

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.