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**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**Opening Statement by**  
**The Honorable Jeff Landry**  
**Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs**  
**At the Legislative Hearing on**  
**H.R. 44, the Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act**  
**July 14, 2011**

We will now move on to the second panel to hear testimony on H.R. 44, the Guam World War II Loyalty and Recognition Act, introduced by our colleague from Guam, Congresswoman Bordallo.

A week from today, July 21, 2011, is the 67<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of American troops liberating Guam. It is my understanding that this morning, Congresswoman Bordallo, with Ranking Member Sablan and Governor Calvo, honored the lives lost during the liberation of Guam by the 3rd Marine Division and 77th Infantry Division in 1944 at a wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery. Arlington Cemetery is a reminder to us all of the ultimate sacrifice brave American military personnel - men and women - have paid for the price of freedom in this country.

Unspeakable actions occur during war. I don't think anyone will disagree that residents of Guam were subjected to many horrors during the 32 months of Japanese occupation. Horrible acts were occurring in every occupied area during World War II.

The 79<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress responded quickly to the plight of Guam residents and, in 1945, passed the Guam Meritorious Claims Act to provide "immediate relief" to the residents of Guam. The Act paid 4,356 individuals over \$8 million dollars. Congress also passed the Guam Land Transfer Act and the Guam Rehabilitation Act.

The Guam Meritorious Claims Act is said to have been the primary means of settling war claims for the people of Guam. The Guam Land Transfer Act enabled land exchanges for resettlement purposes and the Guam Rehabilitation Act appropriated \$6 million for construction and was the means for economic rehabilitation.

While I understand H.R. 44 has been considered in previous Congresses, this is my first opportunity to review this measure, as it may be for other Members of the Subcommittee. I understand from my preparation for this hearing that many people here today believe the Guam Meritorious Claims Act was a start in the process, but was incomplete and did not adequately compensate residents of Guam in comparison to other war claim statutes.

It is also my understanding from documents in the Guam Review Commission report that the intent of the Guam Meritorious Claims Act was to not make Guam residents “whole”, instead it was, at least with regard to property, to provide people relief. I am concerned that if we go forward with this legislative proposal we could be opening Congress up to additional war claims. Documents in the Commission report make note of some 400,000 Americans who suffered injury in World War II who never received compensation for their injuries.

The President of the Heritage Foundation notes that: “The U.S. bears no blame here, and no responsibility. We fought to prevent the Island from being taken by the Japanese, and fought to free it again. Some 3,000 Americans were killed and more than 7,000 wounded in the 1944 battle for the Island. That’s a price paid in blood that can never be made up with mere dollars.” Even the Guam War Claims Review Commission stated that: “The U.S. government is not obligated as a matter of law to pay such compensation.”

During this hearing I hope to find out: why there is a need for additional compensation; who will be compensated under H.R. 44; why the Japanese government did not pay the initial compensation in 1945; and how the federal government is going to pay more than \$100 million when we are nearly \$15 trillion in debt.

As I indicated at the beginning of this statement, I am deeply sympathetic to those living in Guam during the occupation by the Japanese Imperial Army. They were treated in a particularly oppressive, cruel and barbaric way. Sadly, paying this compensation will not bring back the dead nor will it undue the 32 months of hell which they endured.

I look forward to hearing the testimony of our distinguished witnesses, and now recognize our Ranking Member Mr. Sablan, for any statement he would like to make.