



# State of Washington

JOHN SPELLMAN, Governor

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

September 9, 1981

Ms. Joan Z. Bernstein, Chairman  
U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and  
Internment of Civilians

Dear Ms. Bernstein:

On behalf of the people of the state of Washington, I wish to welcome the members of the U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. To the staff members who have worked so diligently, to the local community for all the ground work required, to those of you who have painfully prepared testimony, and to all of you in the audience (many of whom have travelled from as far as Oregon and Idaho), welcome!

Your mostly volunteer labor and your honest desire to have a meaningful hearing are recognized and are gratefully appreciated by all of us who, at times, take our basic human rights for granted. I believe it is only fitting that our great state be one of the locations for the Commission hearings, and I am delighted that all of you are here.

I personally was blessed with a happy, healthy childhood in a farming community across the lake in Bellevue. Many of my schoolmates and friends were Americans of Japanese descent. We grew up enjoying a pleasant, uncomplicated life. Then, one day, suddenly, some of my friends were gone. That was a baffling situation to me as a child, and, even now, as I drive through the lovely valley in that area of Bellevue, I wonder what could or should have been done then to avoid that tragic mistake in our nation's history.

As an elected state official, I am concerned that my predecessors did not question or oppose the wholesale relocation, without due process, of American citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry. Indeed, many who preceded us seemed unwittingly to encourage that tragedy. I realize some argue the wartime necessity of that violation of individual rights, saying that relocation was essential to the security of the Pacific Coast, or that it was essential to the safety of those citizens. But I view that entire sad episode with great disquiet, and strongly believe that restitution and reparation are long overdue.

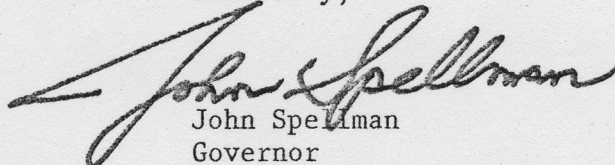
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Appropriate monetary compensation is difficult to measure, but I cannot see any other way to right that grave injustice. The allocation of funds to meet an ever-increasing demand for necessary social services is an issue which I, as Governor, must grapple with every day. The needs of our elderly, and a multitude of other legitimate social needs, are real. They require our honest attention. But the needs of our fellow citizens who were deprived of their basic human rights must also be addressed.

For myself, I was deprived of enjoying a lasting relationship with many of my school friends when they were uprooted and forced to move. For those friends, and for all other Japanese-Americans, their loss was immeasurably greater because what they lost was immeasurably more precious - their fundamental rights. Regardless of the current social or economic status of those who suffered, a redress is long overdue. I sincerely hope this Commission will recommend to the President and Congress a fair and equitable reparation.

In closing, may I say to the Commission that we are proud that a prominent citizen of our state sits among you. Former Senator Mitchell, may I say that we appreciate your willingness to lend us your wisdom, your sense of fair play, and your reputation as a respected citizen. For all the other citizens of our state, history will greatly appreciate your efforts to bring this issue to an acceptable and logical conclusion. For you, the many Japanese-American citizens who have been instrumental in President Ford's 1976 rescinding of Executive Order 9066, which was the basis for the eventual establishment of this Commission, I sincerely believe our system of government will not let your efforts fail.

Sincerely,



John Spellman  
Governor