

May 7, 2007: Loretta Recognizes Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez

Statement on Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

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Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This month is Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. This is a national celebration which continues to highlight and bring awareness to the many accomplishments and contributions of Asian Pacific Americans, who have made this country their home.

And I want to thank Mr. Honda who will be leading a special order in just a few minutes with respect to all of the accomplishments of the Asian Pacific Americans in the United States.

I am fortunate to represent one of the largest Asian Pacific populations in Orange County, California. It's full of Japanese, Korean, Hmong, Cambodians, Taiwanese, Laotian, Chinese, Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders and of course the largest Vietnamese population outside of Vietnam in the world resides in Orange County, California. And representing that community, I see firsthand the rich culture and the contributions that all of these communities bring to my hometown of Anaheim and/Orange County.

More than 30 years ago when the Vietnamese arrived, my district was full of orange groves, they took these orange groves, some of the commercial centers and they made these block long business districts that generate today multibillion dollars for our local economy.

And while being an integrated part of the American social fabric is important, these communities also bring with them a rich awareness of what is going on around the world. In particular what happens in their homeland. And I enjoy an open dialogue, for example, with the Vietnamese American community, especially about the continuing situation in Vietnam where human rights and religious freedoms remain a distant dream for the peoples of that country.

Now is the time to remember and to celebrate the successes and the contributions that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders bring to the diversity of America. Although it is important to recognize the achievements made by this community, Asian Pacific American Heritage Month must also provide a forum to focus on the problems that face these communities such as affordable housing, racial profiling, and language barriers and in particular the health care issues that are so important.

Health care issues that happen in this particular community like Hepatitis C and diabetes and some of the other larger

issues that affect us all. One of the issues facing the API community is the perception that all of the members of their community are thriving, if you're Asian or Pacific Islander, you must be going to the Berkeley's of the world, you must be doctors, thriving engineers, great business people. The reality is that there are large API populations who still have low access to real quality education and they face tremendous language barriers.

The API community has come a long way, sacrificing for our country and contributing to our growth and prosperity and I 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.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.