

Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act (S. 69 and H.R. 42)

To create a Commission to investigate facts and circumstances about the relocation, internment, and deportation of Latin Americans of Japanese descent

Sponsors:

Senator Daniel Inouye (HI)
Representative Xavier Becerra (CA-31)

CONTEXT

The U.S. interned over 110,000 people of Japanese descent during World War II. Between December 1941 and February 1945, the U.S. government orchestrated and financed the abduction of approximately 2,300 men, women, and children of Japanese ancestry from 13 Latin American countries to the U.S. More than 800 of Japanese Latin Americans were included in two prisoner exchanges between the United States and Japan. The remaining Japanese Latin Americans were imprisoned in internment camps without the benefit of due process until after the end of the war. The U.S. government issued an apology and financial reparations for its wartime violation against U.S. citizens and permanent residents of Japanese ancestry through the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. This Act, however, did not bring relief for Japanese Latin Americans who were abducted and unlawfully interned in the U.S. Since the war, the victims of these crimes have been seeking redress. After ten years, the government offered them \$5,000 apiece (instead of the \$20,000 awarded to interned Japanese Americans) and a letter of regret after a class-action lawsuit, *Carmen Mochizuki et al. v. The United States*. Some accepted the settlement, while others refused it or never learned of it. Many Japanese Latin Americans who remained in the United States were eventually able to secure permanent residency status and have become U.S. citizens.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BILL

This bill would create a commission to investigate and determine facts and circumstances surrounding the relocation, internment, and deportation of Japanese Latin Americans during World War II by the U.S. government. The commission would be composed of nine members, three each appointed by the President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President pro tempore of the Senate. The commission would be charged with holding public hearings and submitting a report of its findings and recommending appropriate remedies to Congress, within 12 months of the bill's enactment.

Summary of “Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act”

FINDINGS

In 1982, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians found that approximately 2,300 men, women, and children of Japanese descent were uprooted from their homes in Latin America and detained in internment camps in the United States, and in some cases, deported to Japan to enable the United States to conduct prisoner exchanges. They were not covered by the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which formally apologized and provided compensation payments to former Japanese Americans interned pursuant to Executive Order 9066.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMISSION

The commission would be composed of 9 members: 3 each appointed by the President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President pro tempore of the Senate. The President shall call the first meeting of the commission within 60 days that this act is enacted or within 30 days after legislation making appropriations to carry out this act is enacted.

DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION

- Investigate and determine facts and circumstances surrounding the United States’ relocation, internment, and deportation of Latin Americans of Japanese descent, and the impacts of those actions by the United States
- Recommend appropriate remedies, if any, based on preliminary findings by the original commission and new discoveries

Not later than one year after the date of the first meeting, the commission shall submit a written report on its findings and recommendations to Congress.

POWERS OF THE COMMISSION

The commission shall hold public hearings, give testimony, receive evidence, and administer oaths; may also issue and enforce subpoenas requiring the attendance and testimony of witnesses, as well as producing other physical evidence and materials.

PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

A commission member who is not an officer or employee of the federal government shall be compensated for each day, including travel time, during which the member is engaged in commission duties. A commission member who is an officer or employee of the United States shall serve without compensation.

TERMINATION

The commission shall terminate its duties and performances 90 days after the date on which the commission submits its report to Congress.

AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

Funding shall be appropriated and shall remain available, without fiscal year limitation, until expended.

Campaign For Justice: Redress Now for Japanese Latin Americans!

Coalition Partners

February 2009

1. American Friends Service Committee
2. American Jewish Committee
3. American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
4. Anti-Defamation League
5. Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay Area
6. Asian American Justice Center
7. Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
8. Asian Law Alliance
9. Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Los Angeles County
10. Asian Pacific American Bar Association of South Florida
11. Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
12. Association of Humanitarian Lawyers
13. Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalist
14. Campaign For Justice: Redress Now For Japanese Latin Americans!
15. Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus
16. Council on American-Islamic Relations
17. Friends Committee on National Legislation
18. Global Rights
19. Human Rights First
20. International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies
21. Japanese American Bar Association
22. Japanese American Citizens League — Berkeley Chapter
23. Japanese American Citizens League — Honolulu Chapter
24. Japanese American Citizens League — National
25. Japanese American Citizens League — Pacific Southwest District
26. Japanese American Citizens League — San Diego Chapter
27. Japanese American Citizens League — Seattle Chapter
28. Japanese American Citizens League — SELANOCO Chapter
29. Japanese American Citizens League — Ventura County Chapter
30. Japanese American Living Legacy
31. Japanese Peruvian Oral History Project
32. Korean American Bar Association of Southern California
33. Korean American Coalition—DC Chapter
34. Korean American Resource & Cultural Center
35. Korean Resource Center
36. Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
37. League of United Latin American Citizens
38. Manzanar Committee
39. Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office
40. Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund
41. National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
42. National Asian Pacific American Bar Association
43. National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
44. National Association of Japanese Canadians
45. National Coalition for Redress/Reparations—San Francisco
46. National Council of La Raza
47. National Korean American Service & Education Consortium
48. NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
49. Nihonmachi Outreach Committee
50. Nikkei for Civil Rights & Redress
51. Orange County Korean American Bar Association
52. Organization of Chinese Americans
53. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office
54. Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund
55. South Asian Americans Leading Together
56. Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association
57. The Episcopal Church

Campaign For Justice: Redress Now for Japanese Latin Americans!

Coalition Partners

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58. The United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
 59. Union for Reform Judaism
 60. Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
 61. United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
 62. Washington Office on Latin America
 63. Young Korean American Service and Education Center
 64. Asian Pacific Islander Justice Coalition
 - Asian American Recovery Services
 - Asian American Women's Alliance
 - Asian Law Alliance
 - Asian Pacific American Leadership Institute
 - Asian Pacific Bar Association
 - Cambodian American Resource Agency
 - Contemporary Asian Theatre Scene
 - Filipino National History Society, Santa Clara Chapter
 - Filipino Youth Coalition
 - Filipino Community Support, Silicon Valley (FOCUS)
 - Japanese American Citizens League of San Jose
 - Japantown Community Congress of San Jose
 - Korean American Bar Association of Northern Cal.
 - Korean American Community Services, Inc.
 - Maitri
 - MALAYA
 - Nihonmachi Outreach Committee
 - Organization of Chinese Americans, Silicon Valley
 - South Bay First Thursdays
 - Southeast Asia Community Center
 - Vision New America
 - Vietnamese Voluntary Foundation (VIVO)
- Yu-Ai-Kai
 - International Children Assistance Network
 - Akbayan (SJSU)
 - Vietnamese American Bar Association of Northern California