

Members of the House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management:

Dear Chair Grayber and Committee Members:

My name is Ronald Iwasaki. I was born in Ontario, Oregon in July 1945 after my family was forcibly removed from our farm in Hillsboro. Except for my college years at Oregon State University and four years serving in the U.S. Air Force, I've lived in Washington County and Yamhill County.

I grew up in a truck farming family growing diverse, labor-intensive crops. My dad's two brothers served in the U.S. Army 442nd Regimental Combat Infantry Team in Italy, France, and Germany during WWII. Another uncle served there and two others were in the Military Intelligence Service. However, I never recall hearing them talk about their Army experiences. It was a period in their lives that they endured and were fortunate to return home. My knowledge of these segregated Japanese American Army units occurred primarily with the awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal in November 2011.

The Japanese American families living west of Portland were primarily farmers and geographically scattered. I believe one of the benefits was that these families were not perceived as unified threats. In the East Multnomah and further to The Dalles, there were many more families of Japanese heritage. Discomfort in that region was a lot higher and continued long after the war was over.

In 1960 the Memorial Coliseum was built to honor servicemen and women who had lost their lives in war. But it wasn't until 2014 that the Oregon WWII Monument was built and dedicated after citizens noticed that none existed despite state recognition of WWI, The Korean War, and Vietnam. This was a "better late than never" recognition of servicemen and women of The Greatest Generation. Possibly the oversight was because America in general got back to peacetime activities, whether it be in normal business or personal pleasure.

In October 2019, I was on a special tour that retraced the route taken in 1944-45 by the 100th Battalion/442<sup>nd</sup>. The French villages liberated by the 100th/442nd have annual parades and celebrations even though very few locals were alive during WWII. Their familiarity was passed down by appreciative parents, grandparents, neighbors. A few streets are named after these units and several plaques and monuments are regularly decorated. In the Epinal American (Military) Cemetery, many of the 100th/442 graves were and remain adopted by local families and are regularly visited. It would be a great tribute to honor the valor of these soldiers at home in Oregon as well.

Last spring, the U.S. Postal Service issued the "Go For Broke" Forever 1st Class Stamp, which is a little introduction to the segregated Japanese American soldier unit. Passage of SB 1509 to dedicate Highway 35 as the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway would be another reminder and/or introduction of these accomplished local patriots.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Ronald Iwasaki, Commander  
Oregon Nisei Veterans

