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JACL EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER ARIZONA IMMIGRANT LAW

Washington, D.C.-The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) expresses deep concern that Governor Jan Brewer of Arizona signed into law today a measure that would allow law enforcement officers to detain anybody "if there is reason to suspect they are illegal immigrants." The JACL is the oldest and largest Asian American civil and human rights organization in the nation. Restrictive and punitive immigration laws against Asians were the prime reason for the JACL to be organized in 1929. Since that time, the JACL has fought for fair immigration laws that did not discriminate against one specific group of people.

The National Executive Director of the JACL, Floyd Mori, said upon hearing of the signing of the bill, "This legislation essentially puts a target on the back of anybody who may be viewed as an immigrant, whether or not they are citizens of the United States. This is alarming to those of us of color who are citizens but are often pegged as foreigners simply because of our ethnic heritage. In 1942, Japanese Americans were put into concentration camps simply because of their race. This was contrary to basic Constitutional guarantees of fair and equal treatment under the law. This new Arizona law repeats the same error of that 1942 action by the federal government. People of a particular ethnic heritage will be the target of law enforcement simply because of the way they look. This is the worst case of racial profiling since World War II that we could imagine, and the government of Arizona is making the same mistake the federal government made in 1942, which caused many people to suffer greatly through no fault of their own."

Larry Oda, the JACL's National President, stated: "The JACL was opposed to the legislation and continues to oppose its implementation as a law. Many innocent people will experience difficulties and hardship simply because of their ethnic heritage. While Governor Brewer has cited the boarder problems as a prime reason for signing the law, it is obvious that the impact will be felt largely in Hispanic communities whether people are citizens or not. It is a shame that

politics of fear have won out over the principles of fairness and compassion that have made us the great country we are."

End

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