

Submitter: Eric Ballinger  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules  
Measure: HCR202

Thank you Chair Lieber, Vice Chair Knopp and Distinguished Committee Members,

My name is Eric Ballinger and it is an honor to testify in support of HCR 202 in recognizing Lieutenant Colonel Dick Tobiason.

I first met Dick through a mutual friend and Medal of Honor recipient, Bob Maxwell. I became familiar with Dicks work with the Bend Heroes Foundation, the local Band of Brothers, and Honor Flight. In 2015, Dick made arrangements for my great uncle, Shig Imai, a Nisei WWII veteran, to travel to Washington D.C with Honor Flight to visit the WWII Memorial. A trip of a lifetime!

In 2021, Dick took that experience even further. He was co-author, along with Dr. Linda Tamura and myself, and an essential team member in the creation of Senate Bill 1509 that would eventually dedicate Highway 35 from Government Camp to Hood River as the Oregon Nisei Veterans WWII Memorial Highway. The dedication of this highway on August 13, 2022, honored the Oregon Nisei Veterans that were fighting two wars, one for democracy abroad and one against extreme racial prejudice at home. This highway dedication brought together the Japanese American community, particularly in the Columbia Gorge, and created a road of healing, gratitude, and remembrance. In addition, Dick helped to facilitate the participation of the American Legion Post 22 with this highway dedication. This led to a formal apology by Commander Carl Casey, not only to the Japanese American community, but to the town of Hood River for the divisive and racist stances that Post 22 took, particularly during the 1940's. These events were a direct result of Dicks advocacy and guidance.

I urge you to support HCR 202, including the amendment, for all of the amazing work that Dick Tobiason has done for the State of Oregon, the Nation, and for humanity.

Eric Ballinger