

Chair Burdick and members of the committee,

My name is Carol Suzuki and it's an honor to testify in favor of Senate Concurrent Resolution 14. I am a third generation Oregonian and Japanese American whose family was directly impacted by Executive Order 9066.

My grandparents immigrated to Oregon in the early 1900s from Japan. They were recruited from Japan to work as immigrant farm laborers along the west coast. They eventually settled in the Hood River Valley where they had two children – my dad, Hideo and his sister, Kiku and were able to lease land and farm it growing asparagus, strawberries, and other produce and eventually tree fruits like apples and pears.

It is important to note that as immigrants from Japan, they were not allowed to own land. When my father and aunt became old enough, my family was able to “own” land because they unlike their parents could be U.S. citizens.

The passage of SCR 14 is important to me because, my grandparents after living in the United States for over 25 years as law-abiding citizens (or alien residents as they were called) were wrongly incarcerated in internment camps run by the U.S. government during World War 2. This included my father, aunt and other family members who were American born U.S. citizens. They were imprisoned not because they had broken any laws, not because they had been involved with any subversive activities, but simply based on the fact that they looked like the enemy. They were rounded up like cattle and handed a family number that you had to attach to your body or your personal property. They were imprisoned due to my grandparent's country of origin and on the idea that while they hadn't committed any crimes or acts of sabotage or espionage, “they might.” The very idea of that is chilling and yet it seems that people in positions of power still seem to be of that same mindset.

I believe it is important that we commemorate the 75th anniversary of Executive Order 9066 because the lingering memory of this betrayal still affects me today. I think about my dad being 19 and a recent high school grad with his whole life ahead of him and then being imprisoned by his own country.

It is important to me because my uncle enlisted in the United States Army from behind barbed wire and was a member of the 442nd Regimental combat team in

Europe where the 100th Battalion became the most decorated unit in American history.

It is important to me because Executive Order 9066 still casts a shadow over me and my family today. I too experienced many instances of racial prejudice growing up in Hood River that I will not go into today. And it very nearly broke my heart when my 9-year old daughter after hearing references to the Muslim ban in the news and knowing what happened to people of Japanese ancestry during World War 2 asked me if “they” would come for her. And then she asked me if she looked American enough like her own blond hair/blue-eyed dad so that she wouldn’t be under suspicion. I did my best to assure her that she was safe and to always have pride in her racial heritage.

Sometimes the words of an innocent child are the ones that affect you the most. My daughter should never be afraid of her own government – I work in the capitol, her father is a state representative. I believe very firmly that we as a society must stay vigilant and fight for the principles upon which our democracy was founded. Unless we remember and remind future generations about the past, we are in danger of repeating those same mistakes. This is why I feel so strongly about commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Japanese American internment and honor it with a national day of remembrance. I urge you to pass SCR 14.