

**CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE TOPAZ INTERNMENT  
CAMP**

2018 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: Jani Iwamoto**

House Sponsor: Merrill F. Nelson

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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 the state can learn valuable lessons regarding civil rights.

**Special Clauses:**

None

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

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



28 Utah;

29 WHEREAS, the Topaz Museum Board, a 501(c)(3) organization, was established in  
30 1996 after raising money to restore a portion of an original Topaz recreation hall that had been  
31 used as the Boy Scouts meeting place during the period of incarceration;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

59 foundation's projects;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

82 WHEREAS, visitors can learn this complex history, including information about the  
83 four Supreme Court test cases from Topaz internees Min Yasui, Gordon Hirabayashi, Fred  
84 Korematsu, and Mitsuye Endo, by reading exhibit panels, seeing artifacts and an original  
85 recreation hall, and then visiting the actual camp site;

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

89 WHEREAS, the completion of the Topaz Museum and Education Center allows

90 students, families, educators, historians, former internees, and their families to learn from the  
91 artwork, artifacts, oral histories, diaries, and interpretive exhibits, and then travel 16 miles to  
92 where the history occurred;

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

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

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

100 WHEREAS, on January 18, 2013, Governor Gary Herbert proclaimed January 30,  
101 2013, "Fred Korematsu Day" in Utah, honoring Mr. Korematsu on what would have been his  
102 94th birthday for his lifelong efforts to assure civil liberties for all Americans, following his  
103 imprisonment at Topaz and landmark Supreme Court case;

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

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

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

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

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

128           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor laud the efforts of  
129 all those who contributed to this effort and encourage the residents of and visitors to the state to  
130 take advantage of the important educational opportunities available at the Topaz Museum, 55  
131 West Main, Delta, Utah.

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**Legislative Review Note**  
**Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel**