

DEPARTMENT OF OREGON
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
Wilsonville, Oregon

January 9, 2022

Resolution No.: LEG-001-2022

Designating Oregon State Route 35 as the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Historic Highway

Origin: American Legion Hood River Post 22

Submitted By: District 5

WHEREAS, The Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion in part states “to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism, to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all wars, and to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is committed to the ideals of "freedom, equality and justice" and dismantling injustices in our past; and

WHEREAS, Fifty-seven Nisei (second-generation Japanese Americans) from the Mid-Columbia (Columbia River region north of Mt. Hood) and a total of 120 from the state of Oregon served in our country's Armed Forces during World War II and in the post-war Occupation of Japan, even as their family members were incarcerated on American soil due to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's signing of Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942; and

WHEREAS, These Nisei soldiers were among 33,000 Nisei who served our country in the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team in Europe and as linguists in the Military Intelligence Service in the South Pacific and the post-war Occupation of Japan; and

WHEREAS, The names of sixteen local **Nisei** soldiers were blacked out from an honor roll of 1,600 local Armed Forces members on the Hood River County Courthouse on November 29, 1944, bringing national notoriety to the valley; and the names were restored thirteen weeks later on April 9, 1945; and

WHEREAS, During the war, local citizens discouraged **Nisei** veterans and their families from returning to their homes and farms; and

WHEREAS, The Oregon House of Representative passed Joint Memorial No. 9 on Feb. 28, 1945, calling on President Roosevelt to prevent the return of Japanese Americans "for the duration of the present war with Japan"; and

WHEREAS, In 2011 our nation's Nisei soldiers were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal and in 2015 the French Legion d'Honneur award, the highest award the French Government could bestow on members of the American Armed Forces and in June 2021 the United States Postal Service released a Forever Stamp to pay tribute to Nisei soldiers; and

WHEREAS, Hood River citizens including American Legion Post 22 have since recognized Nisei World War II veterans in an "acknowledgement of wrongs" by dedicating local landmarks: a memorial brick "in honor of all Nisei veterans" at Overlook Memorial Park on Veterans' Day 2001 and a marble monument inscribed with names of all Japanese American veterans at Idlewilde Cemetery on Memorial Day 2011; and

WHEREAS, Three years after the end of World War II, President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981 committing the Federal Government to integrate the segregated military after 170 years of discrimination; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress compelled the U.S. Army to award Medals of Honor to WWII Asian American and Philippine Islander veterans who performed deeds of valor equal to their white counterparts and who had been excluded from that highest military combat award due to discriminatory practices. Sixty years after World War II began, twenty-two Asian-Pacific veterans (including twenty Nisei) received Medal of Honor awards on June 21, 2000; and

WHEREAS, State Route 35 has special significance for Japanese American veterans, as many of their families owned or worked on fruit orchards along the highway and in the region until they were forcibly removed due to President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066; and

WHEREAS, S.R. 35 is 41 miles in length and connects with the POW/MIA Memorial Highway on U.S. Highway 26 and with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway in Hood River on Interstate 84; and

WHEREAS, Oregon has designated 8 border to border war veterans highways but has not designated a highway to honor Oregon's World War II Nisei veterans; and

WHEREAS, Designating S.R. 35 as the Oregon Nisei Veterans WWII Historic Highway will at long last pay tribute to Nisei veterans not only in the Columbia Gorge area but all 120 Nisei who served from the State of Oregon; and

WHEREAS, Thirteen Nisei veterans from Oregon are known to be living today; and descendants of at least twenty-seven Nisei veterans are known to live in Oregon's Mid-Columbia area; and

WHEREAS, American Legion Post 22 is located in Hood River served by S.R. 35, is the only Congressionally chartered veterans group located in the Mid-Columbia area, many Post members associated with local Nisei veterans in their daily lives and WWII Nisei soldiers were

members of the Post; and

WHEREAS, "To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations" is a tenet of the American Legion Preamble to the Constitution; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, By District 5, The American Legion, Department of Oregon in its regular meeting assembled in Wilsonville, Oregon, on January 9, 2022 urges The American Legion, Department of Oregon to support designation of S.R. 35 as the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Historic Highway by the Oregon Legislature; and be it further

RESOLVED, The American Legion, Department of Oregon and Post 22 should testify to the Oregon Legislature in support of the proposed designation; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Historic Highway will be a permanent reminder that the service and sacrifices of Oregon's WWII Nisei veterans were made at a high cost and freedom is not free.

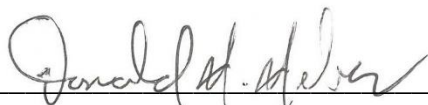
Commander Post 22

__Read on the floor__

Lance Trowbridge
Commander District 5

Adjutant District 5

Approved this 9th Day of January, 2022



Don Webber
Department Commander



Flynn Phillips
Department Adjutant