

**Introduced by Senators Beall, Lieu, and Liu**

May 15, 2014

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Senate Resolution No. 46—Relative to Hong Yen Chang.

1 WHEREAS, Hong Yen Chang, reportedly the first Chinese  
2 immigrant to earn a law degree in the United States and the first  
3 to be licensed to practice law in any state, was denied entry to the  
4 State Bar of California because of discriminatory state and federal  
5 laws; and

6 WHEREAS, In 1872, 13-year-old Hong Yen Chang arrived in  
7 the United States as part of the Chinese Educational Mission, a  
8 program designed to teach Chinese youth about Western culture;  
9 and

10 WHEREAS, Mr. Chang attended Hartford Public High School  
11 in Connecticut and then the exclusive Phillips Academy in  
12 Andover, Massachusetts, and after graduating in 1879, Mr. Chang  
13 attended Yale College (now Yale University); and

14 WHEREAS, When the Chinese government canceled the  
15 Chinese Educational Mission in 1881, Mr. Chang was forced to  
16 suspend his studies at Yale and return to China but nevertheless,  
17 Mr. Chang returned to the United States, enrolled in Columbia  
18 Law School where he graduated in 1886, and reportedly became  
19 the first Chinese lawyer educated in the United States; and

20 WHEREAS, After graduating from Columbia Law School, Mr.  
21 Chang applied for admission to the New York State Bar  
22 Association where Mr. Chang received high marks from the bar  
23 examiners; and

24 WHEREAS, The New York Supreme Court rejected his  
25 application on the ground that he was not a citizen. Undeterred,  
26 Mr. Chang reapplied for admission and was successful; and

1 WHEREAS, In 1887, the New York Court of Common Pleas  
2 issued him a naturalization certificate, and the state legislature  
3 enacted a law permitting him to reapply to the bar and upon his  
4 admission, Mr. Chang became the only regularly admitted Chinese  
5 lawyer in the United States; and

6 WHEREAS, After his admittance to the New York State Bar  
7 Association, Mr. Chang applied to the State Bar of California but  
8 the California Supreme Court denied his admission in the  
9 unanimous published decision *In re Hong Yen Chang*, 84 Cal. 163  
10 (1890); and

11 WHEREAS, The California Supreme Court held that Mr.  
12 Chang's naturalization certificate was void and that, as a  
13 noncitizen, he was ineligible for bar membership, despite Mr.  
14 Chang otherwise satisfying the requirements for bar admission;  
15 and

16 WHEREAS, Because federal law barred Chinese immigrants  
17 from naturalizing, Mr. Chang could not become a citizen and was  
18 thus ineligible to practice law in California; and

19 WHEREAS, Mr. Chang's case came in an era of widespread  
20 discrimination against people of Chinese ancestry and at a time  
21 when the Chinese Exclusion Act, enacted by Congress in 1882,  
22 banned Chinese immigration for 10 years and made Chinese  
23 residents ineligible to naturalize; and

24 WHEREAS, Congress extended the Chinese Exclusion Act on  
25 a number of occasions and the California Constitution in 1879  
26 dedicated an entire article to restricting the rights of Chinese  
27 residents; and

28 WHEREAS, Notwithstanding the discrimination he faced, Mr.  
29 Chang went on to lead a distinguished career in banking and  
30 diplomacy; now, therefore, be it

31 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California*, That the Senate  
32 calls for Mr. Hong Yen Chang's admittance to the State Bar of  
33 California posthumously to remedy the injustice he suffered and  
34 to send a powerful message about the legal profession's  
35 commitment to justice, diversity, and inclusion; and be it further

36 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of  
37 this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

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