
support HB 3595

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Sun, Mar 16, 2025 at 2:59 PM

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Date: March 16, 2025 at 1:32:52 PM PDT
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Subject: support HB 3595

Advocating for Lunar New Year Recognition in Oregon

This year marks a critical milestone in the effort to establish Lunar New Year as an official state holiday in Oregon. While neighboring states like California and Washington have already taken this important step, Oregon has the opportunity to join them in recognizing the cultural significance of this celebration. The Coalition for Asian Pacific American Rights (CFAP), in partnership with State Representative Dr. Tran, is spearheading the introduction of legislation to make this a reality. The goal is to secure widespread support and ensure that Oregon's diverse communities feel seen, valued, and celebrated.

Why Legal Recognition of Lunar New Year Matters

Lunar New Year is a time-honored tradition that holds deep cultural and emotional significance for many communities in Oregon, particularly Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) residents. It is a time for family reunions, reflection, and celebration, marked by vibrant festivities, traditional foods, and rituals that symbolize prosperity and renewal.

Despite its importance, Lunar New Year remains unrecognized as an official holiday in Oregon, forcing many families to navigate work and school obligations while trying to celebrate. Establishing it as a state holiday would acknowledge the cultural heritage of hundreds of thousands of Oregonians, promote inclusivity, and generate significant economic and social benefits for the state.

The Cultural Significance of Lunar New Year

For over 150 years, Asian communities have been an integral part of Oregon's history and development. From the early Chinese immigrants who helped build the state's infrastructure to the thriving Vietnamese, Korean, and Filipino communities that contribute to Oregon's cultural and economic vitality today, the AAPI population has played a vital role in shaping the state.

Lunar New Year is a cornerstone of cultural identity for many of these communities. Recognizing it as a state holiday would honor their contributions, promote greater cultural understanding, and strengthen the bonds that unite Oregon's diverse population. It would also serve as a powerful reminder of the state's commitment to celebrating its rich cultural tapestry.

Economic Benefits of Lunar New Year Celebrations

Lunar New Year is not only a cultural celebration but also a significant economic driver. Festivities often include shopping for new clothes, preparing special meals, and purchasing gifts, all of which contribute to increased consumer spending. In Oregon, businesses—particularly those in the food, retail, and hospitality sectors—benefit from the surge in activity during the holiday period.

Official recognition of Lunar New Year would amplify these economic benefits by encouraging broader

participation in celebrations. It would also provide an opportunity to showcase Oregon's cultural diversity to visitors, potentially boosting tourism and further integrating the holiday into the state's vibrant economic landscape. By supporting local businesses and fostering community engagement, this recognition would create a win-win scenario for Oregon's economy and its residents.

Impact on Public Employees and Students

Currently, many Oregon families face challenges when trying to observe Lunar New Year. Students often must choose between attending school and participating in cultural traditions, while public employees and workers may need to use personal leave to celebrate with their families. This creates unnecessary barriers for those who wish to honor their heritage.

Official recognition of Lunar New Year as a state holiday would address these challenges by:

- Allowing students to celebrate without academic penalties, ensuring they can fully participate in cultural traditions and family gatherings.
- Supporting public employees, educators, and workers by providing them with the time to observe the holiday with their loved ones.
- Aligning Oregon's holiday calendar with the cultural diversity of its residents, fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment for all.

Conclusion: A Step Toward Inclusivity and Equity

Recognizing Lunar New Year as a state holiday in Oregon is a meaningful step toward honoring the traditions of the state's diverse communities. It would promote cultural appreciation, contribute to economic growth, and ensure that families can celebrate without barriers.

We strongly support HB 3595 and urge its passage to create a more inclusive and equitable society for all Oregonians. By embracing Lunar New Year as an official holiday, Oregon has the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to diversity, celebrate its rich cultural heritage, and build a brighter future for generations to come. Let us take this step together to ensure that Lunar New Year is recognized, celebrated, and cherished across the state.

Best

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