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National Federation of Filipino American Associations

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President Obama signs into law Filipino Veterans Congressional Gold Medal Act

On December 14th, 2016, President Barack Obama signed S. 1555 into law, which will award the Congressional Gold Medal to Filipino World War II veterans.

Introduced by Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-HI) in June last year, the bill passed in the Senate on July 13. The House of Representatives unanimously approved the legislation on November 30.

A companion measure, H.R. 2737, was also introduced in the House of Representatives by U.S. Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI) in June last year. In October, it secured 312 cosponsors, more than the two-thirds required.

A few days after Congress finally granted recognition to Filipino and American World War II veterans who served in the Pacific Theatre, national leaders of Filipino organizations met in San Diego, CA. to hear from Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba (Ret), Chairman of the Filipino Veterans Recognition and Education Project (FilVetREP), which spearheaded the nationwide effort. Joining Taguba were NaFFAA National Chair Brendan Flores, Filipino American National Historical Society (FANHS) President Judy Patacsil, and Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) Executive Director Greg Cendana, among others. At this meeting, Taguba laid out the next steps, including fundraising, a national celebration to honor the veterans and their families, and an educational program. He stressed that the bulk of the work is yet to come, with raising funds for the next phase of the project as the primary focus.

"I am grateful to all the volunteers who devoted so much of their time to write, make phone calls, and personally visit their legislators during the past 17 months," said NaFFAA National Chair Brendan Flores. "On behalf of the Filipino American community, I also thank all the supporters in Capitol Hill, notably Sen. Hirono and Rep. Gabbard, for making the momentous signing of the bill a reality. To echo the sentiment of General Taguba, there is more work to be done, and NaFFAA is up to the challenge."

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The National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) is a private, non-profit, non-partisan tax- exempt organization established in 1997 to promote the active participation of Filipino Americans in civic and national affairs. It is recognized by Washington policy makers, national advocacy groups and private industry as the Voice of Filipinos and Filipino Americans throughout the United States. NaFFAA partners with local affiliate organizations and national coalitions in advocating for issues of common concern to Filipino Americans. As the largest national affiliation of Filipino American institutions, organizations and individuals, NaFFAA's thirteen-member regions cover the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, the Marianas Islands, and American Samoa.

www.NaFFAA.org