



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE / JACL

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JACL AND OCA LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE HELD IN DC

Washington, D.C.—The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and OCA National (OCA), the largest and second largest Asian American civil and human rights organizations in the nation, held their annual joint Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. this week. Participants were JACL and OCA leaders from across the United States who met to learn about leadership skills and the legislative process in the nation's capital. The conference is sponsored by State Farm. Leslie Moe-Kaiser and Art Ruiz of State Farm were in attendance and made presentations.

Kicking off the conference was a Friday night reception at which the participants could meet and become acquainted with each other as well as with JACL and OCA staff members. The first session on Saturday morning was presented by Dr. Phil Nash, who teaches Asian American history at the University of Maryland. He encouraged a lot of interaction as everyone had the opportunity to tell personal family stories while learning about the history of Asian Americans. At a later session, Bruce Yamashita shared his story of discrimination in the Marine Corps. Leaders within the Asian American and civil rights community in Washington, D.C. presented various workshops and discussions throughout the conference. Participants also enjoyed a White House briefing.

Always a highlight of the conference is the participation of former Secretary of Transportation, Norman Y. Mineta, who was a dinner speaker and who has spoken at the conference for most of its 27 years of existence. After being the Mayor of San Jose, California, Secretary Mineta was elected to the United States House of Representatives where he served for many years. He was Secretary of Commerce under President Clinton and Secretary of Transportation under President George W. Bush. Secretary Mineta was accompanied at the dinner by his wife, Deni. He spoke proudly of his son, David Mineta, who has been selected as a candidate for a Deputy Secretary position in the Obama Administration.

Congressman Mike Honda of San Jose also spoke at a dinner. He joined the group for their Hill Visits at which time they also met Senator Daniel Inouye, Congresswomen Mazie Hirono, Madeleine Bordallo, and Judy Chu, and Congressmen Eni Faleomavaega and David Wu.

Participants are always touched by the visit to the National Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism where the Japanese American experience of World War II is depicted and remembered. The names of the ten concentration camps in which Japanese Americans were incarcerated are prominently displayed as well as the names of all Japanese American members of the United States Armed Forces who lost their lives in World War II. Warren Minami does an excellent job telling the story and explaining the Memorial.

National Executive Director of the JACL, Floyd Mori, and George Wu, Executive Director of OCA took key roles in the conference. Pei Un Yee of OCA along with Jean Shiraki and Phillip Ozaki, JACL Fellows, ably planned and handled the operations of the conference.

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