



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 167

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2021

No. 190

House of Representatives

Extension of Remarks by Congressman Ed Case on Celebrating Filipino American History Month

Madame Speaker:

Each year our country recognizes October as Filipino American History Month, a time for all Americans to celebrate the incredible past, present and future of our fellow citizens whose heritage lies in the great country of the Philippines.

I am especially humbled to do so as the Representative of Hawaii's First Congressional District, where some 195,000 Filipino Americans live, more than any other of our 435 districts throughout the country. With Hawaii's Second Congressional District with the second largest Filipino Americans population, at about 175,000, our Fil-Am community in Hawaii stands at 370,000. In total, fully a quarter of all Hawaii residents are Filipino Americans, by far the largest percentage of any state or territory.

We observe Filipino American History Month in October because the first recorded arrival of Filipinos in the continental United States took place on October 18, 1587, when the "Luzones Indios" came ashore from the Manila-built galleon *Nuestra Señora de Esperanza* in Morro Bay, California. And in 1906, 115 years ago, the first fifteen sakada (contract laborers) arrived in Honolulu from the Philippines aboard the *SS Doric*, marking the first sustained immigration into our country and the humble beginnings of Fil-Ams in Hawaii. Today our Fil-Am community numbers some four million throughout our country, now the second largest of our Asian American groups.

Hawaii Fil-Ams in particular have been trailblazers in politics and government, the military, business and entrepreneurship, journalism, popular culture, music and the arts and more.

Peter Aduja became the first Fil-Am elected to public office in the United States when he was elected to the Hawaii Territorial House of Representatives in 1954.

Alfred Laureta became the first-ever federal judge of Filipino ancestry. He was born in 'Ewa, graduated from the University of Hawaii at Manōa, and was later nominated and confirmed by our own Senator Daniel Inouye in July 1978.

Benjamin Menor became the first Fil-Am higher court judge as associate justice of the Hawaii State Supreme Court.

Ben Cayetano was the first Filipino American governor of a state in our union.

Major General Antonio Taguba was the second Filipino American promoted to general officer rank in the United States Army.

Eddie Flores Jr. bought the first L&L Drive-Inn on Liliha Street in Honolulu in 1976, turning it into a national franchise.

Carolina Dizon Wong was the first Filipino American woman to obtain an M.D. degree.

Ines Cayaban was the first Filipino American graduate of the School of Public Health, Nursing and Social Work at the University of Hawaii. She received the prestigious Jefferson Award in 1986 for her service to Hawaii.

Francisco Flores Trinidad Jr. of Honolulu, better known by his pen name "Corky," was an award-winning editorial cartoonist of the

Honolulu Star-Bulletin who became the first Asian editorial cartoonist syndicated in the U.S.

A loyal veteran of the 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment that fought alongside our troops in the Philippines during World War II, Domingo Los Banos was Hawaii's first Filipino American school principal.

Roy Macaraeg became the first Fil-Am to become a general officer in the history of Hawaii's citizen soldier ranks.

In Hawai'i, we also regularly honor the over 250,000 Filipinos who answered the call to protect and defend America and the Philippines in the Pacific theater. In 2016, President Obama signed into law the Filipino Veterans of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act to bestow Congress's highest honor upon those veterans.

Each and all of these lives of achievement are but a small sampling of a broader community that has achieved so much and contributed so much to the rich fabric of our country. And the story of Filipino Americans is still in its early chapters.

Why, however, is it important that we take the time to recognize groups like Filipino Americans? To that, I respond that the story of Filipino Americans, and to an extent, the stories of all of our various ethnic groups, is the story of America. From very humble beginnings, they have risen through hard work, sacrifice, commitment to advancing the next generations and mutual support to achieve so much already. That well describes Filipino Americans overall, that embracing the responsibilities and opportunities of America while honoring and treasuring the rich heritage of their ancestral homeland.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen the ways that Asian Americans, including Filipino Americans, have been disproportionately affected by health and social situations. Filipino American nurses, despite making up just 4% of the nurse workforce, have accounted for about 25% of COVID-19 related deaths among all nurses. This is telling sign of the sacrifices they are making for our country.

Sadly, this community is not receiving the respect it deserves and facing senseless discrimination. As of August of this year, more

than 9,000 Anti-Asian incidents have been reported since the pandemic began, with many being Filipino American. All of us must work to stop this hatred.

And yet, as always, we have seen a resilient community persevere through all. In my own district, I have joined my friends for community clean up days at the Filipino Community Center to help protect and promote their heritage. With my colleagues in the House, I have reintroduced our Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act, which seeks to reunite Filipino soldiers with their children.

All of this is why I recently joined my friend and colleague Congresswoman Young Kim in introducing H.Res.724, a bipartisan resolution to express support for the designation of October as Filipino American History Month. We urge our colleagues' support to promote an ongoing appreciation of the contributions of Filipino Americans to our country and the rich diversity of our nation.

To Fil-Ams everywhere, Maraming Salamat Po and Dios Ti Agngina, congratulations. I truly look forward to partnering with you on your next proud chapters.

