



Department of Justice

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JUSTICE ISSUES FIRST REDRESS PAYMENTS TO JAPANESE-AMERICANS

The Department of Justice today issued the first redress payments to nine Japanese-Americans who were interned by the federal government during World War II. The \$20,000 payments, authorized by the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, are the first of up to 25,000 payments to be made during Fiscal Years (FY) 1991 and 1992.

In commenting on today's Redress event, Attorney General Dick Thornburgh stated, "Your struggle for Redress and the events that led to today are the finest examples of what our country is about, and of what I have pledged to protect and defend, for your efforts have strengthened the nation's Constitution by reaffirming the inalienability of our civil rights."

According to John R. Dunne, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division, "The Act provides a total of \$1.25 billion in restitution to U.S. Citizens and permanent resident aliens of Japanese ancestry who were forcibly evacuated, relocated, and interned by the United States Government during World War II.

"ORA estimates that approximately 65,000 internees were living when the Act was passed. In accordance with the Act, ORA will pay the oldest recipients first," concluded Dunne.

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The Act mandates that payments go to the surviving spouse, children or parents, in that order, if the eligible person has died since the enactment of the law. Also, it is the government's responsibility to identify and locate eligible individuals because the law specifically prohibits the use of an application process.

From early 1942 to the end of World War II, over 120,000 Japanese-Americans from the West Coast of the United States were evacuated from their homes and interned in "relocation centers" administered by the War Relocation Authority. The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, which was established by Congress in 1980, concluded that the internment policy was influenced by racial prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership. The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 was passed to provide redress to those Japanese-Americans effected by the wartime internment policy.

The Attorney General, responsible for the implementation of the Act, created ORA within the Civil Rights Division in September 1988.

Last November, Congress appropriated \$500 million for redress payments in FY 91. The Office of Management and Budget has allocated nearly \$350 million to the Department to begin making payments.

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The Office of Management and Budget is expected to allocate the remaining money to ORA later this month, as soon as the final budget compromise is approved. This will allow ORA to pay, during FY 91, all eligible individuals born on or before June 30, 1920.

"There are many people who have contributed valuable time and effort to this redress program," added Redress Administrator Robert Bratt. "In the spirit of the President's "Thousand Points of Light" campaign, we recognize that volunteers played an important role in our current efforts, and will continue to be a major force in program over the remaining years."

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