

## **PH, U.S. sign agreement to protect OFWs' welfare**

Written by Administrator  
Friday, 15 June 2012 16:52

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### **SEC. HILDA SOLIS**

MANILA — The Philippines has signed a partnership agreement with the United States Department of Labor to ensure the welfare of migrant workers.

In a ceremony held on June 11 at the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, ambassadors representing the embassies of the Philippines, Honduras, Peru and Ecuador signed partnership agreements with U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis.

The agreements would ensure that migrant workers are aware of their rights to safe workplaces and to receive full payment of the wages owed to them under the laws of the U.S.

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The accord augurs well for Filipino migrant workers throughout the U.S.

The 2010 U.S. Census showed that the number of "Filipino in any combination" increased by 44.5 percent from 2,364,815 in 2000 to 3,416,840.

The protection of the rights and promotion of the welfare and interest of Filipinos overseas is among the three pillars of Philippine foreign policy.

"We are very pleased to sign these joint declarations and letters of arrangement with DOL," said Philippine ambassador to the U.S. Jose Cuisia, Jr.

He said "we assure DOL we will do our part in ensuring the dissemination of helpful information to Filipino workers concerning their right to a safe and healthy working environment, and fair wages and working hours in the U.S., and in assisting them to seek redress when such rights are disregarded or violated."

Under the agreement, regional enforcement offices of the U.S. Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and its Wage and Hour Division (WHD) will cooperate with Philippine consulates throughout the U.S.

Together, the consulates and Labor Department agencies will reach out to migrant workers with information about U.S. health, safety and wage laws.

The partnership will help the WHD and OSHA more effectively enforce U.S. laws, especially in high-risk and low-wage industries.

Both agencies, under this cooperation, will identify problems faced by migrant workers and target labor law enforcement efforts.

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“Migrant workers make important contributions to our economy,” Solis said.

“Enforcing labor rules means we ensure that companies that play by the rules get an advantage and compete in a level playing field, and that all workers are safe on the job and are fairly compensated.”

The U.S. Labor Department has similar agreements with 11 other countries.

The Labor Department previously implemented agreements with Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and India.

The U.S. Labor Department's WHD is responsible for administering and enforcing laws that establish minimally acceptable standards for wages and working conditions in the country.

WHD has over 200 district, field, and area offices across the country with trained personnel available to assist workers.

All services are offered free and confidential.