

## NV Senator Ensign not inclined to...

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disappointed over disparate compensations for veterans based on where they currently reside.

"Why should there be different compensations made to veterans because of where they live?" she told the *Asian Journal*.

"They fought in the same war side by side with American soldiers, caught the same bullets the enemy fired, fought and died for America. They were promised by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt that they would be accorded the same benefits as American soldiers," she added.

It will be recalled that during deliberations in Congress early this year, Sen. Ensign voted against giving these war veterans the same amount as those living in the United States.

As a result, the US government authorized one-time lump sum payments of \$15,000 each to Filipino World War II veterans who are US citizens as well as those residing in the United States. Veterans who fought in the same war, but are currently living in the Philippines were given a smaller amount of only \$9,000.

The financial compensation package was part of the Obama administration's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act which was signed into law last February.

Filipino-American groups questioned the vote of the Nevada Republican senator whose paternal grandfather was born in the Philippines and is half-Filipino. This makes Ensign one-eighth Filipino.

At the luncheon last Friday, May 29, Sen. Ensign asked members of the Asian Chamber of Commerce to understand his vote.

"I just didn't think it was right. That is why I voted against it. I hope you understand," he said.

He added, "I didn't think that the money we were giving veterans living in the Philippines was right because the standard of living is a lot less there."

It was almost 60 years ago when US President Franklin Roosevelt promised Filipinos military benefits if they fight as soldiers with the American military against the invading Japanese during World War II. However, in 1946, the US Congress passed the Rescission Act which stripped Filipinos of the benefits they were promised. Of the 66 countries allied with the United States during the war, only Filipinos were denied military benefits.

Since then, several bills have been introduced in Congress in an attempt to give full equity to these Filipino war veterans.

It was only last February that the US government finally set aside \$198 million for benefits of Filipino veterans. Of the over 200,000 Filipinos who fought alongside American soldiers 60 years ago, fewer than 18,000 are alive today.

But several Filipino-American groups are still working to give full equity to these veterans and their families. The National Alliance for Filipino Veterans Equity is spearheading the campaign. ■

### Reid Addresses Asian-american and Pacific Islander Summi

## Nevadans travel to Washington to participate in first annual summit

WASHINGTON, DC—Nevada Senator Harry Reid today addressed a group of community leaders at a summit celebrating the Asian- American Pacific Islander Heritage Month. The summit on recovery and reinvestment addressed issues critical to the AAPI community including housing, the economic recovery plan, health care, education and immigration. Reid had an opportunity to meet and speak with the community leaders and advocates who gathered in Washington this morning. Below are Reid's remarks as prepared for delivery:

"Thank you all for coming to Washington and for being here this morning. I appreciate how important the contributions of Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders are to each of your organizations, and I want to let you know that the United States Senate values your contributions just as highly. Though we celebrate them officially at events like this one, they do not go unnoticed the rest of the year.

"I also want to recognize two Nevadans here today: Rozita Lee, of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations; and Jose Melendrez, of UNLV's Diversity and Inclusion program. Thank you both for your leadership.

"The United States has always been a nation of

immigrants. At every turn in our history, we have become stronger and closer by recognizing the richness in each of our many cultures.

"My state of Nevada is home to the third-highest Pacific Islander population in the country, and the sixth-highest Asian-American population.

"Nevada, like America, is stronger for its diversity—not only from the greater Asian-American and Pacific Islander community, but also the great diversity within it. Each year, more and more Nevadans can trace their roots back to the Philippines, China, Japan, Vietnam, Korea, India and many other Asian and Pacific nations.

"As these communities grow, they increasingly include second-generation Americans for whom—as the title of my state's official song says – 'Home Means Nevada,' but who never forget their heritage.

"With each new generation comes the promise of stronger, more vibrant communities—and the same is true for our country as a whole.

"It is fitting that the theme of today's summit focuses on restoring our economy and helping the Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities recover and prosper. ■

## Japan apologizes for Bataan Death March

*Some Filipino vets say it's too late*

by JOSEPH PIMENTEL  
AJPress

LOS ANGELES—FILIPINO World War II veteran Faustino "Peping" Baclig is working on his memoirs.

Everyday the 87-year-old jots down his experience in the war on yellow sheets of legal paper but when it comes to the Bataan Death March in which he survived, he can't bear to write anything down.

Thousands of Filipinos and American soldiers have not forgotten the deadly 65-mile Bataan Death March in April 1942.

For many survivors like Baclig, the traumatic experience has led to nightmares and deep hidden emotional scars.

Baclig said that march was difficult.

"I remember the scorching tropical sun, no rest and no food. Many of us were already weakened by malaria and dysentery so it was not wonderful."

"The suffering was expected because it was war time," he added.

When Baclig and other Filipino WWII veterans heard that the Japanese Ambassador to the United States, Ichiro Fujisaki, spoke at the 64th reunion of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor in San Antonio on Monday, June 1 and offered an apology to veterans and their families, many Filipino veterans felt like it was too late.

"It's too late for me and it's too late for them. That's 67 years ago," said Franco Arcebal, a Filipino WWII veteran, and vice-president of membership for the American Coalition of Filipino Veterans. "Although we accept the apology, it came too late. How come they apologize now? It's terrible... they should have done this about 25 years after the

"It is fitting because just as the values of your communities are the values of all Americans, getting our economy back on track is in our common interest.

"That is why the Senate this year has worked hard to help make life better and more affordable for families of every background.

"We have committed ourselves this year to honoring the past, securing the present and strengthening the future promise of the Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities.

"First, Congress and the President honored our heroes by finally giving Filipino troops the well-deserved and long-overdue pensions they earned in World War II.

"These brave and patriotic troops served under the American flag when the Philippines were a commonwealth of this country.

"They stood with us, they fought with us, they helped us win the greatest war in history—and with the leadership of Senator Dan Inouye and the signature of President Obama, they at long last have received the recognition they deserve.

"Second, we are ensuring Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders can succeed even as our economy weathers unprecedented challenges and crises. As all Americans struggle with strained job and housing markets, we know that minority families and mi-

war."

During his speech, Fujisaki said that the Japanese people must look into the past to learn from the lessons of history.

"We extend a heartfelt apology [from] our country for having caused tremendous damage and suffering to many people, including prisoners of war, those who have undergone tragic experiences in the Bataan Peninsula, in Corregidor Island in the Philippines and other places," said Fujisaki. "Ladies and gentlemen, taking this opportunity, I would like to express my deepest condolences to all those who have lost their lives in the war, and after the war, and their family members."

According to the Associated Press, about 73 surviving Bataan Death March veterans of the Army and former Army Air Corps were in attendance and welcomed the apology.

AP added that Fujisaki's six-minute speech received a standing ovation afterwards.

"Well, we finally got the apology that we wanted," said retired Tech Sgt. Joe Alexander of San Antonio, a two-time former commander of ADBC told the AP. Asked how he felt, Alexander said he felt chills go through his body. "Now we can rest at ease. We're satisfied."

Whether skeptical or accepting, many veterans are resigned to the fact that this will probably be the only apology they'll ever hear from the Japanese for the Bataan Death March.

"This is about as candid an apology as anybody's going to get," added Paul Ropp, a retired Air Force Reserve lieutenant colonel. ■

minority-owned businesses are hit the hardest.

"Our economic recovery plan and the President's budget have made important progress toward creating and saving millions of jobs; cutting taxes for the middle class; and making critical investments in health care, renewable energy and education—but there is more to do.

"The economic recovery plan also gives small-business owners tax relief critical to helping them thrive. There are 9,000 businesses owned by Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Nevada, and more than a million across the country. With nearly a trillion dollars going into and out of these businesses every year, their success is central to our recovery.

"We are also making it easier for these small businesses to get the loans they need to grow and hire employees.

"And when we acted to help families keep their homes, we didn't stop at stabilizing the housing market—we also made it illegal for con artists to prey on minority communities, and are educating those communities—in their native languages—about how to avoid such scams.

"With the leadership of people like Commerce Secretary Gary Locke—a third-generation American and the only Chinese American to ever serve as a governor—our economy will continue to rebound. ■



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