

Kate Brown
Governor



**Oregon Commission on
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Testimony in support of SCR 14
House Committee on Rules. March 2, 3 pm, HR 50

Chair Williamson, Vice-Chair McLane, Vice Chair Rayfield and Representatives Barreto, Hack, Holvey, Kennemer, Nosse and Smith Warner:

I am submitting testimony today as Chair of the Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs. As a third generation Japanese American whose grandparents, mother, father, aunts and uncles were all incarcerated during World War II due to Executive Order 9066, I am honored to be here to testify in support of the passage of this resolution.

February 19, 2017 marks the 75th anniversary of the signing of this Executive Order by President Roosevelt which led to the mass incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans because they looked like the enemy. Four thousand were from the Oregon Japanese American community who were sent first to the Portland Assembly Center, now the Expo Center, and then to the Minidoka incarceration camp near Twin Falls, Idaho, or the Tule Lake incarceration camp in northern California because of fear, racism and war hysteria.

Not only did they lose their homes, businesses and property, they lost their civil rights as citizens of the United States. Young William S. Naito, a Portland native who became a revered business leader, told his Japan-born parents that nothing would happen to their family after the bombing of Pearl Harbor because he had just learned about the constitution in school. They were Americans so they were safe! It was not to be so.

Shortly after the bombing, the FBI took away my grandfathers, as they did all other Japanese leaders in the community, in the middle of the night to be held in Department of Justice incarceration camps without cause.

Recognized in this resolution are some of the sacrifices these Japanese Americans made to prove they were loyal Americans, and because of these sacrifices, the honors they received, such as the Congressional Gold Medal for the Japanese American veterans, which is the only Congressional Gold Medal on display in the Smithsonian out of over 157 medals awarded, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom for Minoru Yasui, the first and only Oregonian to receive this highest honor from the President of the United States, because he was not afraid to stand up for what he believed was the unconstitutionality of the military curfew.

This resolution also recognizes the federal legislation that created the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. My family and the thousands of other Japanese Americans did not deserve the harsh and unfair treatment they received because of their heritage and neither do those we see today in our Muslim communities. This resolution has to be a reminder that ANY executive order that seeks to call into question our rights because of our heritage is wrong. We all know we must not walk down that path of Executive Order 9066 again.

With deep appreciation on behalf of OCAPIA to the sponsors of this resolution as well as to you, we urge the passage of this resolution in remembrance and reverence this day and every day, educating ourselves and others that this history must be learned and not repeated.

Mari Watanabe, Chair, OCAPIA

**OR Commission on Asian
and Pacific Islander Affairs**

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