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Senate

A LONG OVERDUE APOLOGY

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I am proud to join the distinguished Senator from Hawaii, Senator MATSUNAGA, as one of the original cosponsors of this legislation.

I fought for this Nation in World War II. Many others in the Congress also fought in that war, or in Korea or Vietnam. All of us were fighting for a common purpose: to preserve America, and all it stands for.

It is a tragic irony that, at the very moment I and millions of others were fighting for America's ideals, America itself—our country—was engaging in one of the most terrible acts of injustice in our entire history.

Thousands of Japanese-Americans were interned, for no crime other than being born in Japan, or being descendants of Japanese or Japanese-American parents. They were interned under procedures which had a veneer of law, but which—at their heart—were inimical to the fundamental principles of law and justice embodied in our Constitution and characterizing almost all of our history.

We owe these people—these loyal Americans—a profound apology. For what they suffered. We owe them, and ourselves, the kind of educational effort envisioned by this bill, so that this kind of communal injustice can never happen again in this country.

This bill is a major first step in paying back to these Americans—and to the memory of their families and friends who have already passed on—what this country owes them.

I offer my heartfelt congratulations to SPARKY MATSUNAGA, and DAN INOUE who has turned this idea into legislation.

This bill is an authorization bill. Like other authorization bills in the age of 12-digit budget deficits, it will undergo careful scrutiny in the appropriations process. It is one extremely worthy effort, but it must be evaluated along with other projects worthy in their own right. There is much we have an obligation to do, but we can't do it all, now.

But, certainly and at a minimum, we can do this: we can go on record acknowledging this terrible wrong that was done. We can go on record offering this deserved national apology to thousands of Americans whose honor and reputations have long been unfairly stained.