

LATE TESTIMONY



JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER OF HAWAI'I

Honoring our heritage. Embracing our diversity. Sharing our future.

April 16, 2009

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The Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i (JCCH), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, strives to strengthen our diverse community by educating present and future generations in the evolving Japanese American experience in Hawai'i. The Center features a Community and Historical Gallery, Resource Center, Kenshikan martial arts dōjō, Seikōan Japanese teahouse, Gift Shop and Grand Ballroom.

TO: Senator Will Espero, Chair
Senator Robert Bunda, Vice Chair
And Members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs

FROM: Lenny Yajima Andrew, President & Executive Director
Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i

RE: HCR24 URGING THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE TO ISSUE
POSTAL STAMPS HONORING THE WORLD WAR II JAPANESE
AMERICAN NISEI SOLDIERS, OTHER DISTINGUISHED MILITARY UNITS
IN UNITED STATES HISTORY, AND AMERICANS WHO FOUGHT
AGAINST DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RACE OR NATIONAL ORIGIN.
(Thursday, April 16, 2009, 2:00 p.m., Conference Room 229)

POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT

Good afternoon, Chair Espero, Vice Chair Bunda and members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs. I am Lenny Yajima Andrew, President and Executive Director of the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i testifying in strong support of HCR24.

For the past three years a national campaign effort to have the United States Postal Service issue a commemorative postage stamp honoring the bravery and contributions of the Japanese American soldiers of World War II has been gaining momentum. It is fitting and appropriate for Hawai'i to join this effort.

The exploits of the Nisei soldiers on the battlefield are well known. Despite the specter of racial discrimination culminating in the mass incarceration of their people with the outbreak of the Pacific War, Japanese American young men volunteered for military service by the thousands and served with near unprecedented valor in both the European and Pacific theaters. The Nisei from Hawai'i played a particularly large role in this story, from the Hawai'i Territorial Guard members who were handed World War I rifles and told to patrol St. Louis Heights for Japanese paratroopers in the days after the attack on Pearl Harbor to the Nisei National Guard soldiers in Hawai'i who were secretly shipped to the continental U.S. where they would become the legendary 100th Infantry Battalion, to the nearly 10,000 who volunteered for the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the 2,686 who were famously inducted and sent off in front of 'Iolani Palace on March 28, 1943 to those who served as linguists in the Pacific or in construction battalions here in the Islands.



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But their story continued beyond the battlefield. Upon their return home, these soldiers leveraged their military service—and the sacrifices of those who gave their lives in battle—to fight racial discrimination and to force America to live up to the values it had fought for. Again, the Hawai'i story is at the forefront, as coalitions led by Nisei veterans remade Hawai'i in the postwar years. The story of their contributions in the political, economic, and civil rights arenas are every bit as much their legacy as their battlefield exploits.

In a small way, a postage stamp honoring these men will help to perpetuate their legacy and may inspire those unfamiliar with their classic American story to learn more. I urge your Committee to pass this historically significant resolution. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support for postage stamps honoring Japanese American Nisei soldiers and other distinguished military units.