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"GO FOR BROKE, INC." STATEMENT

ENDORING "THE CIVIL LIBERTIES ACT OF 1983"

For The Committee on the Judiciary

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE LAW

AND GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

U. S. House of Representatives

June 20-21, 1984

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MR. CHAIRMAN, AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

My name is Mike M. Masaoka.

Following my honorable discharge from the 442nd Regimental Combat Team in December 1945, I first appeared before this Judiciary Committee early in 1946 as the then Washington Representative of the Japanese American Citizens League, trying to the best of my ability to persuade the Congress that it should enact meaningful corrective and remedial legislation for the benefit principally of those of Japanese

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ancestry in this country, most of whom were forced arbitrarily to leave their homes and associations on the West Coast in the spring of 1942, to be imprisoned as suspect citizens in American-style concentration camps, and to be denied constitutional rights simply because, in the words of the Supreme Court, they had an "affinity" to the then enemy Japanese.

At that time--and to this day--I felt that I owed this effort to those Japanese Americans who volunteered to fight, and if necessary to die, not only for their own country that had deprived them of their dignity and freedom, but also to destroy fascism and totalitarianism everywhere on earth, and also to earn for their families and their posterity the opportunities and equalities to which they were entitled as native-born Americans.

That same summer, on July 15, 1946, the survivors still in the service of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team proudly marched down Constitution Avenue and onto the Mall of the White House, acclaimed as the "Purple Heart Regiment" with casualties numbering more than 300% of its original strength and memorialized as "the most decorated unit in American military history for its size and length of service".

There, in a driving rainstorm, then Commander-In-Chief and President Harry S. Truman affixed the seventh Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation streamer onto the colors and battle flag of the 442nd. As he presented the nation's highest unit award, equivalent to the Medal of Honor for individuals, to these American Japanese troops, the President saluted and succinctly observed: "I can't tell you how much I appreciate the privilege of being able to show you just how much the United States thinks of what you have done...I think that Americanism is not a matter of race or creed, but of the heart. You fought not only the enemy, but prejudice--and you won."

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Mr. Chairman, what had we actually won? Today, through legislative, executive, and judicial actions, our status as citizens is generally acknowledged. Nevertheless, as even the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians officially found as late as last year (1983), we still are marked in much of the public mind with the presumptions of disloyalty and unassimilability that allowed our own government in World War II to herd most of us into wilderness camps, without trial or hearing, not even charges or indictments, at a time when our civil courts were in operation, solely on account of the belief by the same Army that so proudly proclaimed our unprecedented military record that, somehow, in the words of the then Commanding General of the Western Defense Command, "A Jap's a Jap. And giving him a piece of paper attesting to his citizenship doesn't change that fact."

Subsequently, this same General explained in a letter to the then Secretary of War, "In the war in which we are now engaged racial affinities are not severed by migration. The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become 'Americanized', the racial strains are undiluted. To conclude otherwise is to expect that children born of white parents on Japanese soil sever all racial affinity and become loyal Japanese subjects, ready to fight and, if necessary, to die for Japan in a war against the nation of their parents. That Japan is allied with Germany and Italy in this struggle is no ground for assuming that any Japanese, barred from assimilation by convention as he is, though born and raised in the United States, will not turn against this nation when the final test of loyalty comes..."

In services commemorating the 20th anniversary of the activation of the 442nd in February 1943, then four-star General Jacob Devers, who had been

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our commanding general in the invasion of Southern France and in the 442nd's drive northward on the Italy-Swiss-French-German borders, paid this tribute at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery: "The Unknown Soldier of World War II might be Japanese American."

In truth, the Nisei war dead "known only to God", symbolize the supreme sacrifice of all Americans who "gave their last full measure of devotion". In death, they are equal in all respects to their buddies of other races who also fell in battle. We, the living, can show "no greater love" than to assure that they shall not "have died in vain", that the ideals, principles, and objectives for which they fought so gallantly are provided without fear or favor to all Americans without regard to their ancestry.

In any case, this unwarranted stigma, that for some unknown reason "being of the Japanese race" somehow prevented us from becoming as American-- if you will--as the native born children of other immigrants, which we Nisei GIs believed that we had erased forever with our blood and lives in every theater of that worldwide conflict, remains with us even today as a badge of dishonor and disgrace in spite of almost a century of exemplary citizenship on the part of the Japanese in this nation.

Perhaps it was not sheer coincidence, Mr. Chairman, that your State of Texas played a more prominent role in the heroics of the Japanese American combat infantrymen in Italy and in France than you may have been aware of.

The Nisei National Guardsmen of Hawaii who made up the 100th Infantry Battalion, which was later to become the First Battalion of the 442nd while retaining their original designation because of their outstanding gallantry, first fought shoulder to shoulder with the Fighting Texans of the 36th Infantry Division as part of the 34th "Red Bull" Division of Iowans and

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Nebraskans at the bitter fight at Cassino, then in the bloody crossing of the Rapido, as well as at Anzio beachhead. Thereafter, leading the drive on to the Arno River, the 442nd Combat Team participated in the invasion of Southern France in the fall of 1944. Later, now, as part of the 36th Texas Division, we rescued what was left of the Lost Texas Battalion of the 141st Infantry Regiment, after several other outfits had failed in the effort, in the Vosges Mountains in late October 1944. In what military historians have described as one of the 50 greatest battles engaged in by American troops, the Nisei of the 100th and 442nd suffered more than double the number of Texans saved in killed and almost nine times the casualties as the number rescued. I remember well that valiant mission in which all of us were declared to be "Honorary Texans", for I lost a brother in those rugged forested hills, while another lay 100% disabled in a Rome hospital and still another brother was just returning after hospitalization for wounds suffered earlier in Italy to help fill our decimated ranks.

Perhaps, because so many of us prospective beneficiaries of this pending legislation are "Honorary Texans", including both Senators Daniel Inouye and Spark Matsunaga who were recently your colleagues here in the House, while many others of Japanese ancestry served with equal--if not more--heroism in the Pacific Theater in the Military Intelligence Service, thereby--in the reports of General Douglas MacArthur's Intelligence Chief--preventing possibly hundreds of thousands of casualties, including those of many Texans serving in the Army, Navy and Marines in that island-hopping campaign toward victory, saving billions of American dollars, and shortening the war by at least two years, your distinguished Majority Leader James Wright is the lead sponsor of H. R. 4110 "To accept the findings and to implement the recommendations of the

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the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians" and cited as the "Civil Liberties Act of 1983".

We who fought in the Mediterranean and European Theaters salute our fellow Japanese Americans who served in the Pacific and the Asian Mainland against Japanese troops in combat intelligence and as interpreters and translators because we know that their fate as possible prisoners of war or hospitalized wounded would have been far more terrible than ours because of their innocent "affinity" with the enemy and the circumstances of such imprisonment if captured.

For more than 25 personal appearances before this Committee since my first testimony in 1946, I represented the JACL. Now that organization--then and now the largest, oldest, and most effective of Nikkei organizations--is led and represented by a new generation of Japanese Americans.

So, today, I am representing a newly organized umbrella association of Japanese American war veterans, headquartered in San Francisco and incorporated as "Go For Broke, Inc."

"Go For Broke", as you may know, was the battlecry of the 442nd that is now a respected and recognized phrase in our American language, meaning "shoot the works", "go all out", "gamble all in one supreme effort", and other words which epitomize the spirit that motivated all of us who served in all branches of the armed forces in World War II.

Though our membership comprises mostly American veterans of Japanese ancestry who fought in World Wars I and II, as well as in Korea and Vietnam, and as recently as in the invasion of Grenada and the mission in Lebanon, most of us saw active service in World War II. Now, in the twilight of our lives,

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we have decided to "Go For Broke" once again in the ever continuing crusade against racism, bigotry, and injustice; this time to secure if possible enactment of H. R. 4110, in the hope that never again, here or elsewhere, will any individual or minority suffer arbitrarily and without reasonable cause and "due process".

Today, on behalf of your fellow Americans who have served our country so well in times of war and peace, may I enlist your cooperation, Mr. Chairman, in this campaign to redeem the pledge and promise of President Truman almost four decades ago--to gain the victory at home over prejudice--and to join us in this "Go For Broke" crusade that, in truth, affects the integrity of the citizenship of all Americans, without regard to ancestry, previous nationality, race, creed, religion, color, sex, and age.

Of all concerned groups, we Japanese American war veterans believe that we have earned the right to speak out in favor of H. R. 4110 as long overdue and meritorious legislation. And that is my purpose today in presenting the first ever testimony of "Go For Broke, Inc."

Commission Reports and H. R. 4110

We are aware that both the bill under consideration and the reports and recommendations of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians deal with not only the travails of the Japanese Americans on the continental mainland, as well as the then territories of Hawaii and Alaska, but also with the Aleuts in the Alaska Defense Command, in World War II.

Since we did not personally experience the agonies endured by the Aleuts, and since no doubt many others more competent than we will testify concerning their problems, on behalf of the Nisei veterans I will restrict my

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comments to those issues relating to our special and unique concerns. At the same time, though, I cannot but urge the most humane and generous redress for those Aleuts who were the victims of the same war as we were.

Mr. Chairman, among the relatively few criticisms of the Commission and its reports and recommendations are two that I believe I can respond to as competently as any. These relate to the charges that members of the Commission were biased in their outlook and that they failed to view the facts and conditions as they actually were some 42 years ago.

To begin with, the resort to high level commissions to investigate facts and to make recommendations for congressional and/or presidential relief is a time-honored procedure of our system of government.

In this particular case, the Congress itself overwhelmingly established this investigative bipartisan commission of nine, with specific directives as to its responsibilities. The President, the Speaker of the House, and the President pro tempore of the Senate each appointed three commissioners. Seven of the nine are lawyers by training and profession, another a Catholic Priest, and still another a successful businessman.

All have served in several other capacities during their distinguished careers. Among them, two are former United States Senators, one is an incumbent Congressman while another formerly served in the House, two have been cabinet secretaries, another an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, with still another a sitting judge of a State court. One has also served as an Ambassador of the United States, another has been an educator and the Chairman of a national commission whose members were nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. One has been the general counsel in two cabinet

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departments. Etc. A woman was a member, as well as an evacuee who later served in the Army of the United States with distinction and is now a Judge of Common Pleas in the City of Philadelphia.

One can hardly claim that such outstanding commissioners, most of whom being attorneys at law, are not capable of impartial, honest, and realistic research and investigation. This is especially true when all nine were unanimous in their findings and only one dissented as to the compensatory relief recommended.

The Commission held 20 days of hearings in various cities across the country, listened to testimony from more than 750 witnesses, including the evacuees themselves, former government officials who were responsible for the various actions taken under authority of Executive Order No. 9066, public figures, interested citizens, historians and other professionals who have studied the subjects of the Commission inquiry. In addition, the commissioners and its staff carried on extensive research, especially of previously classified and other information not known or available to the general public.

It is difficult to conceive of a more exhaustive and comprehensive review and it is one that certainly a single individual or group can hardly question reasonably as inadequate and/or biased as to the actual facts and general conclusions.

As for the second charge that the Commission failed to take into account the political climate both in Washington and on the West Coast, the public perceptions, and the "war mood" in the spring of 1942, the answer is rather obvious if one studies the reports and the recommendations of the Commission that the commissioners were far better equipped than any others to ascertain and evaluate what happened 42 years ago.

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For the record, may I state that I was the National Secretary and Field Executive of the JACL from August 1941 to June 1943 when I reported for induction into the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. And, to the best of my knowledge and belief, I am the only surviving national officer of the JACL who--at one time or another--met most, if not all, of the major officials, both military and civilian, who were responsible for this wartime agony and discussed various aspects of this evacuation, detention, and relocation travail before, during, and after the issuance of Executive Order No. 9066, which was issued February 19, 1942.

Since I was not required to undergo the so-called evacuation process, although my family members were, I am not competent to address myself to actual camp life in both the so-called assembly centers and the relocation camps. But I do claim to be as knowledgeable as any evacuee as to the public events, decisions, and actions precipitated by the attack on Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941.

After more than two years with the 442nd, I returned to JACL to become its Washington Representative, a full-time activity until the summer of 1952 when I accepted a part-time retainer arrangement with JACL until 1972, when I voluntarily retired as a paid staffer, though retaining my membership in JACL.

For what it is worth, based on my personal recollections and a quick review of documents and publications available to me over the years, including most--if not all--of the major nonfiction books and papers written on the subject during the past half century and more, I can testify that the Commission findings are factual, accurate, and impartial. Many previously classified and/or unknown details, much of its obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, are revealed and exposed for the first time.

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Part 1 of the Report entitled "Personal Justice Denied" is a 467-page documentary that satisfies two of the three directives mandated by the Congress in its authorizing legislation, to (1) "review the facts and circumstances surrounding Executive Order Numbered 9066, issued February 19, 1942, and the impact of such Executive Order on American citizens and permanent resident aliens" and (2) "review directives of the United States military forces requiring the relocation, and in some cases, detention in internment camps of American citizens..."

Part 2, which has to do with the Commission's Recommendations, emphasizes that

In sum, Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity, and the decisions that followed from it-- exclusion, detention, the ending of detention and the ending of exclusion--were not founded upon military considerations. The broad historical causes that shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership. Widespread ignorance about Americans of Japanese descent contributed to a policy conceived in haste and executed in an atmosphere of fear and anger at Japan. A grave personal injustice was done to the American citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry who, without individual review or any probative evidence against them, were excluded, removed and detained by the United States during World War II.

The excluded people suffered enormous damages and losses, both material and intangible. To the disastrous loss of farms, businesses and homes must be added the disruption for many years of careers and professional lives, as well as the long-term loss of income, earnings and opportunity. Japanese American participation in the postwar boom was delayed and damaged by the losses of valuable land and growing enterprises on the West Coast which they sustained in 1942...

Less tangible, the ethnic Japanese suffered the injury of unjustified stigma that marked the excluded. There were physical illnesses and injuries directly related to detention, but the deprivation of liberty is no less injurious because it wounds the spirit rather than the body. Evacuation and relocation brought psychological pain, and the weakening of a traditionally strong family structure under pressure of separation and camp conditions. No price can be placed on these deprivations...
