

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1104

December 4, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write today to discuss your July 15, 2015, Presidential Memorandum that included recommendations to modernize and streamline our broken immigration system for individuals and families in the United States. We applaud your Administration's continued work to improve this system, and respectfully request that you take into consideration the following recommendations related to the implementation of the program of parole for certain family members of Filipino World War II veterans, which was included in the Memorandum.

Like others, we were encouraged by the Administration's decision to implement a program of parole for family members of Filipino World War II veterans. These veterans responded to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's call to arms in 1941, and, by the time the war ended in 1945, an estimated 260,000 Filipino soldiers had participated in the American war effort. However, despite the promise of naturalization for their service, many Filipino veterans did not receive citizenship until after 1990, the year President George H.W. Bush signed the Immigration Act of 1990, which included a provision that offered naturalized citizenship for Filipino World War II veterans.

Today, there are likely less than 5,000 surviving Filipino World War II veterans. Like most elderly Americans, these veterans are likely to become more reliant on family members for care as they grow older. Because the current family-based visa backlog extends back more than 27 years, it is imperative now to implement the program of parole for family members of Filipino veterans as soon as possible. For this reason, we respectfully request that you consider the following recommendations for the program:

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330 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-6361



HAWAII OFFICE:
PRINCE JONAH KUHIO KALANIANA'OLE FEDERAL BUILDING
300 ALA MOANA BOULEVARD, RM 3-106
HONOLULU, HI 96850
(808) 522-8970



Implementation Timeline:

First, related to the implementation timeline for the program, we request that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) develop and implement this program as quickly as possible. As stated above, there are likely less than 5,000 surviving Filipino World War II veterans, and that number will only decline. Ideally, the program would be formally launched, with applications accepted, by the end of 2015.

Program Eligibility:

Second, related to program eligibility, we request that the Administration, at a minimum, allow the spouses, widows, and children of Filipino veterans with approved I-130 petitions to apply for parole regardless of expected priority dates. Children of these veterans may now be adults or minors, married or single. Regardless of these factors, children should be allowed to apply for parole under the program.

Further, the children of deceased veterans should be allowed to apply for parole to care for the widows of Filipino veterans. This recommendation will allow the children of deceased veterans to take care of parents who are the surviving spouses of these veterans at a time when they need care the most.

Last, the children of veterans should be allowed to apply for parole and employment authorization so that those without legal status can care for their parents. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) should implement its policy of "parole in place" for Filipino veterans and their family members to this end.

Application Process:

Third, related to the application process, we request that the Administration, and USCIS specifically, permit all family members that are determined eligible to apply for the parole program under an expedited process. Because of time constraints and humanitarian factors facing Filipino veterans, family members should not have to first be invited by USCIS to apply for the program. Instead, they should be allowed to apply affirmatively under an expedited process that does not require case by case invitations.

Additionally, as the Administration, and DHS specifically, work to verify the veterans statuses of Filipino veterans, we request that you accept a broad array of

documents, including affidavits and military discharge papers issued by the Philippines government, so that the greatest number of Filipino veterans can benefit from the program. We urge DHS to work closely with the Department of Defense (DOD), the Veterans Administration (VA), veterans advocates, and community leaders to ensure that all available records are used to determine eligibility.

In conclusion, we look forward to the Administration's implementation of the family parole program, and encourage you to work closely with community leaders and other stakeholders to develop a strong outreach plan that will allow these stakeholders to disseminate information to veterans and their family members both here in the United States and abroad—specifically in the Philippines. This outreach plan should, at a minimum, include materials translated in Tagalog, Ilocano, and Cebuano.

Lastly, thank you for your consideration of these recommendations.

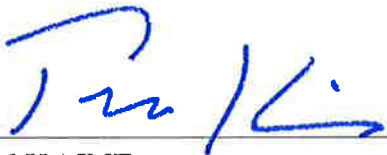
Sincerely,



MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator



HARRY REID
United States Senator



TIM KAINE
United States Senator

CC: U.S Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Director Leon Rodriguez