

Senate Passes Filipino American History Month Legislation

Monday, July 13, 2009

Senator Yee authors resolution to recognize accomplishments of Filipino Americans

SACRAMENTO – The California State Senate has unanimously approved legislation to officially recognize the accomplishments of Filipino Americans. Senate Concurrent Resolution 48, authored by Senator Leland Yee (D-San Francisco/San Mateo), will declare October as Filipino American History Month.

“It is imperative that we continue efforts to promote the accomplishments of Filipino Americans,” said Yee, whose district includes one of the largest Filipino communities outside of the Philippines. “For far too long the role of Filipinos in our national history has been ignored. Through SCR 48, we help ensure that our children learn about this important history.”

The earliest documented proof of Filipino presence in the continental United States was the date of October 18, 1587, when the first “Luzones Indios” set foot in Morro Bay, California. The Filipino American National Historical Society recognizes the year of 1763 as the date of the first permanent Filipino settlement in the United States in St. Malo Parish, Louisiana. Today, California is home to over half of the Filipino population in the United States.

In 2007, Yee successfully passed Senate Joint Resolution 5, urging Congress to pass the Filipino Veterans Equity Act and to fully restore benefits stripped from Filipino WWII veterans by the 1946 Rescission Act.

Senator Yee has long advocated for the Filipino veterans. In 2004, then Assemblyman Yee led the effort to prevent Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger (R-Los Angeles) from eliminating the California Veterans Cash Benefit Program from the State budget. While the Governor proposed cutting the \$226 per month benefit, Yee successfully fought to make sure the Veterans Program was reauthorized in the budget approved by the Legislature. Yee has also authored legislation to add the role of Filipinos in WWII to the high school social studies curriculum.

This year, Yee is authoring SB 242 to protect language as a civil right. In addition to authoring several bills regarding language access, Yee has consistently fought for the Filipino community and helped recognize the accomplishments of Filipino Americans.

In March 2006, Yee honored the contributions of Larry Itliong at a ceremony in San Francisco. Itliong, along with Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, started the farm worker movement. Yee has led various efforts to assist the Philippines after devastating earthquakes, typhoons and mudslides.

In March 2005, Yee honored the late San Francisco community activist, volunteer, and environmentalist Tess Manalo-Ventresca as the 12th Assembly District Woman of the Year.

In 2001, when the airport screeners were laid off, Yee was an outspoken supporter of the workers and his office provided resume and interview tips, and participated in job fairs to help get the workers back on their feet.

SCA 48 will next be considered by the State Assembly.

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