

February 14, 2022

Regarding: SB 1509 Testimony

Dear Members of the House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management, Chair Grayber and Committee Members,

My relatives of Japanese American descent who were born in the USA served during WWII (Frank Toda and Harry Toda of The Dalles, and Shigeru Imai of Hood River) and the Korean War (Jess Toda). As proud Americans, they sacrificed their lives to protect our country, while facing the risks of racial prejudice and the uncertainties of war.

Over thirty-three thousand Japanese American (Nisei) soldiers served our country honorably during World War II while many of their families were among 120,000 incarcerated in American concentration camps with FDR's Executive Order 9088, which impacted only the Japanese American citizens who lived on the West Coast. This truly was an act of racial injustice, particularly with the loss of personal property and the loss of human rights due to Japanese ancestry. My grandparents and family friends lost their farmland in Hood River, Oregon since they were of Japanese ancestry, and were interned in Tule Lake, California, and their sons were sent to war.

One unit, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team is the most decorated unit in our country's military history for its size and length of service. Still, they faced discrimination when they returned home. These courageous sacrifices were not fully acknowledged until President Regan signed the Civil Liberties Act in 1988, to compensate more than 100,000 people of Japanese descent who were incarcerated in internment camps during World War II. A formal apology was issued, and survivors received \$20,000 in compensation. Sadly, my grandparents did not live to see this in action, and \$20,000 is an insignificant amount given the personal property, emotional stress and inhumane treatment of being interned in concentration camps.

Due to the horrific acts of war and behavior during WW2, I strongly endorse Senate Bill 1509 to dedicate Highway 35 as the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway. We can honor these heroes with permanent roadside markers to help our youth and next generations ask questions and learn how American citizens demonstrated pride over prejudice. This recognition will generate awareness of the historical actions that occurred during WW2, open up conversations on the past, so that future generations can realize the sacrifices our Americans of Japanese descent made to protect our nation. It is through acts such this bill, where we can continue to heal this nation, known for racism and division. ***The time is now*** to right a horrible wrong from our past history, and to acknowledge and celebrate our Nisei veterans who helped protect our country during this difficult time.

Regards,

Larry Toda  
Tigard, Oregon