



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE / JACL

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NATIONAL JACL COMPLETES SUCCESSFUL CONVENTION

Salt Lake City, UT – The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) held its 40th Biennial National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, at the Marriott Hotel from July 16-20, 2008. An added innovation included a simultaneous Youth Convention was held in conjunction with the regular convention. Delegates and friends of the JACL from most of the 113 chapters attended to consider important issues as well as to gain information from the many workshops held during the convention.

Co-chairs of the National JACL Convention were Silvana Watanabe and Reid Tateoka. Volunteers from the three Utah JACL Chapters were involved in the planning and execution of convention events. Also working hard to ensure a successful convention was the National JACL staff.

The National Council business sessions ran smoothly although there were some matters of contention and debate. The issue of annual conventions came up for a vote once again and was passed by the narrowest of margins with a two thirds vote of the Council. The National JACL Convention in 2011 will begin the annual convention cycle.

Mark Kobayashi, outgoing Secretary/Treasurer, gave an excellent power point presentation of the budget which was readily adopted. Informative plenary sessions were presented. A number of beneficial workshops were held, and exhibits were available. A special performance of the musical show, Nihonmachi, was performed by The Grateful Crane Ensemble. This is the story of the Japan Towns of which only three remain in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Jose, California.

A highlight of the convention was the participation of Japanese American astronaut, Dan Tani, as the keynote speaker at the Sayonara Banquet. He told of his parents' experience as internees at the Topaz, Utah, internment camp during World War II. Tani showed photos and explained his experiences when he spent four months in space which ended in February 2008. Tani was the recipient of the Japanese American of the Biennium Award at the National JACL Convention held in Phoenix in 2006.

Former Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta and his wife Deni attended the convention. Secretary Mineta, who was a congressman from San Jose, California at the time the Redress effort was initiated thirty years ago, was instrumental in bringing about the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which is being celebrated by the JACL this year on the 20th anniversary of Redress which brought about an apology and reparations to Japanese Americans interned during World War II.

Elections were held for National JACL Board offices. Larry Oda was reelected as National President, Sheldon Arakaki was reelected as Vice President of General Operations. David Kawamoto was elected as Vice President of Planning and Development, a position held by his wife Carol for the previous four years. Ron Katsuyama was elected as Vice President of Public Affairs. Kimberly Shintaku was reelected to a second term as Youth Chair, and Brandon Mita was elected as Youth Representative. Josh Spry was appointed by President Larry Oda as the new Secretary/Treasurer. One elective position is currently vacant. Michelle Yoshida, Legal Counsel, and the district governors continue to serve on the board. The new board was installed by Judge Howard Maetani at the Sayonara Banquet which was the culminating event of the convention.

The 2010 JACL Convention will be held in Chicago, June 30 through July 4, 2010.