

February 19, 2025

The Honorable Mark Takano
2078 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
House of Representatives

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
524 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
United States Senate

The Honorable Mazie Hirono
109 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
United States Senate

Dear Representative Takano, Senator Hirono, and Senator Duckworth,

We the undersigned 97 organizations write in strong support of your efforts to recognize Fred Korematsu's legacy as a civil rights hero. Accordingly, we offer our endorsement and support for the reintroduction of the following legislation in the 119th Congress: (1) Fred Korematsu Congressional Gold Medal Act;¹ (2) Recognizing the importance of establishing a national "Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution";² (3) Korematsu-Takai Civil Liberties Protection Act.³

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, under which authority more than 120,000 Japanese Americans were forcefully removed from their homes and incarcerated without charges or due process. Fred Korematsu, an American citizen of Japanese descent was arrested in May of 1942 for refusing to comply with the removal order. Korematsu, represented by attorneys from the ACLU, challenged the constitutionality of the orders.

Korematsu stood against these unfounded and racist actions. At the time, our institutions — our democracy — failed him. In 1944, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of excluding Japanese Americans from the West Coast in a 6-3 majority in *Korematsu v. United States*. The dissent by Justice Frank Murphy decried the majority opinion and declared that the order to detain Japanese Americans was the “legalization of racism” and that “[r]acial discrimination in any form and in any degree has no justifiable part whatever in our democratic way of life.”

¹ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/640>

² <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-resolution/74/text>

³ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/639/text>

The imprisonment of Americans of Japanese ancestry, and its legal sanction, is now recognized as a grave injustice and a violation of civil liberties. Its basis was rank racism and xenophobia combined with undue deference to the Executive branch, not facts. While the racist basis of the Supreme Court's wartime decision was proven in the early 1980s, leading to Korematsu's conviction being overturned, the decision remains a dangerous precedent. It is more true now than ever before that the Court's deference to government actions based on claims of national security can be used to justify similar actions that target other communities.

We urge Congress to elevate this history for all Americans to learn from it and recognize the importance of this civil rights hero who took a stand on behalf of all of us, and urge the enactment of the following legislation:

Korematsu-Takai Civil Liberties Protection Act, which would prohibit detention or imprisonment based solely on an actual or perceived protected characteristic of an individual.

Recognizing the importance of establishing a national "Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution," which will help to ensure that Fred Korematsu's legacy is remembered and honored, and that the lessons of the incarceration are not forgotten.

Fred Korematsu Congressional Gold Medal Act, which will honor Fred Korematsu for his decades-long fight for justice, and will serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of protecting civil liberties for all Americans.

We must never forget. This legislation will refresh our memory of the liberties that we must always be on guard to protect.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further. Please contact Matthew Marumoto with the Japanese American Citizens League at policy@jacl.org.

Sincerely,

80-20 Asian American Empowerment PAC
80-20 Educational Foundation
Advocacy for Principled Action in Government
American Governance Institute
American Humanist Association
APA Justice Task Force
APIAHiP: Asian & Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation

Asian American Federal Employees for Nondiscrimination
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
Asian American Scholar Forum
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asian Pacific American Public Affairs (APAPA)
Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education
Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL)
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community
Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial Association
Campaign For Justice: Redress NOW For Japanese Latin Americans!
Chinese for Affirmative Action
Defending Rights & Dissent
Demand Progress
Densho
Due Process Institute
Fix the Court
Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equality, UC Irvine School of Law
Fred T. Korematsu Institute
Free Government Information (FGI)
Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation
Hindus for Human Rights
Japanese American Citizens League
Japanese American Confinement Sites Consortium
Japanese American Museum of Oregon
Japanese American National Museum
Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i
Japanese Peruvian Oral History Project
Minidoka Pilgrimage Planning Committee
Muslim Advocates
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)
National Asian Pacific American Families Allied for Substance Awareness and Harm Reduction
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA)
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
National Immigration Law Center
National Japanese American Historical Society, Inc.
National Japanese American Memorial Foundation
Nikkei Progressives (Los Angeles)
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates

OneAmerica
Organization for Identity & Cultural Development (OICD.net)
Prophet Muhammad Center
Public Citizen
Public Counsel
Resisters.com
RootsAction.org
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund
Southeast Asian Freedom Network
Stop AAPI Hate
SWORD (Students Who Oppose Racial Discrimination)
Texas Multicultural Advocacy Coalition (TMAC)
The Advocates for Human Rights
The Sikh Coalition
Topaz Museum
Tule Lake Committee
United for Peace and Justice
X-Lab

Japanese American Citizens League Local Chapters:

Cincinnati Chapter JACL
Dayton Chapter Japanese American Citizens League
Eden Township JACL
Greater Pasadena JACL Chapter
JACL Chicago Chapter
JACL DC Chapter
JACL Honolulu Chapter
JACL Houston
Japanese American Citizens League, Boise Valley Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League, Florin-Sacramento Valley Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League, NY
Japanese American Citizens League, Philadelphia Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League, Portland Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League, Puyallup Valley
Japanese American Citizens League, San Jose Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League, SELANOCO-Orange County Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League, Twin Cities Chapter
Mount Olympus Chapter Japanese American Citizens League
New Mexico Japanese American Citizens League
Olympia Chapter, JACL

Philadelphia Chapter JACL
Pocatello-Blackfoot JACL
Salt Lake JACL
San Diego Chapter, JACL
San Mateo Chapter JACL
Seabrook Chapter JACL
Seattle Japanese American Citizens League
St. Louis Chapter JACL
Ventura County JACL
Wasatch Front North Japanese American Citizens League