HOUSE RESOLUTION

URGING CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO SUPPORT THE PASSAGE OF S. 1337, THE FILIPINO VETERANS FAMILY REUNIFICATION ACT OF 2009, OR SIMILAR LEGISLATION, TO EXPEDITE FAMILY REUNIFICATION FOR CERTAIN FILIPINO VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II.

WHEREAS, on December 8, 1941, thousands of Filipino men and women responded to President Roosevelt's call for help to preserve peace, democracy, and freedom for America and the world; and

WHEREAS, at that time, the Philippines was a commonwealth associated with the United States and its citizens were nationals of the United States, similar to the status of Hawaii's residents prior to statehood and the current status of American Samoa's residents; and

WHEREAS, during the dark days of World War II, nearly 100,000 soldiers of the Philippine Commonwealth Army provided a ray of hope in the Pacific as they fought alongside United States and Allied forces for four long years to defend and reclaim the Philippine Islands from Japanese aggression; and

WHEREAS, thousands more Filipinos joined the United States Armed Forces immediately after the war and served in occupational duty throughout the Pacific theater; and

WHEREAS, valiant Filipino soldiers fought, died, and suffered in some of the bloodiest battles of World War II, defending beleaguered Bataan and Corregidor, and thousands of Filipino prisoners of war endured the infamous Bataan Death March and years of captivity; and

WHEREAS, their many guerrilla actions slowed the Japanese takeover of the Western Pacific region and allowed United States forces the time to build and prepare for the allied counterattack on Japanese forces; and
WHEREAS, Filipino troops fought side by side with American forces to secure their islands as the strategic base from which the final effort to defeat Japan was launched; and

WHEREAS, in February of 1946, Congress enacted the 1946 Rescission Act, which denied World War II Filipino veterans rights to veterans benefits equal to those enjoyed by other veterans and soldiers of more than sixty-six other countries who were similarly inducted into the United States military; and

WHEREAS the Rescission Act discriminated against Filipinos, making them the only national group singled out for denial of full United States veterans status and benefits, including rights of immigration and naturalization; and

WHEREAS, decades later, in recognition of the courage and loyalty of the Filipino troops who fought alongside our armed forces in the Pacific during World War II, the United States Congress enacted legislation in 1990 that provided a waiver from certain immigration and naturalization requirements for these Filipino veterans; and

WHEREAS, as a result of that legislation, many of those Filipino veterans have become proud citizens and residents of this country; and

WHEREAS, despite the granting of citizenship, these World War II Filipino veterans are still denied equal treatment and status as American veterans by the Rescission Act; and

WHEREAS, the 1990 legislation did not go far enough in extending those immigration and naturalization benefits to the children of those veterans, resulting in years of long separation between the veterans and their children remaining in the Philippines awaiting the issuance of immigrant visas; and

WHEREAS, President William J. Clinton proclaimed October 20, 1996, as a day honoring the Filipino Veterans of World War II, recalling the courage, sacrifice, and loyalty of Filipino veterans of World War II in defense of democracy and liberty; and

WHEREAS, on April 1, 2008, the Hawaii State Legislature adopted House Resolution No. 91 requesting Congress and the
WHEREAS, on February 17, 2009, Senator Daniel Akaka, along with Senator Daniel Inouye and others, introduced S. 671, the Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act, to amend the Immigration and Naturalization Act to exempt children of certain Filipino World War II veterans from the numerical limitation on immigrant visas; and

WHEREAS, Representative Mazie Hirono, Representative Neil Abercrombie, and others have expressed an interest or intent to introduce or co-sponsor a House companion bill to S. 671 to facilitate family reunification of certain Filipino veterans of World War II; and

WHEREAS, H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, was signed into law, among many other things, to formally recognize and set the historical record straight by declaring the service of Filipino World War II veterans as active United States military service in the Armed Forces for purposes of this law; and

WHEREAS, decades after their heroic service under the command of their leaders and General Douglas MacArthur, men and women of Filipino-American national heritage are still being denied the benefits and privileges provided to their American compatriots who fought side by side with them; and

WHEREAS, the World War II Filipino veterans that survive, are now in their 70s and 80s, and many are permanently disabled and would, except for the Rescission Act, be eligible for full federal veterans benefits and services; and

WHEREAS, correction of this injustice to the Filipino veterans who served our nation courageously in the fight for freedom and democracy during World War II is long overdue; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Twenty-fifth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2010, that the President of the United States and United States Congress are urged to support the passage of S. 1337, The
Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act of 2009, or similar legislation, to expedite family reunification for certain Filipino veterans of World War II; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, President of the Republic of the Philippines, Majority Leader of the United States Senate, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, Chair of the Committee on the Judiciary of the United States Senate, Chair of the Committee on the Judiciary of the United States House of Representatives, Director of the Bureau of United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs, each member of Hawaii's congressional delegation, the respective Chairs of the Senate Committee on Human Services, the House Committee on Human Services, the Senate Committee on Tourism, and the House Committee on Tourism, Culture, and International Affairs of the Hawaii State Legislature.

OFFERED BY:

[Signatures]

FEB 05 2010