

# NEWS from SPARK M. MATSUNAGA

## U.S. Senator from Hawaii

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### MATSUNAGA INTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO CARRY OUT RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMISSION ON WARTIME RELOCATION AND INTERNMENT OF CIVILIANS

Washington, D.C.--Calling the incarceration in detention camps of 120,000 American citizens of Japanese ancestry "one of America's worst World War II errors," U. S. Senator Spark Matsunaga (D-Hawaii) today introduced legislation to implement the recommendations of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians.

The Hawaii lawmaker said, "I am pleased to be introducing in the Senate the first piece of legislation to compensate these American-born citizens and their immigrant parents for the injustices suffered in World War II.

"Without trial or hearing, without warrant, they were deprived of their liberty, losing their homes, farms, businesses and careers. It was an event unprecedented in American history."

Matsunaga was joined in introducing the bill by Senators Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska), Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), John Melcher (D-Montana), Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio), Donald Reigle (D-Mich.), Paul Tsongas (D-Mass.), Alfonse D'Amato (R-New York), Jeremiah Denton (R-Ala.), Carl Levin (D-Mich.), Daniel P. Moynihan (D-New York), and William Proxmire (D-Wis.).

"It was not until 1980 that the U. S. Congress authorized a study of the circumstances surrounding the relocation and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II," Matsunaga explained. "After a careful review of wartime records and extensive public hearings, a distinguished nine-member study commission reported its findings in February of this year, and, in June, submitted to Congress its recommended remedies.

"I have had nearly five months to review the Commission's recommendations and I am convinced that its findings are accurate, fair and equitable. I therefore have introduced legislation which reflects exactly the Commission's recommendations with respect to Japanese Americans and Alaskan Aleuts.

The Matsunaga bill would:

1. Establish a \$1.5 billion fund which would be used, first, to provide a one-time, per capita

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payment of \$20,000 to each of the approximately 60,000 surviving persons of Japanese ancestry who were excluded from their places of residence pursuant to the Federal Government's Executive Order 9066.

2. From the remaining money in the \$1.5 billion fund, establish a fund for humanitarian and public education purposes related to wartime events.
3. Enact legislation which officially recognizes that a grave injustice was done and offer the apologies of the Nation for the wartime acts of exclusion, removal and detention.
4. Grant presidential pardons to individuals who were convicted of violating the wartime statutes imposing a curfew on American citizens on the basis of their ethnicity and requiring ethnic Japanese to leave designated areas of the West Coast to report to assembly centers.
5. Institute the "liberal review" by appropriate executive branch agencies of applications submitted by Japanese Americans for the restitution of positions, status or entitlements lost in whole or in part because of acts or events between December 1941 and 1945.

"I am also asking that Congress implement the Commission's findings with respect to the Alaskan Aleuts who were evacuated from their island homes by the U. S. Army following enemy attacks on the Aleutian Islands in 1942.

"Resettled in Southeastern Alaska by the U. S. Department of the Interior, the Aleuts suffered deplorable living conditions, inadequate medical care, lack of educational opportunities for their children and the irretrievable loss of priceless religious artifacts," Matsunaga said.

"It is time to give formal consideration to the findings of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians so that at long last Americans, regardless of ancestry, can close out this dark chapter in our national history and proclaim with pride, in the words of President Roosevelt: 'Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart, not of race or ancestry.'"