Legislators want WWII vets honored

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By Lia Zhu In San Francisco |   
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California Assembly members Evan Low and David Chiu joined community leaders and veterans on Wednesday to call on Congress to recognize the service of Chinese-American World War II veterans.  
Both lawmakers released a letter to Congress to urge the speedy passage of HR 2358 and Senate Bill 1050, which, introduced last May, would award Chinese-American World War II veterans a Group Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honor.  
Senate Bill 1050 passed the US Senate on Sept 12 and now awaits a vote in the House of Representatives. HR 2358 still awaits a vote in the House. The two bills must be passed before the end of the Congressional session in December.  
"As a proud grandson of a Chinese-American World War II veteran , I urge Congress to fully support HR 2358 and S 1050," Low told a news conference held Wednesday at American Legion Cathay Post No. 384 in San Francisco.  
"At a time when the United States government discriminated against Chinese Americans, many chose to serve our country during World War II. Passing these bills will show our veterans that we honor their service and sacrifice," he said.  
It is a critical time for Congress to recognize Chinese-American veterans' service and sacrifice as more and more of them pass away each year, said Chiu.  
Chinese Americans have served the US in every war since the Civil War while facing hostility and a number of discriminatory federal and state laws, including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Before the start of World War II, Chinese Americans volunteered for covert missions and operations in China.  
More than 13,000 Chinese Americans served in all branches of the Army infantry and Army Air Force by the end of World War II, despite the fact that the total population of Chinese Americans living in the United States was under 120,000.  
Approximately 40 percent of Chinese-American soldiers were not native-born citizens of the US and were unable to naturalize until after 1943, when the Chinese Exclusion Act was finally repealed.  
"Despite barriers to citizenship and many other challenges, Chinese Americans served admirably, receiving numerous recognitions for their valor, including a Congressional medal of honor," says the letter by Low and Chiu.  
"The United States has a tradition of recognizing marginalized groups who fought in World War II with a Congressional Gold Medal. Recognized groups include Native Americans, African Americans, Japanese Americans, Filipino Americans, and women who served our country.  
"We ask that Congress continues this important tradition and recognize the struggles, service, and patriotism of Chinese Americans who fought to liberate Europe, the Mediterranean, Africa, the Middle East, and the Pacific from Fascism," reads the letter.  
The letter has garnered the signatures of 22 California legislators.  
"Chinese Americans have always been modest of their achievements, even in the face of great discrimination," said Michael Young, a veteran and president of APAPA San Francisco Bay Chapter. "I'm elated that we are finally speaking up about the great contributions of Chinese-American veterans in World War II. This recognition is long, long overdue."  
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