

AMERICANS FOR PERSONAL JUSTICE

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AMERICANS FOR PERSONAL JUSTICE HAILS INTRODUCTION
OF \$1.5 BILLION REDRESS BILL FOR JAPANESE AMERICANS

The introduction of legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives to provide \$1.5 billion to redress the injustice done to Japanese American citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry during World War II when the federal government excluded them from the west coast and detained them in remote camps, was hailed today as a significant step toward achieving a measure of personal justice too long denied.

"The introduction of this legislation is a significant step toward redressing the grave personal injustice that was done to the loyal American citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry who were excluded, removed and detained by our government without any individual review or evidence against them," said Dr. Arthur Flemming, chairperson of Americans for Personal Justice. Americans for Personal Justice is a broad-based group of citizens and organizations seeking enactment of legislation to implement the recommendations of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. Flemming, who served as a member of the Commission on Wartime Relocation is former chairperson of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare.

The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians was created by Congress in 1980 and issued its report and recommendations earlier this year after extensive review of documentary evidence and testimony from more than 750 witnesses. The Commission's report concluded that the treatment of

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Japanese American citizens and resident aliens of Japanese descent during World War II was not justified by military necessity and constituted a "grave injustice."

The legislation, introduced by House Majority Leader Jim Wright (D-TX) and 72 co-sponsors on October 6, would implement all of the Commission's recommendations, including the creation of a \$1.5 billion trust fund for educational and humanitarian purposes with \$20,000 in compensation to be paid out of the trust fund to each individual survivor of the relocation and detention experience.

"Our constitutional commitment to liberty and due process demands that the injustice done to Japanese American citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry be recognized and that compensation be made for the enormous damages and losses, both material and intangible, that they suffered," Flemming said. "A willingness to acknowledge our mistakes and to struggle for a more just society is one of our strengths as a nation. It is this basic sense of fairness and justice that APJ will marshal to secure enactment of this legislation."

Members of the House leadership joining Majority Leader Wright as original co-sponsors of the legislation included Congressman Gillis Long (D-LA), chairman of the Democratic Caucus and Majority Whip Thomas Foley (D-WA). U.S. Rep. Peter W. Rodino (D-NJ), Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Rep. Hamilton Fish, Jr., (R-NY) ranking Republican on the House Judiciary Committee, Rep. Norman Mineta (D-CA) and Rep. Robert Matsui (D-CA) also joined in sponsoring this legislation.

In addition to the \$1.5 billion trust fund with the provision of \$20,000 compensatory payments to individual survivors, the bill includes a formal congressional apology on behalf of the nation to those who were relocated and detained. It also requests that the President offer pardons to those convicted of violating laws during the internment period whose violation was based on a refusal to accept racially discriminatory treatment, and asks federal agencies reviewing requests for administrative rulings relating to the internment to review such cases with liberality, giving full consideration to the findings of the Commission and Congress.

The legislation also creates a trust fund of \$5 million for community education and cultural programs benefiting the Aleuts who were evacuated from the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands during World War II and maintained in camps in southeastern Alaska. In addition, individual Aleut survivors would be paid \$5,000 in compensation, churches and community centers would be rebuilt, World War II debris would be cleared from the Aleutian Islands, and the island of Attu would be returned to the native corporation, provided that the Coast Guard would be able to continue its use of the island.