

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

25-234

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

June 11, 2024

To celebrate the achievements, contributions, and diversity of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities and declare May 2024 as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in the District of Columbia.

WHEREAS, in 1978 Congress passed a joint resolution and President Jimmy Carter signed the resolution proclaiming the first 10 days of May as Asian-Pacific Heritage Week, and in 1990, Congress passed, and President George H. W. Bush signed a bill extending Asian American Heritage Week to the full month of May and the name evolved thereafter;

WHEREAS, May was selected to commemorate Asian American and Pacific Islanders because May 7, 1843, is the anniversary of the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to the United States, and May 10, 1869, marks the initiation of the First Transcontinental Railroad 40 project, which was completed using Chinese labor;

WHEREAS, Asia and the Pacific Islands includes over 30 countries and many cultures within those countries, including populations speaking over 3,000 different languages, and the District of Columbia is home to 30,000 people who descend from these 2 regions;

WHEREAS, the immense diversity inherent in the peoples categorized by the broad term of Asian American and Pacific Islander presents difficulty for these groups to come together and advocate for their diverse interests, leaving them all significantly underrepresented in government, their needs overlooked, and their populations underserved;

WHEREAS, the District of Columbia is home to embassies of Asian and Pacific Island countries, providing a tie between Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and the homeland of their ancestral cultures;

WHEREAS, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders continue to make invaluable contributions to all aspects of American society, including science, technology, business, education, arts, and public service, enriching the cultural tapestry of the District of Columbia and inspiring future generations to pursue their dreams;

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WHEREAS, in the District of Columbia, Chinatown was first established in the 1880s along Pennsylvania Avenue between 4 ½ Street and 7th Street NW, and as residency in Chinatown expanded, so did mutual aid organizations and associations to help the community flourish into a bustling economic quarter, including stores, restaurants, churches, temples and residences, and was later moved due to city redevelopment, to its current location along H Street NW;

WHEREAS, the annual Cherry Blossom festival in the District of Columbia is a springtime activity that commemorates the 1912 gift of Japanese cherry trees from the Mayor of Tokyo to the District of Columbia.;

WHEREAS, this May, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month with a Vice President of Asian descent in office, a first for the community and a ray of hope for further inclusion and appreciation of Asian American and Pacific Islanders going forward;

WHEREAS; Asian American and Pacific Islanders have made many outstanding cultural contributions to the District of Columbia through vibrant art, music, theater, film, language, and food;

WHEREAS; the District’s Asian American and Pacific Islander cultural centers, learning centers, and houses of worship serve residents and visitors alike and irreplaceably enrich the community;

WHEREAS; the many Asian American and Pacific Islander-owned businesses throughout the District of Columbia provide critical services and economic support for their communities;

WHEREAS, established in 1987, the Mayor’s Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs serves as a liaison to the District’s Asian American and Pacific Islanders and promotes and engages these communities to improve access to services and support the unique needs of the communities it serves.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Recognition Resolution of 2024”.

ENROLLED ORIGINAL

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia recognizes and honors the many contributions of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community, celebrates the rich cultural heritage of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, stands against racially motivated crimes and acts of hate targeted at this community, and designates May 2024 as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in the District of Columbia.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately.