

8/13/92

REDRESS

# Update on Reparations Bills

The supplemental redress bills, passed by both houses of Congress, are headed for a vote by the entire House and Senate.

Both the Senate and House versions of the Civil Liberties Act Amendments have been approved in committee and are headed for vote by both legislatures of Congress.

The Senate measure, S. 2553, was passed out of the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs on Aug. 5, while the House of Representatives bill was passed by the House Judiciary Committee on Aug. 11.

Both pieces of legislation, if passed by Congress and signed into by the president, will extend the redress program to make up for an anticipated shortfall of funds.

"There is no question that we have cleared a major hurdle in getting the Judiciary Committee's approval," said Rep. Robert Matsui (D-Calif.). "But we still have a major task before us in getting approval of both the House and Senate before Congress adjourns for the year. Ultimate success of additional redress funding is by no means a sure thing."

Rep. Matsui also pointed out the importance of Congress acting on the legislation this year. "After the November elections, we may see as many as 150 new faces in the House of Representatives. That will be 150 people who know relatively little

about redress. In terms of lobbying Congress, it would be almost like starting over."

According to sources in Washington, D.C., there are enough votes to pass the bill, said David Monkawa of the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations, Los Angeles chapter.

However, a big question mark is President Bush, he said. Since Congress will recess from Aug. 13 until the day after Labor Day, the bill will not go up for a vote before then. If both the Senate and House of Representatives pass the bill after Labor Day, it will go to President Bush no sooner than mid-September for signing or veto.

"However, this timetable could easily be delayed," he said.

Initially, the government estimated that there were 60,000 survivors. The original redress appropriations bill provided \$1.25 billion over a three-year period to be paid to this group of 60,000 survivors. However, the government underestimated the number of eligible survivors. Now, the number has been revised up to 80,000 eligible survivors.

The new House bill, if passed and signed into law, will insure that a \$400 million fund is authorized as

an entitlement to redress up to 20,000 of the youngest eligible survivors, meaning those individuals born after March 31, 1935.

"We call on all concerned people to write letters to President Bush, strongly urging him to pass the supplemental redress bill (S. 2553/H.R. 4551) to fulfill the government's promise to redress the injustice perpetrated upon the Japanese American community," remarked John Ota, of the NCCR San Francisco chapter.

Karen Narasaki, the Washington, D.C. representative for the Japanese American Citizens League, said that many of the JAACL members who had written letters of support to their congressional representatives were receiving responses from them citing the lack of committee action as a reason for not taking a position on the bill.

Narasaki noted, "Since both bills are now out of their respective committees, members of Congress no longer have that as an excuse to not co-sponsor the bill."

The House bill has 91 co-sponsors and the Senate bill has 10 co-sponsors to date.

Redress backers suggested that concerned community members to meet with their representatives and senators this month when Congress is in recess in order to urge them to become co-sponsors, if they have not done so already, and to pass the legislation as soon as Congress reconvenes on Sept. 8.