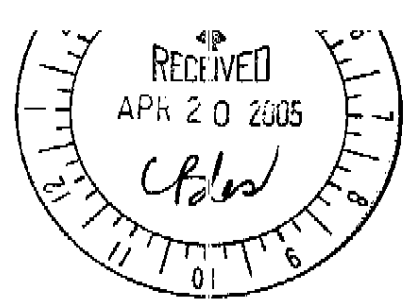


The Honorable Richard W. Pombo, Chairman
The Honorable Nick J. Rahall, II, Ranking Member
House Committee on Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515-6201



**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JUDITH T. WON PAT
DEMOCRATIC LEADER
I MINA'BENTE OCHO NA LIHESLATURAN GUÁHAN
Before the Committee on Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Hearing on H.R. 1595**

April 20, 2005

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Rahall, Ms. Bordallo, and distinguished Members of the Committee: My name is Judith T. Won Pat and I am the Democratic Leader of the 28th Guam Legislature. I am pleased to submit this statement in support of H.R. 1595, the Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act, and to urge the Congress to act expeditiously.

I commend the work of the Guam War Claims Review Commission, which submitted its final report to the Secretary of the Interior and to the Congress on June 9, 2004. The Review Commission issued findings and recommendations, which are the basis for H.R. 1595. While many of us on Guam support the work of the Review Commission and its important recommendations, we note that there is one area where strong sentiment exists for improvement. However, our strong feeling by no means should be taken as an excuse to delay or to hinder passage of legislation to bring closure to the war claims issue for the people of Guam.

In supporting the Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act, I would like to take a moment to note the significance of this effort to me. My father, the late Honorable Antonio B. Won Pat, the first Delegate from Guam, recognized the historical injustices suffered by the people of Guam since his first term in 1973. I am personally pleased that his work was continued by his successors, Congressman Ben Blaz, Congressman Robert A. Underwood, and Congresswoman Madeleine Z. Bordallo. All of Guam's representatives have fought hard and diligently to help bring justice to our people. It is with this legacy in mind that I urge the Committee to act on the Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act while there are still World War II survivors with us who endured the occupation.

In recollecting my father's efforts, I am also saddened to recall the tragedy of his younger brother, my uncle, the late Francisco B. Won Pat, who was beaten and publicly executed by enemy soldiers after being falsely accused of trumped-up charges. The scars that every family carries on Guam cannot be healed without a just recognition of the loyalty and sacrifices of our people.

Each family has a story to share and it is the universal experience of the people of Guam, as a people under enemy occupation that should be told to our fellow citizens.

The heart of the Review Commission's recommendations and a reading of the Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act leaves an unmistakable conclusion that this unique experience of American nationals must be recognized and honored as a moral obligation of the United States. It would be easy to lose this point in arguments over claims, budgetary resources, or fiscal limitations. However, to do so would be to miss the central point of the Review Commission's work.

Having diligently discharged its duties as mandated by Public Law 107-333, the Review Commission left no doubt whatsoever that there was a lack of parity between American nationals on Guam and other Americans, and that this injustice demands a remedy.

The Review Commission recommended that Congress reopen war claims for Guam. The Review Commission recommended that claims for deaths that occurred during the war time period be compensated for \$25,000. The Review Commission further recommended that claims for injury, forced labor, forced march, and internment be compensated to survivors for \$12,000. Lastly, the Review Commission recommended that injury claims for survivors who were alive in 1990 be compensated for \$12,000. I do not agree with this last recommendation and I would urge an amendment that will allow for compensation for injury for all of those claimants who have passed away after 1945. However, if in the final analysis an amendment is not accepted by the Committee, it is absolutely incumbent on this Congress to pass a bill to finally bring closure to this issue. This may be the last time that an effort can be made on the Guam War Claims issue because there are fewer and fewer survivors with each passing week.

I do not make this point simply out of fairness for all families in Guam, although that point alone is compelling. I would raise the issue that the Review Commission itself acknowledged. That is, that it was a failure of Congressional action to include the people of Guam in the War Claims Act of 1948 and its subsequent amendments. This negligence of Congress of historic proportions is correctable and is the fundamental reason why all claimants, directly or their heirs, are entitled to justice.

Mr. Chairman, I again thank you for your expeditious hearing on H.R. 1595, the Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act. The people of Guam have waited close to sixty-one years for closure and while students of history will note the injustice, you now have an opportunity in 2005 to right a wrong.

Respectfully,



Judith T. Won Pat
Democrat Leader, 28th Guam Legislature