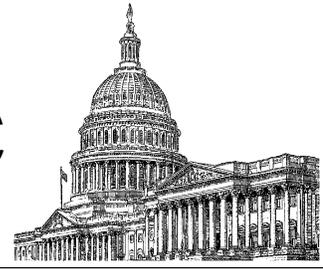


Dan Inouye

U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII



**GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY
PEARL HARBOR MEMORIAL MUSEUM
& VISITOR CENTER**

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2008

I am sadly reminded that in December, 1991 – the 50th anniversary of that Day of Infamy, a poll was taken of our nation’s high school seniors. Less than half of them could intelligently describe the significance of December 7, 1941.

Still others did not know where Pearl Harbor was located. I would hate to think that the thousands of men who gave their lives on that fateful day and the painful days that followed, did so in vain.

History teaches us that when its citizens have no sense of pride, or interest in their nation’s history, and fail to support its historic sites and memorials that serve as reminders of past glories or haunting crisis, the very survival of that nation – or that of its national character – are put in jeopardy.

It is for this reason that I thank all of you today because through our collective efforts, we will be able to remind our young citizens of the pain and sacrifice made by those who came before them so that they, in turn, may enjoy the fruits of freedoms.

December 7, 1941 – the Day of Infamy when America suddenly found itself at war. It was a difficult time for Americans because we were not prepared for war – not for the physical destruction and not for the heartache. On this day, 2,388 personnel were killed, and another 1,178 wounded. 21 ships were destroyed or damaged. It was a day when weaker souls would have surrendered.

Out of the ashes and the marbled trails of oil in the harbor waters came a resilience, a resolute determination, an unwavering spirit of the American people. This Spirit of America united and galvanized the people. It gave us strength in the face of adversity and made us unwilling to accept defeat.

My fellow Americans, today the obstacles and challenges are many. The ugly voices of hatred and the unconscionable actions of terrorists surround us, and make us afraid. It was that same powerful spirit of this land that unified America after the September 11th attack of the Twin Towers and the Pentagon.

The Spirit of America lives in the hearts and minds of every member of our armed forces standing in harm's way in Iraq and Afghanistan. We pray for their safe return home.

I can think of very few other places that so symbolically represents our nation's resilient spirit than the Arizona Memorial. Walking through the solemn hall of the Arizona Memorial, or learning at the Visitor Center about that fateful day, you see the great devastation and despair. It is then followed by a welling up of emotion in the depth of your soul, a steadfast and unwavering resolve – the Spirit of America. It lives in all of us.

We must always remember our history. While there were painful lessons learned, it is also the source of our inner strength and our spirit. We must never allow that torch to flicker out.