

Community Speaks Out and Urges Speaker Laurie Jinkins to Not Kill Americans of Chinese Descent History Month Again

Community speaks out about scandalous research used against them and urges Speaker Jinkins to NOT kill Americans of Chinese Descent History Month.

BELLEVUE, WA, UNITED STATES, April 4, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Last year, the Washington House Democrats killed Americans of Chinese Descent History Month. This year, after almost two months of waiting, SB 5000, the bill to designate January as Americans of Chinese Descent History Month, finally passed the House State Government and Tribal Relations Committee on the cutoff day. The bill quickly passed the Senate on a 48-0 vote, but was in a holding pattern in the House committee. [A recent The Spokesman-Review article](#) highlighted the bill's four-year struggle to pass through the Washington legislature and its battle in the House committee this year. The article also questioned whether the bill would suffer the same fate as last year and fail to pass in the House.

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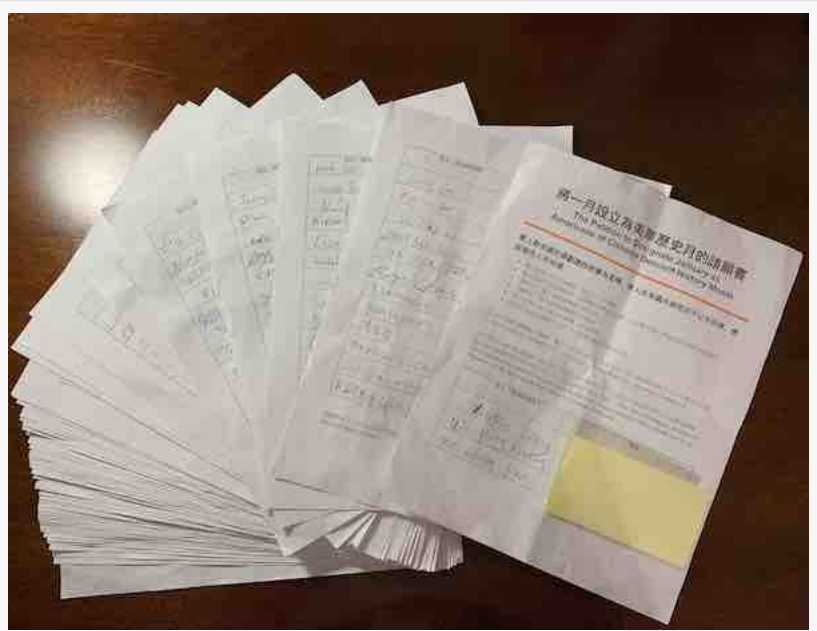
*Veronica Trapani-Huebner,
OSPI*

In light of this article, the community that has been advocating for the bill for four years has decided to speak out. "What we have been seeing is appalling. There has been scandalous research and strong-armed political manipulation to alter the bill's trajectory and limit its influence to Washington state only. After all the discrimination our community has endured in this state and country, we do not deserve this kind of mistreatment", said Linda Yang, Director of Washington Asians For Equality, with frustration.

After SB 5000 passed the Senate on February 1, Rep. Santos introduced her own bill, called Chinese American Month, on February 6. It took SB 5000 a month and a half to finally receive a public hearing on March 21. By that time, Rep. Santos' bill had missed the House bill of origin cutoff and was considered dead for this session. However, Committee Chair Bill Ramos held a "courtesy" public hearing on Santos' bill on the same day, which was out of the ordinary. During her testimony for Santos' bill, UW Teaching Professor Connie So claimed that she was commissioned by OSPI to "assess the appropriate month to honor Chinese Americans". She

argued that the term "Americans of Chinese Descent" should not be used to refer to all "Chinese Americans" because early immigrants, such as the Chinese railroad workers in the 19th century, were prohibited from naturalization. According to So, "The Chinese American experience is not the Chinese experience and is not an American experience". She argued that the name "Chinese American Month" was supported by her research, which turned out to be [a problematic survey](#) of only 18 people in her close circle.

Despite So's claim, OSPI denies any association or involvement with her: "OSPI has no record of a contract with Professor Connie So." and "OSPI did not contract Dr. So to produce any survey about finding the appropriate month for Americans of Chinese Descent History Month. Therefore we have no knowledge of the creation of the survey, funding, or payment breakdowns." WA Asians For Equality is investigating who actually funded So's research. According to Public Records Act (PRA) records, Santos' office initially contacted So on July 11, 2022, regarding "Chinese American history month".



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After the public hearing, there was eight-day pressure on Senator Keith Wagoner, the prime sponsor of SB 5000, and the bill's community supporters to accept striking out SB 5000's original bill language and replacing it with that of Rep. Santos' bill. Professor So's research was used as the excuse for such an amendment. However, the community wanted the committee to pass SB 5000 without amendment. Many people testified at the public hearing, including Yongsheng Sun, a sociologist and professor of Asian American Studies. In order for the bill to move forward, Senator Wagoner agreed to some changes. The community and Senator Wagoner rejected the change that would replace the name "Americans of Chinese Descent History Month" with "Chinese American History Month".

WA Asians For Equality obtained a copy of Prof. So's research report, "Recommendations for Chinese American Month," which Rep. Santos sent to Speaker Laurie Jinkins under high priority on January 31. Upon close examination, So's entire research is problematic, as it is full of sampling bias, an insufficient sample size, and survey bias. So and her four paid consultants designed a two-question survey that only 18 people in her close circle answered. So's consultants wrote pros and cons commentary that accompanied each survey question, which is a frowned-upon approach that introduces survey bias.

In an email sent to the entire House committee on March 28, Yang stated, "The term 'Americans of Chinese Descent' acknowledges that we are Americans first and foremost, which brings a sense of belonging and safety to our community members." Yang also pointed out that "More than 1,000 people living, working, and running businesses in Rep. Santos' own 37th legislative district have physically signed the petition to designate January as Americans of Chinese Descent History Month. Additionally, over 700 people have signed the online petition, which was drafted by a Central Valley High School Junior, in support of designating January as Americans of Chinese Descent History Month." The committee ended up passing the bill with an amendment that designates January as Chinese American/Americans of Chinese Descent History Month.

In an unexpected twist, Chair Ramos removed the language that urges commemoration of Americans of Chinese descent's history in the United States from the final amendment. The removal turned out to be intentional. According to a March 6 article, Rep. Santos told the reporter for NW Asian Weekly, "we're focusing on what was important to Washington state to commemorate and recognize the contributions of Chinese Americans in the state". Yang's group tried to request adding national history back in without success.

The community remains cautiously optimistic that the House will pass SB 5000 this year. "We have sent Speaker Jinkins the findings of our investigation into Professor So's research", said Yang. "We hope that as the leader of the House Democratic Caucus, she will take the commanding effort to establish January as Americans of Chinese Descent History Month this year."

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