



DEI IN MOTION

Celebrating Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

May 2026

In the month of May we take time to reflect and celebrate the important role that Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPIs) have played in our shared history. We celebrate the life and legacy of Norman Y. Mineta — a true American trailblazer whose story is one of resilience, justice, and unwavering public service.

Born on November 12, 1931, in San José, California, to Japanese immigrant parents, Mineta and his family were forcibly sent to the Heart Mountain internment camp in Wyoming during World War II — an injustice that, rather than breaking his spirit, became the defining force behind a lifetime of advocacy.

Mineta surpassed the prejudice and intolerance of his era, becoming the first Asian American mayor of a major U.S. city, the first Japanese American elected to Congress from the mainland, and the first Asian American to serve in not just one, but two presidential cabinets. His greatest pride, by his own account, was helping right a historic wrong: he led the Congressional effort that resulted in the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan, providing a formal government apology and redress for the 120,000 Japanese Americans imprisoned during the war.

On September 11, 2001, as U.S. Secretary of Transportation, Mineta's leadership ensured that what happened to Japanese Americans during World War II would not happen to any other group based on ethnicity or religion. Within hours, he ordered every aircraft in American skies grounded — and stood firm that there would be no racial profiling at the nation's airports.

He passed away on May 3, 2022, leaving behind a legacy of public service and civil rights activism honored by, among other recognitions, the co-naming of the U.S. Department of Transportation building in Washington, D.C., in his honor.