

Submitter: Linda Tamura

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Veterans and Emergency Management

Measure: SB1509

Part 2:

- American Legion Post #22 dedicated a brick for “All Nisei Veterans” at downtown Overlook Park on Veterans’ Day 2001.
- A marble monument with names of all local Japanese American veterans was dedicated at Hood River’s Idlewild Cemetery on Memorial Day 2011.

We’ve honored these veterans in other ways:

- The Congressional Gold Medal, our nation’s highest civilian award, honored all Nisei WWII veterans in 2011.
- Last June 2021 the U.S. Postal Service issued the Go For Broke Japanese American Soldiers of WWII Stamp. We held our Oregon dedication on Flag Day.

Today we endorse SB 1509, dedicating Oregon Route 35 (from the Columbia River to Mt. Hood) as the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway. This 41-mile highway would honor ALL 130 Nisei veterans from Oregon, five of whom were killed in action. Today we know of just ten who are still living.

Oregon Route 35 was travelled regularly by the Japanese American community in Hood River. Descendants of at least 25 Nisei veterans still live in the area. To support educating the public - especially our youth - we are partnering with the History Museum of Hood River.

The Oregon Nisei Veterans WWII Memorial Highway would be among eight highways dedicated to Oregon veterans during five major wars, thanks to veteran Dick Tobiason and the Bend Heroes Foundation.

Our Nisei veterans fought two wars: for democracy in Europe and the South Pacific – and against prejudice at home. Veteran George Akiyama told me, “We had to prove we were good citizens and loyal Americans – for the way people were being treated back home and in camp.” Imagine...

The weapons of these modest, courageous Americans – their actions – were more powerful than their words. Honoring these heroes who stood above discrimination can symbolize hope and resilience for our next generations: a reminder of America’s commitment to “liberty and justice for all.”

They paved the way. Highway 35 can become a highway of gratitude and remembrance.

Sincerely,
Linda Tamura
Tualatin, OR