



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

1828 L Street NW, Suite 802 • Washington, DC • 20036

Phone: (202) 223-1240 • Fax: (202) 296-8082

Email: dc@jacl.org

PRESS RELEASE

IT'S TIME TO RESTORE LAW AND JUSTICE

Contact: Floyd Mori (202) 223-1240
dc@jacl.org

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Yesterday, the Senate debated points regarding the Defense Authorization Bill for fiscal year 2008. Embedded in that bill as an amendment based on The Habeas Corpus Restoration Act of 2007 sponsored by Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA). This bipartisan amendment would restore habeas corpus rights to enemy combatants held under U.S. authority and would also allow those charged with the ability to discover whether their incarceration is legal in federal court.

Habeas corpus was undermined in last year's Military Commissions Act which took away the right for any non-citizen labeled an enemy combatant to challenge the abuse of power by the Government. Senator Leahy warned that restoring habeas corpus not only affects those held in detention camps such as Guantanamo Bay, it includes an estimated 12 million lawful permanent residents in the United States today. Under current law, any of these people can be detained indefinitely, without the ability to challenge their detention in court.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) filed for cloture on the amendment last night which means the Senate is expected to vote this week as soon as Wednesday. Unfortunately, the Justice Department said it would recommend that President Bush veto the bill if it contains the Leahy-Specter amendment despite the fact that it has support from both Democrats and Republicans and is co-sponsored by 19 Members of Congress.

The JACL maintains it is of utmost importance to fight to restore these rights. Referring to the internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans during WWII, National Executive Director, Floyd Mori states, "Japanese Americans know well the impact when the Great Writ of habeas corpus is suppressed. It is at the heart of our Constitutional rights guaranteed everyone, even for those considered the least of us. Restoring habeas corpus will restore us again to a country operation under rule of law, not under absolutist authority."