

Legislation Text

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Declaring February 19, 2018, as Day of Remembrance in honor of the 120,000 Japanese Americans interned during World War II, as a result of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066, and honoring the heroism, courage and loyalty of Japanese American World War II veterans and internees by continuing their fight to uphold constitutional freedoms and justice for all against xenophobia and hate.

WHEREAS, On February 19, 1942, two weeks after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, authorizing the exclusion and incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans and legal residents of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast of the United States in incarceration camps during World War II, thus continuing a decades-long tradition of codifying acts of socioeconomic exclusion directed towards Asian American communities; and

WHEREAS, Japanese internees were uprooted from their homes and jobs, and consequently housed in tar paper-covered barracks that were structurally unsound, lacked plumbing and cooking facilities, and were incredibly overcrowded, with 25 people being forced to live in spaces built for four; and

WHEREAS, These internees also lost substantial property--amounting to an estimated \$1-3 billion--in addition to experiencing crippling trauma. Approximately twelve internees were shot and killed as they attempted to escape from the camps, while dozens more died due to inadequate healthcare; and

WHEREAS, Over two-thirds of the Japanese Americans interned were American citizens, with the vast majority of incarcerated Japanese non-citizens having resided in the United States for over twenty years; and

WHEREAS, Italian Americans and German Americans were also restricted in exercising their freedoms through extreme measures that required identification cards, travel restrictions, and seizure of personal property. Additionally, 11,500 Germans and 1,881 Italians were interned across the country; and

WHEREAS, Despite the clear deprivation of civil rights and civil liberties, the US Supreme Court sided with Roosevelt's executive order in 1944 with its ruling in *Korematsu vs. United States*, noting that the need to protect against espionage was more pressing than the civil rights of Japanese Americans; and

WHEREAS, President Gerald Ford formally rescinded Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1976, calling it a "setback to fundamental American principles," and the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians concluded in 1983 that Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity, noting that decision to issue the order was shaped by "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership"; and

WHEREAS, Congress enacted the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, in which it formally apologized on behalf of the US Government for "fundamental violations of the basic civil liberties and constitutional rights of these individuals of Japanese ancestry"; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Chapter of Japanese American Citizens League was chartered on March 25,

1947 through the leadership of numerous former internees, and today is a leader in the City in “tackling the continual problems of racial prejudice and injustice in this country”; and

WHEREAS, As US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids and mass arrests of immigrants have proliferated, we must remember the 133,000 Americans whose nationality was criminalized during World War II in spite of their demonstrated commitment to the United States and their active participation in American communities; and

WHEREAS, Day of Remembrance provides an opportunity for all people to reflect on the importance of sociopolitical leadership and vigilance and on the values of justice and civil rights during times of uncertainty and emergency; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Declares February 19, 2018, as a Day of Remembrance of the 120,000 Japanese Americans interned during World War II, as a result of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066, and honors the heroism, courage and loyalty of Japanese American World War II veterans and internees by continuing their fight to uphold constitutional freedoms and justice for all against xenophobia and hate.