



HR0288

LRB095 11819 KXB 34962 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The American GI Forum was chartered by Congress because of the inequities and discrimination inflicted upon returning Mexican-American Veterans after their distinguished service in World War II, and its primary purpose is to serve Hispanic and Latino Veterans and their families; and

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WHEREAS, Hispanic and Latino Americans, as members of the Armed Forces of the United States, served with valor and distinction during World War II, fighting and dying for the principles of equality, justice, and freedom for all; and

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WHEREAS, Hispanic and Latino Americans during World War II were the most decorated minority group to receive this country's highest award, The Congressional Medal of Honor; and

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WHEREAS, Hispanic and Latino Americans, as an ethnic group, made tremendous and significant contributions during World War II, including the 200th and 515th Coast Artillery (Anti-aircraft) battalions stationed at Clark Field in the Philippines, 65 miles west of Manila; and

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WHEREAS, These National Guard units were largely made up of Mexican-American officers and enlisted personnel from New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas and were activated and dispatched in 1940 while America was still at peace; and

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1           WHEREAS, Within days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the  
2 Japanese Imperial Navy attacked American positions in the  
3 Philippines; outnumbered and desperate, General Douglas  
4 MacArthur moved his forces, including the 200th and 515th, to  
5 the Bataan Peninsula west of Manila; fighting alongside their  
6 Filipino comrades, the National Guard units made a heroic  
7 three-month stand against the large, well-equipped invading  
8 forces; as the weeks passed, rations, medical supplies, and  
9 ammunition diminished and became scarce; on April 9, 1942,  
10 starving and greatly outnumbered, most of the surviving troops  
11 were ordered to surrender; and

12           WHEREAS, After their capture, the American and Filipino  
13 soldiers had to endure the 12-day, 85-mile "Death March" from  
14 Bataan to the prison camps, followed by 34 months of captivity;  
15 three years later, General Jonathan Wainright praised the men  
16 of the 200th and 515th units, saying that "they were the first  
17 to fire and the last to lay down their arms and only  
18 reluctantly doing so after being given a direct order"; and

19           WHEREAS, The 158th Regimental Combat Team, an Arizona  
20 National Guard unit comprised of many Hispanic soldiers, saw  
21 heavy combat in the Pacific Theater and earned the respect of  
22 General MacArthur, who referred to them as "the greatest  
23 fighting combat team ever deployed for battle"; and

1           WHEREAS, Company E of the 141st Regiment of the 36th Texas  
2           Infantry Division was made up entirely of Hispanic Americans,  
3           and after 361 days of combat in Italy and France, the 141st  
4           Regiment sustained 1,126 killed, 5,000 wounded, and over 500  
5           missing in action; in recognition of their extended service and  
6           valor, the members of the 141st garnered 31 Distinguished  
7           Services Crosses, 12 Legion of Merits, 492 Silver Stars, 11  
8           Soldier's Medals, 1,685 Bronze Stars, as well as numerous  
9           commendations and decorations; and

10           WHEREAS, From 1940 to 1946, more than 65,000 Puerto Ricans  
11           served in the American military, most of them going overseas,  
12           and the 295th and 296th Infantry Regiments of the Puerto Rican  
13           National Guard participated in the Pacific Theater while other  
14           Puerto Ricans served in Europe; and

15           WHEREAS, Twelve Hispanic soldiers received the Medal of  
16           Honor for the services during World War II; and

17           WHEREAS, The Public Broadcasting Service has announced it  
18           is airing the documentary series, "The War," by Ken Burns  
19           beginning September, 2007, and this seven-part, 14 hour  
20           documentary series explores the history and horror of World War  
21           II from an American perspective, and it follows the fortunes of  
22           so-called ordinary men and women who were caught up in the

1 greatest cataclysm in recent human history; and

2 WHEREAS, This documentary exposes the racism of World War  
3 II directed at African-American and Japanese-Americans;  
4 however, it fails to outline the same racism as it affected  
5 Hispanic and Latino Americans; and

6 WHEREAS, This documentary purports to honor the heroism of  
7 all Americans, when in fact it glaringly fails to honor those  
8 heroic Hispanic Americans who have earned such an honor; and

9 WHEREAS, Whether intentionally or inadvertently, the  
10 contributions of Hispanic and Latino Americans in World War II  
11 were omitted; this oversight appears to have violated the  
12 Public Broadcasting Service's own policy on Diversity;  
13 therefore, be it

14 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
15 NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we  
16 condemn this documentary for not presenting the contributions  
17 of Hispanic and Latino Americans during World War II; and be it  
18 further

19 RESOLVED, That the Public Broadcasting Service is urged to  
20 refrain from broadcasting the documentary until this omission  
21 is corrected; and be it further

1           RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be sent  
2 to the President of the United States, President of the U.S.  
3 Senate, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, members  
4 of the Illinois congressional delegation, national and local  
5 directors of the Public Broadcasting Service, and to the  
6 National Commander of the American GI Forum.