced by the 32 percent denial rate. Unfortunately, the Trump Administration declined to reverse its decision, and on December 28, 2020, USCIS published a notice in the *Federal Register* announcing the final steps to fully terminate the FWVP Program.

To prevent the continued painful separation of our Filipino veterans from their family members, we request that your administration move swiftly to rescind the December 28, 2020 notice and restore the FWVP Program. We also urge your administration to consider renewing the FWVP Program following a review and evaluation of its impacts and success over the past five years. There is urgency in taking action on this matter as the Department of Homeland Security has estimated that there are fewer than 6,000 surviving Filipino veterans who are now in their 90s. At a time when many families are apart and the elderly are especially vulnerable to this pandemic, restoring and extending the FWVP Program is a fitting way to honor and care for our veterans who have given so much in service to our country.

Removing the threat to terminate the FWVP is an important action and sends the message to this community that we thank them for their service and commitment to our country. In addition, as previously stated, we hope to work with your administration in passing and enacting the Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act, a bill that has been continually introduced in Congress since 2003. Similar to what we understand is included in your United States Citizenship Act, this bill would exempt children of Filipino World War II veterans from numerical limitations on immigrant visas, providing a sure and swift pathway for those individuals to reunite with their veterans here in the United States. We would like to work together to ensure the enactment of this bill either as an included provision of your proposed immigration reform package or as a stand-alone piece of legislation.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Ed Case
Member of Congress



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

/s/

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Al Green
Member of Congress

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Kaiali'i Kahele
Member of Congress

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

Michael F.Q. San Nicolas
Member of Congress

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Raul Grijalva
Member of Congress

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Dina Titus
Member of Congress

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

Elaine G. Luria
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

Steven Horsford
Member of Congress

Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

/s/

André Carson
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress