

Submitter: Lynn Fuchigami Parks
On Behalf Of: Japanese American Museum of Oregon
Committee: Senate Committee On Veterans and Emergency Preparedness
Measure: SB1509

February 2, 2022

To: Veterans and Emergency Preparedness Committee, Oregon State Senate
RE: Oregon Senate Bill 1509

From: Lynn Fuchigami Parks, Japanese American Museum of Oregon, recently retired Executive Director and Consultant, Advisory Board, National Veterans Network

My name is Lynn Fuchigami Parks, former Executive Director of the Japanese American Museum of Oregon whose mission is to preserve and honor the history and culture of the Japanese American in the Pacific Northwest, educate the public about the Japanese American experience during WWII, and advocate for the protection of civil rights for all.

I am writing to strongly endorse the passage of Oregon Senate Bill 1509 that designates Oregon State Highway 35 from Columbia River to Mt. Hood as, "Oregon Nisei Veterans WWII Memorial Highway".

During WWII, the Nisei soldiers fought prejudice and fought for freedom both at home and abroad, and their story is an incomparable example of extraordinary courage, loyalty and selfless service beyond compare. The fact that they fought and died for a country that had unjustly imprisoned many of them and/or their families and friends, only adds to their remarkable story. To this day, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team (100th Infantry Battalion combined) is the most decorated unit in U.S. military history for their size and length of service. What laurels speak more powerfully to why one of the eight highways dedicated to Oregon veterans who fought during the major wars should be named after the Nisei soldiers? More specifically, the highway from the Columbia River to Mt. Hood is an extremely appropriate location as Hood River had a previous dark history, recognized nationally during WWII for one of the worst examples of hate and prejudice as Legionnaires blacked out the names of their 16 local Japanese American soldiers from the military service honor roll at the county courthouse.

Elevating their story to help educate future generations and leaders to promote equality and justice could not come at a more critical time. Bringing attention to this history by naming Highway 35 as the Oregon Nisei Veterans WWII Memorial Highway is a powerful and permanent action to help achieve this.

Again, I urge support for the passage of Oregon Senate Bill 1509 to honor the Japanese American Nisei Veterans.

Lynn Fuchigami Parks