

**Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to the law as it existed
prior to this session of the General Assembly.
Act 1153 of the Regular Session**

1 State of Arkansas
2 86th General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2007
4

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1959

5 By: Representatives Moore, E. Brown, Flowers, Maxwell, Reep, Cheatham
6 By: Senators J. Jeffress, J. Taylor
7

For An Act To Be Entitled

10 AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE SIGNAGE FOR WAR RELOCATION
11 CENTERS THAT WERE OPERATED BY THE WAR RELOCATION
12 AUTHORITY DURING WORLD WAR II; AND FOR OTHER
13 PURPOSES.
14

Subtitle

15 TO AUTHORIZE SIGNAGE FOR WAR RELOCATION
16 CENTERS THAT WERE OPERATED BY THE WAR
17 RELOCATION AUTHORITY DURING WORLD WAR
18 II.
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22 WHEREAS, on February 19, 1942, seventy-four (74) days after the
23 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed
24 Executive Order 9066, which established military exclusion zones and enabled
25 the federal government to force more than one hundred ten thousand (110,000)
26 people of Japanese descent to sell all of their belongings, evacuate their
27 homes with only what they could carry, and enter confinement at assembly
28 centers; and
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30 WHEREAS, seventy percent (70%) of the people who were forced into
31 assembly centers were American citizens of Japanese descent; and
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33 WHEREAS, while first confined in assembly centers, the people of
34 Japanese descent were then moved by train to war relocation centers which
35 were established by the War Relocation Authority (WRA); and



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 2 WHEREAS, most of the WRA centers were in California, Arizona, Idaho,
 3 Utah, and Colorado, but in the summer of 1942, two (2) war relocation centers
 4 emerged from the swamps and forests of southeast Arkansas, Jerome and Rohwer;
 5 and

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 7 WHEREAS, Jerome and Rohwer were selected by the federal government for
 8 their geographic isolation and location near railroad tracks in southeast
 9 Arkansas; and

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 11 WHEREAS, Jerome and Rohwer were the only WRA centers east of the Rocky
 12 Mountains and the WRA centers that were farthest east; and

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 14 WHEREAS, Jerome and Rohwer housed approximately seventeen thousand
 15 (17,000) Japanese American inmates; and

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 17 WHEREAS, Jerome opened on October 6, 1942, and closed on June 30, 1944,
 18 at its peak population housed eight thousand four hundred ninety-seven
 19 (8,497) inmates, and has the distinction of being the last WRA center to open
 20 and the first one to close; and

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 22 WHEREAS, Rohwer opened on September 18, 1942, and closed on November
 23 30, 1945, and inmates assigned to Rohwer came from Hawaii; Los Angeles
 24 County, California; and San Joaquin County, California; and

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 26 WHEREAS, Rohwer at its peak population housed eight thousand four
 27 hundred seventy-five (8,475) inmates; and

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 29 WHEREAS, after the war, most of the physical traces of the WRA centers'
 30 existence disappeared, and now oats, soybeans, winter wheat, and cotton grow
 31 where the Jerome Relocation Center and Rohwer Relocation Center once stood;
 32 and

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 34 WHEREAS, the evidence of Jerome's existence that remains today and that
 35 is visible from U.S. Highway 165 is a smokestack from the hospital complex,
 36 two concrete tanks from the wastewater disposal plant, and a former

1 administration building that is visible from U.S. Highway 165; and

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3 WHEREAS, the evidence of Rohwer’s existence that remains today is a
4 cemetery with two (2) cement monuments and twenty-four (24) graves placed in
5 a formal landscape that the inmates designed and created; and

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7 WHEREAS, in 1992, Rohwer was recognized as a National Historic Landmark
8 and opposite the cemetery sits two (2) contemporary granite monuments, one
9 (1) that acknowledges the status as a National Historic Landmark and the
10 other that acknowledges former inmate Sam Yada’s dedication to educating
11 future generations about the Japanese American experience in World War II in
12 Arkansas; and

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14 WHEREAS, hundreds if not thousands of Japanese American visitors make a
15 pilgrimage to southeast Arkansas each year to see where their ancestors lived
16 and where their grandparents were born; and

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18 WHEREAS, Rohwer and Jerome are areas of substantial historic interest
19 to all Arkansans and contribute to the state’s overall economy by serving as
20 recognized national tourist attractions to out-of-state visitors,

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22 NOW THEREFORE,

23 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

24

25 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 13, Chapter 7, Subchapter 1 is amended
26 to add an additional section to read as follows:

27 13-7-111. Signage for war relocation centers.

28 (a) The General Assembly finds that:

29 (1) There are only two (2) war relocation centers for people of
30 Japanese descent that were operated by the War Relocation Authority during
31 World War II in Arkansas, Jerome and Rohwer;

32 (2) Rohwer is recognized as a National Historic Landmark for its
33 importance in American history and importance to Japanese Americans and is an
34 important part of Arkansas’ history; and

35 (3) Jerome is an equally valuable part of the history of
36 Arkansas and the history of many Japanese Americans.

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(b)(1) The Department of Arkansas Heritage shall erect signage to inform visitors about the historic landmarks of Jerome and Rohwer in southeast Arkansas, subject to the appropriation and availability of funding.

(2) Any signage placed in a right-of-way of a state highway shall be approved by the State Highway Commission.

(c) The signage shall include the following about Jerome and Rohwer:

(1) Information about the size and locations;

(2) Site plans;

(3) Photographs;

(4) Dates of occupancy; and

(5) Other information as determined by the Department of Arkansas Heritage that would be of value to visitors of Jerome and Rohwer.

APPROVED: 4/4/2007