

## Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Establishes January 30 as Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution

01/30/2023

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy today signed a joint resolution (AJR98) designating January 30 of each year as “Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution in New Jersey.” The day of recognition honors the legacy of Fred Korematsu, an American civil rights activist of Japanese heritage who fought against the wrongful incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Governor Murphy was joined today by Dr. Karen Korematsu, daughter of Fred Korematsu and Founder and Executive Director of the Fred T. Korematsu Institute; Ambassador Mikio Mori, Consul General of Japan in New York; Vice-Consul Haruna Maki; legislators; and advocates to commemorate New Jersey’s first Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution, which will be celebrated annually on Mr. Korematsu’s birthday.

“In setting aside a day permanently recognizing the contributions of Fred Korematsu, we are recommitting ourselves to our nation’s ideal of protecting civil liberties,” **said Governor Murphy**. “While we can never rectify the injustices woven into the fabric of our nation’s history, we can ensure that the stories of those who fought against injustice are never forgotten. History must be our guide for creating a better tomorrow. I am honored to sign this resolution and to put New Jersey firmly, and forever, on the side of Fred Korematsu and all who keep his legacy alive.”

“AAPI stories often go unknown, unrecognized, and can slip through the cracks of history into the forgotten. New Jersey is doing a great thing by honoring Fred Korematsu and his courageous activism for civil rights – not only to celebrate his service and perseverance, but for recognizing a true AAPI civil rights champion,” **said Congressman Andy Kim**. “Fred always stood for what was right and offered his life and story to combat discriminatory policies and xenophobia in our country. May ‘Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution’ be a lasting recognition of his impact and the many contributions of the AAPI community to our nation’s story.”

“With the increasing need for mutual understanding among different communities, it is more important than ever to remember, recognize, and honor Fred Korematsu’s legacy of civil rights and liberties,” **said Ambassador Mikio Mori, Consul General of Japan in New York**. “His legacy continues to inspire people of all backgrounds and demonstrates the importance of speaking up to fight injustice. Let us remember and celebrate this day to learn from history and commit to never letting hatred and racism dictate our actions again.”

“Congratulations New Jersey! Thank you, Senator Lagana, Assemblymen Mukherji, Verrelli and Umba, who sponsored the bill and Governor Murphy for signing it into law. And of course, thank you to Tak Fumoto, a camp survivor who shared his testimony— and advocated for this during COVID, Spring of 2020,” **said Dr. Karen Korematsu, daughter of Fred Korematsu and Founder and Executive Director, Fred T. Korematsu Institute**. “This demonstrates how one person’s brave stance can change the lives of many others. Let us always remember and honor the memory of my father so that honor and justice will shine forever.”

“Today, Jan. 30, 2023, is a great day for State of NJ—it is a great day for HUMAN KIND!” **said Takeshi Fumoto, internment camp survivor and human right activist**. “To not only recognize the wrongs of the past, but by recognizing this through legislation, vows to not repeat it. As a survivor, by testifying and passing this bill, and getting unanimous vote of approval by the State Senate and Assembly, gives me a hope for future of America!”

Primary sponsors of the legislation include Senator Joseph Lagana, and Assemblymembers Raj Mukerji, Anthony Verrelli, and Brandon Umba.

“We sometimes forget that the struggle for civil rights and civil liberties must be taken up every day. We must remember the sacrifice of ordinary Americans who came before us, people like Fred Korematsu, who stood up for those liberties when others stood quiet,” **said Senator Joseph Lagana**. “I am proud to pay tribute to Fred Korematsu, a Japanese American who spent an entire lifetime fighting against racial injustice and inequality and striving to uphold the basic rights and civil liberties we all hold dear.”

“For years, Fred Korematsu paid the price for refusing to comply with the despicable imprisonment of Japanese Americans during World War II. He took a lonely stand in defense of civil rights and our Constitution, resulting in one of the worst Supreme Court precedents in the history of our democracy,” **said Assemblyman Raj Mukherji, Chair of the Legislature’s Joint Asian Pacific American Caucus**. “Today we salute Mr. Korematsu’s tireless efforts for vindication. We also salute the incredible patriotism, heroism and valiant service of so many Japanese Americans – including those of the decorated 442nd Regimental Combat Team – in defense of our country, despite the fact that we rounded 120,000 of them up like cattle and imprisoned them based solely on their race.”

“Despite the adversity he faced, Fred Korematsu refused to give up. His tireless advocacy on behalf of those impacted by racial discrimination was influential in compelling our country to recognize the injustice of its past actions,” **said Assemblyman Anthony Verrelli**. “This day will commemorate his life and serve as a reminder to us all that we must oppose inequality and injustice wherever we see it.”

“I want to thank the Governor for signing this resolution and Assemblyman Mukerji for introducing it,” **said Assemblyman Brandon Umba**. “The history of Mr. Korematsu is very important to me and my family. I am the great grandson of an Asian WW2 veteran who overcame similar prejudice as Mr. Korematsu. He is a hero in the eyes of many, and I’m thankful that our great state will now recognize him with ‘Fred Korematsu Day.’”

“I grew up in Maywood and attended Hackensack High School several decades ago. But despite an otherwise excellent education, I was never taught about the internment camps where Japanese Americans like my mom, Fred



Korematsu, and 120,000 others were detained. Fred Korematsu had the courage to stand up to the country that he loved and challenge it to be better. He is a national hero and an inspiration to the next generation of Asian American activists who continue the fight for civil rights today. We are pleased to see Gov. Murphy make New Jersey the next state to honor Korematsu's contributions to our country and ensure that our students learn from his example of civic engagement," **said Phil Tajitsu Nash, board co-president of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF).**

"We applaud New Jersey for recognizing Fred Korematsu Day. This recognition is about understanding how vitally important, but also how fragile our rights as Americans can be," **stated David Inoue, Executive Director for the Japanese American Citizens League.** "At a time when there are threats to a woman's right to health care and other states are proposing to reinstitute Alien Land Laws, it is important that we remember Fred Korematsu and the stand he took against the racist incarceration of Japanese Americans and that despite him fighting in the courts, the Supreme Court ultimately denied his rights as an American."

"As a career military veteran and nephew of a 442nd RCT veteran who overcame racial prejudice in service of his country during World War II, I am proud and honored to have New Jersey establish Fred Korematsu Day on January 30th" **stated Michael Asada, Governor for the Eastern District Council of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL).** This law recognizes Mr. Korematsu's legacy to overcome social injustice and serves as a reminder that civil liberties should be protected for all Americans. We look forward to observing Fred Korematsu Day each year in New Jersey on the anniversary of his birth."

"Fred Korematsu fought the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II and dedicated his life to defending civil rights. Even though his federal conviction was vacated in 1983 after it was discovered that the government engaged in extreme misconduct, the original U.S. Supreme Court decision was never overturned—although it has been widely discredited. We thank Senator Lagana, Assemblymembers Mukherji, Verrelli, and Umba for sponsoring the bill and Governor Murphy for enacting January 30th of each year as Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution into law," **said Sandra Leung, president of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA).**

"AAPI Montclair is grateful to Governor Murphy for signing the Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution Resolution into effect," **said Danielle Iwata, AAPI Montclair.** "As a descendant of Japanese incarceration survivors, this is an especially powerful moment to see New Jersey reaffirm our civil rights and remember this piece of our country's past. Fred Korematsu's legacy is one of the many beacons illuminating how Asian American history is American history. We once again applaud Governor Murphy for signing the AAPI curriculum law one year ago this month and the progress being made to ensure our educators have the resources they need to teach about the contributions of heroes like Fred Korematsu. We join our diverse local and state partners in honoring his call to 'stand up for what is right' and fight for equity and justice."

"The internment of Japanese Americans during World War II is widely known as one of the most shameful periods of our nation's history" **said Amol Sinha, Executive Director of the ACLU of New Jersey.** "Fred Korematsu heroically stood up against racism and governmental abuse of power, despite the personal harm it would cause him. Mr. Korematsu embodied the values of equity, dignity for all, and a vision for a more just future. While it's been decades since his internment, the U.S. Supreme Court decision that bears his name, and his subsequent exoneration, we know that history repeats itself and persecution persists. As we honor Mr. Korematsu, let us remember that the work of securing freedom is unfinished – his legacy lives on as we continue the march toward liberation and justice for all."

"APALA-NJ applauds the New Jersey legislature for their leadership in bringing Fred Korematsu's life's work and story to light and Governor Murphy for enacting the joint resolution recognizing January 30th as Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution. The recognition of Fred Korematsu, an Asian American who advocated for civil liberties and justice, is a significant step in appreciating the varied stories of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders ("AAPI") who make up the fabric of our history. It sends a crucial message to the growing AAPI population in New Jersey of the importance of their experiences and that the history of AAPIs matters," **said Punam Alam, President of the Asian Pacific American Lawyers Association of New Jersey.**

"To learn what Fred Korematsu experienced makes us rethink the freedoms that we often take for granted," **stated the Japanese Cultural League of Jersey City (JCLJC).** "Regardless of background or beliefs, we all must keep watching, make sure nobody is excluded from basic rights, or one day, it could be you or your family whose civil liberties are violated."

"We are grateful to Governor Murphy and the NJ Legislature for honoring Fred Korematsu's principled and tenacious stand in the face of racism and his tireless fight for human rights and civil liberties for all, regardless of race creed or color," **stated Make Us Visible NJ.**

"The importance of honoring and teaching the legacy of civil liberties heroes like Fred Korematsu cannot be understated. His fight against racial discrimination and unjustified mass internment is one that we continue to this day, whether through ensuring visibility for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders or working against the injustices of immigrant detention and surveillance," **said Amy Torres with New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice.** "Korematsu famously said, 'If you have the feeling that something is wrong, don't be afraid to speak up.' Establishing this day in his memory is an important step for New Jersey. Every other day of the year, we must fight to keep his legacy alive through the continued pursuit of justice, inclusion, and belonging for all communities that call our state home."

SABA-NJ proudly supports New Jersey Assembly Joint Resolution 98, a bill that will officially establish January 30 of each year as 'Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution of New Jersey,'" **stated South Asian Bar Association of New Jersey (SABA-NJ) 2023 Executive Board.** "Fred Korematsu is a hero in the AAPI community as he advocated for civil rights and fought injustice during one of the darkest times in American history. Although most attorneys are familiar with his name through the landmark United States Supreme Court case, *Korematsu v. United States*, this bill will ensure that the broader New Jersey population is aware of and understands the importance behind his legacy."

"SALDEF is pleased that the State of New Jersey is honoring Mr. Korematsu who is an American civil rights icon," **said Amman Deep Singh Seehra Vice Chair, Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF).** "His strength and courage left an indelible legacy that continues to inspire our work at SALDEF to uphold social justice and religious freedom for all Americans. This designation of January 30th as Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution can now inspire all New Jerseyans to come together as a community that recognizes and addresses injustice."

Fred T. Korematsu was an American civil rights activist. In 1942, at the age of 23, he refused to go to the government's incarceration camps for Japanese Americans. After he was arrested and convicted of defying the government's order, he appealed his case all the way to the United States Supreme Court. In 1944, a divided Supreme Court ruled against him, arguing that the incarceration was justified due to military necessity.

In 1983, with new evidence, a pro-bono legal team re-opened Korematsu's 40-year-old case on the basis of government misconduct. On November 10, 1983, Korematsu's conviction was overturned in a federal court in San Francisco. In 1998, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, from President Bill Clinton. And in 2018, the Supreme Court formally repudiated its 1944 decision, which today is widely regarded as one of the most unjust decisions in the history of the Court.

## Governor Phil Murphy

## Statewide

<a href="/governor/">Home (/governor/)</a>	<b>Key Initiatives</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>NJ Home</b>
<b>Administration</b>	Economy & Jobs	Facebook	(//www.nj.gov)
Governor Phil Murphy	(/governor/initiatives/#Economy)	(https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/)	<b>Services A to Z</b>
(/governor/admin/about)	Education	Twitter	(//www.nj.gov/njgov/njgov/alphaserv.html)
Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver	(/governor/initiatives/#Education)	(https://twitter.com/GovMurphy)	<b>Departments/Agencies</b>
(/governor/admin/lt)	Environment	Instagram	(//www.nj.gov/njgov/deptserv/)
First Lady Tammy Snyder	(/governor/initiatives/#Environment)	(https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/)	<b>FAQs</b>
Murphy	Health	Snapchat	(//www.nj.gov/faqs/)
(/governor/admin/fi)	(/governor/initiatives/#Health)	(https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)	<b>Contact Us</b>
Senior Staff	Law & Justice	YouTube	(//www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html)
(/governor/admin/staff)	(/governor/initiatives/#Justice)	(https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice)	<b>Privacy Notice</b>
Cabinet	Transportation	<b>Contact Us</b>	(//www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html)
(/governor/admin/cabinet)	(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)	Scheduling Requests	<b>Legal Statement &amp;</b>
Office of Climate Action	<b>News &amp; Events</b>	(/governor/contact/scheduling/)	<b>Disclaimers</b>
and the Green Economy	Press Releases	Contact Us	(//www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html)
(/governor/climateaction/)	(/governor/news/news/562023/governor-creates-1st-annual-2023-press-conference)	(//www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html)	<b>Accessibility Statement</b>
Office of Equity	Photos	(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy)	
(/governor/admin/equity/)	Public Addresses	(/governor/news/addresses)	
Office of Health Care	Affordability and	Executive Orders	
Transparency	(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml)	(//www.nj.gov/eo7658/murphy/approved/eo_archive.html)	
Boards, Commissions &	Administrative Orders	(/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)	
Authorities	(/governor/admin/bca)	Direct Appointments	
(/governor/admin/bca)	New Jersey Puerto Rico	(/governor/news/appointments)	
Commission	Commission	Advice and Consent	
(https://www.nj.gov/puertoricocommission/)	Appointments	(/governor/news/acappointments)	
Internship Opportunities	(/governor/admin/internship.shtml)	Statements on	
(/governor/admin/internship.shtml)	Governor's Fellows	Legislation	
Program	(/governor/admin/fellows)	(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)	
(/governor/admin/fellows)	Governor's Residence -	Administration Reports	
Drumthwacket	(http://drumthwacket.org/)	(/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)	
(http://drumthwacket.org/)	Transition Reports	(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)	
	Press Kits	(/governor/news/press)	

(//nj.gov/opra/)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2023  
 Office of Governor PO Box 001  
 Trenton, NJ 08625  
 609-292-6000

(https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login)

(<https://tech.nj.gov/>)