



OFFICE OF SENATOR
FRANK B. AGUON, JR.

CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON
GUAM U.S. MILITARY RELOCATION | HOMELAND SECURITY | VETERANS' AFFAIRS | JUDICIARY



30 January 2014

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
United States Senate
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-4503

Dear Senator Sanders:

Buenas yan Hafa adai (Greetings)! I am writing in support of S.1950, the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014 that was introduced last week.

As Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee for the 32nd Guam Legislature, my office is inundated with Veterans' concerns on a daily basis. These men and women, approach me with serious health and financial challenges that I often feel powerless in helping them because our island has yet to receive adequate resources and attention needed to duly compensate our Veteran's for their service and sacrifice. Every month the Guam Department of Veterans Affairs buries a Veteran whom almost always gets laid to rest without receiving their eligible compensation, and benefits. This is disheartening for me, although I continue to press on our local and federal Department of Veterans Affairs Offices to provide our island Veterans with better services, my pleas are often met with even more challenges or simply fall on deaf ears. I cannot even fathom the amount of frustration and agony *all* Veterans face as they await for their duly needed compensation.

This is why I am in favor of S.1950; it encompasses various Veterans' benefits pertaining to health, education, employment and compensation. On Guam, the top issues that Veterans face are claims processing, and disparities in seeking and obtaining care from the Guam Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC).

In helping to address the concerns of Veterans on Guam, I am pleased that the bill requires quarterly reports from the progress of Department of Veterans Affairs in eliminating the backlog of claims for compensation that have not been adjudicated. The bill clearly stipulates that after 90 days of enactment, monthly reporting of claims processing is required, and must be publicized. This is great news for *all* Veterans as there will be updated information on Veterans claims to help eliminate the backlog, and most importantly it ensures that *all* Veterans' claims are being monitored and duly compensated.

This past month our island welcomed home almost 600 men and women from the 1-294th Infantry Regiment of the Guam Army National Guard, from a deployment in Afghanistan. Sadly two of our heroes: Sgt. Eugene Aguon and Spc. Dwayne Flores were killed in action.

I Mina'Trental Dos Na Liheslaturan Guåhan
Phone: (671)475-GUM1/2 (4861/2) | Fax: (671)475-GUM3 (4863)
155 Hesler Place Hagatna, Guam 96910 | Email: aguon4guam@gmail.com

www.frankaguonjr.com



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In the nation, Guam has the highest enlisted membership per capita of all Guard organizations. I believe the Veterans of Guam have gone above and beyond to answer our nation's call to serve, our willingness to serve continues to be recognized however, full compensation for the service of our Veterans has yet to be afforded.

In so doing, I offer my full support to this bill as it also authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to proceed with contracts to build community-based outpatient clinics that have been on hold, and mandates that the VA provide a comprehensive assessment of its capital infrastructure and how it will address its deficiencies. I am hoping that this bill will move any plans to build additional CBOCs forward as we need additional facilities to provide adequate medical services for our Veterans on Guam.

In addition, this bill also expands the current caregiver law to include all generations of veterans. It provides advance appropriations for all mandatory accounts, which ensures disabled veterans, survivors and GI Bill student-veterans will continue to receive their monthly allotments regardless of future government shutdowns.

I am confident that S.1950 will pass into law. This legislation is an omnibus Veterans' bill that covers the needs of *all* Veterans and I look forward to seeing our Veterans reap the positive benefits of this bill. I will continue to push for the passage of this bill by activating our island Veterans in submitting letters/testimonials as other Veterans have already done throughout the nation.

Un Dangkolo' Na Si Yu'os Ma'ase' (Thank you very much)

Respectfully,


SENATOR FRANK B. AGUON, JR.

Chairman, Committee on Guam U.S. Military Relocation, Homeland Security, Veterans' Affairs, and the Judiciary
I Mina'Trentai Dos Na Liheslaturan Guåhan (Thirty-Second Guam Legislature)

CC: The Honorable Madeleine Z. Bordallo, Member, U.S House of Representatives
Mr. William "Bill," Cundiff, Guam Veterans Commission
Guam Veterans Stakeholders

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