

Washington Legislature Passed Americans of Chinese Descent History Month

The WA Legislature became the first in the nation to pass Americans of Chinese Descent History Month. The community is urging Governor Inslee to sign the bill.

BELLEVUE, WA, UNITED STATES, April 19, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Despite the repeated obstacles by some House Democrats, the bill to declare January as Americans of Chinese Descent History Month, has successfully passed the Washington Legislature. Both the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House signed the bill on April 18th. It is currently en route to Governor Inslee's desk for his signature. If Governor Inslee signs the bill, Washington would make history by becoming the first state in the nation to officially establish Americans of Chinese Descent History Month.



Tacoma built Reconciliation Park, an important step in bringing the city's past anti-Chinese history to light for the current generation.

Community advocates, led by WA Asians For Equality, have embarked on an unexpected four-year effort to ensure that the Americans of Chinese descent community finally receives the long overdue recognition it deserves. In 2020, then-Republican Senator Hans Zeiger introduced SB 6679, which aimed to establish Chinese American History Month. In 2021, Senator Keith Wagoner reintroduced the bill as SB 5264. In 2022, Senator Wagoner amended the bill in response to the increasing anti-Asian violence and attacks, changing the name to Americans of Chinese Descent History Month. The bill passed the Senate with a vote of 48-0 and then passed the House State Government and Tribal Relations Committee unanimously as well. Unfortunately, Reps. Cindy Ryu, My-Linh Thai, and Sharon Tomiko Santos blocked the bill from receiving a final floor vote through a [36-hour political maneuver](#), effectively killing the bill in 2022.

In December 2022, Senator Wagoner pre-filed the Americans of Chinese Descent History Month bill as SB 5000. Once again, the Senate swiftly passed the bill with a unanimous vote of 48-0 on February 1. However, the battle for SB 5000's survival began after that. The bill was referred to



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*Linda Yang, Director of WA
Asians For Equality*

the House State Government and Tribal Relations Committee on February 3. Soon after, Rep. Sharon Tomiko Santos introduced HB 1759, Chinese American Month. Rep. Santos, a legislator of Japanese descent, has represented the historical Chinatown International District (CID) as a state Representative since 1999 but has never sponsored a bill to establish a commemorative month for her local Americans of Chinese descent community until after Senator Wagoner's SB 5000 has passed the Senate and reached the House committee this year.

Rep. Santos' bill failed to advance out of the House State

Government and Tribal Relations Committee by the cutoff and is not eligible to advance in the legislature this session. In an unusual move, Committee Chair Bill Ramos scheduled a "courtesy" public hearing on HB 1759 on the same day as SB 5000 was heard. Soon after, pressure was put on Senator Wagoner and SB 5000's community advocates to accept the striking out of the entire SB 5000 language and replacing it with that of Rep. Santos' HB 1759.

WA Asians For Equality [pushed back on the claim](#) that immigrants without US citizenship are not "real Americans". In an email to the House committee, Linda Yang, Director of WA Asians For Equality said, "We reject the notion that those who were wronged and denied citizenship are not 'real Americans'. It is our responsibility to rectify historical injustices and acknowledge that our ancestors, who built railroads, dug canals, and worked in plantations, are Americans, identifiable as "Americans of Chinese Descent", and their stories are an integral part of American history."

In order to advance SB 5000 out of committee, Senator Wagoner and WA Asians For Equality agreed to a version of striking amendment that kept the name "Americans of Chinese Descent History Month".

SB 5000 passed out of the House committee unanimously as amended on March 29th. It then passed the House 94 to 2 on April 6. Despite the fact that she asked for it, Rep. Sharon Tomiko Santos voted against the amended SB 5000 during the final House floor vote. Also voted against the bill was Rep. Cindy Ryu.

Due to the amendment, SB 5000 was sent back to the Senate for concurrence. Both Senator Wagoner and WA Asians For Equality urged concurrence in the Senate. On April 13, the Senate concurred in the House amendment, and passed SB 5000 47 to 0, which marked SB 5000's final passage in the WA Legislature. The community is urging Governor Inslee to sign the bill into law. In 1943, Warren G. Magnuson, a US Representative from Washington, proposed the Magnuson Act, which successfully repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act, a notorious example of anti-Chinese legislation. Linda Yang, Director of WA Asians For Equality, stated "By signing SB 5000 into law, Governor Inslee would once again be leading the way for the rest of the country to follow in

bringing inclusion and justice to Americans of Chinese descent.”

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