

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



SENATOR ELVI GRAY JACKSON
SENATE DISTRICT G

Sponsor Statement

Senate Bill 131

Asian American/Pacific Islanders Program

Senate Bill 131 requires schools in the State of Alaska to educate students on the history and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

This curriculum will be established and provided by each school district for students in kindergarten through grade 12. The contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are aplenty and need to be taught in schools. In addition to teaching about the contributions of the two communities, schools will also educate students on the cultural and economic diversity of the communities. May is Asian Pacific American History Month and was established as a way to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese individuals to the U.S. in 1843. There are numerous sister cities between Japan and Alaska. Anchorage has been a sister city to Incheon since 1976. Closest one to Juneau is Nemuro, Japan. It is an ocean facing fishing port. As early as 1788, there were Filipino seamen contacting Alaskan Natives. As Alaska developed our natural resource industries, there was a steady stream of Filipino immigrant workers. May is also the anniversary of the Transcontinental railroad completion where most of the workers were Chinese Immigrants.

Although we are recognizing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders as a group, they are very different and have their individual traditions, culture, and ways of life. It is important to teach our youth the differences within these cultures and their significance to our country.

Similar bills to this one have been adopted in 6 states: Illinois, New Jersey, Florida, Rhode Island, Wisconsin and Connecticut. Several other states are currently working on passing similar legislation as well.