

Japanese American Citizens League

5415 NORTH CLARK STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60640
(312) 728-7170

WILLIAM J. YOSHINO
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chapter Presidents
Redress Chairs

DATE: February 7, 1980

FROM: Bill Yoshino

SUBJECT: JACL Redress Position

The November 28, 1979, introduction of redress legislation by Congressman Mike Lowery (Seattle) has led to some confusion in the overall redress effort of JACL. The Lowery bill seeks compensation of \$15,000 plus \$15.00 per day of internment. This bill, which does not reflect the JACL approach, was introduced at the urging of the National Council for Japanese American Redress (NCJAR). The NCJAR is made up of individuals located primarily in Seattle and Chicago.

The original JACL Redress Committee considered this direct approach, however, deemed it unrealistic in terms of passage in Congress. The rationale of the Committee and Committee Chair in choosing the Commission approach was based in a greater responsibility to the total Japanese American community in seeking a means for successful passage of a bill, hence the Commission approach.

Individuals within the NCJAR have chosen to attack the JACL position on redress as well as the Nikkei legislators who support the Commission bill. This serves to confuse the issue and possibly develops an appearance of factionalism within the Japanese American community. The remedy at this time is to state and clarify the position of JACL and the Commission bill.

The official position of the National Committee for Redress and thus the JACL with regard to the legislative thrust of the campaign is to seek passage of S. 1647 and HR 5499. We do not seek redress per se from the government and will not focus our lobbying efforts towards securing monetary compensation for the evacuation. It will not be the JACL who ultimately determine the form or amount of compensation.

Chapter Presidents
Redress Chairs
February 7, 1980
Page 2

Congress will make the final determination according to the facts we are able to present at the Commission hearings.

Our position is encompassed in S. 1647 and HR 5499, which state that the Commission will recommend possible "appropriate remedies". It is of utmost importance to our political strategy that we avoid any reference at all to the idea of seeking compensation or redress and that we maintain absolute consistency on this particular point.

Our official position is simply that we seek the passage of S. 1647 and HR 5499 to establish a factfinding commission in order that there can be an official governmental investigation of the events of 1942 to determine whether an injustice occurred. We are stating that no such investigation has ever been conducted and that it is in the best interest of this country that an investigation be held. If the findings of the commission establish that a wrong was committed against American citizens, then we will leave it to the Commission to determine what an appropriate remedy will be.

John Tateishi has restructured the National Redress Committee to reflect a national make-up. Ross Harano (Chicago) is a member to the newly constituted committee.

The Chicago Chapter will host Karl Nobuyuki, Ron Ikejiri and Min Yasui on February 22, 1980, at 6:30 p.m., at the Japanese American Service Committee building, 4427 North Clark Street. If you are interested in attending, please contact me.

I trust this has clarified, somewhat, the JACL approach to redress.

Enclosure



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR REDRESS

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS: 1765 Sutter Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94115 (415) 921-5225
WASHINGTON OFFICE: 1730 Rhode Island Ave. N.W., Washington D.C. 20036 (206) 223-1240
John Y. Tateishi, Chairman — Ronald J. Ikejiri, Washington Representative

POSITION STATEMENT OF THE JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR REDRESS

In the spring of 1942, shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War, 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry were forcibly evicted from the West Coast states and subsequently incarcerated in government detention camps with barbed wire and armed military guards.

Without trials or hearings, without any credible claims of wrongdoing or official charges filed against these innocent victims--a great majority of whom were American citizens--Japanese Americans experienced a total violation of the protections guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.

When Japanese Americans were evicted from their homes and incarcerated in America's concentration camps, seven of the ten articles of the Bill of Rights were arbitrarily suspended, an action taken solely on the basis of race. As a consequence, an entire group of loyal Americans was deprived of their constitutional rights.

Aside from the minimum of \$400 million in property losses alone estimated by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco in 1942, there were other immeasurable damages which must be considered: the loss of individual freedom, the destruction of personal human dignity, the loss of income and disruption of careers, and the psychological trauma of having been innocent victims imprisoned for three and a half years.

Today, Americans of Japanese ancestry seek remedial legislation as means of promoting human rights and upholding the Constitution of the United States. The campaign is spearheaded by the Japanese American Citizens League, an educational and human rights organization with a membership of over 30,000 Americans.

On August 2, 1979, S1647 was introduced in the United States Senate, and on September 28, 1979, HR5499 was introduced in the House of Representatives. The bills, which are titled the "Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians Act," are identical and seek "to establish a fact-finding commission to determine whether a wrong was committed against those American citizens and permanent resident aliens relocated and/or interned as a result of Executive Order No. 9066 and other associated acts of the Federal Government, and to recommend appropriate remedies."

It is the official position of the Japanese American Citizens League, by unanimous consent of the Executive Committee of the JACL on November 10, 1979, that the JACL seeks the enactment of S1647 and HR5499 and the

establishment of a congressional fact-finding commission to investigate the events of 1942. In advocating the passage of this legislation, the JACL places its trust in the findings of the commission to determine whether remedies should be made. Further, the JACL recognizes that an investigation into the events of 1942 is in the best interest of this nation.

We call upon the Congress of the United States, through the investigations of the commission, to rectify a mistake of the past so that we, as a nation, will continue as the best hope for mankind. And further, that the Congress will signal to all the people of the world that the United States does indeed carry out in practice the ideals of democracy.