

## **Bill would honor World War II internment challenger from East Bay**

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### **Body**

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SACRAMENTO California lawmakers united today to honor a man who challenged the World War II internment of Japanese-Americans, but not without partisan bickering over the new Arizona immigration law.

The state Assembly unanimously passed a bill designating Jan. 30 as Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution in California. The measure, AB1775, encourages California schools to spend the day recognizing Korematsu's accomplishments and the importance of preserving civil liberties.

Korematsu, who died in 2005, was arrested in Oakland in 1942 after refusing to enter an internment camp. His case led the U.S. Supreme Court to examine the legality of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066, which authorized the internment of 120,000 Japanese-Americans and resident aliens.

In 1944, the high court ruled against Korematsu, saying that the need to protect against espionage outweighed his rights. Forty years later, a federal court judge in San Francisco formally vacated Korematsu's conviction.

"We have made great progress in the areas of civil rights and equality, but we are constantly challenged to uphold these ideals," said the bill's co-author, Mary Hayashi, D-Hayward. "When these trials come, we are able to be inspired by the courage" of people like Korematsu.

Korematsu, who lived in San Leandro for many years, died in 2005. He was buried in Oakland.

Several Democratic lawmakers today said AB1775 was a reminder of the need to defy injustices, and they invoked the Arizona law as an example. The law makes the failure to carry immigration documents a crime and gives the police the authority to detain anyone suspected of being in the country illegally.

Assemblyman Warren Furutani, the bill's author and a fourth-generation Japanese-American, said he sees similarities between what happened in the 1940s and the current situation in Arizona.

"When you can be stopped because of the color of your skin, because people want to check your immigration status that should not happen in America," the Lakewood Democrat said. "We should not have to walk around wearing no stinking badges proving we are where we belong."

Republicans said tying the Arizona law to the internment of Japanese-Americans was political posturing.

"The Arizona law simply restated the current federal law on immigration," said Assemblyman Chuck DeVore of Irvine, who is vying for the Republican nomination next month for Barbara Boxer's U.S. Senate seat. "This bill seeks to honor a U.S. citizen who fought against an injustice, and somehow comparing that to Arizona I find nonsensical and beneath the sentiments expressed by this resolution."

Democrat Sandre Swanson, of Alameda, defended the comparison.

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"Each generation has a responsibility to address injustice, and sometimes it's hard to recognize injustice when it's right in front of us," he said. "That's why Arizona was raised."

California was home to two of the 10 **World War II** relocation centers Tule Lake and Manzanar. Tule Lake, the country's largest camp, held more than 24,000 internees, and was named a national monument in 2008. Manzanar held about 11,000 and has been designated a national historic site.

The legislation now goes to the state Senate. It is one of two **bills** in the Legislature this year seeking to grant a special day of recognition to Californians. The other would **honor** Ronald Reagan, the former president and governor.

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