US congresswoman recalls Lunar New Year holiday push

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US Congresswoman Grace Meng remembered that when she was a girl, she and her siblings were often exhausted as they sat in classes the day after the large family celebration on Chinese Lunar New Year Eve.  
She said her parents would not let them skip school, but even if they attended, they were exhausted, because it's a tradition that Chinese families usually stay up until midnight on Lunar New Year's Eve.  
But since 2016, New York City schools have been closed for Lunar New Year's – an important holiday celebrated by Asian-American communities across the city.  
And this year, right before the Lunar New Year, Meng introduced a resolution that urged the House of Representatives to officially recognize the holiday.  
"For the Asian-American community, Lunar New Year is the most important holiday of the year, and it's also a time to celebrate the important heritage of Asian Americans," Meng said in a statement released on Feb 15.  
"As Lunar New Year continues to grow in popularity, it is important that more be done to acknowledge this annual observance, and official recognition by the House would go a long way towards further appreciating the holiday. I look forward to this resolution passing soon, and I wish a happy, healthy, prosperous and peaceful New Year to all who celebrate the Year of the Dog.  
"As a kid growing up in New York, my Jewish friend always got off for their New Year, so I always wondered why we didn't have off during Chinese Lunar New Year as well," Meng said in an interview with China Daily.  
"I first introduced this legislation when I was a member of the New York state Legislature in 2009," Meng said. "I was able to work with the New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio to make it happen at that time."  
"Our resolution hopes it can happen in other school districts across the country where there are large Asian populations," Meng said.  
"When I first started (to introduce the legislation), people thought I was crazy, because a lot of people told me to work on something more likely to happen and more practical, but I thought that symbolically it was very important to work on it," Meng said.  
"Especially in cities where there are such large populations of Chinese Americans and other Asian Americans, there were schools that reported that there were more students absent than students present in schools back then during the New Year," Meng added.  
According to data released by the US Census Bureau, New York's Asian population has grown by 15 percent between 2010 and 2015, and now represents 13.5 percent of New York City's population.  
And New York City has the largest Chinese population of any city outside of Asia, according to the Department of City Planning website.  
Meng's resolution has been referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, where it is awaiting further action.  
The first Asian-American member of Congress from New York state, Meng is serving her third term in the House of Representatives. She represents the 6th Congressional District of New York, which is in the New York City borough of Queens.

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