

CHAPTER 21

AN ACT

SB 1509

Relating to Nisei veterans; creating new provisions; amending ORS 366.924; and prescribing an effective date.

Whereas our country and state are committed to ideals of “freedom, equality and justice” to dismantle injustices in our past; and

Whereas 57 Nisei (second-generation Japanese Americans) from the Mid-Columbia area (Columbia River region north of Mt. Hood) and a total of 120 Nisei from the State of Oregon served in our country’s Armed Forces during World War II and the post-war occupation of Japan, even as their families were incarcerated on American soil after President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942; and

Whereas these Nisei soldiers were among 33,000 Nisei who served our country in the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team in Europe and as linguists in the Military Intelligence Service in the South Pacific and the post-war occupation of Japan; and

Whereas the 442nd Regimental Combat Team is the most decorated unit for its size and length of service in the U.S. military’s history; and

Whereas 16 Nisei soldiers’ names were blacked out from an honor roll of 1,600 local Armed Forces members on wall plaques at the Hood River County Courthouse on November 29, 1944, bringing national notoriety to the valley; and

Whereas the Nisei soldiers’ names were restored 13 weeks later on April 9, 1945, following pressure from the American Legion National Commander against “bigotry and race hatred”; and

Whereas the Oregon House of Representatives passed Joint Memorial 9 on February 28, 1945, calling on President Roosevelt to prevent the return of Japanese Americans “for the duration of the present war with Japan”; and

Whereas Hood River citizens have since recognized Nisei World War II veterans in an “acknowledgement of wrongs” by dedicating a memorial brick “in honor of all Nisei veterans” at Overlook Memorial Park on Veterans Day 2001, and a marble monument inscribed with names of all Japanese American veterans at Idlewilde Cemetery on Memorial Day 2011; and

Whereas three years after the end of World War II, President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981 committing the federal government to integrate the segregated military after 170 years of discrimination; and

Whereas the State of Oregon, through the Bend Heroes Foundation, has honored nearly a half million Oregon war veterans with eight border-to-border veteran highways; and

Whereas Oregon has not named a highway to honor World War II Nisei veterans; and

Whereas Oregon Route 35 has significance for Nisei veterans, as many of their families owned or

worked on fruit orchards along the highway until they were forcibly removed during World War II; and

Whereas designating Oregon Route 35 as the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway will honor Nisei veterans not only in the Columbia Gorge but all 120 Nisei World War II Veterans in Oregon; and

Whereas designating the 41-mile long Oregon Route 35 as the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway will not change any existing names of Oregon Route 35; and

Whereas Oregon’s veterans and community members have offered to finance the creation and installation of special highway markers for the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway; now, therefore,

Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:

SECTION 1. ORS 366.924 is amended to read:

366.924. (1) The portion of U.S. Highway 395, crossing the State of Oregon, beginning at the California state line and ending at the Washington state line, shall also be known as the World War I Veterans Memorial Highway.

(2) The portion of Interstate 5, crossing the State of Oregon, beginning at the California state line and ending at the Washington state line, shall also be known as the Korean War Veterans Memorial Highway, and as the Purple Heart Trail.

(3) The portion of Interstate 5, beginning in Albany and ending in Salem, shall also be known as the Atomic Veterans and Atomic Cleanup Veterans Memorial Highway.

(4) The portion of U.S. Highway 101, crossing the State of Oregon, beginning at the California state line and ending at the Washington state line, shall also be known as the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq Veterans Memorial Highway.

(5) The portion of U.S. Highway 26, beginning where the highway intersects with U.S. Highway 101 and ending at the Idaho state line, shall also be known as the POW/MIA Memorial Highway.

(6) The portion of Oregon Route 35, beginning where the highway intersects with U.S. Highway 26 and ending where the highway intersects with U.S. Highway 30, shall also be known as the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway.

[(6)] (7) The Department of Transportation shall place and maintain suitable markers along each highway described in this section to indicate the designation of each highway.

[(7)(a)] (8)(a) The department may accept moneys from and may enter into agreements with veterans groups to create, install and maintain the markers.

(b) The department may not use public funds for the installation and maintenance of the markers.

SECTION 2. The amendments to ORS 366.924 by section 1 of this 2022 Act apply to new high-

way markers erected on Oregon Route 35 on or after the effective date of this 2022 Act.

SECTION 3. This 2022 Act takes effect on the 91st day after the date on which the 2022 regular

session of the Eighty-first Legislative Assembly adjourns sine die.

Approved by the Governor March 7, 2022

Filed in the office of Secretary of State March 7, 2022

Effective date June 3, 2022
