

Submitter: Gary Akiyama

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Measure: SB1509

As the son of a decorated NISEI war veteran my father George Akiyama bravely and gallantly and with the utmost pride served in the United States Army with the now famous 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. My dad and his fellow soldiers so desperately wanted to prove their loyalty and honor to the USA and that being an American they would take any steps, even to their death to show their patriotism! Thus the slogan " Go For Broke " was born. When imperial Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7th, 1941 that day would profoundly change the lives of all Japanese American forever. Even though my dad and family were American citizens looking like the enemy would not hold well. What would follow would be all Japanese American families to be separated, loss of all property and possessions and being in concentration camps, living in awful conditions that were fit for only an animal in some cases. A story I need to share is when my dad returned home to Hood River, Oregon after serving proudly and being a Sergeant in the USA Army. He wanted to get a haircut before heading home in Oak Grove to see his family. He walks into a barber shop in downtown Hood River and was waiting patiently for his turn, however he was not being served. So finally he gets served and as he sits down in the barber chair the barber looks at him and says, " I ought to cut your throat, you dirty Jap"! My dad jumps out of the chair and says, " wow! your no better than the German soldiers that I just fought!" and left the barber shop. A Captain Lawrence from Parkdale observed all of this and was not happy about this incident at all. Captain Lawrence somehow found out where my father lived and went to the Akiyama house and deeply apologized to my dad and the family. I am truly humbled and honored that all of you at the Oregon Legislature would seriously consider the designation of Highway 35 in Hood River County as a Veteran's Memorial Highway in honor of the NISEI Veterans of WWII. Thank You, Gary Akiyama