

## Fred Korematsu Day

### of Civil Liberties and the Constitution

honors the legacy of civil rights hero Fred T. Korematsu and his fight for racial equity, social justice, and human rights for all.

On this day, we hope that his story of perseverance in the face of adversity inspires others to become more civically involved and to, as Fred said, “stand up for what is right.”

# Who was Fred Korematsu?

Fred Korematsu was an American civil rights activist who stood up to the U.S. government’s wrongful incarceration of over 125,000 people of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast during WWII.

Even though Fred was vilified and ostracized by his Japanese American community and had no support from his family, he was not afraid to speak up. He knew the government had violated the civil rights of thousands of its citizens and immigrants when it forced them to leave their homes and live in remote incarceration camps.

After disobeying the government’s orders, Fred spent over two years in various prisons and wartime incarceration sites.

*“I didn't feel guilty because I didn't do anything wrong... Every day in school, we said the pledge of the flag, 'with liberty and justice for all,' and I believed all that. I was an American citizen, and I had as many rights as anyone else.”<sup>1</sup>*

Fred's case went all the way to the Supreme Court. In 1944, the court ruled against Fred, claiming that the incarceration was a “military necessity.” Even more than the fact that he now carried a federal conviction, he was devastated that the court validated the government’s complete disregard of his community’s civil liberties.

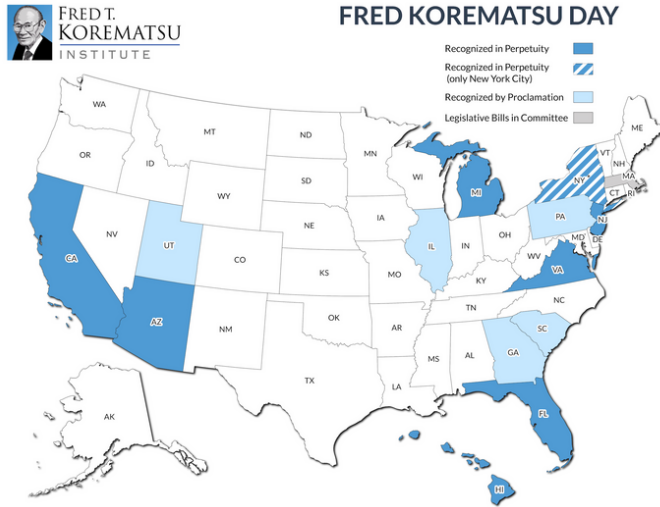
It took nearly forty years, but Fred’s conviction was finally overturned in the ninth circuit court of appeals. Several years later, the government issued apologies and reparations to remaining camp survivors. In 1998, President Bill Clinton awarded Fred the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award of the United States.

Fred never gave up hope during all that time. Amazingly, he was never bitter or angry. He remained firm in his commitment to community and his country. He treated everyone else the way he wanted to be treated and lived by his moral principles of right and wrong.

Fred was an ordinary citizen who believed in our constitutional rights and was not afraid to speak up in the face of adversity. We honor his determination and sacrifice.

<sup>1</sup>Richard Goldstein, Fred Korematsu Obituary, New York Times, April 1, 2005.

# Where is Fred Korematsu Day recognized?



## Recognized in perpetuity

- California – bill signed in 2010
- Hawai'i – bill signed in 2013
- Virginia – bill signed in 2015
- Florida – bill signed in 2015
- New York City – bill signed in 2018
- Arizona – bill signed in 2022
- New Jersey – bill signed in 2023
- Michigan – bill signed in 2023

## Recognized by proclamation

- Utah (2013)
- Illinois (2014)
- Georgia (2014)
- South Carolina (2015)
- Pennsylvania (2014)
- Michigan (2014, 2015)

## Legislative bills in committee\*

- Massachusetts
- \*as of October 2023

## Fred Korematsu Day not yet recognized in your state?

Work with your local or state representative to put forth a legislative bill.

Contact us at  
[info@korematsuinstitute.org](mailto:info@korematsuinstitute.org)  
for ideas on how to get started.

## How will you honor Fred's legacy?



Become more civically engaged



Don't be afraid to speak up for what is right



Attend a FKD event



Donate to the Fred T. Korematsu Institute



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