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## *House of Representatives*

### **A Tribute to the Japanese American National Museum on the Occasion of its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and in Recognition of its Receipt of America's Highest Honor for Museums**

**Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD.** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Japanese American National Museum, the private nonprofit national institution dedicated to sharing the experiences of Americans of Japanese ancestry in the United States.

Located in the historic Little Tokyo district of Downtown Los Angeles in the 34<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, I had the privilege of nominating the Japanese American National Museum for an especially prestigious honor. The Institute of Museums and Library Services bestowed upon the museum its National Medal in recognition of the museum's "extraordinary civic, educational, economic, environmental, and social contributions." The museum was one of only 10 institutions in 2010 to receive the institute's National Medal – America's highest honor for museums. The Japanese American National Museum is only the second museum located in California to be recognized with this national distinction.

The concept for the museum originated more than 25 years ago when members of the Japanese American community realized that their families' storied history was being lost to time. The families especially wanted to preserve for future generations the stories of the tremendous hardships endured by Japanese Americans during World War II. During this time, thousands of Japanese American families lost their homes, their businesses and most of what they owned when the United States government unconscionably incarcerated them in detention camps.

Despite this injustice, many Japanese Americans responded to the military needs of our country during World War II with great patriotic fervor. The famed 100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion and the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team – made up almost entirely of Japanese Americans – became the most decorated units for their size and length of service in the history of our Armed Forces. In addition, Japanese Americans who became members of the United States Military Intelligence Service during World War II saved thousands of American lives by using their Japanese-language skills to serve our country as translators, interrogators and code breakers in the Pacific Theatre.

In 1985, the museum was founded as an almost all-volunteer organization composed of 13 different committees and only one

full-time staff member with no permanent site and no endowment. In 1992, the museum renovated an important historic building for their headquarters and then expanded to a modern Pavilion in 1999. Throughout this time, the Japanese American National Museum became the repository of the history of people of Japanese ancestry in the United States, collecting more than 80,000 artifacts, photographs, documents and ephemera (such as letters, posters, and newspaper articles) that help to preserve and share their stories with all Americans.

An average of 25,000 students annually make visits to the Japanese American National Museum, guided by volunteers who lived through much of this amazing history. Visitors to the museum learn about the commonalities of the Japanese American experience with that of other ethnic groups in our country as part of the museum's core exhibition entitled, "Common Ground: The Heart of Community."

The museum's new exhibition entitled, "Fighting for Democracy: Who is the 'We' in 'We, the People'?" features profiles of seven people of various backgrounds and ethnicities who actively supported the American war effort, but who also wanted our democracy to truly serve all the people in the post-World War II era. This exhibition has traveled to the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, the National Archives and the Tuskegee National Institute Historic Site in Alabama.

The museum also organized a five-state educational project entitled, "Enduring Communities: The Japanese American Experience in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah." The three-year project – which involved local institutions within each state – culminated with a national conference in Denver in 2008 attended by teachers, scholars and the people from the communities who lived this history.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition of the museum's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and its receipt of the Institute of Museums and Library Services' National Medal, I ask my congressional colleagues to please join me and the residents of the 34<sup>th</sup> Congressional District in congratulating the Japanese American National Museum for its extraordinary achievements. I congratulate Museum President and CEO Akemi Kikumura Yano, the members of the museum's Board of Governors and Board of Trustees and all of the community members whose dedication to preserving the Japanese American story make the museum the local and national treasure that it is today. I wish the museum and everyone involved in its growth and educational mission many more years of continued success.