

REDRESS

# Seymour Announces He Will Co-sponsor S. 2553

Community groups welcome change of heart from senator who was previously lukewarm in his support of redress measure.

Sen. John Seymour (R-Calif.) has agreed to co-sponsor the supplemental redress bill, S. 2553, in the Senate, after previously being lukewarm in his support for reparations to Nikkei former internees, reported John Ota, a member of the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations, San Francisco.

"We welcome Sen. Seymour's change in position on the supplemental redress and hope that this means that he will vigorously lobby his fellow senators, President Bush and Bush's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in support of the bill," said Richard Konda, Coordinating Committee member of the Nihonmachi Outreach Committee (NOC) in San Jose.

On July 7, Konda and five others from NOC and NCRP met with Seymour's chief of staff Bill Cranham to discuss the redress bill, and were disappointed with Seymour's lack of support for the bill, according to Ota.

However, on July 28, Joel Cliff, an aide to Seymour in Washington, D.C., called Konda to inform him of Seymour's change of heart.

This was just three days after *The Rafu Shimpō* printed an article in which several community activists criticized Seymour's position on the redress bill, noted Ota.

A possible influence on his decision may have been the thousands of letters Seymour is reported to have received in the past several months—organized by NCRP, NOC and the Japanese American Citizens League—urging him to support S. 2553.

The decision by Seymour "once again shows the power that the grassroots people in the community can have," said Kay Ochi, recently elected president of NCRP, Los Angeles. "Credit for this is due to all those who wrote letters and personally lobbied Sen. Seymour."

Ochi urged the community to continue their letter-writing and lobbying work, "focusing more now on President Bush and Bush's Office of Management and Budget, who, together, are the main obstacles to the redress bill."

The redress bill is currently stalled in Congress. Legislative aides to Sen. Daniel Inouye and Rep. Norman Mineta have said that they do not expect much progress until President Bush's OMB withdraws its objections to the bill.

Unless the bill is passed and signed into law, more than 15,000 former internees and other eligible persons may be denied their \$20,000 individual redress payments.