

Submitter: Nancy Trotic

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Measure: SB1509

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 1509, to designate Oregon Highway 35 as a memorial to honor Oregon's Nisei veterans of World War II.

My great-great-grandparents, white emigrants from Missouri, came to Odell in 1901. Their son, Ira Ulysses Lafferty, together with his partner Clint Wood, opened a grocery store in Odell in 1924.

On July 29, 1945—at a time when many local residents had signed petitions demanding that people of Japanese ancestry not be allowed to return to their homes in Hood River, and when threats of arson were being made against businesses that served them—my great-grandfather's store ("a community center that had become a real institution," according to a Sept. 2 article in the Oregonian) burned to the ground. We do not know what caused the fire, but it may well have been an angry arsonist.

Despite my ancestors' long history in Odell and Hood River, I was unaware, until recently, of the existence and magnitude of the racial prejudice, injustice, discrimination, and harassment in Hood River and the surrounding communities, both before and after World War II, against people of Japanese ancestry—even those who fought bravely for the United States.

My hope is that when others who aren't aware of this history drive along Highway 35 and see the memorial signs, they will wonder: Who were the Nisei veterans, and why is this highway named in their honor?

When more Americans learn more about the history and consequences of racial prejudice in the United States, we will be better able to fight its ever-rising dangers in the present day—and to more fully honor all those who served in our armed forces.

Nancy Trotic
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