

February 1, 2022

TO: Veterans and Emergency Preparedness Committee, Oregon State Senate
RE: Oregon Senate Bill 1509
FROM: Minoru Yasui Legacy Project

Minoru Yasui Legacy Project (MYLP) is a committee of volunteers who work to defend civil rights and advance social justice. MYLP was organized to continue the legacy of Minoru Yasui to advocate for fairness and justice for all. The Japanese American Museum of Oregon, a non-profit tax-exempt organization, is MYLP's fiscal sponsor.

We enthusiastically support the passage of Oregon Senate Bill 1509 to designate Oregon State Highway 35, from Columbia River to Mt Hood, "Oregon Nisei Veterans WWII Memorial Highway" one of the eight highways to be dedicated to Oregon veterans who fought during five major wars.

Minoru Yasui was born in 1916 in Hood River, Oregon. He attended Hood River public schools, University of Oregon, and the University of Oregon School of Law. He was the first Japanese American admitted to Oregon State Bar (1939). Within days of US entry into WWII, Yasui reported to the Army to be activated from his status as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Infantry Reserve; but the Army refused to accept him for active duty. Yasui made national history by challenging the constitutionality of the military curfew imposed on Japanese American citizens in March 1942. He was arrested, subsequently found guilty, and served nine months of solitary confinement in Multnomah County Jail.

Other Japanese American men already on active duty also were discharged as ineligible to serve on account of race. This policy was changed early in 1943, and 33,000 Japanese American men, recruited from America's concentration camps where they and their families were imprisoned, served bravely and with distinction during the remainder of WWII.

MYLP strongly endorses Senate Bill 1509 to dedicate Highway 35 as the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway. We can honor these heroes with permanent roadside markers to help our youth and next generations ask questions and learn how American citizens demonstrated pride over prejudice.

June Arima Schumann, Chair
Minoru Yasui Legacy Project
Portland, Oregon