



S A C R A M E N T O J A C L
J a p a n e s e A m e r i c a n C i t i z e n s L e a g u e

Senator Bob Huff
State Capitol, Room, 4090
Sacramento, CA 95814
June 29, 2016

Statement of the JACL, Sacramento Chapter on Assembly Bill 1726

The State Senate Education Committee held a hearing last week where Senator Bob Huff (R-San Dimas) argued in opposition to Assembly Bill 1726 (Bonita). This bill would authorize the collection of demographic data for each major Asian and Pacific Islander group in the state.

Historically, demographic surveys treated Asian American, and Asian Pacific Islander communities as a homogeneous ethnic group when, in fact, we are made up of are numerous identities reflecting distinct countries of origin, immigration history, cultures, and socioeconomic issues. The collection of data is important to determine how each of these communities access healthcare and educational and social opportunities. Once the data is obtained, appropriate resources can effectively be directed at those who need them most.

Senator Huff's reasons for opposing AB 1726 grossly misstates the causes and effects of two pivotal episodes in Asian American history.

At the hearing, Senator Huff stated his belief that "data in itself isn't bad and yet it's never been good to the Asian community." He continued, "California was worried about too many of these people [Chinese] coming over. And they started counting them. And pretty soon it disaggregated the Chinese and you had the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882." He went on to say disparaging remarks about Japanese Americans. "Later on you started to discriminate against Japanese, why, because they were keeping track of them separately. So when we get into World War II, we have them now in internment camps. So just because (we) get data and it's not necessarily intended for bad now, it can be and history has said it has been used in evil ways in the past."

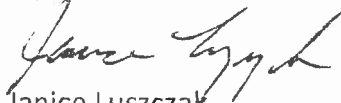
Senator Huff fails to note that at the time of the implementation of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Chinese immigrants and their families accounted for only .002 % of the nation's population, hardly enough to be a primary reason for a ban on all immigration from China. In fact, historians and sociologists primarily blame racism and ignorance as the cause of the cessation of immigration from China in 1882. Sadly, a "complete and total ban" on Muslims entering the United States has become a major part of the current electoral dialogue, repeating a dark part of American history that occurred 134 years ago.

Similarly, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians concluded that the internment of Japanese Americans was caused by “race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership.” The collection of demographic data was not a major factor in the decision to forcibly remove families from their homes and businesses. Senator Huff mentions World War II, but fails to connect the war with the internment of Japanese and Japanese Americans.

Senator Huff claimed that two of the worst acts of racism carried out by our government resulted from gathering data. He implies that the demographic data of how many Chinese and Japanese were in America justified their exclusion from citizenship or imprisonment in remote camps. But this perspective completely ignores the social, political, and economic factors that lead to those unjust events of American history.

AB 1726 is supported by more than 100 Asian American and Asian Pacific Islander advocacy organizations and social justice organizations who believe that the collection of demographic data will result in an increase in the quality of life for members of the Asian American and Asian Pacific Islander communities. The data collected would definitely be “good” for these communities, in spite of Senator Huff’s remarks.

Japanese American Citizens League, Sacramento Chapter



Janice Luszczak
President

cc: Senate President Pro Tempore, Kevin de Leon
Senator Richard Pan
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