

Bend Heroes Foundation
1900 NE 3rd St. Ste 106, #205
Bend, OR 97701

Feb. 17, 2020

Public Hearing by Oregon House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management:
SB 1509 Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway

Chair Grayber and distinguished Committee members:

I am Dick Tobiason, Chairman, Bend Heroes Foundation, and initiator of 9 border to border veterans highways across Oregon honoring almost 600,000 veterans who served during war and peacetime since WWI.

Please accept my deep appreciation for your support with legislation creating those highways and holding this hearing today.

In that capacity, fellow Bendite Eric Ballinger asked me if it was possible to have the Oregon legislature designate the 41 mile SR 35 between the POW/MIA Memorial Highway on US Hwy 26 and Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway on I-84 as the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway. I replied it must be done and Dr. Linda Tamura and American Legion Post 22 in Hood River must join us. Dr. Tamura, Eric Ballinger, American Legion Post 22 and others will provide riveting testimony on the importance and justification for honoring Oregon's WWII Nisei Veterans with a dedicated highway.

It is well known that our own government imprisoned Japanese - American families in what can be described as concentration camps far from their homes. From those camps many young Nisei entered WWII military service. As Americans they wanted to fight for our nation.

On returning home after the war, these veterans were ill-treated by their former communities, a local veterans group and the Oregon Legislature. Positive events over the ensuing 7 decades have belatedly helped right those wrongs.

It is past time to right those wrongs by enacting SB 1509 into law so that the few remaining Nisei Veterans and families will know we honor them especially near the communities they left for war. They were proud to serve our nation as Americans during war and prove their fidelity to our nation. Travelers along the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway will be afforded opportunities to learn more about these heroes and discrimination issues facing our nation during and after WWII.

At my request, ODOT kindly created a mockup of the proposed highway sign and which has been submitted for the record. As usual, veterans and historians will pay ODOT to create and install signs

Over the last 7 decades since the end of WWII our military services and society have made great strides in advancing equality among formerly disadvantaged groups.

Thank you for this opportunity to briefly comment on SB 1509. I am honored to work with Dr. Linda Tamura, Eric Ballinger, and American Legion Post 22 in this most worthy endeavor.

I urge this committee to vote unanimously “Aye” with a “Do Pass” recommendation just as your Senate counterpart committee has already done.

Respectfully submitted,

Dick Tobiason, Chairman
LTC US Army Retired

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