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May 16, 1984.

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Mr. Ron Wakabayashi
National Director
Japanese American Citizens League
1765 Sutter Street
San Francisco, California 94115

Dear Mr. Wakabayashi:

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus would like to offer its endorsement of the Civil Liberties Act of 1983, legislation concerning the internment of Japanese Americans during World War Two. It is our firm belief that this legislation is essential for addressing the terrible injustices perpetrated upon citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry by their internment.

As the independent Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians concluded, the internment of Americans of Japanese ancestry during World War Two was not justified by the government's argument of military necessity. Rather, it was the result of "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership." The forced exclusion and detention was based solely on ancestry, and this blatant example of racism must be addressed.

The tragic episode in American history is rendered even more poignant by the memory of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the World War Two military unit of Japanese Americans, many of whom had volunteered from this nation's detention camps. Forced to leave their homes on the West Coast with their families, these dedicated Americans volunteered for combat duty to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States. While they shed their blood in the service of this nation, their families--parents, brothers, sisters, wives, and children--remained behind barbed wire and under armed military guard as prisoners of the country for which these men were willing to give their lives in combat.

In what constitutional experts for some forty years have described as one of the worst episodes in the constitutional history of this country--the denial of guaranteed protections to over 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry, the majority of whom were United States citizens--the internment experience remains a blemish on this nation. We have, with H.R. 4110, an opportunity to rectify a grave injustice and to declare to the citizens of this country that the ideals and principles of American democracy are indeed shared by all who inhabit our shores.

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