

SR 31

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LATE

Testimony of Duk Hee Murabayashi

Senate Committee on Economic Development & Taxation

**Wednesday, March 31, 2010
1:45 pm, Conference Rm 016**

In Support of SCR 75/SR 31

Placing a Commemorative Plaque at the former Site of the Korean National Association Headquarters

I am Duk Hee Murabayashi, former Chair of the Centennial Commission of Korean Immigration to Hawaii (2002-2003), and president of the Korean American Foundation Hawaii.

An increasing number of Korean visitors to the Hawaiian Islands are curious about the life of early Korean immigrants in Hawaii. One of the remarkable achievements of the early Korean immigrants, whose population in the Islands was only 4,533 was the building of the headquarters of the Korean National Association (KNA) in 1914, at a time when they had no mother country to which to return. KNA was a unique entity, that represented and protected Koreans in Hawaii. The KNA headquarters was at 1306 Miller Street, the exact spot of the present living quarters at the governor's mansion.

For 32 years, the Korean National Association conducted various activities and assisted Koreans after they had forcefully lost their country to Japan in 1910. KNA published a Korean language newspaper, raised funds to support political efforts to regain Korea's sovereignty, and promoted welfare programs for its aging and dying population.

The Hawaii Territorial government did a friendly condemnation of the KNA headquarters site in December 1945 for the expansion of the governor's mansion.

The site was sold to the government in July 1946.

It is fitting to recognize the KNA headquarters site, albeit belatedly, with a bronze plaque, not larger than 24x15 inches mounted on a 24 inch high pedestal (stone or cement block), to be placed on the Ewa sidewalk of Miller Street, near the back gate of the governor's mansion. Or it could be placed on the wall of the governor's mansion, if placing the plaque on the sidewalk is not acceptable to the city.

Other such commemorative plaques are planned in coming years to recognize significant sites in the history of Koreans in Hawaii. Such commemorative plaques will serve to inform Korean visitors about the lives and activities of early immigrants. They will also help all of us appreciate the sacrifices of early immigrants and their contribution to regaining the sovereignty of Korea. They will also serve to remind us of Koreans' contribution in building modern Hawaii.

We strongly support SCR 75/SR 31 and ask for your favorable action.

It is coincidental that the present Governor's living quarters resembles the old KNA headquarters. A photo of the KNA headquarters is attached for your review.

