

Japanese American Citizens League

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WILLIAM J. YOSHINO
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Individuals

DATE: August 14, 1980

FROM: ~~Bill~~ Yoshino

SUBJECT: Passage; Commission Bill

As you may already be aware, President Carter signed the "Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians Act" into law on July 31. Carter's signing clears the way for a comprehensive investigation of the facts surrounding the issuance of E.O. 9066 and its impact on those affected.

The act stipulates that members of the commission shall be appointed within 90 days after enactment. The first meeting of the commission will be within 120 days after enactment or within 30 days after funds have been appropriated for the commission, whichever is later.

Following is the text of Carter's remarks at the signing:

"Senate Bill 1647 establishes a seven person commission that will work during the next 18 months to look into one of the most disappointing and sometimes embarrassing occurrences in the history of our nation.

"In February of 1942, the President signed a proclamation setting aside certain areas of our country from which American citizens and resident aliens could be interned. This was in a time of war but no German American citizens or aliens were incarcerated or were Italian Americans interned, either.

"The only ones who were about 120,000, during the wartime period who were interned -- in addition, about 1000 residents of the Pribilovs in the Aleutian Islands were removed from the homeland and brought to the mainland because of the claim, which may have been completely legitimate, that those islands were subject to attack because of their exposed position.

"Later, some attempts were made for redressing these grievances for the 1000 residents of the Aleutian Pribilov. Ten-thousand dollars were set aside. That's \$10 per person to attempt some compensation for their inconvenience and their suffering and as a matter of fact, some lives were lost.

"I believe that it will be very helpful for this commission to assess this episode in American history to see if adequate compensation has been awarded under previous efforts which were more generous in the case of the Japanese Americans, and to reconfirm our nation's commitment to basic human rights.

"I'm grateful that Danny Inouye has taken the leadership in this legislation, Sparky Matsunaga, the other senator from Hawaii has also been instrumental in this period as has Senator Hayakawa from California -- all of Japanese descent and Ted Stevens, representing the citizens of the island off the Alaskan coast. We also, of course, have Congressman Mineta and Matsui, also of Japanese descent, and representatives of other citizens involved. Rep. Bob McClory is here as well.

"The JAAL has kept this issue alive, along with the Aleutian-Pribilof Island Association. And we have representatives of those groups with us.

"It is with great deal of pleasure I sign this legislation into law. The commission study is adequately funded. It is not designed as a witch hunt. It is designed to expose clearly what has happened in that period of war in our nation when many loyal American citizens of Japanese descent were embarrassed during a crucial time in our nation's history.

"I don't believe anyone would doubt that injustices were done, and I don't think anyone would doubt that it is advisable now for us to have a clear understanding as Americans of this episode in the history of our country.

"One of the things I should have said earlier and overlooked is that following this episode our government did make an honest attempt to give the Japanese American citizens a chance to express their grievances and to estimate their losses. The fact is that we want to be sure that those efforts were adequate. This will be judged by this commission in its report to me and Congress. And we also want to make sure their efforts will prevent any recurrence of this abuse of the basic human rights of American citizens and also resident aliens who enjoy the privileges and protections of not only American law but of American principles and ideals."