

Congresswoman Matsui Marks Day of Remembrance

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Washington, DC - Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui delivered the following remarks on the floor of the House of Representatives in support of H. Res. 122, which recognizes a National Day of Remembrance for the Japanese Internment. The Day of Remembrance takes place each year on February 19, to mark the date President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which forced 120,000 Japanese American citizens and other legal residents such as German and Italian Americans into internment camps during World War II solely based upon their Japanese descent. This year is the 65th Anniversary of the Executive Order. Below are her remarks (as prepared for delivery):

"Madam Speaker, the resolution before us is a reminder that from great injustice can come great awakening. We take up this resolution to mark the 65th anniversary of Executive Order 9066.

"The resolution is a reminder that each of us has a responsibility to ensure that something like Executive Order 9066 never happens again. In a time of war, thousands of innocent American citizens were rounded up, forcibly removed from their homes, and shipped to internment camps.

"Sadly, this was an avoidable consequence of racial prejudice and wartime hysteria. The government at all levels was blinded by war. It is imperative that we learn the lesson this moment in history has taught us.

"That is why I applaud the creation of a grant program to preserve the internment camps and related historical sites where Japanese Americans were detained during World War II.

"We must preserve these camps as the physical "tangible" representation of our government's failure to protect the Constitutional right of every American and also as a symbol of our nation's ability to acknowledge our mistakes. Further, these designations will ensure that future generations will be able to visit the internment camps to gain a better understanding of the previous generation's experience.

"We may have won World War II, Madam Speaker. However, we were victorious not because of our treatment of Japanese, Italian, and German Americans, but in spite of it. And now, 65 years later, we are once again engaged in armed conflict overseas. And once again, the undertones of suspicion and mistrust toward particular groups of people lurk beneath the surface of our society.

"Which is why it is more important than ever to recall our past so we do not repeat our mistakes. I hope every American will take this day to reaffirm their commitment to our Constitution and the rights and protections it guarantees for all of us.

"The resolution before us today recognizes the past injustices and points the way toward a future where such wrongs are no longer perpetrated in this great country. Each member of this Congress, as a servant of the people, is duty-bound to apply these lessons of the past to the challenges we now face.

"In doing so, we show our continued efforts toward ensuring that our country avoids similarly misguided policies now and in the future."

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