

Submitter: Carol Suzuki

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Measure: SB1509

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Thomsen and members of the committee –

My name is Carol Suzuki. I serve as the Operations Director for the Senate Majority Office but I am here today in my personal capacity as a sansei – a 3rd generation Japanese American - who was born and raised in the Hood River Valley to speak in favor of Senate Bill 1509 and the -3 amendment.

I'd like to tell you about my beloved uncle, Yoriaki Tambara, who was like a second father to me. He was born in Metolius, Oregon and a graduate of Bend High School. He was among the young JA men who enlisted with the U.S. armed services from within the Minidoka Concentration camp in Idaho and went on to serve with the segregated 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the most decorated unit in military history for its size and length of service.

Oregon Highway 35 is well-positioned for naming as the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway because it cuts through the heart of the Hood River Valley where many Japanese American families once had and still operate thriving fruit orchards. My own family's orchard has been in operation for over 100 years and is located within a mile of the highway. Traveling on Highway 35 is the route we would take to go downtown, to take truckloads of fruit to Odell to Diamond Fruit or to Underwood, WA or to get to I-84 on our way to Portland or the Oregon Coast. Whenever I drive on Highway 35 I will think of him.

While my uncle was never wounded and did not receive medals for his service, I have no doubt that it took incredible courage to enlist and serve — knowing that war casualties were high and that he may never make it home to his young bride, my aunt Kiku, who he met and married while imprisoned in Idaho. He chose to fight for his country even as his own family and loved ones remained incarcerated behind barbed wire to demonstrate his loyalty to the United States despite everything.

It's men like my Uncle Yori that we honor with the passage of Senate Bill 1509. An Oregon Nisei Veterans Memorial Highway designation would forever memorialize these soldiers bravery and stand as a marker of the triumph of the human spirit.

I want to thank Eric Ballinger, Linda Tamura and Dick Tobiason for the genesis of this idea and for letting me be a part of this effort, my husband – former Rep. Brian Clem for having this bill drafted and Sen. Chuck Thomsen - a veteran and fellow orchardist for sponsoring this legislation. Over the years I have been involved with the passage

of several bills commemorating the resilience of the Japanese Americans who rebuilt their lives after World War II, but this one is more personal and perhaps closest to my heart.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this meaningful bill and I encourage your passage of Senate Bill 1509 with the -3 amendment.