

**Remarks of
H.E. JOSE L. CUISIA, JR.
Ambassador of the Philippines
To the United States**

**Reception in honor of
The Presidential Inauguration of H.E. Barack Obama
20 January 2013, 4:00 to 6:00 pm
Embassy of the Philippines**

Deputy Assistant Secretary Francey Youngberg of the Department of Housing and Urban Development

Commissioner Hector Vargas, Jr., White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

Mga kababayan,

Good afternoon to all of you.

I want to start by congratulating all of you! You are standing here today because all of you are winners. It is only in a working democracy where the final victors are the people so please give yourselves a big round of applause.

I would like to thank you for joining us this afternoon. We have friends who came in from the northeast, from the West Coast and even from Hawaii. Thank you all for braving Washington, DC weather and traffic to observe a symbolic and meaningful US tradition.

Tomorrow, President Obama will stand at Capitol Hill and take his oath before his countrymen as President of the United States. I am sure he will recite the oath and deliver his remarks with pride in his heart. When we look back at the campaign, we all will concede that it was not an easy victory. The results showed the deep divisions that mark a large and diverse society.

However, I believe that he will also speak with great confidence that America will stand by him as he implements difficult reforms. The hallmark of democracy comes not with the exercise of rights and responsibilities but with the guarantee that institutions will function no matter what the outcomes will be.

You are fortunate to live in a country where your voice matters. Last summer, I got to witness the conventions of both the Republican and Democratic parties together with the other Ambassadors here in Washington, DC. I was very pleased to meet Filipino Americans in Tampa and Charlotte as well as the Filipino American delegates. There was so much energy among the Convention participants and the passion of the people was just palpable.

I am hosting this reception because I know that the Filipino-American community actively participated, in various ways, in last year's election. First, [twenty-five (25)] Filipino Americans were elected into office. I congratulate them and their supporters on their success. I hope that they will be bold and fearless public servants and will keep their integrity no matter where success leads them. Also, I hope that they will inspire more Filipino-Americans to seek elective office.

Congratulations are in order too for the National Federation of Filipino-American Associations (NaFFAA) for their hard work in educating, persuading and pushing our community to register and vote. Gloria Caoile, Jon Melegrito, Bing Branigin, and many others, I pray that you will remain tireless in traveling from coast to coast to get more Filipino-Americans registered.

I would like to commend as well the Filipino American Vote Coalition of Hampton Roads (FAVCHOR) and the KAYA-Filipino Americans for Progress in California for their efforts to get more Filipino Americans registered and active in the election process. You have shown that we can achieve so much when we work together towards a common and noble goal. It is my hope that this will only be the start. In the coming

years, we look forward to seeing more local initiatives that empower the Filipino American community and demonstrate their strength to policy makers. Who knows, one of you may just be the next community organizer who will occupy the White House.

Since I assumed the office of the Philippine Ambassador, it has been my personal advocacy to get more Filipino Americans to be politically active. Filipinos have been in this country for many years and your contribution to the growth and development of the United States has been recognized by the White House, the US Congress and your communities. You worked hard to earn your US citizenship and you should be able to exercise the privileges that come with it, most important of which is the right to vote.

There are many avenues that allow you to be politically active. For now, I am just pleased that many have responded to our incessant call to register and vote.

You may ask what my hidden agenda is. Why am I pushing you to be responsible citizens of America. I believe that by being good Americans, you become good Filipinos. By supporting a candidate or a party or a policy, you become a stakeholder. What you say matters and as a voter, a campaign volunteer or a contributor, you have the ears of the decision makers. And I trust, that you will continue to hold a sweet spot for the Philippines. The US is a top trading partner of the Philippines, one of the largest sources of foreign direct investment and a mutual defense treaty ally. You, as a political constituent, can do so much in advancing a more robust Philippines-US relations.

Your numbers continue to grow and our community has been described by the Migration Policy Institute as being more educated than the other minorities and is generally well-off. This means you have the resources to accomplish more. I look forward to the day when a Filipino American bloc is able to influence important policy decisions.

Before I close I wish to greet four special guests. Joining us this afternoon are four students from the Philippines who are invited to witness tomorrow's inauguration – Ms. Leslie Ching, Ms. Trina Samson, Mr. Anton Reloj, and Ms. Salve Anne Marie Villarosa. I'll see the four of you tomorrow.

Once again, I would like to thank you all for responding to our call. We in the Philippine Government take pride in the success of Filipino Americans and we are confident that you will continue to reach even greater heights.

Maraming salamat at mabuhay kayong lahat!