

April 8, 2008

House of Representatives
United States Congress
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

We write as faith-based organizations to urge you to support H.R. 662, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act. This bill would create a nine member 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.

If you are already a cosponsor, we thank you for supporting this important legislation. We write now to urge you and your colleagues to support action on this bill and to press for a hearing in the House Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties.

Almost twenty years ago, Congress approved the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which provided an official apology and modest reparations for the World War II internment of 110,000 Japanese Americans by the U.S. government. Several of our organizations supported the 1988 legislation to recognize and address the moral failing of the U.S. government. But the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 did not reach all those of Japanese ancestry who were brought to U.S. internment camps.

According to the findings of the 1982 Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, approximately 2,300 men, women, and children of Japanese descent were uprooted from their homes in 13 Latin American countries and detained in internment camps in the United States, and in some cases, were deported to Japan to enable the United States to conduct prisoner exchanges. We believe that this action of the U.S. government must be acknowledged and addressed by Congress.

The capture and detention of civilians residing in other countries on the basis of ethnicity was not only wrong in itself, but set a most dangerous precedent. Passage of H.R. 662 would affirm another important step in assuring that this kind of action will not be taken again, and would demonstrate a national commitment to honor human dignity and international human rights.

Please cosponsor and support H.R. 662, the “Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act.”

Sincerely,

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
The Episcopal Church
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office
The United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society