

May 7, 2007: Asian Pacific American Heritage

The Honorable Loretta Sanchez

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE

May 07, 2007

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 contributions of the Asian Pacific Americans who have made this country their home.

I want to thank Mr. Honda, who will be leading a special order in just a few minutes, with respect to all 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, Laotians, Chinese, Hawaiian Pacific Islanders and, of course, the largest Vietnamese population outside the world resides in Orange County, California. Representing that community I see firsthand the rich culture and the contributions and all of these communities bring to my hometown of Anaheim and Orange County.

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

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.

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.

In particular, the health care issues that are so important, so many health care issues that happened in this particular community like hepatitis C, diabetes, and some of the other larger issues which affect us all.

One of the problems facing the APAC community is the perception that all the members of their communities are thriving. If you are Asian or Pacific Islander, you must be going to the Berkeleys of the world, you must be doctors, you must be thriving, you must be engineers, you must be great business people. But the reality is that there are large populations, 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.