

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE TOPAZ INTERNMENT CAMP

2018 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

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LONG TITLE

General Description:

This concurrent resolution recognizes the achievement of establishing the Topaz Museum and Education Center to preserve the Topaz Relocation Center site and educate the public about Japanese American internment history.

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution:

- ▶ recognizes the achievements of Jane Beckwith, founder and current president of the Topaz Museum Board, the past and present members of the Topaz Museum Board, and other groups and individuals in bringing the vision of the Topaz Museum and Education Center to reality and providing a place where residents of and visitors to

28 the state can learn valuable lessons regarding civil rights.

29 **Special Clauses:**

30 None

31

32 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:*

33 WHEREAS, during World War II, as described in the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, "race
34 prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership" led to over 120,000 people of
35 Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of whom were American citizens, being forced from their homes
36 in west coast states and incarcerated in camps such as the Topaz Relocation Center near Delta,
37 Utah;

38 WHEREAS, the Topaz Museum Board, a 501(c)(3) organization, was established in
39 1996 after raising money to restore a portion of an original Topaz recreation hall that had been
40 used as the Boy Scouts meeting place during the period of incarceration;

41 WHEREAS, the Topaz Museum Board, under the direction of its founder and current
42 president, Jane Beckwith, consists of people committed to a mission of: preserving the Topaz
43 site; telling the history of incarceration during World War II; honoring the internees;
44 interpreting the impact of the experience on the internees, their families, and the residents of
45 Millard County; and educating the public in order to prevent a similar denial of American civil
46 rights from recurring;

47 WHEREAS, since its founding, the Topaz Museum Board has purchased 633 acres of
48 the original site of the Topaz Relocation Center, conducted teacher workshops, held
49 pilgrimages, and raised awareness of the history of Topaz;

50 WHEREAS, the Secretary of the Interior designated the Topaz site as a National
51 Historic Landmark in 2007;

52 WHEREAS, the Topaz Museum Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, has recently
53 completed an ambitious campaign that raised approximately \$3,000,000 to create the
54 long-awaited and much-needed Topaz Museum and Education Center to tell the story of
55 Topaz;

56 WHEREAS, the Topaz Museum and Education Center is the crowning jewel of a
57 preservation program that began in 1991 to ensure the story of Japanese American internment
58 during World War II is remembered and the site of the Topaz camp is preserved;

59 WHEREAS, the museum received many donations, including \$300,000 from the state
60 of Utah and \$1,200,000 from the National Park Service through the Japanese American
61 Confinement Sites grant program, allowing the Topaz Museum Board to complete this project;

62 WHEREAS, the Friends of Topaz, an organization created to support the Topaz
63 Museum Foundation by engaging with communities, constituents, and individuals, has played
64 an important role in promoting the mission, vitality, and success of the museum;

65 WHEREAS, the Topaz Museum Foundation has maintained a strong relationship with
66 over 3,000 people, including many former internees, who have financially supported the
67 foundation's programs and whose help was essential in the completion of each of the
68 foundation's projects;

69 WHEREAS, the exhibits for the Topaz Museum and Education Center highlight the
70 personal sacrifices and contributions of more than 11,000 people incarcerated at the desolate
71 Topaz camp;

72 WHEREAS, the exhibits include a collection of 1,000 artifacts, including 110 original
73 pieces of artwork created by internees during their incarceration, over 35 video interviews, and
74 a restored recreation hall;

75 WHEREAS, the Topaz Museum and Education Center has become the official
76 repository for teaching, exploring, and interpreting the history of this troubled period of
77 America's past and the impact that still resonates today;

78 WHEREAS, the museum stands as a memorial to the resilient internees who tried to
79 make camp life as normal as possible and as a witness for the history of the incarceration of
80 people of Japanese ancestry during World War II;

81 WHEREAS, the installations and exhibits use cutting-edge technology combined with
82 historic perspectives to engage and educate the public about the United States Constitution and
83 civil rights;

84 WHEREAS, the Topaz Museum and Education Center will continue to collect and
85 safeguard artifacts, artwork, and video interviews, making them accessible to future
86 generations, and ensuring this period in American history will never be forgotten;

87 WHEREAS, the Topaz Museum Foundation also protects 633 acres of the original
88 Topaz site, which is replete with evidence of gardens, walkways, concrete foundations, and
89 artifacts, giving evidence of Japanese Americans who lived there from September 11, 1942,
90 until October 31, 1945;

91 WHEREAS, visitors can learn this complex history, including information about the
92 four Supreme Court test case appellants—Min Yasui, Gordon Hirabayashi, and Topaz
93 internees Fred Korematsu and Mitsuye Endo—by reading exhibit panels, by seeing artifacts
94 and an original recreation hall, and then by visiting the actual camp site;

95 WHEREAS, this total experience produces an understanding of the stark reality of what
96 happened in America to people of Japanese ancestry, the majority of whom were American
97 citizens;

98 WHEREAS, the completion of the Topaz Museum and Education Center allows
99 students, families, educators, historians, former internees, and their families to learn from the
100 artwork, artifacts, oral histories, diaries, and interpretive exhibits, and then travel 16 miles to
101 where the history occurred;

102 WHEREAS, museum docents greet visitors and answer questions beyond the scope of
103 the exhibits allowing visitors to question and contemplate poignant and significant aspects of
104 civil rights and race relations;

105 WHEREAS, in 2007, Governor Jon Huntsman Jr. spoke at the dedication of the Topaz
106 site as a National Historic Landmark;

107 WHEREAS, in 2009, the Utah State Legislature passed a resolution supporting the
108 construction of the Topaz Museum and Education Center;

109 WHEREAS, on January 18, 2013, Governor Gary Herbert proclaimed January 30,
110 2013, "Fred Korematsu Day" in Utah, honoring Mr. Korematsu on what would have been his
111 94th birthday for his lifelong efforts to assure civil liberties for all Americans, following his

112 imprisonment at Topaz and landmark Supreme Court case;

113 WHEREAS, Topaz art has been shown in five major galleries in California and Utah,
114 and in 2018 the Utah Museum of Fine Arts will host a retrospective show of the art of Chiura
115 Obata, who started the art school at Topaz;

116 WHEREAS, over 250 teachers have learned about Topaz in the Summer Field School
117 hosted by the Topaz Museum Foundation and the Utah State Office of Education and countless
118 students have visited the Topaz Museum;

119 WHEREAS, the Topaz Museum website and social media accounts confirm that 5,000
120 people per month are reading about Topaz and downloading information about visiting the site;
121 and

122 WHEREAS, the grand opening of the Topaz Museum and Education Center took place
123 on July 7 and 8, 2017, and featured speeches by Senator Orrin Hatch, Representative Rob
124 Bishop, Jill Remington Love, executive director, Utah Department of Heritage and Arts, and
125 Don Tamaki, whose parents were in Topaz, a koto performance by Shirley Muramoto, a flag
126 presentation by the Latinos in Action, a presentation by Kimi Kodani Hill, a book signing by
127 Willie Ito, who was in Topaz, taiko drumming by the Ogden Buddhist Taiko Group, the puppet
128 show "E.O. 9066" by the San Francisco troupe, Lunatique Fantastique, a ribbon cutting, and
129 tours of the museum and site:

130 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
131 Governor concurring therein, recognizes the achievements of Jane Beckwith and the Topaz
132 Museum Board in bringing the vision of the Topaz Museum and Education Center to reality
133 and providing a place where residents of and visitors to the state can learn valuable lessons
134 regarding civil rights and the nation's commitment to equal justice under the law by
135 championing the resilience of the internees who remained steadfast when their government
136 wavered.

137 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor laud the efforts of
138 all those who contributed to this effort and encourage the residents of and visitors to the state to
139 take advantage of the important educational opportunities available at the Topaz Museum, 55

140 West Main, Delta, Utah.