

REMARKS ON FLOOR AMENDMENT TO H.R. 3494

July 16, 2019

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Not far from here on the slopes of Capitol Hill is a small, serene and unassuming memorial. On its walls are names not now known to too many Americans but indelibly etched in a dark chapter of our national story. Tule Lake, Poston, Manzanar, the internment camps where 120,000 Japanese, most of them American citizens, were locked up in the hysteria of the Second World War just because they were Japanese.

This amendment, proudly cosponsored by many of my colleagues in our Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, asks a question that must be asked. Are we repeating history or in danger of doing so?

In these recent years of justifiably heightened scrutiny on the intelligence activities of the People's Republic of China, a disproportionate number of Americans of Chinese descent have been investigated and prosecuted for espionage. Those convicted have received disproportionately high sentences and the too many exonerated have had their careers ruined nonetheless.

No doubt China seeks to recruit Chinese Americans to its goals, and no doubt our government should and must review specific cases of potential espionage by China on specific facts. But have we fallen into the same trap all over again of justifying investigations and other actions toward the end of national security by the means of general profiling and targeting based solely on ethnic identity?

The Committee of 100, a group of prominent Chinese Americans in diverse fields, reviewed the empirical evidence and concluded that “Asian Americans, whether immigrant or native born, may be facing unfair and increasing prejudice in this era of geopolitical competition.” It stated correctly:

“A definite line can be drawn between appropriate prosecution that is based on actual evidence and free of bias, and overreaching persecution that is triggered by unfounded suspicions and tainted by racial prejudice. All Americans, regardless of ethnicity, depend on that line.”

This resolution is a flashing red light to our intelligence community: stop, look and listen. Take some time to think it through, to be sure you’re staying on the right side of that line, and then report back to Congress that you have done so and have the procedures and mindset in place to assure that we won’t repeat history, with Chinese Americans or any other broad ethnic or interest group.

I urge adoption of my amendment. Thank you.