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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

**XAVIER BECERRA**  
31ST DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

**Introduction of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and  
Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act**

**HON. XAVIER BECERRA**  
**California**  
**Tuesday, January 6, 2009**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Xavier Becerra".

Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act. This bill would create a commission to review and determine facts surrounding the relocation, internment, and deportation of Japanese Latin Americans during World War II.

Almost thirty years ago, Congress established the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians to study the circumstances which led to the detention of 110,000 Japanese Americans during World War II. After twenty days of hearings, testimony from 750 witnesses, and review of thousands of government and military documents, the Commission concluded that internment of Japanese Americans was the result of racism and wartime hysteria. In its report to Congress titled *Personal Justice Denied*, the Commission stated "not a single documented act of espionage, sabotage or fifth column activity was committed by an American citizen of Japanese ancestry or by Japanese alien..." The Commission's findings vindicated these loyal Americans and President Ronald Reagan's signature of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 brought closure to thousands who suffered unspeakable indignities and tremendous losses. However, there remains a group who has not yet experienced the closure they deserve or obtained the justice to which they are entitled.

Between December 1941 and February 1948, approximately 2,300 men, women, and children of Japanese ancestry were abducted from 13 Latin American countries and deported to internment camps in the United States. The U.S. government orchestrated and financed this operation with the intention of using these individuals as hostages in exchange for Americans held by Japan. Over 800 people, many who were second or third generation Latin Americans and had no familial or linguistic ties to Japan, were used in two prisoner of war exchanges. The remaining detainees were held in U.S. internment camps until after the end of the war. In the appendix of *Personal Justice Denied*, the Commission cited the federal government's role in kidnapping and detaining Japanese Latin Americans, but acknowledged it had not researched documents that exist in distant archives or receive official testimony from government officials or survivors.

It is for these reasons that I introduce this very important legislation. The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act would create a commission to investigate and review the facts with regard to the abduction and detainment

Japanese Latin Americans during World War II by the U.S. government. Composed of nine members appointed by the President, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and President pro tempore of the Senate, the commission would be charged with holding public hearings and submitting a report of its findings and recommending appropriate remedies to Congress.

I am proud to be working with Senator Daniel K. Inouye of Hawaii, a decorated World War II veteran and a tremendous public servant, who is also introducing an identical Senate companion measure today. Additionally, I am honored to have the indispensable support of the wonderful men and women of the Campaign for Justice and the Japanese American Citizens League. Without them this effort would lack the heart and soul essential to cross the finish line.

Madam Speaker, now is the time to reconcile our past and complete the official narrative on a troubling period in our nation's history. As we commit ourselves to building a better America for our daughters and sons, I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act.