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**State Government & Tribal  
Affairs Committee**

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**SJM 8008**

**Brief Description:** Asking that the federal government provide veterans' benefits owed to Filipino veterans.

**Sponsors:** Senators Prentice, Rockefeller, Berkey, Weinstein, Kauffman, Marr, Oemig, Kline, Hobbs, Murray, Poulsen, Rasmussen, Kastama, Shin, Franklin, Hatfield, Sheldon, Kohl-Welles, Jacobsen, Fraser, Pridemore and Kilmer.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requests the President and Congress of the United States to amend the Rescission Act of 1946 to restore to Filipino veterans full United States veteran status with military benefits.

**Hearing Date:** 3/16/07

**Staff:** Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

**Background:**

The Commonwealth Army of the Philippines was established in the early 1900s when the United States assumed formal sovereignty over the Philippines. At that time, the United States was preparing for the Philippines to become a sovereign nation. Public Law 73-127, enacted in 1934, required the Commonwealth Army to respond to the call of the President of the United States under certain conditions. On July 26, 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt ordered the Commonwealth Army into the service of the United States Armed Forces of the Far East (USAFFE) where it served throughout World War II.

Among the other military components of the Philippines were the "Old Scouts" or "Regular Scouts," members of a small, regular component of the U.S. Army. Originally formed in 1901, the Regular Philippine Scouts were part of the U.S. Army throughout their existence.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

Anticipating the need of local occupational forces in 1945, Congress enacted Public Law 79-190 authorizing the recruitment of 50,000 "new" Philippine Scouts. New Philippine Scouts were Philippine citizens who served with the U.S. Armed Forces with the consent of the Philippine government and served between Oct. 6, 1945, and June 30, 1947.

Another group of Filipinos served as guerrillas in USAFFE resistance units recognized by and cooperating with U.S. forces between April 20, 1942, and June 30, 1946, inclusive.

Prior to 1946, U.S. Department of Veterans Administration (VA) officials considered that Filipino military service met the statutory definition of a U.S. veteran. However, that year Congress passed Public Laws 79-301 and 79-391 in 1946:

- Public Law 79-301, the First Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act, authorized a \$200 million appropriation to the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, with the provision that service in the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines should not be deemed to have been service in the military or naval forces of the United States.
- Public Law 79-391, the Second Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act enacted in 1946, provided that service in the New Philippine Scouts was not deemed U.S. military service.

Generally, Old Philippine Scouts are eligible for VA benefits in the same manner as U.S. veterans. Commonwealth Army veterans, including certain organized Filipino guerrilla forces and New Philippine Scouts residing in the United States who are citizens or lawfully admitted for permanent residence, are also eligible for VA health care in the United States on the same basis as U.S. veterans.

Certain Commonwealth Army veterans and new Philippine Scouts may be eligible for disability compensation and burial benefits. Other veterans of recognized guerrilla groups also may be eligible for certain VA benefits. Survivors of World War II era Filipino veterans may be eligible for dependency and indemnity compensation. Eligibility and the rates of benefits vary based on the recipient's citizenship and place of residence.

**Summary of Bill:**

The Senate and House of Representatives of the state of Washington petition the President and Congress of the United States to give priority in the issuance of immigrant visas to the descendants of Filipino World War II veterans and to amend the Rescission Act of 1946 to restore to Filipino veterans full United States veteran status with military benefits.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.