

STATEMENT OF SENATOR HENRY M. JACKSON
COMMISSION ON WARTIME RELOCATION
AND INTERNMENT OF CIVILIANS

Chairperson Bernstein and Members of the Commission:

I am pleased to be here today, and would like to take this opportunity to recognize a member of this Commission who is a longtime personal friend, and respected former colleague from Washington State, the distinguished Senator Hugh Mitchell. I have every confidence that the quality of this Commission's work will reflect the combination of experience, knowledge, and impeccable credentials that Hugh and the others bring to this notable panel. I would also like to commend the members of this Commission for accepting the challenge and the responsibility of gathering and reviewing the facts surrounding the internment of thousands of U.S. civilians and resident aliens during World War II.

During the last session of Congress, my colleagues and I worked together to develop the legislation that established the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. It is incredible that this episode in our history has never been the subject of an objective public study and there has never been a public acknowledgement by the U.S. government that a wrong was committed against thousands of loyal Japanese American citizens.

The evacuation and internment episode was a tragic failure of American democracy. It was the result of wartime hysteria

manifested throughout the highest levels of this nation's government. The action of the Supreme Court's decision upholding the Executive Order was one of the most regrettable decisions in the history of the Court. We need to acknowledge these facts.

Now is the time to conduct an adequate investigation of the internment and relocation episode. I believe that this Commission's inquiry will enable us to put this regrettable chapter in American history behind us once and for all.

There are many questions that remain unanswered about the measures taken to force the relocation of the Japanese American citizens and the Aleuts during World War II. The hearings that are to be conducted by the Commission throughout the year will provide the proper public forum for a thorough and historically accurate investigation and discussion of these questions. The answers are of paramount importance to those who still bear the scars of personal experiences in relocation. They are also important to all Americans who share democratic values.

Finally, I think it is crucial that the Commission make an honest appraisal of the causes and the consequences of the evacuation and internment of U.S. citizens and residents. We need to understand how our government could have interned 120,000 people based solely on their ethnic backgrounds. We need to understand why our government denied the interned civilians protection by depriving them of any semblance of procedural due process. A thorough understanding of how and why this episode occurred 39 years ago is our best protection against similar actions from ever again taking place.