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For Immediate Release

STATE AGENCY SUPPORTS CONGRESSIONAL BILLS PERTAINING TO WORLD WAR II
INCARCERATION OF JAPANESE AMERICANS.

At its last meeting the Washington State Commission on Asian American Affairs, the state agency charged with bettering the lives of Asian Pacific Americans in the area, voted to support Congressional efforts to address the internment of citizens and residents of Japanese descent during World War II. (see enclosure)

The House is now considering a bill which was introduced at the end of November by Representative Mike Lowry, 7th District Democrat from Seattle. Lowry's bill H. 5977 calls for monetary repayment to those persons whose lives were disrupted by the internment.

Senator Daniel Inouye, Democrat from Hawaii and Congressperson Jim Wright, Democrat from Texas, have introduced identical bills in their respective chambers. If passed, S. 1647 and H. 5499 would establish a commission to study the legality of the incarceration. Commission members would include Senators, Representatives, and persons appointed by the President.

After careful consideration, the Commission on Asian American Affairs voted to support both the study commission bills and the direct redress bill. Members who voted to support both argued that the study commission bill is not strong enough by itself and that the Lowry bill could serve as the vehicle through which to implement the study commission's recommendations. The Commission firmly believes that the investigation will confirm that a grievous wrong was committed when over 110,000 persons of Japanese descent were summarily rounded up and imprisoned during the second World War.

(more)

Support of the study commission bill was offered with some suggested amendments, however. Commissioners expressed a desire to incorporate language into the bills which would require that some of the persons serving on the study commission be former internees and that recommendations for action would come in the form of specific remedies. Further, the Commission also called for arranging public hearings on the bills, especially in the Senate.

Members of the staffs of Senator Inouye's and Representative Lowry's offices have already contacted the Commission on Asian American Affairs soliciting support. They, as well as other members of the state's Congressional delegation and community organizations will be informed of the Commission's official position.

Diane Yen-Mei Wong, Executive Director of the Commission on Asian American Affairs, stated "It was not an easy decision for the Commissioners to make. Each person has had quite a while to think about the issue and to weigh the consequences of the bills. When I spoke with several Commissioners after the meeting, they seemed to be satisfied with the final position and the process by which it was determined. It's a good and a rational stance and I think it's something that our Commission can pursue without hesitation."

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Enclosure