



# JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE / JACL

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **JACL Abhors LPGA English-Only Ruling**

**San Francisco, CA --** The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), the nation's oldest and largest Asian American civil and human rights organization, is astonished by the action of the LPGA in requiring its players to speak English or risk suspension. The JACL does not accept the LPGA rationale that this rule is needed to increase its marketability and ensure public interest at pro-am events. Rather than invoke this rule, which would require players who have been on the LPGA Tour for two years to pass an English evaluation by the end of 2009, the LPGA should reconsider and retract this action.

The hallmark of athletic performance is rooted in the skill and tenacity of those who play the game, and not in a criterion that tests English proficiency. Moreover, a lesson from the recent Olympic Games is that athletic excellence is not determined by national boundaries or by a proficiency in a certain language. The JACL is greatly disturbed because this rule would selectively affect a large number of foreign-born players, including a sizable delegation from South Korea. These players honor the game of golf with their skill and sportsmanship, and they should not risk suspension because they fail an English proficiency test or because they may choose not to learn the English language.

The disturbing feature of this policy is that it runs counter to American ideals that encourage and value diversity. Moreover it ignores a recognition that globalization extends beyond the import and export of consumer goods to internationalizing sporting events to ensure the best in competition. This is exemplified in sports such as Major League Baseball where foreign participation is actively sought, without imposing restrictive language barriers. The JACL believes that if the LPGA is interested in increasing its marketability, it should reject an insular mentality and focus on attracting, rather than excluding, skilled players. The international nature of sports requires tolerance, which is a basic human value. Language is something that any game of sports has overcome in developing good play and sportsmanship. Golf has a very major global component. Many American players go to foreign countries to hone their skills for the LPGA and the PGA.

National Executive Director of the JACL, Floyd Mori, stated: "The LPGA has taken tolerance and diversity back several giant steps after there have been some great strides of progress toward opening the game of golf to all people. The language requirement is clearly aimed at a specific cultural group of players who have excelled in the LPGA. It is ironic that when we have just completed the Olympics, where sport is touted as the common language that builds international relationships, where culture and language barriers are overcome, and where sportsmanship and competition are a measure of excellence in the game of sports, the LPGA regresses into such an unacceptable policy. The LPGA has had a sorry history of placing factors that do not contribute to the game itself as more important than the skill of playing golf."

The JACL urges the LPGA to reconsider this new language requirement and respect the culture of their international players. The United States should be showing the way towards more inclusion and tolerance. The LPGA insults the fan base of their sport by not recognizing that those who follow the game and are loyal patrons of their tournaments, want to see excellence and skill. Their appreciation for the game is not measured in how well the players speak English. Internationalization of the game has made it more exciting and has developed a more competitive atmosphere among American players. The JACL maintains that the LPGA language policy is wrong!

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The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) is the nation's oldest and largest Asian American civil and human rights organization, established in 1929. The JACL will be holding its second annual Gala Event in Washington, DC on September 25, 2008, at the Hyatt Hotel. For information or to join the JACL, please visit the website at [www.jacl.org](http://www.jacl.org).