

TRIBUTE TO RIZAL AGBAYANI

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. FILNER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to Mr. Rizal Agbayani, a veteran of World War II and a former member of the U.S. Armed Forces in the Far East. He died of a heart attack last week at the Fairfax Hospital in Virginia, near Washington, DC. He is survived by his wife, Criselda, and his eight children.

Mr. Agbayani came to Washington as part of the 37-veteran delegation from Hawaii attending the gathering of the National Advisory Council of Philippine-American Veteran Leaders. Almost 300 Filipino veterans were in our Nation's Capital last week, gathered together for the first time, working with a united front to achieve equity for all Filipino World War II veterans.

Mr. Agbayani actively took part in meetings with several Members of Congress. He was also one of the hundred demonstrators at a rally in front of the White House organized by National Advisory Council members and the 130-member Equity Caravan, a 6-city, 2-week march to Washington designed to call attention to the Filipino Veterans Equity Act (H.R. 836) and urging Congress to pass this bill.

Mr. Agbayani was named after Jose Rizal. A national hero of the Philippines, Rizal was executed for his fight to free the Philippines from colonial Spain, and this year marks the observance of the centennial anniversary of Rizal's death. Like his namesake, Mr. Agbayani died while fighting for justice, and today his body is being flown to the Philippines to his final resting place.

I want to take this opportunity to commemorate the life and struggle of Mr. Agbayani and the thousands of other Filipino World War II veterans whose participation was so crucial to the outcome of World War II. Too few Americans are familiar with this chapter in our Nation's history.

During this war, the military forces of the Commonwealth of the Philippines were drafted to serve in our Armed Forces by Executive order of the President of the United States. Filipino soldiers defended the American flag in the now famous battles of Bataan and Corregidor. Thousands of Filipino prisoners of war died during the 65-mile Bataan death march. Those who survived were imprisoned under inhuman conditions where they suffered casualties at the rate of 50 to 200 prisoners a day. They endured 4 long years of enemy occupation.

The soldiers who escaped capture, together with Filipino civilians, fought against the occupation forces. Their guerilla attacks foiled the plans of the Japanese for a quick takeover of the region and allowed the United States the time needed to prepare forces to defeat Japan. After the liberation of the

Philippine Islands, the United States was able to use the strategically located Commonwealth of the Philippines as a base from which to launch the final efforts to win the war.

One would assume that the United States would be grateful to their Filipino comrades, so it is hard to believe that soon after the war ended, the 79th Congress voted in a way that can only be considered to be blatant discrimination, as they took away the benefits and recognition that the Filipino World War II veterans were promised.

Mr. Agbayani and his comrades have been fighting over 50 years to regain this recognition that they so deserve. Their sons and daughters have joined in the fight, wishing desperately to restore the honor and dignity to their fathers while they are still alive. The urgency is real, Mr. Speaker. At least six Filipino World War II veterans are dying each day.

Mr. Agbayani's journey to Washington last week was his final journey in search of this recognition for his Filipino World War II comrades. As a tribute to Mr. Agbayani and the thousands of other veterans already gone before us in death, I urge my colleagues to take a serious inventory of this issue, to cosponsor 836, and to correct a monumental injustice by restoring the benefits that were promised to the Filipino World War II veterans for their defense of democratic ideals.

GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HANSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, on September 18, 1996, one year ago today, President Clinton, claiming authority under the Antiquities Act, stood on the south side of the Grand Canyon of Arizona and designated 1.7 million acres of southern Utah as a national monument.

Over at the Committee on Resources, we have met with administration officials, held hearings, and subpoenaed documents in an effort to sort this thing out. I thought it might be appropriate, since today is the anniversary of that unprecedented election year stunt, to say a few words about what we have been able to come up with.

The first time I or any other Utah official heard about the National Monument was on September 7, 1996, when the Washington Post published an article announcing that President Clinton was about to use the Antiquities Act of 1906 to create a 2-million-acre national monument in southern Utah.

Naturally, we are all somewhat concerned. In fact, I think most of us found it a little hard to believe. Surely the President would have the decency to at least let the citizens of Utah

know if he were considering a move that would affect them so greatly.

When we expressed our concern to the Clinton administration, they denied they had even heard about such a thing. They tried to make it look like the monument was some kind of nebulous idea that was being kicked around, but that we should not really take it too seriously or worry about it. As late as September 11, Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt wrote to Utah Senator BENNETT and pretty much told him that.

Within the confines of the administration, however, it was clear the monument was a go. The real issue was keeping it a secret from the rest of the world. By July 1996 the Department of Interior had already hired law professor Charles Wilkinson to draw up the President's National Monument proclamation. In a letter written to Professor Wilkinson asking him to draw up the Proclamation, DOI Solicitor John Leshy wrote: "I can't emphasize confidentiality too much. If word leaks out, it probably won't happen, so take care."

When I say that the Clinton administration went to great lengths to keep everyone in the dark, I should probably qualify that a little. On August 5, 1996, CEQ chair Katy McGinty wrote a memo to Marcia Hale telling her to call some key western Democrats to get their reactions to the monument idea. There was conspicuous absence on her list, however, of anyone from the State of Utah. Not the governor, not the senators, not the Congressmen, not the Speaker of the House, not the President, nobody. Even the Democratic Congressman, Bill Orton, was kept in the dark. Clinton did not want to take any chances.

In the memo, Ms. McGinty emphasized that it should be kept secret, saying that "Any public release of the information would probably make the President change his options."

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Why, you ask, did President Clinton want to keep this secret from the rest of the world? Because it would ruin their timing. This announcement was a political election year stunt and those type of things have to be planned and timed perfectly. If news of the monument were to break too early, it would be old news by the time Bill Clinton did his photo op on the site of the Grand Canyon.

Let us back up and ask ourselves why President Clinton wanted to create this new 1.7 million acre national monument. The administration claimed it was to protect the land. For example, at our hearing this year, Katy McGinty said, "By last year the lands were in real jeopardy."

That sounds great, but the truth is the land was not in any danger. Even if it were, national monument status would not do anything to protect it. If anything, it takes away protection. We have requested documents from the administration where they admit to both