
**State Government & Tribal Relations
Committee**

ESB 5264

Brief Description: Recognizing contributions of Americans of Chinese descent.

Sponsors: Senators Wagoner, Brown, Conway, Das, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Honeyford, Kuderer, Lovelett, Pedersen, Rivers, Schoesler, Stanford, Warnick and Wilson, C..

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Designates January of each year as Americans of Chinese Descent History Month.
- Encourages public schools to designate time for activities to commemorate the lives, history, achievements, and contributions of Americans of Chinese descent.

Hearing Date:

Staff: Desiree Omli (786-7105).

Background:

According to the University of Washington's Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest, the first wave of Chinese immigration to the United States occurred in 1849 after the discovery of gold in California. With the immigration to the west, Washington became home to many Chinese immigrants. By the 1870s Chinese miners in the Eastern Washington territory outnumbered non-Chinese miners nearly two to one. The Chinese population in Washington grew when construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad transcontinental line began in 1871, which ran from Wisconsin and Minnesota to Washington and Oregon, as many laborers who were recruited to work on the railroad were Chinese. According to the Washington State History

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Museum, after work on the railroad had finished, many Chinese workers moved into other industries such as salmon canning. With the onset of the economic depression in the 1880s finding work became more difficult and resentment against Chinese laborers grew. In the late 19th century, there were over 100 incidents of anti-Chinese violence in the Pacific Northwest. Expulsions, or forced removal, of Chinese people began taking place, the first of which occurred in Tacoma in 1885. Changes in policies impacting Chinese immigrants were seen in 1943 when an act was introduced in Congress by a Washington Senator and passed to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Act.

According to analysis by the Pew Research Center of 2019 American Community Survey data, Chinese Americans are the largest Asian origin group in the United States (U.S.), making up 24 percent of the Asian population, or 5.4 million people. Data from the 2010 U.S. Census showed that Washington was home to 94,198 people who identify as Chinese alone and 113,144 people who identify as Chinese in combination with one or more race or ethnicity.

There are several months out of the year that have been statutorily dedicated to the commemoration of specified groups. In 2000 Washington declared May of each year to be Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. In 2019 the state declared June of each year to be LGBTQ Pride Month, and October of each year to be Filipino American History Month.

Summary of Bill:

January of each year is declared Americans of Chinese Descent History Month and designated as a time to commemorate the contributions of Americans of Chinese descent to the history and heritage of Washington and the U.S.

Public schools are encouraged to designate time for activities to commemorate the lives, history, achievements, and contributions of Americans of Chinese descent.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 9, 2022.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.