

SENATE RESOLUTION
8627

By Senators Kline, Kohl-Welles, Hatfield, Hobbs, White, and Fraser

WHEREAS, Immigrants from China first came to America in the 1860s with a true American spirit of hope for a better life and access to opportunities for their children; and

WHEREAS, Chinese-Americans played a vital role in the history and development of Washington state and our country; and

WHEREAS, Chinese-Americans helped build Washington railroads, mining, and fishing industries, transportation networks, retail commerce, technology centers, educational and artistic institutions, and the government itself; and

WHEREAS, The number of people of Chinese descent in Washington grew from 234 in 1870 to more than 3,000 a decade later, and today there are more than 60,000 Chinese-Americans statewide; and

WHEREAS, The state and territorial legislatures across the country, including Washington, enacted discriminatory laws targeting Chinese immigrants in order to discourage further immigration from China and sought to severely limit the success of the Chinese laborers already here; and

WHEREAS, In 1853, the Washington Territorial Legislature passed a law that denied anyone of Chinese descent the right to vote and, in 1864, the Territorial Legislature passed a "police tax" on all Chinese immigrants over the age of eighteen; and

WHEREAS, In 1882, the United States Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which banned Chinese emigrants from entering America and called for the deportation of any who arrived after 1880; and

WHEREAS, Chinese immigrants were denied the opportunity to own land in Washington when the Washington Territorial Legislature passed the Alien Land Law in 1886, barring ownership of land by anyone "incapable of becoming citizens"; and

WHEREAS, Despite widespread discrimination, then Sheriff William Billings and a large force of citizens stood with courage to uphold order and protect Chinese citizens from a mob of nearly 100 men in Olympia in 1886; and

WHEREAS, In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Magnuson Act, sponsored by Washington Senator Warren Magnuson, to repeal the Chinese exclusion laws; and

WHEREAS, In the 1950s and 1960s, more Chinese entered fields traditionally closed to them, such as medicine, engineering, corporate business, and even politics; and

WHEREAS, Chinese-American Wing Luke (1925-1965) was elected to the Seattle City Council in 1962, becoming the first Chinese-American on the U.S. mainland to hold such a post; and

WHEREAS, In 1974, Chinese American Ruby Chow (1920-2008) became the first Asian-American elected to the King County Council, which was an extension of her role as an influential female leader in Seattle's Chinese community; and

WHEREAS, Today, Washingtonians of Chinese descent continue to occupy leading roles in politics, business, and academia, including Gary Locke, the first Chinese-American governor in the United States and currently the U.S. Secretary of Commerce;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Senate honor Chinese-Americans for their vast and irreplaceable contributions to Washington state, despite enduring decades of systematic, pervasive, and sustained discrimination.

I, Thomas Hoemann, Secretary of the Senate,
do hereby certify that this is a true and
correct copy of Senate Resolution 8627,
adopted by the Senate
February 24, 2011

THOMAS HOEMANN
Secretary of the Senate