

45 years later:

Will the Japanese American Internment Be Redressed?

1987 offers the best chance yet to right the wrongs committed in 1942, when the U.S. government threw over 120,000 Japanese Americans into concentration camps without charges or hearings. The government claimed military necessity, but a 1981 government commission found that in fact, there was none. It has also been established in federal court that the government deliberately covered up evidence showing that the internment was unnecessary.

U.S. Concentration Camps

The truth is that those put into the camps were victimized solely due to their Japanese ancestry. Two-thirds of the internees were U.S. citizens. Most of the rest were Japanese immigrants barred by law from becoming naturalized U.S. citizens. World War I veterans and uniformed members of the U.S. armed forces were not spared. Anyone on the West Coast who was as little as one-sixteenth Japanese was subject to internment, while Italian-Americans or German-Americans were not touched.

Internees spent an average of 3 years behind barbed wire, watched by armed guards in desolate desert camps. They had been allowed only to bring what they could carry with them. Families, careers, farms and businesses were shattered. The psychological and social scars remain to this day.

The Redress Movement

Since the late 1970s, an unprecedented and powerful movement has swept and united Japanese American communities across the country -- a movement to correct the gross injustice of the concentration camps and ensure that this never again happens to any other group of people.

Former internees, students, lawyers, and Japanese-Americans from all walks of life, joined by justice-minded people of all nationalities, raised their voices in a call to rectify the tremendous wrong committed during World War II. The National Coalition for Redress/Reparations was founded in 1980 and, together with such organizations as the Japanese American Citizens League and the National Council for Japanese American Redress, has helped organize the grassroots movement for redress and reparation.

In 1981 the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, appointed by President Carter, held hearings around the country and studied volumes of materials. It concluded that the camps had been a grave injustice and recommended:

- * An official apology for the camps
- * Payment of \$20,000 to each surviving former internee
- * A community fund for projects related to the camps

Redress Bills in Congress

Since then, bills have been introduced in both houses of Congress, to put into effect the Commission's recommendations. This year, we are making our biggest push yet to ensure that the House of Representatives will pass the redress bill, H.R. 442, and that the Senate passes S. 1009.

Due to the support redress forces have accumulated in the past several years, the good work of strong redress backers in Congress and favorable shifts in Congress, we believe there is a chance for redress and reparations this year. As of early April, there were 71 cosponsors (out of 100) for the Senate bill, and 134 cosponsors (out of 435) for the House bill.

Both bills need to be passed by votes in subcommittees, committees and full floor votes in both houses of Congress. To pass these bills, with the crucial \$20,000 individual payment intact, and have President Reagan either sign them or override his veto will not be easy.

However, we are determined to do everything we can to win. **WE NEED YOUR HELP IF WE ARE TO SUCCEED.**

(See reverse side for what you can do)



NATIONAL COALITION FOR REDRESS/REPARATIONS (N.C.R.R.)
1911 Bush Street, #1G, San Francisco, CA 94115 (415) 436-5259



HOW YOU CAN HELP MAKE REDRESS A REALITY

MAILGRAMS: We are asking redress supporters to send Mailgrams at the key times in the redress bills' progress through Congress. You can sign Mailgram authorization forms at our information tables or give us authorization by calling us at (415) 436-5259 or (415) 922-1534, and we will send a Mailgram in your name. You will be billed \$3.50 for each Mailgram you authorize. If you prefer to send your own Mailgram, you can do so by calling BAUD 9600, a Mailgram service, at 1-800-523-7660. Give them the text of your message (up to 100 words), the name of the member of Congress you want the message sent to, and your name, city and phone number.

LETTERS: Personal letters to members of Congress can be very effective. We encourage supporters to emphasize the importance of retaining the key provision providing \$20,000 payment to former internees, as this provision is the most likely to come under fire.

WHOM AND WHEN TO WRITE IN CONGRESS:

Because the Senate bill has 71 cosponsors, we are presently concentrating on the House of Representatives.

In April and early May:

We want to target members of the House Subcommittee on Administrative Law and Governmental Relations. This subcommittee is likely to vote on the bill by mid-May. Barney Frank, D-MA, is chair of this subcommittee. He is a strong supporter of H.R. 442, so we should thank him for his support and let him know that we are mobilizing support for the bill. Jack Brooks, D-TX, is a Democrat on the subcommittee who is not a cosponsor of H.R. 442. Members of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team are especially urged to contact him since they are honorary Texans (for having saved the "Lost Battalion" from Texas during World War II).

Benjamin Cardin, D-MD; Patrick Swindall, R-GA; Howard Coble, R-NC; Lamar Smith, R-TX and E. Clay Smith, R-FL, the ranking Republican on the subcommittee, are not cosponsors of H.R. 442.

From mid-May through July:

We want to target members of the House Judiciary Committee, which is likely to vote on H.R. 442 before the summer recess begins on August 8. Pete Rodino Jr., D-NJ, is chair of this committee and a cosponsor of H.R. 442. As chair, it is important to let him know there is strong grassroots support for the bill, since his is an influential voice in the committee. Hamilton Fish Jr., R-NY, is the ranking Republican on the committee and a cosponsor of H.R. 442. Roman Mazzoli, D-KY; Jack Brooks, D-TX and Benjamin Cardin, D-MD are not cosponsors. Daniel Lungren, R-CA, is a strong opponent of paying any compensation to former internees, and of course, is not a cosponsor.

From August through mid-September:

We plan to target swing votes throughout the House of Representatives. Redress supporters in the House hope to bring H.R. 442 to a full floor vote in mid-September, the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution.

The address for members of the House of Representatives is:
House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515

MAKE DONATIONS AND GET INVOLVED: In order to carry out these activities and make the big push for redress legislation we need funds more than ever. Please send a check to N.C.R.R. at 1911 Bush St. #1G, San Francisco, CA 94115.

For only \$10 you will receive a one-year membership to N.C.R.R., copies of our newsletter, *The Banner*, and other important information on redress and reparations.

The more people we have, the more support we can mobilize and the better our chances of winning redress. If you want to help us out a little or a lot, contact us and we'll let you know what you can do.

REDRESS LEGISLATION

H.R. 442 and S. 1009 — The Civil Liberties Act of 1987

FINDINGS & PURPOSES:

Congress finds that the findings of the CWRIC accurately and completely describe the circumstances of the evacuation, relocation, and internment of U.S. citizens and permanent aliens of Japanese ancestry and individuals of Aleut ancestry.

The purposes of the Act are to provide congressional recognition of the fundamental injustice of the internment in order to prevent the recurrence of any similar event, and make restitution to those individuals interned.

PROVISIONS RELATED TO AMERICANS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY:

1. Recognition of injustice and an apology by Congress on behalf of the Nation.
2. Based on reviews by the Attorney General, the President is requested to offer pardons to those convicted of violating laws during the internment period whose violations were based on a refusal to accept racially discriminatory treatment.
3. Departments and agencies of the government to which individuals may apply for restitution of positions, status, or entitlements lost because of discriminatory acts related to the internment, shall review such applications with liberality, giving full consideration to the findings of the Commission.
4. A Civil Liberties Public Education Fund of \$1.5 billion is authorized for educational and research purposes, individual payment, and community welfare; amounts of which shall only be available for disbursement by the Attorney General and a Board of Directors.
5. The Attorney General shall identify and locate each eligible individual and shall pay out of the Fund to each surviving individual the sum of \$20,000. Those who decline payment shall have their amount remain in the Fund. Consideration shall be given to the elderly claimants in disbursing funds.

PROVISIONS RELATED TO ALEUTIAN AND PRIBILOF ISLANDERS:

1. A restitution fund of \$5 million is authorized for community, educational, and cultural programs benefiting the Aleuts. The Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association will act as chief administrator of this Fund.
2. To each of the survivors of the internment of Aleuts, \$12,000 in compensation shall be paid out of the Fund.
3. Churches and community centers destroyed in World War II shall be rebuilt or replaced.
4. Debris remaining from World War II shall be cleared away from the Aleutian Islands.
5. The island of Attu shall be returned to the Aleut corporation provided that the Coast Guard will be able to continue essential functions on the island.

HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW

Here's a typical—but greatly simplified—"legislative road map" showing how bills are enacted into law. Most proposals, however, never make it through this legislative labyrinth. In the first session of the 97th Congress, for example, of 7,312 bills introduced in both Houses, only 157 became law.

