

JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

VICE PRESIDENT FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Biennial Report to the Membership

Presented by

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**June 30- July 4, 2010
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NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS
BIENNIAL REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP

The JACL Constitution describes the duties of the office of the JACL National Vice President for Public Affairs as follows:

ARTICLE VII, NATIONAL OFFICERS

SECTION 1. DUTIES OF NATIONAL ELECTED OFFICERS

- i. Vice President for Public Affairs. The Vice President for Public Affairs shall be responsible for monitoring the external affairs of the National organization, including matters and committees relating to legislation, civil rights, public issues, media and public relations.*

It has been a pleasure to work with the many talented and dedicated members of JACL's staff and National Board during the past two years in my position as Vice President for Public Affairs. I admire their conscientious service that resulted in many focused discussions and decisions around critical issues, many of which are described below.

The JACL has been steadfast in raising awareness and promoting education about constitutional issues. Several recent, landmark pieces of legislation, including the renewal of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and passage of the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act (also known as the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act), the Filipino Veterans Equity Act, and health care reform represent advances toward long-standing JACL positions on fairness and due process.

Recent federal action extends basic health care coverage to many currently uninsured or underinsured and prevents loss of coverage due to changes in health or job status. However, JACL continues to seek ways to educate and voice concern about the need to (1) ensure guaranteed, affordable universal health coverage, (2) improve data collection concerning health disparities, and (3) improve access to personalized, culturally and linguistically competent health care. Also, JACL continues its efforts to eliminate health disparities and access to programs and services that affect JAs and other groups through its support of local initiatives, including health fairs, workshops, and health outreach projects.

Your Board continues to promote education about the injustices incurred by the WW-II incarceration of almost 120,000 JAs. Funding obtained from the National Park Service for World War II Concentration Camp preservation projects helps JACL achieve its educational mission. Your Board also continues its strong support of these vital educational programs and other educational opportunities, including the passage of S. 1055 (which will award the Congressional Gold Medal to the Japanese American 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd) and the adoption of the Nisei Veterans Stamp. The

success of such initiatives depends upon a collective, sustained process of education, and your responses to our periodic calls for action are necessary to ensure success.

Your Board supports our youth and encourages them to learn more about their Japanese heritage through the dissemination of information about Japanese Consulate-sponsored events, including the recently initiated program for JA students to study and travel in Japan.

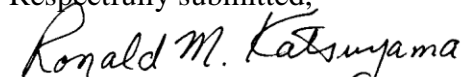
Your Board continues to offer vigorous responses to incidents of bigotry and have called for appropriate authorities to resolve such situations in a manner that ensures adherence to civil rights laws and promotes understanding and respect across diverse populations.

Your Board has also served our educational mission by opposing impending state legislation that threatens civil rights. For example, we opposed California's Proposition 8 on grounds that it would deprive some citizens of the same legal right to marry. We also opposed Texas' SB 362 on grounds that it would impose strict identification requirements that unduly affect the poor, elderly, recent immigrants, or those with disabilities.

An ongoing initiative directly related to our civil and human rights mission is our role as a plaintiff, challenging the constitutionality of Arizona's SB 1070. The decision to serve this role resulted from much reflection and discussion. Because I have provided my thoughts on the issues relevant to this action in separate communications, I will not repeat them here. However, there will be many opportunities for further examination of such issues at the upcoming JACL National Convention in Chicago, where a distinguished panel will present a plenary session, "Reframing Civil Rights," at 9:30 am on Thursday July 1st. This panel will discuss the relationship between constitutional rights and laws addressing health care, same-sex equality, immigrant rights and environmental justice. I look forward to joining with you in further discussions on these critical issues.

My role as your Vice President for Public Affairs has afforded many opportunities for dialogue and leadership on critical issues and to participate in adoption of strategies that help define JACL and determine its future. While the JACL cannot claim credit for particular national civil and human rights developments, I have come to appreciate the value of its strong leadership in raising awareness, educating, and organizing focused efforts that help our organization fulfill its civil and human rights mission.

Respectfully submitted,



Ron Katsuyama

National Vice President for Public Affairs, 2008-2010