SENATE RESOLUTION

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By Senators Hasegawa, Hobbs, Brown, Dammeier, Roach, and Chase

WHEREAS, On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 which authorized the military to forcibly remove and incarcerate more than 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast, including 12,000 Japanese-American residents of Washington State; and

WHEREAS, The first Civilian Evacuation Order gave Japanese-Americans from Bainbridge Island less than one week to leave behind homes, farms, businesses, friends, and family and to report to hastily constructed detention centers like Camp Harmony on the grounds of the Western Washington Fair in Puyallup; and

WHEREAS, This drastic course of action allegedly aimed to prevent acts of espionage and sabotage by Japanese-Americans who were deemed untrustworthy and disloyal to the United States; and

WHEREAS, On March 23, 1943, the War Department organized a segregated unit of Japanese-Americans, many of whom reported for military duty from concentration camps surrounded by barbed wire in which they and their families were detained; and

WHEREAS, More than 12,000 volunteers responded to unfounded questions of their loyalty and patriotism by amassing a battle record unparalleled in United States military history that, according to General Douglas MacArthur's chief of intelligence, "saved a million lives and shortened the war by two years"; and

WHEREAS, Equally loyal and patriotic Japanese-Americans fought to protect our constitutional rights and liberties through dissent and civil disobedience, like University of Washington student Gordon Hirabayashi who was arrested, convicted, and imprisoned for defying the military curfew on select civilians and refusing to evacuate when ordered; and

WHEREAS, In 1982, the Congressional Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians found "no military or security reason for the internment" of persons of Japanese ancestry, but determined it "was caused by racial prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership"; and

WHEREAS, As a result of this travesty of justice, Japanese-Americans suffered immense economic loss of property and assets, immeasurable physical and psychological harm, and were deprived of their constitutional liberties without due process of law; and

WHEREAS, President Gerald Ford rescinded Executive Order 9066 in 1976, calling upon the American people to "resolve that this kind of action shall never again be repeated"; and

WHEREAS, The Washington State Legislature enacted token compensatory redress for forty state workers who lost their jobs due to their incarceration, while Congressman Mike Lowry of Washington State introduced federal legislation to provide reparations and an apology to all living former Japanese-American internees, initiating a ten-year quest that ended when President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Washington State Senate, along with the people of Washington, pause to acknowledge the seventy-third anniversary of the signing of Executive Order 9066, as well as the seventieth anniversary of the end of World War II, to recognize and honor the heroism, sacrifice, patience, and loyalty of the Japanese-American World War II veterans and internees, and to remember the lessons and blessing of liberty and justice for all; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be immediately transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate to the Nisei Veterans Committee, the Military Intelligence Service — Northwest Association, the Japanese American Citizens League, the Japanese Cultural & Community Center of Washington State, and the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience.