

look forward to continuing that relationship with the Asian Pacific Islander community to celebrate its contributions and to overcome the ongoing challenges that these communities face.

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ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PERLMUTTER). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, this month marks a special opportunity to pay tribute to the contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans. In our community, we have a great opportunity to recognize this dynamic force of creativity in our Nation, and I welcome the opportunity to do so and I thank my colleague MIKE HONDA for hosting this special order tonight.

An estimated 180,000 Asian Pacific Islanders representing a diverse community of backgrounds and cultures and experiences make their homes in Minnesota, with an estimated 32,000 in the Fifth Congressional District alone. Minnesota serves as home to one of the Nation's largest Hmong population, estimated at nearly 80,000. In Minnesota, we boast 2 members of our State legislators who have Hmong American heritage, Senator Mee Moua and Representative Cy Thao. The Hmong American story in Minnesota is quintessentially Minnesotan and we are proud of our Hmong community.

The Hmong story is quintessentially an immigrant story as well, a story coming from their land to a new one to make success here in America, overcoming the many difficulties, struggling, persevering, while retaining love for their land of origin, finding tremendous love and loyalty in their new home as well.

The Asian American and Pacific Islanders make a valuable contribution to every aspect of American life and Minnesota life, from business, education, to arts to military. We will always remember Qixing Lee, a young man who graduated from North High School of Hmong American heritage who lost his life in this conflict in Iraq. Their contributions and unique additions to our life have enhanced the moral fabric and character of our State and our great country.

As we celebrate the many contributions of the Asian American-Pacific Islander community, let us not lose sight of the cornerstone of their contributions and to the very foundation of this country, immigration. Immigration has played a vital role in the entire making of America, whether the immigrants are from Europe, Africa, whether they are from Asia, or Latin and Central America. But immigration no doubt has played a vital role in the cre-

ation and success of our country, and must be looked at as a vital American strength as we look forward in this 110th Congress.

As the Democratic-led House leads the way on immigration reform, I believe that we must look at comprehensive reform, not shock radio sound bites. Reform that fully recognizes the contribution of immigrants have made and continue to make to our Nation is as equally important as security on the border. Fair comprehensive immigration policy must work to protect and unite families. Right now, an estimated 1.5 million Asian and Pacific Islanders face an immigration backlog that has forced many families to live separated from their loved one for years. This is a shame and must end.

As we celebrate the contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to our Nation, let us use this occasion to take our great country in a new direction and to higher heights, and to meet the challenges facing all Americans, including Asian American and Pacific Islanders. As we have in the first 100 days, let us take further steps to change the way we do business in Washington and defend our country, grow our economy, care for all children and families, protect our planet, and restore accountability. Together, we can make the American dream a reality for all Americans.

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my good friend and colleague and neighbor, Congressman Mike Honda, first for his leadership on so many issues, and, secondly, for organizing a special order tonight to celebrate the contributions of Asian Pacific Americans, but also to celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month.

We have the pleasure of representing the California Bay Area together. It is really an honor and a magnificent challenge and an exciting part of my district to bring all of our diverse communities together, to support many, many issues as minority communities. So the Asian Pacific American community is one of those communities that is incredibly diverse in my district and also in our Nation, but also plays an increasingly important role in the development of our Nation. With over 14 million people and 24 ethnic groups, they encompass vast histories and rich cultures.

In many ways, the APA community is seen as a model minority community, but the truth is the very same challenges, like access to health care and education, that other communities face are also obstacles to be overcome by Asian Pacific Americans. For example, nearly 2.4 million Asian American

and Pacific Islanders are without health insurance, and about 13 percent of Asian Pacific American children are uninsured. Diseases such as diabetes are on the rise and one of the leading causes of mortality among Asian Pacific Americans.

Congressman HONDA and I also co-chair the Congressional Out-of-Poverty Caucus, along with our colleagues Congressman JOE BACA, Congressman G.K. BUTTERFIELD, and Congressman JOHN CONYERS. We all are working to raise awareness of all of these challenges and are working on a plan to eradicate poverty in our country.

As with many minority communities, education plays a key role in ensuring that the next generation of APAs are able to break free from the cycle of poverty. That is why I am a cosponsor of H.R. 629, introduced by a colleague from Oregon, Congressman DAVID WU. This legislation would create institutions of higher education modeled after the historically black colleges and universities and our Hispanic serving institutions. This would establish a university for the Asian Pacific American community.

Back at home in the Ninth Congressional District of California, my constituents and organizations based in my district are really making an impact in many of these fields. An organization that I am very proud to represent is Asian Health Services. This agency has served thousands of people who cannot afford basic services such as health care and mental health services. Our Asian community is so diverse that Asian Health Services has translators that speak nine different languages. When it comes to health care justice, this agency advocates for those with no voice by working with elected officials to create policies that meet the essential mental health and health care needs.

I also want to mention the Asian Pacific Environmental Networks. This agency is a powerful grassroots organization and has done incredible work to provide housing for the waitresses and the security guards and the janitors that keep our community working. They have negotiated with developers to set aside 465 units of housing for low and extremely low income individuals. To further aid this community, the network has negotiated 300 entry-level construction career path placements, allowing constituents to gather the tools that they need for success.

This is truly an important time to reflect upon the accomplishments and the achievements of the APA community. The United States is strong because of its diversity and its immigrants. I am proud to be a member of the Asian Pacific American Caucus and our Tri-Caucus which reflects the beauty and diversity of our country. Let us rededicate ourselves tonight to eradicate the disparities and the discrimination against the Asian Pacific American community and to celebrate the great contributions.

I want to thank Congressman HONDA again for his leadership, and for making sure that justice prevails for the Asian Pacific American community, because his leadership and bringing together the diversity, closing the health care gap with regard to minority communities, all of the issues that he works on makes this House of Representatives a better place.

ASIAN PACIFIC HERITAGE MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from California (Mr. HONDA) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks, and include extraneous material on the subject of my special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to call upon my colleague, Ms. BORDALLO, who hails from Guam.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Asian Pacific Heritage Month and to recognize the contributions of Asian and Pacific Island Americans to our Nation. First, I want to thank my colleague from California, the Honorable Mr. HONDA, the chairman of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, for his distinct leadership and dedication to the needs of our communities.

Every May during Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, we recognize the contributions Asian and Pacific Island Americans make to the United States economically, culturally, politically, throughout its history. Asian and Pacific Islander Americans continue to make notable and diverse contributions to every aspect of American life. Asian and Pacific Island Americans also serve public interests by serving honorably in the United States Armed Services and ably at every level of government in the United States. I am proud to participate in the effort to honor their contributions to this country and celebrate our heritage with this month's events.

Some people wonder why we continue to celebrate cultural diversity. I respond by saying that doing so helps to remind us that while many of us have no memory of fleeing oppression or desiring to live freely, many Vietnamese Americans can tell you of their desire to live freely and the risks that they took fleeing communism to do so. Or, the experiences of some Korean Americans can help us better understand the importance of family and the hardships and the pain created as a result of being kept apart from loved ones for generations. While many of our lives

are relatively stable and certain, some Chinese Americans or Japanese Americans can inspire you with their stories of succeeding here in the United States after arriving with no money and no possessions.

Freedom and economic opportunity are attributes of the United States that have, for generations, inspired hope among the repressed people of the world. Some of us take the United States and the American way of life for granted. The United States and the privilege and the goodness of America's way of life are particularly important for at least two groups among the Asian and Pacific Islander American community. They are Chamorro or Filipino-Americans. And I say that because Chamorro or Filipino-Americans are among the very few Americans who can identify with heart-swelling pride inspired by witnessing the striking and the unique beauty of the Stars and Stripes flying proudly at the top of flagpoles for the first time after enduring and being liberated from a brutal and extended occupation by the foreign power.

To all Americans I say this: To learn of the experiences endured by these Americans during occupation and liberation will provide you invaluable perspective on what it means to be an American. In fact, before the House this week is H.R. 1595, the Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act. This bill would help fulfill a moral obligation on the part of our national government to a group of citizens, the people of Guam, most of whom were indigenous Chamorros who bore the burden of a brutal occupation. The people of Guam were brutalized through public executions, beheadings, rape, and severe injury, forced labor, forced march, and internment in concentration camps.

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H.R. 1595 is called the Loyalty Recognition Act because the loyalty of the people of Guam to the United States during this 32-month enemy occupation should be honored.

It is a tragic injustice of history that, following liberation, Congress did not provide for war claims for the people of Guam in the same manner and with the same opportunities that were afforded to other Americans. The people who carried a disproportionate burden of the war were given less than other Americans when it came time to make our Nation whole. Those who gave more in blood got less in recognition. Asian Pacific American Heritage Month would be especially noteworthy if this legislation were to be agreed to by the House of Representatives.

Asians and Pacific Islanders have a powerful story to tell, and they have a love for this Nation that many take for granted. Our contribution to America is not just the great food and the intriguing cultures that we have introduced to this land; it is also the stories of our incredible journeys to freedom.

Our heritage is our gift to this Nation. Our unique cultures have survived and continue to thrive because America has come to know and appreciate how our contributions enrich our Nation.

I am very, very proud of the Chamorro culture on Guam and take every opportunity to share our culture and our traditions.

Today it is worth reflecting on who we are as a Nation and what values we stand for. We are a Nation of immigrants whose parents and grandparents have come to these shores seeking individual liberty, prosperity and human dignity. The Nation we call our own is one of compassion and of justice. And when it comes to our heritage, we may be Chamorros, Hawaiian, Japanese, Samoan, Chinese, Filipino, Palauan, Chuukese, Korean or any of the various proud cultures of Asia and the Pacific, but we all share a common love for this country.

So as we celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, let us honor the contributions of all Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, and let us appreciate the cultural diversity, the patriotism and the communities that make our country, that make America so great.

Dangkulo na Si Yu'os Ma'ase.

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to call upon our good friend, colleague from Texas, Representative AL GREEN.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I'm honored to be here tonight to celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. And I want to especially thank Chairman HONDA for the outstanding job that he has done, not only with this event, but also what he does year round, year in and year out with our caucus, the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus. I thank you for what you have done.

Mr. Speaker, I represent the Ninth Congressional District in Houston, Texas. The Ninth Congressional District is one of the most diverse districts in the country. It is 36 percent African American, 31 percent Hispanic, 21 percent Anglo and 12 percent Asian. And I am proud to say that this district, the Ninth Congressional District, has the ballot printed in three languages, English, Spanish and Vietnamese, soon to have it in a fourth language, Chinese.

I'm also proud to say that we have elected a Vietnamese to the State House in the State of Texas. The honorable Hubert Vo is a State Representative from a district that is within my Ninth Congressional District.

I am so honored that we have selected the theme "Meeting the Challenges for Asian Pacific Americans." This is most appropriate. Why? Because in spite of discrimination and degradation, Asian Americans have met the challenges for America. They were there when America needed a national rail connectivity. In spite of discrimination and humiliation, they