

Submitter: Debbie Whitecotton

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Veterans and Emergency Management

Measure: SB1509

My father was Harold Yukimori Okimoto and he served in WWII as 1st Sgt. in the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion (C Battery) attached to the 442nd Infantry Battalion. He proudly served his country while his wife and her parents were incarcerated in Minidoka. After the war Hood River was not a welcoming atmosphere where they faced discrimination and racism on their return, but thankfully their were individuals that were supportive and kind. Growing up my parents and grandparents never spoke of their incarceration & discrimination they faced - it wasn't until my senior year in HS that my history teacher asked if my parents were incarcerated. I asked my mother and she said "yes" but I could sense she did not want to discuss it. My father unfortunately died in 1958 from cancer. To honor my father and the Nisei soldiers with designating a portion of Hwy. 35 is especially meaningful. I only wish my father and so many of the courageous and loyal Nisei soldiers were alive to see this bill pass. In truly hope their memory and honor can be memorialized by the passage of this bill. Having grown up in the HR Valley, it is even more special to possibly have the opportunity to see signs along a stretch of highway that was and continues to be traveled by many of the families this bill will honor. Please consider my testimony to help pass this legislative bill.