

Submitter: Toby Loftus

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Veterans and Emergency Management

Measure: SB1509

My name is Toby Asai Loftus and I wish to submit my testimony in strong support of SB 1509.

My grandparents were Japanese immigrants who settled in Hood River and raised eight children. When Pearl Harbor was bombed, two of my uncles were already in the U.S. Armed Forces. While the rest of the family was forced from their Hood River home by Executive Order 9066, Uncle Taro "Tot" Asai and Uncle Masaaki "Half" Asai served in the Pacific theater. Uncle Tot was with the 37th Infantry Division (the "Buckeye Division") that served in the island-hopping campaigns in the Pacific theater.

While the rest of the family, including my grade school-aged mother, were incarcerated in Tule Lake and later Heart Mountain, Uncle Half and Uncle Tot's names were two of 16 Japanese American names removed by the American Legion Post No. 22 from the Hood River Honor Roll during the notorious "Hood River Incident" that gained national news.

Two more of my uncles joined the U.S. Armed Forces before war's end. Uncle Masami "Min" Asai was drafted and Uncle Gene Asai, who graduated while incarcerated in Heart Mountain, volunteered and served in MIS.

For their service, my uncles received Congressional Gold Medals in 2012 (posthumously for three of them).

It would be a great and fitting honor to remember the service of Nikkei soldiers who served despite the great injustices forced upon their families during WWII. I enthusiastically support passage of this bill.

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