



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 112th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 157

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1, 2011

No. 77

Senate

The Senate was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, June 3, 2011, at 10:30 a.m.

House of Representatives

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WESTMORELAND).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

June 1, 2011.

I hereby appoint the Honorable LYNN A. WESTMORELAND to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2011, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT OF 1882

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. CHU).

Ms. CHU. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to announce an action to address an injustice carried out on this very floor that

Congress has never atoned for, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

A century ago, the Chinese came here in search of a better life; but they faced harsh conditions, particularly in the Halls of Congress. Congress passed numerous laws to restrict Chinese Americans, starting from the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, to stop the Chinese from immigrating, from becoming naturalized citizens, and from ever having the right to vote.

These were the only such laws to target a specific ethnic group. The Chinese were the only residents that had to carry papers on them at all times. They were often harassed and detained. If they couldn't produce the proper documents, authorities threw them into prison or out of the country, regardless of their citizenship status. Political cartoons and hateful banners like these were hung in towns and cities and printed in papers. At that time of this hateful law, the Chinese were called racial slurs, were spat upon in the streets, and even brutally murdered.

Only after China became an ally of the U.S. in World War II was this law repealed in 1943, 60 years after its passage. It has never been formally acknowledged by Congress as incompatible with America's founding principles.

That is why, as the first Chinese American woman elected to Congress, and whose grandfather was a victim of this law, I stand on the very floor where the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed and announce that I have introduced a resolution calling for a formal

acknowledgment and expression of regret for the Chinese exclusion laws.

When the exclusion laws were first introduced, there was a great deal of debate in Congress over their merits. The U.S. had just abolished slavery. The 14th and 15th Amendments had recently been ratified. Slavery had been defeated, and freedom seemed more certain. The national atmosphere led many in Congress to stand up against the discriminatory anti-Chinese laws. But over the years, those standing for justice almost all disappeared. By the time 1882 came around, Members of Congress were fighting over who deserved the most credit for getting the most discriminatory laws passed and standing against the "Mongolian horde."

Representative Albert Shelby Willis from Kentucky pushed relentlessly for the exclusion laws, lambasting the Chinese. Standing in the same spot where I am now, he said the Chinese were "an invading race" and called them "alien with sordid and un-republican habits." He declared the "U.S. was cursed with the evils of Chinese immigration" and that they disturbed the "peace and order of society."

But there were a brave few, a small minority who fought hard against prejudice and principles of freedom. One such man was Senator George Frisbie Hoar, whose statue now stands proudly in the Capitol. He stood up to all of the Chinese exclusion laws and voted against each. He said in 1904 when the laws were made permanent, "I cannot agree with the principle that this legislation or any legislation on the subject

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

H3809