



美洲同源總會

Chinese American Citizens Alliance

~ National ~

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National Lodge
ESTABLISHED 1895

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C.A.C.A. Observes 52nd Anniversary of the Immigration Act of 1965; Laid Foundations for the Modern U.S. Immigration System

San Francisco, October 3, 2017—Fifty-two years ago, the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 (also known as the Hart-Celler Act) was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on October 3, 1965, abolishing the “national origins” quota system. The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (C.A.C.A.), the nation’s oldest, continuous civil rights and social advocacy organization for Americans of Chinese ancestry, recognizes the historic significance in this shift in United States immigration policy that underscored a legacy of discriminatory legal obstructions imposed on newcomers.

In his speech at the signing ceremony on Liberty Island, New York, President Johnson declared that the bill “does repair a very deep and painful flaw in the fabric of American justice. It corrects a cruel and enduring wrong in the conduct of the American Nation.”

The Hart-Celler Act, named for congressional co-sponsors Emanuel Celler of New York and Philip Hart of Michigan, was a dramatic break with past immigration policy resulting in an immediate impact on immigration. The bill ended the national-origins quota system, a component of the Immigration Act of 1924 that determined how many immigrants could enter the United States, restricted by country of origin based on a percentage of the people already in the U.S. The policy was considered racist as White Northern Europeans were largely favored for immigration over arrivals from Asia and Africa.

According to the new law, immigrant visas were no longer based on “race, sex, nationality, place of birth, or place of residence.” Passage of the Immigration Act of 1965 finally placed Asian immigrant quotas on an equal footing with those of other nationalities, addressing the legacy of anti-Asian legislation that began with the Naturalization Act of 1790 allowing only “free white persons” to become U.S. citizens and continuing with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and further restrictions imposed in 1892, 1902 and 1904. Following repeal of Chinese exclusion laws in 1943, Chinese immigrants became eligible for naturalization but a quota still limited annual immigration to only 105 persons. The quota for Asian nations under Hart-Celler was raised to 20,000 per year, the same as for European nations.

Key to the Immigration Act of 1965 was the creation of preferences according to categories, such as familial relations to U.S. citizens or permanent residents, vocational and intellectual skills deemed useful to the United States, and refugees escaping violence or unrest from their countries. Although quotas under the previous system were abolished, caps were established on total immigration per country. While family reunification was an existing goal, the new system would permit entire families to establish new lives in the U.S.

“Central to the narrative of the Chinese experience in America is the story of immigration,” states Ted Gong, C.A.C.A. National Vice President of Civic and Public Affairs and the president of C.A.C.A.



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Washington, D.C. Chapter. “A fundamental tenet of the organization’s Purposes and Objectives is the preservation of Chinese American historical and cultural traditions through the education of our youth and community. The recognition and understanding of important benchmarks such as the Immigration Act of 1965 demonstrates the Chinese American Citizens Alliance aims to cultivate a more prominent voice in the national conversation on immigration and immigration reform.”

“Moreover,” Mr. Gong added, “it is important to remember that the 1965 Immigration Act did not pass in isolation. It was enacted because of the momentum of the Civil Rights Movement that saw the passage of the Civil Rights Act 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. There seems today to be a tendency among new immigrants to go it alone and not understand that the single act that most affected their ability to immigrate to the U.S. came from joining coalitions of people working together to gain civil rights and equal opportunities for all. Commemorating this anniversary is right for its significance to our community, and it is important to remind us of the coalition process by which it was gained.”

“As the only people in United States history who were restricted from immigration based solely on their race, Chinese Americans understand the wounds suffered through bigotry and injustice by Federal policies sanctioned by Chinese Exclusion laws beginning in 1882,” said C.A.C.A. National President Davace Chin. “Therefore, we must be activists against the resurgence of anti-immigrant feeling and attacks resulting from the ongoing public debate over undocumented immigrants, over border security walls and the uncertain fate of Dreamers.”

The occasion of the 52nd Anniversary of the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965 should stimulate renewed and informed political discussions over family reunification and merit- and skills-based immigration. The Chinese American Citizens Alliance will continue to advocate for bipartisan efforts for fair and reasonable immigration legislation by the nation’s elected representatives.

The Chinese American Citizens Alliance also will challenge racially-motivated initiatives disguised as immigration reform attempts. At the Alliance’s 54th National Convention held in Chicago last month, delegates passed Resolution #09, “Oppose Government Actions that Discriminate Against Bona Fide Immigrants and Nonimmigrants Based on Religion, Race, Ethnicity or National Origin.” The resolution called for the exercise of vigilance in order to “check governmental actions that seek to circumvent due process of law and deny the equal protection of the law by discrimination based on religion, race, ethnicity, or national origin.”

On September 6, C.A.C.A. issued a news release that declared its opposition to the Presidential Administration’s proposal to ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program, urging the United States Congress to take action to protect “Dreamers.”

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The Chinese American Citizens Alliance, established in 1895, is among the oldest civil rights organizations in the United States. Headquartered in San Francisco with chapter/lodges in Albuquerque (NM), Boston (MA), Chicago (IL), Greater San Gabriel Valley (CA), Greater New York (NY), Houston (TX), Las Vegas (NV), Los Angeles (CA), Mississippi, Oakland (CA), Peninsula (CA), Portland (OR), Phoenix (AZ), Salinas (CA), San Antonio (TX), San Francisco (CA), Seattle (WA) and Washington, D.C., the Alliance addresses issues regarding voter education, political participation, racial discrimination and hate crimes, and supports youth leadership training programs and equal employment opportunities for all Chinese Americans.