

Subject Files: Civil Rights: Redress: SMM Speeches - Drafts: To the members of the Japanese American Citizens League

Senator Spark M. Matsunaga Papers

Senate, Subject files, Civil Rights, Redress, Box 54, Folder 8

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August 13, 1984

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE:

As a longtime member of the Japanese American Citizens League, I take special pleasure in extending my warmest aloha and best wishes to you as you begin your 1984 National Convention here in the Island State. Hawaii, a unique bridge between the East and West, is also the home of one of JACL's youngest, most enthusiastic and fastest growing chapters and I am sure that your hosts, the members of the Honolulu Chapter of the JACL, will make your visit to Hawaii especially memorable and pleasant.

As we prepare to observe the 45th anniversary of the Japanese American Citizens League, we can look back with considerable pride on our achievements as a civil rights organization dedicated to social justice. During the last 44 years, the Japanese American Citizens League has been in the forefront of efforts to improve our nation's immigration policies and it led the battle to repeal the infamous Emergency Detention Act. In addition, we joined our fellow Americans in fighting for passage of the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, to name but a few.

Today, we face one of our greatest challenges: enactment of legislation to implement the recommendations of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. In its final report, entitled "Personal Justice Denied" which was issued last year, the Commission confirmed what we have always known. The wartime relocation and internment of Americans of Japanese ancestry was not based on military necessity, but was the result of racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership. As a remedy, the Commission recommended that a formal apology be extended to former internees by the federal government, and that compensation in the amount of \$20,000 be paid to each surviving former internee.

(ETH)

The Commission further recommended the establishment of a Civil
Public
Liberties/Education Fund which would undertake educational activities
designed to ensure that the activities surrounding the relocation
and detention of Japanese Americans will never be forgotten.

My bill, S. 2116, introduced last year, would implement
the Commission's recommendations. It has made considerable progress
during the Second Session of the 98th Congress and I will be
reintroducing it in January when the new Congress convenes.
I urge you to redouble your efforts to generate public support
for S. 2116 and to make sure that your own Senators and Members
of Congress are informed about this historic legislation. I am
looking forward to continuing to work with you to obtain the
enactment of this important bill and, hopefully, will be able to
report its Senate passage by the time your 1985 Convention convenes.

ABW

Sincerely,

SMM
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