

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Michael Honda (CA-15) sent a letter to the Postmaster General recommending that the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) issue more stamps celebrating Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI). While the USPS does produce some AAPI-themed stamps, they are not issued as frequently as other American heritage stamps. In fact, only 33 Asian American-themed stamps have ever been issued.

“Stamps are like history teachers, educating us on significant, and often omitted, social, cultural and political occurrences in America’s past,” said Rep Michael Honda, Chairman of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus. “Many minority communities, left out of the traditional history schoolbook, rightly receive recognition via the US postal stamp. Asian American and Pacific Islander communities are one such group and while there is a precedent for AAPI-themed stamps, few have gone beyond cultural comment only. Lunar New Year, for example, has comprised nearly half of all AAPI-themed stamps to date. Today we are calling for something more socio-politically substantial. Stamps that remember the Japanese-American internment camps, the Chinese laborers who built the Transcontinental Railroad, or the roughly 11 million AAPI veterans who served our country, among many other meritorious memorials, is a necessary next step in mainstreaming a minority group that remains marginalized from the postal service’s primary platform for remembering America’s history.” – US Representative Michael Honda, Chairman, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus.

There are approximately 16.6 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders currently living in the United States. In addition to being one of the most ethnically-diverse communities, it is also one of the fastest growing; by 2050, the AAPI population is expected to more than double. Just some of the AAPI individuals who could be proudly displayed on a U.S. stamp include:

- Patsy Takemoto Mink, the first woman of color elected to Congress and a strong advocate for educational equality for women;
- Judge Herbert Choy, the first Asian American to serve as a U.S. federal judge; and
- Ellison Onizuka, the first Japanese American space astronaut.

“I have the honor of representing an extremely diverse district, including many Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders,” said Rep. Loretta Sanchez (CA-47), Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam. “Unfortunately, the AAPI community’s significant contributions to literature, science, government, business, and the arts are not adequately reflected on U.S. stamps. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have enriched the lives of communities across the country, and I think the U.S. Postal Service should do more to honor their history.”

Reps. Honda and Sanchez, are joined by members of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, namely Eni Faleomavaega (AS), Madeleine Bordallo (GU), David Wu (OR-1), Gregorio Sablan (CNMI), Charles Djou (HI-1), Barbara Lee (CA-9), and Bob Filner (CA-51). The text of the letter is available below:

To the members of the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee:

We write to respectfully ask you to recommend to the Postmaster General that stamps celebrating Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) heritage and honoring AAPI contributions be issued each year. Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, which is the month of May each year, presents the perfect opportunity to issue commemorative stamps that reflect the diversity within our community and the contributions of AAPIs.

Since the Committee's inception, only 43 Asian American and Pacific Islander themed stamps have been issued. This does not do justice to the rich diversity of this community and the myriad contributions this community has made to our country. Currently, there are approximately 16.6 million AAPIs living in the United States, with 45 distinct ethnic groups within our populations, speaking various dialects within each group. It is certainly a diverse community, and one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the U.S. By 2050, the Asian Pacific Islander population is expected to more than double, and reach 40.6 million, or 9% of the population.

AAPIs have made countless contributions to our country throughout our nation's history that warrant recognition on the face of a stamp. These include:

- The Chinese laborers that helped build the Transcontinental Railroad;
- Remembering the Japanese American Internment during World War II;
- Honoring the 10.7 million AAPI veterans, including the contributions of Nisei veterans and Filipino veterans during World War II;
- Dalip Singh Saund, the first Asian American elected to Congress in 1956 to represent the 29th district of California, which included Riverside and Imperial counties;
- Patsy Takemoto Mink, the first woman of color elected to Congress in 1964, and champion of educational equality for women;
- Judge Herbert Choy, a Korean American judge who was the first AAPI to serve as a U.S. federal judge;
- Anna May Wong, Chinese American Hollywood trailblazer;
- Ellison Onizuka, the first Japanese American space astronaut. He lost his life when the Space Shuttle Challenger was destroyed;
- Remembering the 52 survivors of the ship that was stranded in the Pacific Ocean in 1988 and ultimately rescued by Filipino fisherman into the Island of Bolinao, and;
- The many Chinatowns, Japantowns, Little Saigons, and other thriving ethnic communities throughout our country in major regions including Orange County and San Jose California.

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, which is the month of May each year, presents the unique opportunity to recognize the contributions of AAPIs throughout our history through commemorative stamps. In June 1977, Reps. Frank Horton of New York and Norman Y. Mineta of California introduced a House resolution that called upon the president to proclaim the first ten days of May as Asian-Pacific Heritage Week. The following month, senators Daniel Inouye and Spark Matsunaga introduced a similar bill in the Senate. Both were passed. On October 5, 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed a Joint Resolution designating the annual celebration. Twelve years later, President George H.W. Bush signed an extension making the week-long celebration into a month-long celebration. In 1992, the official designation of May as Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month was signed into law. This particular month was chosen to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese to the United States and the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, as they each took place in the month of May.

We ask that the rich diversity and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders be fairly represented and celebrated in the stamps issued by the United States Postal Service. If you have any questions about our request, please do not hesitate to contact Gladys Barcena in Congresswoman Loretta's Sanchez office at (202) 225-2965 or [gladys.barcena@mail.house.gov](mailto:gladys.barcena@mail.house.gov), or Gloria Chan in Congressman Michael Honda's office at (202) 225-2631 or [gloria.chan@mail.house.gov](mailto:gloria.chan@mail.house.gov).