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HAWAII

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Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and
Merchant Marine

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July 16, 2004

**The Commissioners of Jefferson County, Texas
c/o The Honorable Carl R. Griffith, Jr.
Jefferson County Judge
Jefferson County Courthouse
1149 Pearl Street
Beaumont, Texas 77704**

Dear Commissioners:

I understand that the Commissioners of Jefferson County are planning to hold a hearing on July 19, 2004 on the issue of a street sign called "Jap" Road in the town of Fannett. I have known that this road sign has been an issue for many decades. I am also aware that the residents of Fannett helped Japanese rice farmers to build the road and named it, "Jap Road," as a way to honor the Japanese rice farmer Mayumi. All this was done in the genuine spirit of cordiality and undoubtedly the Japanese immigrants must have been proud to be accepted by Texans as one of their own.

However, time has changed the meaning of "Jap," and it now has a derogatory, insulting connotation. Since Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the imperial Japanese people were called "Japs" and the term was applied unfairly to Japanese Americans who were born in this country. The Japanese Americans are true blooded Americans, no different from the Irish Americans, Italian Americans or African Americans. To be called a "Jap," or to condone the use of the word "Jap," no matter how innocent, is an affront and insult to an ethnic group.

Japanese American men served in the European and Asia Pacific theaters of war to prove their loyalty, to erase racial slurs, and to be treated as Americans. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team has a special relationship with Texas because we were attached to the 36th Texas Division in France. In fact, when elements of the 36th Division failed to rescue its trapped 1st Battalion, the 442nd was ordered to do the job. They did, sustaining casualties three times more than the 211 that were left to be saved.

The Commissioners of Jefferson County, Texas

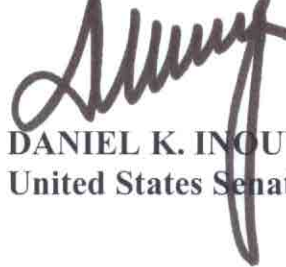
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I was in the same company, Company E, as Kelly Kuwayama, who is testifying at your hearing in Beaumont, and Saburo Tanamachi, a resident of Beaumont, who was killed in the rescue operations. With his life, Saburo honored his family, Jefferson County, the Great State of Texas, and the United States of America.

It is my hope that the Commissioners, exercising their great wisdom, can remove the street name, "Jap Road," and replace it with one that is not offensive to anyone. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Aloha

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "D. Inouye", with a long, sweeping vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

DANIEL K. INOUE
United States Senator

DKI:mcb

cc: Sandra Tanamachi
Terry Shima