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OFFICE OF THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS
CHICAGO 60602

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December 3, 1979

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Cook County Board of Commissioners has called upon the United States Congress to create a commission to study the possible awarding of compensation to thousands of persons of Japanese ancestry who were incarcerated in "relocation" centers during World War II.

Commissioner Martin Tuchow introduced a resolution urging the Illinois Congressional Delegation to support HR 5499 which would create a commission and determine possible compensation. The Board gave unanimous approval to Tuchow's resolution.

Tuchow noted that in the spring of 1942 the federal government incarcerated 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry, 70,000 of whom were United States citizens.

Tuchow said that he has been working with the Japanese American Citizens League, which is seeking redress for the losses suffered by Japanese Americans as a result of the evacuation.

Many of these displaced Japanese Americans came to the Chicago area from the camps following World War II and have settled here, Tuchow said.

(more)

"Many of these persons live in my home Ward, the 48th Ward, and have proven themselves to be fine citizens and have made a tremendous contribution to the community and local economy," Tuchow said. "The treatment of these persons during World War II is one of our national shames. Yet, no official government agency has ever investigated the causes of the evacuation or the long term economic effect on these Japanese Americans."

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JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

Argument for the support of

HR 5499

A bill that would create a commission to determine whether any wrong was committed against Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II and whether any compensation should be given for losses suffered

In the spring of 1942, one of the greatest acts against constitutional guarantees was perpetrated when all rights of freedom and justice were denied as the federal government incarcerated 110,000 persons, of which 70,000 were United States citizens, in American style concentration camps.

Today, many Americans believe it is inconceivable that such a great injustice was committed, legalized and approved by a government that prides itself on the rights of individuals guaranteed by the constitution. Too few courageous Americans cried out their concern and indignation in opposition to a tragic mistake in our constitutional history.

Americans of Japanese ancestry are living reminders of this terrible injustice. Wartime hysteria and racism led to the mass incarceration of American citizens without trial and without proven charges. There was no law in 1942 to justify imprisoning citizens without due process of law, but it was done anyway on orders of an army commander. For those who remember these camps being called innocuous "relocation centers", let there be no doubt - there were barbed wire, guard towers, bayonets and machine guns to keep the inmates in the American concentration camps.

Moreover, when this actions was finally reviewed by the Supreme Court in the Korematsu case, the Court ruled that the "evacuation" was a justifiable exercise of presidential power. Justice Robert M. Jackson, in a dissenting opinion said, "The Court for all time has validated the principle of racial discrimination in criminal procedure and of transplanting American citizens. The principle then lies about like a loaded weapon ready for the hand of any authority that can bring forward a plausible claim of urgent need."

While there is no way to estimate the long-term economic loss to the evacuees, the Federal Reserve Board made an arbitrary estimate of \$400 million dollars. Nor is there any way to measure the hearts that were broken, the tears that were shed and the lives disrupted.

RESOLUTION

- WHEREAS, In the spring of 1942, one of the greatest acts against constitutional guarantees was perpetrated when all rights of freedom and justice were denied as the federal government incarcerated 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry, 70,000 of which were United States citizens in "relocation centers," and
- WHEREAS, No official government body has ever investigated the causes of the evacuation and the long term economic effects on Japanese Americans, and
- WHEREAS, Many Japanese Americans came to the Chicago metropolitan area from the camps and have settled here, and
- WHEREAS, The Japanese American Citizens League, a national organization founded in 1930 with a membership of over 25,000, is seeking redress for the losses suffered by Japanese Americans as a result of the evacuation, and
- WHEREAS, 128 Congressmen have co-sponsored HR 5499 which would create a commission to determine whether any wrong was committed against those who were incarcerated and whether any compensation should be given for the losses suffered by the internees, THEREFORE, BE IT
- RESOLVED, That the Cook County Board of Commissioners memorialize the Congress of the United States to pass HR 5499, and IT BE FURTHER
- RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be forwarded to the Illinois Congressional delegation.