

# Support shown for Civil Liberties Act amendments

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Spokespersons for the Japanese American community testified March 26 in support of the Civil Liberties Act Amendments of 1992 that would provide increased funding for eligible redress recipients.

Testimony on H.R. 4551, which would amend the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 that established redress for Japanese Americans interned during the war, was heard by the Judiciary Subcommittee on Administrative Law and Governmental Relations.

If passed, H.R. 4551 would increase authorization for the Civil Liberties Act by \$320 million to provide funding for all eligible redress recipients, about 15,000 more than original estimates and extend redress to non-Japanese spouses who were

interned. H.R. 4551 would also provide funding for the education fund. In the budget proposal for fiscal year 1993 drafted by the Bush Administration, the education fund was eliminated and appropriation figures were significantly lower.

H.R. 4551 was introduced Mar. 24 by Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) and Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.). Testifying in support of the bill were, Reps. Norman Mineta (D-Calif.), Robert Matsui (D-Calif.), Patsy Mink (D-Hawaii), and Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), and Dennis Hayashi, national director of JACL.

Hayashi said, "The JACL fully supports increasing the level of appropriations to cover the estimated 15,000-17,000 (additional) eligible recipients. Further, the

See TESTIMONY/page 5

## Matsui supports amendment

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Rep. Robert Matsui testified March 26 before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Administrative Law and Government Relations in support of H.R. 4551 which would make up for shortfalls in redress appropriations.

In support of the bill, Matsui said, "(It) would increase the authorization to provide adequate funding for all eligible recipients. The new authorization would cover the payments for all surviving recipients and maintain a fund created

by Congress to educate the public about the internment history.

"We have an obligation to make good on reparations for those who were removed from their homes and interned fifty years ago. This

legislation will bring that obligation

See MATSUI/page 5





## TESTIMONY

(Continued from page 1)

JACL supports both proposals' expansion of the definition of 'Japanese ancestry' to include non-Japanese spouses and parents, most of whom were voluntarily interned so as not to break up their families."

"It is our belief that maintenance of an education fund which serves to remind the public about the consequences of racial prejudice directed at a targeted minority is critical."

Speaking on behalf of the Bush Administration, John Dunne, assistant attorney general of the Department of Justice, said the education fund was not included in the budget recommendations because the work of such a fund had been undertaken by "other entities, including other arms of the federal government," as well as private efforts, "largely within the Japanese American community."

Alan Nishio, president of the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations (NCRR), said, "We're working with JACL to encourage the House to pass H.R. 5451. I understand President Bush put (redress appropriation) in as pay as you go. Given President Bush's approach, H.R. 5451 is probably the safest way to seek additional appropriation at this time."

Nishio said that NCRR is planning to conduct a grass roots letter writing campaign encouraging Congress to pass the bill. Noting that many California members of Congress already signed on to the bill, Nishio said, "It looks like it has bi-partisan support, but it's not assumed that it's going to go smoothly. In the current environment, any bill like this will garner a certain amount of letter writing from those group of die-hards that supported the Jacobs case. People think redress is over, but there's still a lot of work that needs to be done."

## Talk to Congress

The JACL is urging individuals to send letters and/or schedule appointments to meet with their congressional representatives urging co-sponsorship in support of H.R. 5451. In addition, JACL is encouraging letters to be sent to members of the judiciary committee urging a favorable vote out of the committee.

The following serve on the House Judiciary Committee: Majority members—Jack Brooks (Tex.), chairman; Don Edwards (Calif.), vice-chairman; John Conyers, Jr. (Mich.); Romano L. Mazzoli (Ky.); William J. Hughes (N.J.); Mike Synar (Okla.); Patricia Schroeder (Colo.); Dan Glickman (Kan.); Barney Frank (Mass.); Charles E. Schumer (N.Y.); Edward E. Feighan (Ohio); Howard L. Berman (Calif.); Rick Boucher (Va.); Harley O. Staggers, Jr. (W. Va.); John Bryant (Tex.); Mel Levine (Calif.); George E. Sangmeister (Ill.); Craig A. Washington (Tex.); Peter Hoagland (Neb.); Mike Kopetski (Ore.), and Jack Reed (R.I.).

Minority members—Hamilton Fish, Jr. (N.Y.); Carlos J. Moorhead (Calif.); Henry J. Hyde (Ill.); Jim Sensenbrenner, Jr. (Wis.); Bill McCollum (Fla.); George W. Gekas (Pa.); Howard Coble (N.C.); Lamar Smith (Tex.); Craig T. James (Fla.); Tom Campbell (Calif.); Steven H. Schiff (N.M.); Jim Ramstad (Minn.); and George Allen (Va.).

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## MATSUI

(Continued from page 1)

to its fruition and relieve the pains that have not healed by time."

Matsui also discussed H.R. 4553, which he introduced Mar. 24 before the House, a bill that would exclude redress payments as a factor in determining eligibility for federal benefits. As reported in the Jan. 17 issue of the *Pacific Citizen*, pension benefits to a number of Japanese American veterans were cut off because they reported receiving redress payments. The Matsui bill is an attempt to clarify the intent of the original Civil Liberties Act of 1988.

"Without the clarifying provision in H.R. 4553, those veterans and survivors who also receive redress payments would lose their eligibility for VA pension benefits, which is a stark departure from the intent of Congress."

Matsui said that officials from the Veterans Administration were consulted on the issue. "To his credit, VA Secretary Edward Derwinski recognized the Congressional intent and sought to make the corrections administratively. However, legal obstacles have prevented him from doing so, and as a result I am offering this bill to include these pension programs under the Civil Liberties Act," said Matsui.