



Feinstein, Woolsey Introduce Bills To Save Historic Angel Island Site

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Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and U.S. Representative Lynn Woolsey (D-Petaluma) today introduced identical legislation to preserve and restore the Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco Bay. Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Daniel Akaka (D-HI) are cosponsors of the legislation in the Senate, and Democratic House Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) and House Resources Committee member Representative Mark Souder (R-IN) are supporting the bill in the House.

“Known as the Ellis Island of the West, the Angel Island Immigration Station is a valuable part of our nation’s history that tells the story of many people who came to America to make a better life for their families,” Senator Feinstein said. **“It is important that we preserve Angel Island and its rich history for future generations.”**

“The Angel Island Immigration Station contributes greatly to understanding our nation’s rich and complex immigration history,” said Rep. Lynn Woolsey. **“In particular, the Station is a significant historical landmark because it teaches visitors about the Chinese-American experience.”**

“Angel Island is an American treasure,” Senator Boxer said. **“From 1910 to 1940, Asian immigrants pursuing the American Dream came through the California immigration station on the island. We must remember and honor their journey, and we must recognize the difficulties so many faced in the pursuit of the freedom we enjoy.”**

“I am pleased to join my colleague from California in support of this bill that seeks to enable the restoration of the Angel Island Immigration Station,” Senator Akaka said. **“It is a special place, of national significance. It speaks volumes to me, as a Chinese American, about the difficulties that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders new to our shores have experienced in seeking opportunity in America. The poems etched on the walls are poignant evidence of peoples’ desires to be Americans and to be in America. Angel Island deserves to be restored and preserved.”**

“Angel Island speaks to us across the years, telling the stories of immigrants from around the world, especially the stories of Chinese-Americans,” Minority Leader Pelosi said. **“We are a nation of immigrants, and we must treasure that history while remembering that every individual must be treated with dignity and respect. I commend Congresswoman Woolsey and Senators Feinstein and Boxer for introducing this legislation to preserve the station and its lessons for future generations.”**

“Congress must help restore this ‘western Ellis Island’ because it was the doorway to America for so many immigrants,” said Representative Souder. **“Angel Island is particularly meaningful to Asian-Americans, for whom we have minimal historic sites given their importance to American culture. Currently, many of its structures are crumbling and leaking, and they will only fall further into decay. Preservation of such an important portal is fundamental to remembrance of our history and whence we came. Once we lose historic buildings they are gone forever.”**

Under Woolsey’s leadership, the bill passed the U.S. House of Representative in the 108th Congress, but was not taken up in the U.S. Senate before the 108th adjourned. Said Woolsey, **“starting off the 109th Congress with identical bills in the U.S. House and Senate will provide momentum for final passage of the ‘Angel Island Immigration Station Preservation and Restoration Act’ in both chambers of Congress. This legislation is vital to complete the Angel Island Restoration project by making the site eligible to receive federal funds while preserving Angel Island’s status as a California State Park.”**

The bill will authorize \$15 million of federal funds for the Angel Island Immigration Station preservation project and, new in the 109th Congress version of the bill, is a 50/50 match requirement of state and private funding for the project.

Current estimates to restore and preserve the Angel Island Immigration Station total over \$30 million. To date, the Immigration Station has secured \$16 million for the preservation efforts from private foundations, federal and state government sources. However, because the Immigration Station is located in a California State Park, without this legislation it is unable to receive additional federal dollars beyond the grants for which it has already qualified.

The Angel Island Immigration Station was the entry point for over 1 million immigrants from 1910-1940, including approximately 175,000 Chinese immigrants who were forced to stay at Angel Island before entry to San Francisco -- or return to China. According to the Angel Island Immigration Foundation, “the average detention was two to three weeks, but many stayed for several months and a few were forced to remain on the island for nearly two years.” During their detention many of the Chinese immigrants carved poetry on the walls of the station. Today, about 140 of the poems remain on the walls of the detention barracks, as a testament to their experience.

In 1997, the Angel Island Immigration Station was designated as a National Historic Landmark and in 2000, it was placed on “America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places” list, becoming an official project of Save America’s Treasures, a joint program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the White House Millennium Council. More than 50,000 people, including 3,000 school children, make the trip out to the site each year to learn about its rich history.

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