

Some WWII Veterans Vets Celebrate, Others...

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(ACFV). "We are excited. We are high and joyful...many of us have been waiting, some were resigned to keep fighting [for the bill], and others have already died."

It's been a long journey for Baclig, Arcebal and the estimated 18,000 or fewer remaining Filipino WWII veterans, mostly residing in the Philippines

When President Franklin Roosevelt ordered Philippine citizens to fight as soldiers with the American military against the invading Japanese army on July 1941, they were promised American veterans affairs military benefits.

However, several years later, the US Rescission Act of 1946 was enacted and those same Filipino WWII veterans were left with no military benefit and recognition.

The Filipino Veterans Equity compensation fund seems to alleviate that, according to Arcebal.

"This is what we want," he said.

But for other Filipino WWII Veterans and their supporters, the Senate and House passing the stimulus bill with the FilVet equity act is not a tactical victory.

"It's not complete unless it has recognition in the bill," said Art Garcia of the Justice for Filipino American Veterans. "The inequity still exists. The Rescission Act is not being amended or rescinded so therefore, the inequity still exists."

"This [lump sum] can help the old veterans especially those in the Philippines because \$9,000 is a lot of money there but let the buyer beware," added Garcia. "Let the veterans think twice before they accept the payment."

The Filipino Veteran Equity Act includes a provision that would release the US government from any more future claims from Filipino WWII veterans.

"We're not quite sure yet if that means monetary or oth-

er releases such as pension, healthcare or immigration," said Ben de Guzman of the National Association of Filipino Veterans Equity. "There is still more that veterans can be fighting for. We are trying to figure out the release claim."

Arcebal said that it doesn't matter what the release claim states.

"There are already so many of us dying," he said. "Practically speaking, this is better than a monthly pension. We're tired of working."

Arcebal added that the US has already recognized the Filipino WWII veterans for their valor.

For Baclig, the passage of the bill is a sigh of relief. It's an unexpected birthday present.

"I'm just happy that the congressman did their duties," he said. "They made it hard for us. I'm grateful for them and everybody's support."

Cautious celebration

With President Obama expecting to pass the stimulus bill sometime early next week, Arcebal said that he is already trying to organize all the Filipino WWII veterans to educated them on how to file the proper paperwork to receive their payment.

"It's important for them to know what they need to do," he said.

He has already received a permit to celebrate the much-awaited victory at the Filipino WWII memorial in Lake Street Park. The celebrate will commence on Feb. 18, the anniversary of the US Rescission Act of 1946.

Garcia of JFAV said that he's also going to celebrate with many of the WWII veterans he has fought for.

But he said the struggle is not yet finished.

"It's only the beginning because where there is injustice there is a struggle," he said. "There's no lump sum without recognition. We will accept the lump sum if we get the recognition. We will celebrate, but we will celebrate cautiously." ■

Winners and Losers

Those who got the cut—and not—in President Obama's stimulus bill

by LIZ SIDOTI
AP Writer

WASHINGTON — Barack Obama is scoring a monster victory three weeks into his presidency with the economic stimulus deal. But he's taken some hits along the way and ultimately will be judged on whether he is able to cure an economy that is mired in recession.

As the stimulus plan works its way toward Obama's desk, plenty of political winners and losers are emerging: Education made out; governors' budgets, not so much. Alternative energy companies are poised to fare well, but defense contractors likely won't reap any benefit.

Taxpayers, reeling from rising unemployment and footing the bill for much of the \$789 billion package, could win or lose: It depends on whether the investments—and tax cuts aimed at the middle class—end up paying off. The economy, too, could come out on top or on bottom: It's not certain that the plan is enough to reverse the slide that started more than a year ago.

The winners:

- Obama. The new Democratic president used his popularity and bully pulpit to get the notoriously sluggish Congress to work through the huge package in relatively short order. But it wasn't all smooth sailing, and Obama knows that his political fate is tied to his ability to reverse the severe economic conditions that he inherited from former President George W. Bush.

- Senate moderates, specifically Susan Collins, R-Maine., and Ben Nelson, D-Neb. They helped broker a deal with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and the White House that ultimately cut some \$100 billion from the package and paved the way for final passage. Collins, in particular, showed her power in a Senate where Democrats lack a filibuster-proof majority; she was able to make the White

House and the Democratic majority bow to her demands.

- Education. The measure includes a \$25 billion downpayment on K-12 school reforms and \$47 billion to prevent cuts in state aid to school districts.

- The jobless and the poor. Unemployment benefits will be temporarily extended and increased. Food stamps will be boosted. Billions of dollars will flow for job training and temporary welfare payments.

- The alternative energy industry. The package allots \$50 billion for energy efficiency and renewable energy programs.

- House Republicans. Adrift after back-to-back electoral losses, they found their voice against a Democratic speaker and an expanded majority. They held to the GOP's cornerstone of fiscal conservatism as they led the effort to define the package as too costly and too quick. As the economy turns around, however, they run the risk of being cast as modern-day Herbert Hoovers who wanted to nothing.

- Big government. The package melds an unprecedented level of new spending and tax cuts, and it marks an extraordinary intervention of government into people's lives.

- Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. He was key to brokering a final deal in line with a White House-imposed deadline of mid-February. He delivered for the White House but also



President Barack Obama addresses employees at the Caterpillar plant in East Peoria, Ill., Thursday, Feb. 12, 2009.

AP Photo by Charles Rex Arbogast

may have compromised some of the Senate's independence in the process.

- House Minority Leader John Boehner. He strengthened his hold on his job, keeping his rank-and-file united against the House version.

- General Motors Corp. The struggling automaker got a tax break worth \$3.2 billion that preserves its ability to claim refunds against taxes paid when times were good.

- Large hospices. They won a reprieve—worth about \$134 million—from cuts in what Medicare pays them to care for dying patients.

The losers:

- Obama. He spent weeks preaching of bipartisanship and spending his political capital but reverted to combative, buck-stops-here talk when Republicans rebelled at the cost and scope of the plan. With the economic downturn worsening on his watch, Obama runs the risk of facing the ultimate political punishment if doesn't turn around—a one-term presidency.

- Bipartisanship. So much for all that talk. Obama wanted broad support from members of both political parties. But House

Democrats shut out the GOP as the original bill was written, and no House Republicans voted for the measure. Only three Republicans voted with Democrats in the Senate. A largely party line vote was expected on final passage.

- House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. She struggled to control liberals who demanded more spending and didn't include Republicans in the process from the start, undercutting Obama's calls for bipartisanship. Her strained relationship with Reid also may have worsened.

- Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. He failed to keep his members in line and was eclipsed by three members of his caucus—Collins, Olympia Snowe of Maine and Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania. They negotiated with the Democrats and ultimately sided with them.

- Homebuilders. They saw a \$39 billion tax break that would have provided a \$15,000 tax credit for homebuyers scaled back substantially.

- Governors. They'll get just \$8 billion to defray budget cuts as they face declining revenues and rising demand for services.

- On the bright side, they pushed for massive spending on roads, bridges and other construction projects to bring jobs—and got \$46 billion.

- The nuclear energy industry. It had lobbied hard for \$50 billion worth of federal loan guarantees for technologies that use little or no carbon—but saw it stripped from the package. Count environmental groups and the conservative Taxpayers for Common Sense as the victors here.

- The defense industry. There's no significant money for weapons systems, though lawmakers approved several billion for construction at military facilities.

- Liberals. They yielded to calls from conservatives for deeper tax cuts and less spending.

- Large and medium-sized businesses, including manufacturers. They were cut out of about \$17 billion in tax breaks that would have expanded their ability to use current losses to get refunds against taxes paid when they were making large profits. ■



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