

SENATE RESOLUTION

8620

By Senators Hasegawa, Hobbs, Brown, Wellman, Kuderer, Darneille, Das, Hunt, Salomon, Schoesler, Lovelett, Wilson, C., Billig, Saldaña, Zeiger, Frockt, Palumbo, and Fortunato

1 WHEREAS, Seventy-seven years ago, on February 19, 1942, during
2 World War II, persons of Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese ancestry,
3 including United States citizens, were ordered to live in
4 concentration camps and subject to a strict curfew; and

5 WHEREAS, Over 120,000 United States citizens and permanent
6 residents of Japanese ancestry were required to leave their homes on
7 the West Coast and submit to imprisonment based solely on their
8 ancestry. This was required by Civilian Exclusion Order 34 which was
9 authorized by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, The first civilian evacuation order gave Japanese
12 Americans from Bainbridge Island less than one week to leave behind
13 homes, personal belongings, farms, businesses, friends, and family;
14 allowed them only two suitcases of personal belongings; and
15 transported them to hastily constructed detention centers, like Camp
16 Harmony located in the horse stalls on the grounds of the Washington
17 State Fair in Puyallup where they were held until more permanent
18 concentration camps could be built in more remote locations, like
19 Hunt, Idaho (Minidoka) and Tule Lake, California, which is where most
20 Japanese Americans from the Puget Sound region were held; and

21 WHEREAS, This drastic course of action allegedly aimed to prevent
22 acts of espionage and sabotage by Japanese Americans who were deemed

1 untrustworthy and disloyal to the United States even though no
2 evidence was ever presented to support such distrust; and

3 WHEREAS, On March 23, 1943, the War Department organized a
4 segregated unit of Japanese Americans; and, from within those
5 American concentration camps where they and their families were
6 incarcerated, surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards, thousands
7 responded to questions of their loyalty and patriotism by
8 volunteering to serve in the segregated Army unit known as the 442nd
9 Regimental Combat Team, which went on to amass a battle record
10 unmatched in United States military history earning 7 Presidential
11 Unit Citations, 21 Medals of Honor, 29 Distinguished Service Crosses,
12 a Distinguished Service Medal, 588 Silver Stars, more than 4,000
13 Bronze Stars, 22 Legion of Merit Medals, 15 Soldier's Medals, 9,486
14 Purple Hearts, and a total of 16 decorations from the governments of
15 France and Italy; and

16 WHEREAS, Equally loyal and patriotic Japanese Americans fought to
17 protect our constitutional rights and liberties through dissent, like
18 Minoru Yasui; Fred Korematsu; and University of Washington student
19 Gordon Hirabayashi who was arrested, convicted, and imprisoned for
20 defying the military curfew on select civilians and challenging the
21 constitutionality of the exclusion and incarceration orders.
22 Korematsu and Hirabayashi were eventually awarded the Presidential
23 Medal of Freedom for their principled actions and sacrifices; and

24 WHEREAS, In 1982, the Congressional Commission on Wartime
25 Relocation and Internment of Civilians found "no military or security
26 reason for the internment" of persons of Japanese ancestry. Rather,
27 it found the denial of constitutional rights "was caused by racial
28 prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership"; and

29 WHEREAS, In 1976, President Gerald Ford rescinded Executive Order
30 9066 saying, "I call upon the American people to affirm with me this
31 American Promise—that we have learned from the tragedy of that long-
32 ago experience forever to treasure liberty and justice for each
33 individual American, and resolve that this kind of action shall never
34 again be repeated"; and

35 WHEREAS, In 1979, newly elected Washington State Congressman Mike
36 Lowry introduced H.R. 5977: The Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which
37 was signed 10 years later by President Ronald Reagan who said, "So
38 what is most important in this bill has less to do with property than
39 with honor, for here, we admit a wrong. Here we reaffirm our
40 commitment as a nation to equal justice under the law."; and

1 WHEREAS, In 2010, the United States Congress recognized the
2 unparalleled record of Nisei soldiers by awarding the Congressional
3 Gold Medal to the 100th Infantry Battalion, the 442nd Regimental
4 Combat Team, and the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) of the
5 United States Army who fought in the Pacific Theater as interpreters
6 and code breakers; and

7 WHEREAS, Throughout Washington State, survivors of the European
8 and Asian Pacific battlefields of World War II and of American
9 incarceration camps continue to live their golden years in quiet
10 contrast to their extraordinary acts of patriotism, conscience, and
11 valor;

12 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That on this auspicious occasion
13 of the 75th Anniversary of the signing of Executive Order 9066, the
14 Washington State Senate, along with the people of Washington State,
15 pause to acknowledge and reflect on the significance of Executive
16 Order 9066 and its effect in denying constitutional freedoms and
17 protections. We also reflect on our democracy's greatness in
18 recognizing the need to correct this failure, the need for constant
19 vigilance to protect our constitutional rights and freedoms; and

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we recognize the Japanese American
21 internees, constitutional protectors, and World War II veterans from
22 the state of Washington; honor their patience, heroism, sacrifice,
23 and loyalty; and remember the lessons, rights, and responsibilities
24 that come with the phrase, "liberty and justice for all"; and

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
26 immediately transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate to the Nisei
27 Veterans Committee, the Military Intelligence Service-Northwest
28 Association, the Japanese American Citizens League National and
29 Seattle Chapter, the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of
30 Washington State, the Japanese American National Museum, and the Wing
31 Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience.

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