

Processing of Filipino vets' claims 'on track,' says Gaa

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Of the 31,000 claims that have been filed as of May 4, "the vast majority are now in the system and being processed." He said that of the claims that are now being processed, "15,962 claims were filed in the Philippines while 7,407 were filed in the US."

So far, more than 2,000 claims have been completed and of all the claims that were filed, about 200 have been disapproved.

Ambassador Gaa also welcomed the inclusion of funding for the Filipino Veterans Equity Fund in the 2010 proposed budget submitted by President Barack Obama to the US Congress last May 7.

"The inclusion of funding for our veterans in the 2010 budget proposed by President Obama not only assured continued appropriations for their benefits but also reiterates the importance the current administration gives to the contribution, courage and sacrifices of our Filipino veterans of World War II," Ambassador Gaa said.

According to the *San Jose Mercury News*, seven Filipino-American veterans from San Jose are among the first Northern Californians to receive long-sought compensation for their military service during World War II, and among those getting a \$15,000 check was Dominador Valdez, 83, president of the Santa Clara County chapter of the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans of WWII.

"We are happy and grateful to the 111th Congress for finally taking this action," Valdez told the newspaper.

Based on estimated figures, only about 18,000 of the 250,000 Filipinos who fought in World War II war are still alive—with 6,000 still in the United States and 12,000 in the Philippines. (*Momara G. Visaya*)

Pinay to run across America

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running an average of one marathon a day.

During the three thousand mile trek, she'll encounter elevation that can go as high as 8,000-feet and weather that may reach over 100 degrees.

Takbong Pangarap Events Director Chuck Crisanto said that only 200 people have successfully ran across the US.

"Well the difficulty can be compared to climbing Mt. Everest. Climbing the top is 8 kilometers vertical, running across the US is 5,000 kilometers horizontal," said Crisanto. "When Joy completes this run, she'll not only be the first Filipina to accomplish this but also the first Southeast Asian woman."

Seasoned marathon runner Joe Matias says even ultra runners aren't willing to do what Rojas is doing.

"It takes a different breed of people to do something like this," said Joe Matias, who is helping coordinate runners nationwide to pace with Rojas along the way. Rojas knows her run is difficult. She admits of not being the most talented runner in the world.

But she said her biggest attribute is her stubbornness to finish a project.

Her first stop will be Las Vegas. Crisanto said that it would take about two weeks.

To follow Joy Rojas or donate to the cause, visit www.thepoc.net/index.php/Takbong-Pangarap/ (*Joseph Pimentel*)

US Filipino citizens urged to participate in choosing next RP president

by DYMPHNA CALICA-LA PUTT
AJPress

THE Philippine government is urging Filipino citizens living in the United States to participate in choosing the next Philippine president in the national elections in May 2010.

Consular offices in the US will make voter registration even easier for Filipinos by holding several consular outreach programs throughout the country this year.

"The right to vote is a constitutionally-guaranteed right that should be exercised by any Filipino during elections," Philippine Consulate General Los Angeles (PCG LA) Vice Consul General John Reyes told *Asian Journal*.

"Therefore, it is every Filipino's bounden duty to register and vote and be part in this very important process of selecting our nation's leaders," he added.

The Philippine Department of Foreign affairs said earlier that it is targeting one million Filipinos to participate in overseas absentee voting (OAV) in preparation for the 2010 presidential elections in the country.

"That's why we are urging all Filipinos abroad to register now. This is an opportunity to choose our leaders. This is also our duty," Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Rafael Seguis said in a recent interview in Manila, Philippines.

OAV was made into law in 2003 through Republic Act 9225 or the Citizenship Retention and Reacquisition Act. Under this law, Filipinos who have re-acquired their Filipino citizenship can participate in Philippine elections via OAV.

Similarly, the law allows Filipino citizens living abroad to participate in elections in the Philippines even without going back to the

country.

With OAV, ballots are sent to voters by mail. Voters need to mail the ballots back to the Consulate where he or she registered.

This is the third OAV registration for overseas Filipinos after the law was passed in 2003 in time for the 2004 Philippine presidential elections. Registration period this year, for the 2010 elections, started last February and will end in August.

"All OAV registrants during this period can vote for the president and vice president, 12 senators, and party list representatives during the May 2010 general elections," PCG LA Vice Consul Reyes also said in the interview.

Consular outreach programs will be initiated by PCG LA on May 16th in Panorama City, CA; in Las Vegas, NV on May 23rd and 24th; in Walnut CA on May 30th; and in Chandler, AZ on July 18th.

This consular office has jurisdiction over the areas of Southern Nevada, Southern California, Texas and Arizona.

For its part, the Philippine Consulate General New York (PCG NY) will hold outreach programs in Rochester, NY on May 16th; in Philadelphia, PA on July 11th and in Massachusetts on July 18th.

PCG NY covers Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Both NY and LA consular offices have been trying to reach out to more Filipino voters via outreach programs in their respective jurisdictions. This is to make registration faster and more convenient for Filipinos.

These two consular posts have the highest

turnout of OAV registrants in the US since registration started in February.

While voter registration during outreach programs is free, registrants may be asked to make appointments via fax or e-mail.

PCG LA, in particular, has asked Filipinos to download forms from their website and have these ready during registration at the outreach sites. They need to make appointments online and view the appointment schedule on the website.

US-based Filipinos need to register in the consular office that has jurisdiction in the area where they reside.

Those residing in the areas of Northern California, Northern Nevada, Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming need to register at the Philippine Consulate San Francisco.

Filipinos in Midwest states namely Arkansas, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Illinois, and Wisconsin are covered by Philippine Consulate Chicago.

Those living in Hawaii, American Samoa, Kiribati, Tonga, French Polynesia, meanwhile are under the jurisdiction of Philippine Consulate Honolulu.

The Philippine Embassy in Washington, DC, meanwhile, has jurisdiction over Alabama, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Complete schedule of voter registration hours and outreach programs in these consular offices can be viewed in their respective websites. ■

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