



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 100<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 133

WASHINGTON, FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 1987

No. 60

## Senate

S 5164

Mr. CRANSTON. Mr. President, I am delighted to cosponsor the legislation, S. 1009, introduced today by my very good friend from Hawaii (Mr. MATSUNAGA) for redress of one of our Government's greatest acts of injustice. This legislation would implement the recommendations of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment. It was introduced in the 99th Congress as S. 1053, and as S. 2116 in the 98th Congress. I am delighted to note the increasing number of cosponsors of this historic legislation.

As we look back with regret on this painful period of injustice—45 years ago—we must reaffirm our pledge that this kind of injustice must never recur. Enactment of this legislation will help to prevent a recurrence.

And it will help us to look forward with hope to a brighter future of full participation by Asian-Americans in the American dream.

My involvement in opposing the relocation of Japanese-Americans dates back to the very beginning.

I believe that our Government's action in this case was a terrible affront to the ideals for which our Nation stands.

Shortly after Pearl Harbor, I was assigned to the Office of War Information. There I worked closely with Eleanor Roosevelt and Archibald MacLeish trying to dissuade President Roosevelt from forcefully evacuating Japanese-Americans from the west coast and interning them in so-called relocation camps.

Unfortunately for 120,000 Japanese-Americans—and for the good name of our Nation—military authorities prevailed, and the orders for internment were issued.

More than two-thirds of the internees were American citizens. The rest were legal U.S. residents.

After the internment process began, I visited two of the camps, Tule Lake in California and Heart Mountain, WY. Recently, the children of internees visited Heart Mountain trying to sense what their parents had felt. In part I can tell them.

For 4 days in the cold, snow-covered camp at Heart Mountain, I spent my time round the clock inside the barbed-wire camp, talking to internees and visiting with a number of boyhood friends from Los Altos.

We ate meals together, talked over old times, walked around in the bitingly cold weather, played poker—in wanton violation of camp rules—and cheered at a football rally.

My friends and former classmates justifiably felt themselves robbed of their citizenship. They were distressed at the racial prejudice behind their internment. They were anxious for their

Government to prove its own adherence to democracy and to the very ideals for which we were then at war.

President Roosevelt himself proclaimed, "In vindication of the very ideals for which we are fighting this war it is important to us to maintain a high standard of fair, considerate, and equal treatment for the people of this minority as for all other minorities."

But this standard was not upheld. The mere presence of Japanese blood in loyal American citizens was believed to be enough to warrant removal and exclusion from places they otherwise had a right to go.

The argument that they were removed for their own good, because of possible vigilante attacks, was not persuasive. Most, if not all, Japanese-Americans would rather have faced the risk of being killed by individuals than deprived of their liberties by their own American Government. And given the choice to remain interned or fight in the war, most enlisted and served.

One of my most poignant memories is of an intelligent and progressive-minded mother who was still managing—with much difficulty—to conceal from her 4-year-old child that they were prisoners in what most inmates considered a racial internment camp.

It was ironic to see American Nisei soldiers, home on furlough and clad in uniform, wandering around inside a fenced-in camp. These Nisei soldiers returned from the battlefields of Europe as the most distinguished and decorated combat unit of the war, and from the Pacific theater as loyal soldiers and as officers in military intelligence. I have never forgotten these impressions.

In 1980, I was a cosponsor of the legislation establishing the Relocation Commission. The Commission report issued in 1983 amounted to our Government's official apology—41 years overdue to the internees and their families.

It confirmed what a great many conscientious Americans have long believed: These Americans of Japanese descent were clearly mistreated, and their basic civil liberties violated.

The ACLU singled out the internment and related abuses at the time as "the worst single wholesale violation of civil rights of American citizens in our history."

As one commentator on the period said:

Japanese-Americans were the immediate victims of the evacuation. But larger consequences are carried by the American people as a whole. Their legacy is the lasting one of precedent and constitutional sanctity for a policy of mass incarceration under military auspices. This is a result of the process by which the evacuation was made. That process betrayed all Americans.

Since those tragic events took place, a number of the participants have had changed hearts and minds. Henry L. Stimson, who was Secretary of War, realized that to loyal citizens this

forced evacuation was a personal injustice. Former Attorney General Francis Biddle reiterated his belief that the program was ill-advised, unnecessary, and unnecessarily cruel. Justice William O. Douglas, one of the Supreme Court majority in the Korematsu decision holding the evacuation constitutionally permissible, later said "the case was ever on my conscience." And Chief Justice Earl Warren, who as California's attorney general had urged evacuation, afterward said, "I have since deeply regretted the removal order and my own testimony advocating it, because it was not in keeping with our American concept of freedom and the rights of citizens."

On February 17, 1942, Attorney General Francis Biddle wrote to Secretary Stimson opposing the proposed exclusion order, stating that the War Department and the FBI had found no danger of imminent attack or evidence of planned sabotage. Biddle especially objected to removal from their homes of 60,000 American citizens who happened to be of Japanese descent. He refused to let the Justice Department participate in any way with the exclusion policy.

Not a single documented act of espionage, sabotage, or fifth column activity was committed by the Nisei or by resident Japanese aliens on the west coast. Yet their lives were disrupted, fortunes were lost, and loyal citizens and legal residents incarcerated.

The victims of this policy were held collectively guilty, and collectively punished.

Moreover, the Government's attitude toward these innocent people fostered suspicions that often led to violence against them. Many were attacked when they attempted to return to their homes 3 years later.

The legislation I'm cosponsoring today redresses this mass violation of civil liberties and compensates internees for their suffering.

While the loss of liberty and the personal stigma attached to internment can be erased, Federal reparations are a justifiable response to the legitimate financial losses incurred. An independent study done for the Commission found the economic losses alone to evacuees between \$2.5 and \$6.2 billion in today's dollar values, including interest for the past 40 years. Many consider this a conservative estimate of the real economic losses of homes and other property, stores, and businesses. And these estimates do not begin to measure the personal hardships suffered.

The Commission found the cause of the exclusion and internment policies to be "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership."

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. Shortly afterward, all American citizens of Japanese descent were barred from living, working, or traveling on the west coast. The same exclusion applied to a whole genera-

tion of Japanese immigrants residing at that time in the United States who, because of Federal law, were not permitted to become U.S. citizens.

After the initial plan for voluntary exclusion failed, these American citizens or legal residents were forcibly removed by the Army, first to assembly centers—makeshift quarters in fairgrounds and racetracks—and then to relocation centers. These latter camps, located in desolate Western areas, were surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by military police.

The U.S. Government carried out its policy without reviewing individual cases or providing due process of law, and continued its policy virtually without regard for individuals who demonstrated loyalty to the United States.

Congress made it a crime to violate Executive Order 9066. The U.S. Supreme Court—in one of its most agonizing decisions—held the removal constitutionally permissible because of the war. Interestingly, since that decision a number of Justices from the majority—enough to have reversed the 5-to-4 decision—have written that on hindsight, they would have voted differently. The Supreme Court in a related case struck down imprisonment of these admittedly loyal American citizens. But long after the fact.

The Commission found that the main impetus leading to the exclusion order was the mistaken notion that individuals of Japanese descent would be loyal to Japan, not to the United States, and groundless fears of fifth column activity even though no evidence of such activities could be uncovered. The Commission stated that "the record does not permit the conclusion that military necessity warranted the exclusion of the ethnic Japanese from the west coast."

After exclusion became official policy, the War Relocation Authority [WRA]—the civilian agency charged with supervising the relocation—assumed that the vast majority of evacuees were loyal and should be allowed to resettle outside of the west coast. But because of harsh objections from certain mountain State politicians, a consensus plan for detention of the evacuees emerged. The WRA gave up on its idea of resettlement, and accepted a program of confinement. Despite WRA's belief that evacuees should be returned to normal productive life, it had, in effect, become their jailer. Since there was no military justification for detention, the WRA instead contended that the program was for the evacuees' own safety.

The history of life during the evacuation and in the relocation camps is one of suffering and deprivation. On the average, families received only 1 or 2 weeks notice of evacuation to an unknown destination. They could take with them only what could be carried. All else was lost or sold for cut-rate prices. Life in the relocation camps was spartan, with shoddy and crowded buildings, defective facilities, faulty

heating, inadequate health care, and limited education programs. Privacy was impossible. Families and individuals alike lost their identities and became known only by identification numbers.

Because the Western Defense Command opposed individual loyalty reviews—for fear of weakening the blanket exclusion—no opportunity for individual review was created in the assembly centers. The War Department favored conducting loyalty reviews, but did not act on this until the end of 1942. Although these reviews eventually permitted some to leave relocation centers, it didn't end the exclusion from the west coast. Moreover, even this belated process was offensive, since it treated Japanese Americans as guilty until proven innocent.

In the spring of 1943, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy, and Gen. George C. Marshall reached the conclusion that the loyalty reviews eliminated any justification for exclusion from the west coast. They kept their views private, however, and General DeWitt repeatedly opposed ending exclusion until he left the Western Defense Command in late 1943, as did west coast anti-Japanese fractions. Secretary Stimson finally put the recommendation before the Cabinet in May 1944. But no action was taken until December 7, 1944, while confinement continued for the great majority of Japanese Americans.

The exclusion and removal of Japanese-Americans resulted from a long history of anti-Japanese-American agitation and legislation on the west coast. By contrast, in Hawaii, where the military commander restrained plans for radical measures and treated the ethnic Japanese as loyal residents—absent evidence to the contrary—only 2,000 ethnic Japanese were taken into custody. The policy developed was in sharp contrast to Government actions against enemy aliens or citizens of non-Japanese descent. For example, the United States never ordered a mass exclusion or detention against American citizens of German or Italian descent.

This episode in American history should never have happened. It's the Government's responsibility to set the record straight and to try, at least, to recognize and partially compensate for past injustices, although the tarnish on our Constitution can never be completely removed.

Our purpose is to recognize and redress the injustices and violations of civil liberties against U.S. citizens and U.S. residents of Japanese and Aleut ancestry by the United States and to discourage similar injustices and violations of civil liberties in the future.

The bill provides for the establishment of a \$1.5 billion trust fund from which individual payments to the surviving internees would be made.

Those eligible are people of Japanese or Alaskan Aleut ancestry excluded from the west coast between December 7, 1941, and June 30, 1946, or deprived of liberty or property as a result of a series of Executive orders, proclamations, laws, Armed Forces directives, or other Federal actions resulting in exclusion, relocation, and/or detention of individuals on the basis of race. The remaining moneys in the trust fund would be utilized for humanitarian and public education efforts to preclude this event from occurring again in the future.

This act is a just and fair redress to those individuals who were excluded and/or interned without justification, in gross violation of their civil liberties as American citizens and residents. I urge my colleagues to support it.