

Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act (S. 381 and H.R. 662)

To create a Commission to investigate facts and circumstances about the relocation, internment, and deportation of Latin Americans of Japanese descent

Sponsors: Sen. Daniel Inouye (HI), Sen. Ted Stevens (AK), Sen. Carl Levin (MI), Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (VT), Sen. Daniel Akaka (HI), Sen. Lisa Murkowski (AK)

Rep. Xavier Becerra (CA-31), Rep. Dan Lungren (CA-3),
Rep. Mike Honda (CA-15), Rep. Chris Cannon (UT-3)

CONTEXT

The U.S. interned over 110,000 people of Japanese descent during World War II. Between December 1941 and February 1945, the U.S. government orchestrated and financed the abduction of approximately 2,300 men, women, and children of Japanese ancestry from 13 Latin American countries to the U.S. More than 800 of Japanese Latin Americans were included in two prisoner exchanges between the United States and Japan. The remaining Japanese Latin Americans were imprisoned in internment camps without the benefit of due process until after the end of the war. The U.S. government issued an apology and financial reparations for its wartime violation against U.S. citizens and permanent residents of Japanese ancestry through the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. This Act, however, did not bring relief for Japanese Latin Americans who were abducted and unlawfully interned in the U.S. Since the war, the victims of these crimes have been seeking redress. After ten years, the government offered them \$5,000 apiece (instead of the \$20,000 awarded to interned Japanese Americans) and a letter of regret after a class-action lawsuit, *Carmen Mochizuki et al. v. The United States*. About 800 accepted the settlement, while others refused it or never learned of it. Many Japanese Latin Americans who remained in the United States were eventually able to secure permanent residency status and have become U.S. citizens.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BILL

This bill would create a commission to investigate and determine facts and circumstances surrounding the relocation, internment, and deportation of Japanese Latin Americans during World War II by the U.S. government. The commission would be composed of nine members, three each appointed by the President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the 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, within 12 months of the bill's enactment.

SUPPORTERS OF THE BILL

Campaign For Justice: Redress Now For Japanese Latin Americans!
Japanese American Citizens League
Japanese Peruvian Oral History Project
National Coalition for Redress/Reparations—
San Francisco
Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress
Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus

Asian American Justice Center
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
Washington Office of Latin America
Latin American Working Group
Friends Committee for National Legislation
Organization of Chinese Americans
Human Rights First
National Asian Pacific Women's Forum

Summary of “Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act”

FINDINGS

In 1982, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians found that approximately 2,300 men, women, and children of Japanese descent were uprooted from their homes in Latin America and detained in internment camps in the United States, and in some cases, deported to Japan to enable the United States to conduct prisoner exchanges. They were not covered by the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which formally apologized and provided compensation payments to former Japanese Americans interned pursuant to Executive Order 9066.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMISSION

The commission would be composed of 9 members: 3 each appointed by the President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President pro tempore of the Senate. The President shall call the first meeting of the commission within 60 days that this act is enacted or within 30 days after legislation making appropriations to carry out this act is enacted.

DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION

- Investigate and determine facts and circumstances surrounding the United States’ relocation, internment, and deportation of Latin Americans of Japanese descent, and the impacts of those actions by the United States
- Recommend appropriate remedies, if any, based on preliminary findings by the original commission and new discoveries

Not later than one year after the date of the first meeting, the commission shall submit a written report on its findings and recommendations to Congress.

POWERS OF THE COMMISSION

The commission shall hold public hearings, give testimony, receive evidence, and administer oaths; may also issue and enforce subpoenas requiring the attendance and testimony of witnesses, as well as producing other physical evidence and materials.

PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

A commission member who is not an officer or employee of the federal government shall be compensated for each day, including travel time, during which the member is engaged in commission duties. A commission member who is an officer or employee of the United States shall serve without compensation.

TERMINATION

The commission shall terminate its duties and performances 90 days after the date on which the commission submits its report to Congress.

AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

Funding shall be appropriated for the fiscal year 2007, and shall remain available, without fiscal year limitation, until expended.