

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6467

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Development, January 29, 2010

Title: An act relating to honorary degrees for students who were ordered into internment camps.

Brief Description: Authorizing honorary degrees for students who were ordered into internment camps.

Sponsors: Senators Shin, Kastama, Delvin, Hobbs, Berkey, Rockefeller, Marr, Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Roach and Kline.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/29/10 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kilmer, Chair; Kastama, Vice Chair; Becker, Ranking Minority Member; Pflug, Shin and Tom.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: United States Executive Order 9066 was a United States Presidential executive order signed and issued during World War II by U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt on February 19, 1942, ordering Japanese Americans to internment camps. The order authorized the Secretary of War and United States Armed Forces commanders to declare areas of the United States as military areas "from which any or all persons may be excluded," although it did not name any nationality or ethnic group. It was eventually applied to one-third of the land area of the U.S. (mostly in the West) and was used against those with "Foreign Enemy Ancestry" — Japanese, Italians, and Germans.

Approximately 120,000 ethnic Japanese people were held in internment camps for the duration of the war. Of the Japanese interned, 62 percent were Nisei (American-born, second-generation Japanese American) or Sansei (third-generation Japanese Americans) and the rest were Issei (Japanese immigrants and resident aliens, first-generation Japanese American). Americans of Italian and German ancestry were also targeted by these restrictions, including internment. Eleven thousand people of German ancestry were

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

interned, as were 3,000 people of Italian ancestry, along with some Jewish refugees. Some of the internees of European descent were interned only briefly, and others were held for several years beyond the end of the war. Like the Japanese internees, these smaller groups had American-born citizens in their numbers, especially among the children. A few members of ethnicities of other Axis countries were interned but exact numbers are unknown.

Summary of Bill: Honorary degrees may be conferred, by the University of Washington, Washington State University, Central Washington University, Western Washington University, Eastern Washington University, or community and technical colleges in existence in 1942, upon persons who were students at those institutions in 1942, but did not graduate because they were ordered into an internment camp. An honorary degree may also be requested by relatives for deceased qualified persons.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: An honorary degree is a small gesture that means a lot to those that may receive them. These individuals were deprived of their ability to obtain their degrees. This is not just fair, it is right. The story must be told so that this will never happen again. It is never too late to do the right thing.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Shin, prime sponsor; Mitsuye Mihara, Art Abe, citizens; Gail Nomura, Nate Caminos, Bob Nakamura, Japanese American Citizens League.