

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5264

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
State Government & Elections, February 5, 2021

**Title:** An act relating to declaring January as Chinese American history month and encouraging public schools to commemorate the month.

**Brief Description:** Declaring January as Chinese American history month and encouraging public schools to commemorate the month.

**Sponsors:** Senators Wagoner, Brown, Conway, Das, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Honeyford, Kuderer, Lovelett, Pedersen, Rivers, Schoesler, Stanford, Warnick and Wilson, C..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** State Government & Elections: 1/29/21, 2/05/21 [DP].

<p><b>Brief Summary of Bill</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Declares January of each year as Chinese American history month.</li></ul>
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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Kuderer, Vice Chair; Wilson, J., Ranking Member; Hasegawa and Hawkins.

**Staff:** Melissa Van Gorkom (786-7491)

**Background:** In 2000, Washington declared May of each year to be Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. According to the 2010 census, the Asian population grew faster than any other race group in the United States between 2000 and 2010. As of the 2010 census, there are about 4 million people of Chinese decent alone or in combination in the United States, a growth of 40 percent since the 2000 census. Washington is home to the seventh-largest Chinese American population in the United States. The 2010 census

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documented 94,198 people of Chinese descent alone living in Washington.

In 2019, Washington declared October of each year Filipino American History Month.

**Summary of Bill:** The state declares that January of each year is Chinese American history month.

Public schools are encouraged to designate time for appropriate activities in commemoration of Chinese American history month and the lives, history, achievements, and contributions of Chinese Americans.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Chinese laborer's built the transcontinental railroad which brought opportunity and prosperity to the region but then were expelled from the state and country through the Chinese Exclusion Act. The Chinese exclusion act of 1882 is not widely known in our history but specifically targeted Chinese Americans by trying to limit their population in the United States. The Chinese Exclusion Act lasted over 60 years and was only rescinded in 1942 when China was a major United States ally during World War II. Unfortunately only a few years later the borders were sealed again until 1979 when the government embraced the free market economy again. The contributions by those railroad workers and Chinese Americans have been largely ignored by the history and this bill would provide a conduit for information and learning about Chinese Americans who played a vital role to this state. Chinese people have been migrating to the United States for over a half century and high tech companies have attracted more Chinese people to help contribute to the economy. Chinese today are facing backlash and education has an important role in changing that by sharing our culture with the community to help people in Washington understand Chinese culture and history and avoid bias and discrimination. This bill would help expand the teaching of Chinese American history in public schools, but it should also include all educational institutions, public entities and private organizations.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Keith Wagoner, Prime Sponsor; Linda Yang; Kan Qiu; Terry Mao; Aaron Sun; Anthony Cheng; Emily Shi.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** PRO: April Li; Nathan Qiu.