Year of the Dog resonates in California

2018-02-10

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco |   
 China Daily USA |  
 Updated: 2018-02-10 00:06

A California state senator said that the coming Chinese New Year was special to him because he was born in the Year of the Dog.  
"In San Francisco, Los Angeles and other parts in the state, so many people are celebrating the Lunar New Year. It makes sense for the state to honor it and recognize it," said state Senator Scott Wiener.  
Chinese Consul General Luo Linquan wished the community an auspicious New Year. He said the Year of Dog was special to him too, as he was married in the Year of the Dog.  
"Chinese New Year is the most important day for all Chinese. It has been celebrated in San Francisco since the first Chinese immigrants came here in the mid-19th century," Luo said.  
The officials joined community members on Thursday to welcome the Lunar New Year at the state building.  
The celebration, which started with lion dancing and a Chinese calligraphy performance, attracted hundreds of local residents. Such celebrations have been hosted in the state building for 14 years.  
"San Francisco is among the top 10 immigrant-friendly cities in the US," Luo said. "Today's celebration is a good example."  
But the state unfortunately has a history of discrimination against Chinese, said Wiener.  
"We should move in the other direction and celebrate this amazing culture. Lunar New Year is so important; it should be a day of special significance in California," he said.  
Wiener is the lead author of a recently proposed Senate bill that designates the Lunar New Year a day of special significance in California and also encourages education about its traditions and cultural significance.  
"It's a wonderful celebration," said California Assembly member Phil Ting. "In fact, I'm very proud that my daughters go to the San Francisco Unified Schools that celebrate Chinese New Year and take the holiday off."  
He said the holiday has become much more mainstream throughout the US, especially as the Chinese-American population grows.

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