

Mike M. Masacka

SUITE 520, THE FARRAGUT BUILDING
900 SEVENTH STREET, NORTHWEST
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20006
TELEPHONE (202) 296-4484

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English Editor
Kashu Mainichi
915 E. Third Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

TO THE EDITOR:

It has been reported in the Japanese American vernacular press that redress succeeded because many petitions were signed and thousands of letters were sent to the Congress not to mention personal calls to the Congressmen representing them here in Washington. This is the classic textbook operation of meaningful lobbying, but it is woefully inadequate in explaining what really happened. After all, these days it is only the unsophisticated who fail to understand that there are many more places like Dayton, Ohio, in this country than there are Little Tokyos.

In addition to a continuous presence in the nation's capital, which the JAACL LEC and the Nisei Veterans provided, success requires organized grassroots support, which also was supplied by the JAACL LEC in the determined leadership of Grace Uyehara. This grassroots support, by the way, is far different and more persuasive than what some activists describe as "direct action" by a "united community". But even grassroots support of the genuine variety is far from enough to get a bill like redress through Congress and signed by the President. Ask one who has spent more than 40 years on Capitol Hill like I have.

Remember, on this issue, in spite of the principles involved so clearly, negative mail swamped Washington. Strict budgetary constraints plus racial hatred and vicious warmongering combined emotionalism with monetary fears to make up a troublesome and seemingly impossible package.

So what was needed for passage and enactment of this redress bill? First-rate brains, a lot of uncommon guts, and ready access to the influential but rarely available

personal advisors to the President of the United States. And fortunately for us of Japanese ethnicity, when it came to lobbying the White House and the Reagan Administration, all three essential requirements were in the person of one Grant Ujifusa, a Sansei from the wilds of Northern Wyoming, an LEC volunteer and strategy chair.

Because many remain unaware of what really happened, I think it appropriate to repeat what LEC Chair Jerry Enomoto, a past National President of JACL and one who appreciates lobbying genius from his years of experience with the California State Legislature and the Governors of the most populous State in the Union, said about Grant at the Seattle JACL Convention this past August, where he received the same award given to the Japanese American Members of the Congress, without whom this whole process of redress could not have been successfully initiated.

"Grant Ujifusa, an honors graduate of Harvard College (and now a senior editor of Reader's Digest), is co-author of The Almanac of American Politics (published by the National Journal). According to the The Washington Post, Grant's volume in its eighth biennial edition, has been the single most influential book in the nation's capital for many years.

"One of the country's leading authorities on Congress, Grant not only formulated JACL LEC's legislative strategy, but thanks to the access provided by his book and to his skills of persuasion, Grant implemented crucial aspects of the strategy in a long series of one-on-one meetings with key Senators and Representatives.

"Grant was also redress's principle lobbyist at the White House. By using his contacts among important Republican politicians throughout the country and by many face-to-face meetings with officials at the Justice Department, the Office of Management and Budget, and at the White House, Grant was able to reverse long-standing Administration opposition to the redress bill, even though the mail was running heavily against it.

"For his deep commitment to our community, and for his extraordinary intelligence and technical skill, the JACL LEC honors Grant Ujifusa and his indispensable role in the passage and enactment of the Japanese American redress bill."

In short, Grant knows who, what, when, where and how of the redress effort because he not only formulated the strategy, but executed key dimensions of it. I can testify to all that because I was there and marvelled at how he operated. He gave an eloquent summary of his experiences to those attending the National JACL Convention in Seattle this

past summer, neglecting in his modesty his own vital role. If you have the opportunity, I urge that you go hear him speak as to how redress at long last was achieved.

As redress itself is put into actual practice, the Japanese American community must continue to depend on Grant in the upcoming appropriations struggles in the Congress and with the new Administration. He is truly the man for our times.

Sincerely,


Mike M. Masaoka