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March 30, 2006

The Honorable Gale A. Norton
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Norton:

Sixty-four years ago today, 227 people were forced by their government to leave behind home, community and livelihood for desolate internment camps. I refer to Japanese Americans from Bainbridge Island in Washington state. They were the first of more than 120,000 U.S. residents who were removed forcibly under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's World War II-era Executive Order 9066.

I now live on Bainbridge Island and have represented its citizens in Congress since 1999. For over five years, an impressive coalition of historic preservation, cultural, faith and environmental groups have been working together to acquire the land near the former Eagledale Ferry Dock, from which these first internees began their solemn journey to Manzanar Relocation Center in California.

The 50-acre site, now known as Joel Pritchard Park, came under ownership of the City of Bainbridge Island just last month. Five acres adjacent to the former Eagledale Ferry Dock will become home to a memorial called Nidoto Nai Yoni, which translates to "let it not happen again." Today, a dedication and blessing ceremony is being held to mark the start of its construction.

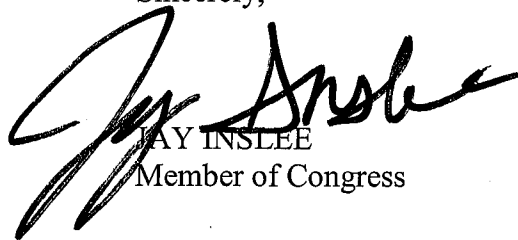
This project is supported strongly not only by Japanese Americans, but by Americans from all walks of life throughout the nation. It also has received unanimous, bi-partisan support from local, regional and state governments. Along with other members of Washington's congressional delegation, I would like to see this historically significant site included in the national park system. Toward this end, I secured federal funding three years ago with U.S. Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, and U.S. Rep. Jim McDermott for a study on whether Eagledale Ferry Dock qualifies for this distinction.

In recent days, I have learned that results of this study have been completed by the National Park Service and currently are under review by the congressional affairs office of the Interior Department. I understand the study must then go to the Office of Management and Budget for analysis before it can be reported to Congress.

If the study reports favorably on the former Eagledale Ferry Dock site and recommends it as a satellite unit to the national parks system, I immediately will file legislation in the House to designate it as such. Because the lawmaking process itself can be slow, I urge you to process the study and send it to Congress with dispatch.

The vast majority of former Japanese-American internees have already passed away, and the few remaining survivors are reaching advanced age and most are in declining health. We not only owe it to them to give this memorial the status enjoyed by our nation's most important places - like Mount Rainer National Park, Olympic National Park and Whitman Mission Historic Site, to name a few in Washington. We also owe it to our nation to include the site of the former Eagledale Ferry Dock in the pantheon of important American sites. It is a short, scenic ferry ride from downtown Seattle and will provide generations to come an important reminder, especially in a post-Sept. 11 world, about the dangers of allowing fear to guide national policies.

Sincerely,



JAY INSLEE
Member of Congress

cc: David Anderson, Associate Director of Natural Resource Programs Office of Management and Budget