



Hawaii State Bar Association

Civic Education Committee

January 24, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

RE: HSBA Civic Education Committee's Nomination of Congresswoman Patsy T. Mink for the Presidential Medal of Freedom

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of the Hawai'i State Bar Association Civic Education Committee, **we humbly ask you to posthumously honor a truly deserving American, Patsy Takemoto Mink, with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.**

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the historic election of Patsy Mink to the United States Congress. In 1964, no woman of color had ever been elected to national office until Patsy Mink. As a legislator in the nation's capitol, she was indefatigable in her determination in advancing civil rights and liberties, economic justice, the integrity of the democratic process and the advancement of women to the same financial and educational opportunities as men. She was most well known for her role in co-authoring and ushering the passage of Title IX, later renamed the Patsy T. Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act, which was not just a law about girls sports. She knew this would transform every classroom and the workplace because this was about fairness and educational opportunities for all. Fifty years ago, Patsy Mink won that important election that would mark the beginning of her journey as one of our America's greatest legislator.

Yet, Patsy Mink may be unknown or overlooked in most school curricula outside of Hawai'i, and many Americans take for granted the rights, freedoms and opportunities she sought to protect and guarantee for all people. We would like to change that.

In celebration of this momentous occasion, the Civic Education Committee will be undertaking an audacious campaign to honor and celebrate the life and legacy of Patsy Mink. The theme of our campaign, "**Elections Matter**," highlights the importance of civic participation and does so through the lens of perhaps one of the most important elections in American history – Patsy Mink's election as the first woman of color to the people's house. Throughout the year, we will be focusing our efforts to support teachers and students with resources to educate and encourage registering young voters. We are working with educational specialists and community partners to raise awareness of and to encourage students and teachers to think and learn about principles, issues, and programs that Patsy Mink worked on to improve society and



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its governance and what can still be done now to preserve, protect and advance the fundamental principles of doing what is right and caring for all people in a democracy.

To kick off our year in celebration of Patsy Mink's legacy, we are co-sponsoring an event on January 30, 2014 that marks Hawaii's first "Civil Liberties and the Constitution Day." Our program, "Undaunted Courage & Civil Liberties," offers an opportunity for community members to reflect on the life stories in pursuing social justice of Fred T. Korematsu (awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Clinton) and Patsy Mink, and explores the modern relevance of your 2012 Executive Order for Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals (DACA) for undocumented youths brought to the U.S. as children now struggling to defer their deportation from the only country they have known by staying in school or by serving in the military. This is just the first on many opportunities that we look forward to providing the community to celebrate the life and legacy of Patsy Mink.

We believe that the Presidential Medal of Freedom is a befitting honor to bestow during this special year. As our nation's President, you have the sole discretion to bestow this award on Patsy Mink for her "especially meritorious contribution" to significant public and private endeavors. She was an extraordinary American legislator and public servant in leading the way for women, girls, Asian Americans, and all citizens who trust in America's promise of fundamental values of fairness, dignity and opportunities for all people.

It is no surprise that we hold Patsy Mink in highest regard, and we appreciate the opportunity to share with you stories about her and to tell about our many tributes to her after her death in 2002. Through the letters and materials we are submitting for your consideration, we hope you will be reminded of her powerful voice and clear vision. We hope you share our belief and vision that all Americans of all ages can benefit and be comforted in trusting their moral compasses by learning about Patsy Mink's legacy as a champion of speaking out for what is right. Her lasting words inspire us to have faith, courage and perseverance when critics attack policies and actions that may not always be popular:

"It is easy enough to vote right and be consistently with the majority.
But it is more often important to be ahead of the majority and this
means being willing to cut the first furrow in the ground and stand alone
for a while if necessary."

For many similar reasons why your becoming our nation's 44th President wins you a very special place in the minds and hearts of people here in your home state of Hawai'i, we believe you can understand what Patsy Mink means to us. Perhaps, no other U.S. President can appreciate the connection and bonds with Patsy Mink as deeply in the same way that you may.

We understand that it is not easy for you to visit with the people of Hawai'i often, but we welcome any possible opportunity for you to participate in events that will allow us to engage



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with you in December or throughout the rest of your term in office, in celebrating this honor for Patsy Mink.

With much Aloha and gratitude, we wish you continued strength in your final term as President and we appreciate your earliest consideration of our request that you award Patsy Takemoto Mink the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2014.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Pettit", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

TED N. PETTIT
Co-Chair, Civic Education Committee

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ruth Oh", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

RUTH OH
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