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**WINNING THE FUTURE:  
PRESIDENT OBAMA'S  
AGENDA AND THE  
ASIAN AMERICAN AND  
PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITY**

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MAY 2011





## **Winning the Future: President Obama's Agenda and the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community**

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In his State of the Union address, the President laid out his vision for America to win the future. The President made it clear that the most important contest we face today is not between Democrats and Republicans, but rather America's contest with competitors across the globe for the jobs and industries of our time. To win that contest and secure prosperity for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) and all Americans, we have to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world and the AAPI community plays an integral part of that plan to win the future.

We can win the future through innovation and job creation in tomorrow's industries by doing what America does best – investing in the creativity and imagination of the American people. We must out-educate our global competitors to meet the demand over the next 5 years when nearly 90 percent of new jobs will require more than a high school degree. And we must rebuild America, attracting new businesses to our shores by having the fastest and most reliable ways to move people, goods, and information – from roads and airports, to high-speed rail and high-speed Internet.

In the last two years since taking office, the President and his Administration have worked to lay the groundwork for America to win the future, stopping the freefall of the economy and investing in our long-term growth and prosperity. The areas that have been a top priority to this Administration are of vital importance to the AAPI community, such as job creation, access to quality health care, improvements to our education system, comprehensive immigration reform, and the civil rights of all Americans.

**Strengthening Our Economy:** Job and economic security are central to AAPI families. President Obama has focused on taking strong and necessary steps on behalf of AAPIs and all Americans to pull our economy back from the brink of a second great depression, jumpstart job creation and strengthen the middle class. The President is also directing investment toward one of the most promising job-creating, life-changing, world-saving technologies of our time: clean energy. He's committed to out-building the rest of the world, by investing in the infrastructure America needs to attract businesses, and jobs, to our shores.

**Revitalizing Education:** In order to win the future, we must out-educate our competitors. Restoring the United States to its role as the global leader in education will require that we invest in strengthening and expanding educational opportunities for AAPI students – from cradle to career. The President is calling for an expansion of the Race to the Top program to further achieve meaningful reforms in public education. He's committed to recruiting and training 100,000 new teachers in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math; upgrading and revitalizing America's community colleges; expanding college affordability by making permanent the President's American Opportunity Tax Credit; and reforming immigration laws so that we stop expelling talented, responsible graduates who want to contribute to a country where they grew up and know as home.

**Ensuring Access to Affordable Health Care:** The Obama Administration has made great strides in giving AAPIs and all Americans greater freedom and control over their health care choices. Some AAPI groups that have the highest rates of un-insurance in the nation stand to benefit the most from the passage of the Affordable Care Act and the Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009

**Fixing Our Broken Immigration System:** In December of 2010, the President expressed his deep disappointment that Congress failed to pass the DREAM Act, and in his State of the Union Address in January 2011, he reiterated his commitment to immigration reform. Recognizing that this will require action in Congress, the President will continue to press his partners in Congress to get this critical reform enacted at the earliest possible opportunity.

**Protecting Our Civil Rights:** Fighting discrimination and enforcing equal protection under the law have been priorities for the Administration. The Department of Justice has strengthened its ability to prosecute hate crimes, harassment of students, workplace and public accommodation discrimination and other civil rights cases. It also revived its National Origin Working Group that prioritizes outreach to national origin communities.

**Ensuring Affordable and Secure Homeownership:** The Administration has worked to address the foreclosure crisis and revitalize communities hardest hit by foreclosures.

**Protecting Our Air, Water and Cleaning Up Our Communities:** There are too many places in America today where the environmental, health, and economic burdens of pollution fall disproportionately on poor and minority communities. This Administration has proposed far reaching changes that will positively impact the health of AAPIs and their communities.

**Securing a Clean, Renewable Energy Future:** The transition to clean and renewable energy has the potential to grow our economy and create millions of jobs. The AAPI community stands to benefit from the growth of this sector and be a critical part of our nation’s clean energy future.

**Honoring and Serving our Veterans, Service Members, and Military Families:** AAPIs have served in almost every war since the founding of our country. Today, nearly 5 percent of soldiers serving in the U.S. Armed Forces are of AAPI origin – that is over 124,000 AAPIs currently serving in our armed forces. More than 300,000 AAPI veterans have bravely served our nation. The Administration is committed to the care of all of its service members, veterans, and their families, and is making important strides in delivering vital services in a culturally sensitive way.

**Increasing Access and Participation of Underserved AAPIs:** On October 14, 2009 President Obama signed an executive order that restores the White House Initiative and President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to address issues concerning the AAPI community. In March 2011, the White House Initiative presented a report to the President of 23 Federal agency plans that lay out how each agency will increase access and participation within their programs of AAPI communities that remain underserved.

## Strengthening Our Economy: Economic Growth and the AAPI Community

President Obama has focused on taking strong and necessary steps on behalf of AAPIs and all Americans to pull our economy back from the brink of a second great depression, jumpstart job creation and strengthen the middle class. The President is also directing investment toward one of the most promising job-creating, life-changing, world-saving technologies of our time: clean energy. The President has crafted a framework that will enable Americans to out-build the rest of the world, by investing in the infrastructure needed to attract businesses, and jobs, to our shores.

**SPURRING ECONOMIC GROWTH WITH AAPI BUSINESSES:** With [1.5 million AAPI-owned businesses](#) in the United States generating more than \$507 billion dollars in sales and employing more than 2.8 million workers, success of AAPI-owned businesses is critical to the overall economy. Between 2002 and 2007, the number of U.S. businesses owned by Asian Americans increased 40.4 percent, increasing at more than twice the national rate, according to U.S. Census Bureau.

- Between 2002 and 2007, the number of U.S. businesses owned by Asian Americans increased 40.4 percent, increasing at more than twice the national rate, according to U.S. Census Bureau.
- Small businesses account for nearly [two out of three new jobs](#) created today. AAPI-owned businesses, like other minority-owned businesses, continue to grow and create jobs in difficult times, testifying to their important role in helping drive economic recovery and growth.
- At the same time, AAPI-owned businesses face challenges. The Obama Administration, through the Small Business Administration (SBA), Department of Commerce (DOC) and Department of the Treasury, has implemented a number of initiatives to support AAPI and other small, minority-owned businesses.

These initiatives include:

- **Increasing Access to Capital.** During the height of the economic downturn, while banks pulled back on traditional loans, the Recovery Act ensured government-backed guarantees on SBA loans at rates up to 90 percent and helped double the volume of SBA loans. The Recovery Act and the Small Business Jobs Act have put over 10,000 loans into the hands of Asian American-owned small businesses, equaling more than \$7 billion in lending support. More recently, in the first quarter of FY 2011, AAPI businesses had the highest number of small business loan applications compared to other categories of minority-owned businesses (12.8% of total business loan volume).
  - The 2010 [Small Business Jobs Act](#) created a \$30 billion small business lending fund, added new small business administration capital, contracting and counseling programs, and provided targeted tax incentives for small businesses.
  - [Startup America](#) is a national effort, spanning both public and private sectors, to increase the number of successful startups and invest in promising young entrepreneurs.
- **Providing Incentives for Small Businesses to Grow and Hire.** The President has signed into law [16 tax cuts](#) to help small businesses invest in their firms and create jobs through the Recovery Act and the Small Business Jobs Act; in addition, the [Affordable Care Act](#) provides a tax credit to small businesses so they can attract qualified employees and provide affordable health care.
- **Promoting Business Growth through Exports.** In 2010, the President set a goal of creating two million American jobs by [doubling exports over the next five years](#). To help minority-owned businesses globalize their business models, the [Minority Business Development Agency](#) has partnered with the [International Trade Administration](#) to provide export-related training to minority-owned companies.

- **Ensuring Minority-Owned Businesses Compete for Government Contracts.** As of September 2010, 32.6 percent of Federal agency Recovery Act contracting dollars, totaling \$10.14 billion, have gone into the hands of small businesses; 17.5 percent, totaling \$5.43 billion, supported minority-owned firms. AAPI small businesses have secured over \$1 billion in new government contracts.

**CREATING JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND PROTECTING AAPI WORKERS:** This Administration remains committed to improving the lives of AAPI workers and their families, and to ensuring that all communities, including AAPIs, have access to good jobs.

- In early 2009, the President signed the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act \(ARRA\)](#) to create jobs, spur economic growth and invest in communities. AAPI workers experience disproportionately longer periods of [unemployment](#), despite aggregate data showing that AAPIs possess some of the lowest unemployment rates among all racial groups. The Recovery Act is thus vital to the community and the country as a whole. A recent report from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office showed that the Recovery Act was responsible for increasing the number of people employed by as many as 3.3 million.
- AAPIs in the service industry are among the fastest growing and tend to be recent immigrants with limited English proficiency and educational skills, contributing to an increase in low wage workers, and presenting unique obstacles to effectively access government resources.
- The Obama Administration, through the Department of Labor (DOL), has prioritized assisting all communities, including AAPIs, by working to ensure that all people have an opportunity to find and keep safe and stable jobs, which exist in fair and diverse workplaces, by:
  - **Promoting Workplace Safety and Standards.** Since President Obama took office, DOL has implemented a robust outreach strategy to protect the health, safety, wages, working conditions, and retirement security of the nation's workforce, forging alliances with community organizations and translating materials into Asian languages to engage at-risk AAPI workers.
    - During this Administration, DOL has collected more than \$300 million in back wages for more than 500,000 workers and hired an additional 350 wage and hour investigators to ensure that the agency can promptly respond and conduct targeted enforcement.
  - **Increasing Job Training Opportunities.** DOL's Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs provide training, employment and education to state and local communities to help adults, youth and dislocated workers gain the skills to build successful careers and improve employment prospects.
  - **Strengthening Unemployment Benefits.** The Administration and Congress have [extended and expanded unemployment insurance benefits](#) to historic levels and offered powerful incentives for States to modernize their programs. Since 2010, twenty-six States have changed their laws so that up to 20 weeks of additional benefits are available to workers who have exhausted their benefits; and 32 States now offer benefits to recent workforce entrants who lose their jobs. States also have granted benefits to part-time workers, those who must leave jobs because of domestic violence or compelling family reasons, and those who seek to retool for another career.

## **Winning the Race to Educate Our Kids: Education Opportunities for AAPIs**

**In order to win the future we must win the race to educate our children. Restoring the United States to its role as the global leader in education will require that we invest in strengthening and expanding educational opportunities for AAPI students – from cradle to career. To achieve this, the Obama Administration has made key investments for the AAPI community.**

**PROVIDING KEY INVESTMENTS:** Over the next 5 years, nearly 90 percent of new jobs will require more than a high school degree, yet one quarter of our children do not even finish high school. The quality of our math and science education lags behind other countries, and America has fallen from 1st to 9th in college graduation. To compete in the 21st century, and to give our children the best possible chance to succeed, we must win the race to educate our kids.

- The Administration [has made key investments in early learning programs](#), such as Head Start and child care so that children enter school ready to learn. 2.3 percent of Head Start participants and 2 percent of the nation’s child care subsidy recipients are AAPI. The Administration has made critical investments in reforms to strengthen elementary and secondary education, such as dedicating more than \$4 billion in School Improvement grants over the past few years to challenge states and districts to implement bold reforms. This will transform the 5,000 lowest-performing schools in America so that every American student has a complete education, from cradle to career, so that they can compete in the global economy.
- By signing the [Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act](#), the President ensured increased affordability of and access to student loans for American students. The Department of Education estimates that some 40,000 additional Pell Grant awards will be made to AAPI students by 2020 under this new law, and that more than 50,000 AAPI borrowers will avail themselves of new protections for student loan repayment which ensure affordability.
- The Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act also strengthens Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) – that is, a public or private nonprofit college or university with a student body that is at least 10 percent Asian American and/or Pacific Islander – by investing \$50 million in these institutions over the next decade. Most of these institutions are junior and community colleges where nearly half (47.3 percent) of AAPI undergraduates enroll. AANAPISI-eligible institutions enroll 75 percent of the low-income AAPI undergraduate students in U.S. higher education. They also serve communities with disproportionately high numbers of English learners and individuals with low academic achievement.
- In July 2009, the President issued a challenge to the country to reform our schools by announcing the [Race to the Top fund](#), a \$4.35 billion fund that is rewarding eligible states to create incentives for future improvement in four areas of enormous importance to AAPI students: adopting rigorous standards and assessments, recruiting and retaining high quality teachers, turning around low-performing schools, and establishing data systems to track student achievement and teacher effectiveness. The 11 states and one district that have been selected as Race to the Top winners—including Tennessee, Delaware, Rhode Island, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and the District of Columbia—reach approximately 27 percent of the nation’s AAPI students. In recognition of its far-reaching impact, Race to the Top received a first-time annual appropriation of \$700 million in FY 2011, including funding for a new early learning component that is aligned with the Administration’s proposed Early Learning Challenge Fund.

- President Obama also announced the American Graduation Initiative, a historic initiative to strengthen our nation’s community colleges, and called for five million additional college graduates by 2020. This initiative provides \$2 billion for Community College Challenge Grants for two-year schools where many AAPI students earn their first college degree, receive job training, or prepare to attend a four-year institution. In fact, 47 percent of AAPIs undergraduate enrollment is at community colleges. We cannot achieve the President’s goal without the success of AAPI students.

**SUPPORTING AAPI COMMUNITIES:** Contrary to the prevailing model minority myth that all AAPIs are well-educated, some AAPIs have staggering educational needs that may be overlooked or masked by aggregated data: for example, only 14 percent of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders 25 years of age and older have at least a bachelor’s degree; and 40 percent of Hmong, 38 percent of Laotians, and 35 percent of Cambodians do not complete high school. Supporting AANAPISIs will ensure that we not only reach the President’s 2020 goal but address ongoing education disparities in the AAPI community.

- **English Learners:** English Learners (ELs), many of which are AAPIs, are the fastest-growing major student population in the United States. Nearly one in four AAPI students is limited English proficient or lives in a linguistically isolated home.
  - The Department of Education requests \$750 million in the FY 2012 Budget for English Learner Education. Funding goes to all states to create high-quality instruction, prepare teachers of ELs, and support effective methods for teaching ELs. EL education will also be strengthened through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and its inclusion in other key programs including Race to the Top, Investing in Innovation, and Promise Neighborhoods.
  - The Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division and the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights reached a settlement agreement with the Boston School Committee that ensures that English Learner students will no longer be denied language support services based on a system that did not accurately assess or provide for their language needs. As a result of the agreement, more than 4,000 students who were inappropriately characterized as having “opted out” of EL services will now have EL and compensatory services made available to them. In addition, approximately 4,300 students who were improperly identified as non-EL students, will, for the first time, be offered EL services.
- **Native Hawaiians:** Only 14 percent of single-race Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders 25 and older have at least a bachelor’s degree compared to 28 percent for the total population. The President’s 2012 Budget is committed to needs of Native communities by providing:
  - \$34 million for Native Hawaiian K-12 programs to support projects to improve the educational achievement of Native Hawaiian students.
  - \$15 million for Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions to help these institutions improve and build their capacity to serve Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian students.
- **AAPI Teachers:** While AAPIs comprise 3.9 percent of the total enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, they represent only 1.5 percent of teachers. The President’s 2012 budget is committed to increasing the number and diversity of effective teachers entering the pipeline.
  - \$40 million for the Hawkins Centers of Excellence to support targeted investments in teacher preparation programs at minority-serving institutions to increase the number of effective minority teachers.

## Reforming Health Care: Ensuring Access for AAPIs

This Administration has made great strides in giving AAPIs and all Americans greater control over their health care. AAPI communities experience high un-insurance rates and stand to benefit greatly from the President signing the Affordable Care Act and the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 into law. More than 26 percent of Hmong Americans, 22.5 percent of Bangladeshi Americans, and 17.4 percent of Micronesians live in poverty; [and among adults age 18 and older, 35.5 percent of Korean Americans, 18.3 percent of Vietnamese Americans, and 17.7 percent of Indian Americans lack health coverage.](#)

- In the first few weeks in office, the Obama Administration expanded health insurance for children through the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009, which for the first time ever allowed states to cover legal immigrant children without a five-year waiting period. This law has removed language barriers by providing an increased match to states for the cost of translation or interpretation services so that non-English speaking legal immigrant children and pregnant women can get necessary healthcare information and services

**Expanding Access to Affordable Care for AAPIs:** For the one in six Asian Americans and one in four Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders who are uninsured, the Affordable Care Act will, by 2014, make health care more accessible and affordable. The Affordable Care Act will provide many benefits to AAPIs by:

- **Reducing health disparities** which affect AAPI communities, who have higher than average rates of illnesses like diabetes, heart disease, chronic hepatitis B, liver and cervical and cancers.
  - Cervical cancer incidence rates are among the highest in the U.S. for Laotian American, Samoan, Vietnamese American and Cambodian American women.
  - Asian American adults aged 65 years and older were 30 percent less likely to have ever received the pneumonia shot, compared to white adults of the same age group.
  - In Hawaii, Asians, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders ages 20 years or older are more than two times as likely to have diagnosed diabetes as white residents of similar age.
  - Asian Americans are less likely to be tested for HIV/AIDS, and while the total number of reported AIDS cases has generally declined over the past five years for the white population, it has continued to increase for Asian Americans.
- **Reducing health care costs** and giving AAPIs more control over their own care.
  - Seniors have the freedom to get the care they need, including free preventive care, lower cost prescription drugs, and Medicare they can count on. Nearly 4 million Americans who hit the Medicare prescription drug coverage gap known as the "donut hole" received \$250 tax-free rebates, and will receive a 50 percent discount on brand name prescription drugs if they hit the donut hole this year.
  - Up to 4 million small businesses, including many of the nearly 250,000 small businesses owned by AAPIs, benefit from the \$40 billion in tax credits that help make providing coverage for their employees more affordable.
  - Insurance companies can no longer overcharge just to boost profits and CEO salaries.
  - The Affordable Care Act helps families by allowing young adults to stay on their parent's health insurance policy up to the age of 26 years old.
- **Providing new coverage options**
  - Children with pre-existing conditions cannot be denied coverage in new health plans.
  - Adults who have been locked out of the insurance marketplace because of a pre-existing condition can now buy coverage through a new Pre-Existing Condition Plan.

- **Ensuring better quality coverage**
  - People with insurance are free from worrying about losing their insurance due to a mistake on an application, or having it capped unexpectedly if someone is in an accident or becomes sick.
  - All Americans in new insurance plans will receive preventive services without being charged a deductible, co-payment, or co-insurance. This will have an enormous impact on AAPIs, many of whom do not have a regular doctor or source of preventive care.
  - The Affordable Care Act as well as the Recovery Act provides new funding for community health centers, which are critical health resources in the AAPI community, providing comprehensive health care for everyone no matter how much they are able to pay. These resources will allow health centers to double the number of patients served.
- The website [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov) is available to help consumers find insurance options, learn about prevention, and access newly available programs like the new pre-existing condition insurance plan.

**Fighting Childhood Obesity:** The rates of overweight and obesity in the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) community is increasing, with surveys showing one in five NHPI high school youth (20.4 percent) are obese, and that number rises to one out of three (33.5 percent) when you include those who are likely to be overweight. First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move* Initiative, along with other creative initiatives throughout the Administration, is working to tackle childhood obesity among NHPI children. NHPI children are at great risk of being overweight and obese throughout all stages of their childhood and adolescence. These numbers have significant health consequences. Childhood obesity is a contributing factor to higher risks for health complications such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer and asthma. Additionally, a number of factors limit NHPI children's options for physical activity, as well as access to healthy foods.

**Delivering on Our Promise to Veterans, Service Members, and Military Families:** From the Civil War to the front lines in Iraq and Afghanistan, AAPI service members have played a major role in defending our nation. The Obama Administration's Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) work to ensure that we honor the service and sacrifice of our military and their families.

- AAPIs serve in our military in record numbers. Over 124,000 AAPIs currently serve in our armed forces and over 300,000 of our Nation's veterans are AAPI.
- Every day, VA serves AAPI Veterans in a variety of ways – from service connected disability compensation to educational services, home loan guarantee programs and health care service.
- As of October 2010, the VA has issued over \$5.66 billion in post-9/11 GI Bill benefit payments to approximately 385,000 Veterans or eligible family members pursuing higher education. To encourage more veterans to use this historic program, in February 2010, VA launched a nationwide Post-9/11 GI Bill advertising campaign through college newspapers, radio ads and information handouts at 60 schools with large veteran-student populations.
- VA continues to work with organizations such as the Japanese American Veteran Association, Filipino WWII Veterans, Japanese American Civil League, Organization of Chinese Americans and other organizations to inform AAPI Veterans about VA services and employment opportunities.
- As the nation's largest integrated health care system, the VA offers the ideal setting in which to evaluate and implement patient-centered and culturally sensitive approaches to care. The VA is studying the special needs of specific minority groups to include that of AAPIs.
- VA is also working with other federal agencies to advance research on disparities and minority health. Examples include the Federal Collaboration on Health Disparities Research and partnerships with the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury, and the National Institutes of Health, to improve treatment and support for recently returned Veterans and their families.

## Fixing Our Nation's Broken Immigration System and Protecting Civil Rights

Our ability to win the future is contingent upon an economy and immigration system that works. We cannot continue to expel talented young people who want to contribute to the country they have called home since birth. In December of 2010, the President expressed his deep disappointment that Congress failed to pass the DREAM Act, and in his State of the Union Address in January of 2011, the President reiterated his commitment to immigration reform. Recognizing that this will require action in Congress, the President will continue to work toward building the bipartisan consensus necessary to enact this critical reform at the earliest possible opportunity.

**Reforming Immigration for AAPIs:** The Obama Administration recognizes that AAPIs are part of the fabric of hardworking, talented people who enrich the economy, diversity, and cultural landscape of the United States. Generations of immigrants, including many from Asia and the Pacific Islands, have helped make America the engine of the global economy and a beacon of hope around the world.

- As the immigration debate proceeds, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) continues to improve its responsiveness to the individuals and families who rely on it for information and services. In 2009, USCIS launched an [updated website](#), including an [online tool](#) that allows legal immigrants for the first time ever to get updates on their applications on line or via text message and improving processing times and clearing backlogs of pending applications. USCIS has also fully eliminated the FBI National Name Check Program's backlog. In 2010, USCIS launched quarterly public engagements that included live question-and-answer sessions with USCIS officials.
  - AAPIs are one of the fastest growing groups in the United States and by [2050 will make up 9.2 percent](#) of the population – approximately 40.6 million people. Nearly [two-thirds](#) of AAPIs are foreign-born and many have interacted with the immigration system.
  - Approximately [one-third](#) of those admitted to the United States in 2009 came from an Asian country. In 2009, [487,929](#) came to the U.S. from a variety of Asian countries, including India, Thailand, China, Samoa, Nepal, and Cambodia.
- The President has devoted critical funding to support citizenship preparation and integration programs. In 2010, USCIS awarded close to \$8 million in new grant funding to organizations in 27 states, and expects to [award additional grant funding](#) in 2011. In addition, USCIS launched a new [Citizenship Resource Center](#) that centralizes citizenship resources for the community.
  - AAPIs naturalize at among the highest rates of those who choose to become American citizens. Since 1980, individuals from India, the Philippines, Vietnam, and China have ranked among the [top five](#) nationalities to apply for and receive U.S. citizenship.
  - The Administration also supports [programs](#) that assist individuals acquire important English language skills and civics information, along with adult education to encourage new Americans and their communities to continue working together to build a dynamic, vibrant future. Of the 55.4 million people who speak a language other than English at home, [15 percent](#), or 8.3 million, speak either an Asian or Pacific Island language.
- The Obama Administration is committed to maintaining a robust refugee admissions program. Recognizing the continuing challenges and barriers faced by refugees, the Administration has undertaken a comprehensive review of the United States Refugee Admissions Program with the goal of strengthening support for refugees and the communities in which they are being resettled.
  - In 2009, approximately 45 percent of the refugees admitted to the United States were from Asian countries. The U.S. has welcomed over [2.5 million](#) refugees since passage of the Refugee Act in 1980. In 2009, the U.S. resettled 74,654 refugees, [45 percent](#) of whom came from Asian countries, most notably from Burma and Bhutan, two countries that produced the second and third highest number of refugees, respectively, after Iraq.

- The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) also has invested in implementing critical reforms to the detention system, enhancing the security and efficiency of the detention system while prioritizing the health and safety of detainees. A concrete example is the [Online Detainee Locator System](#), a public, Internet-based tool designed to assist family members, attorneys, and other interested parties in locating detained individuals in DHS custody.

**Protecting Civil Rights and Civil Liberties for AAPIs: The Obama Administration has taken unprecedented steps to ensure that our laws are enforced fairly and equitably. Federal agencies – from the Departments of Justice (DoJ) and Education (DoEd) to Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to the Department of Agriculture are working to strengthen their civil rights divisions to fight discrimination and enforce equal protection under the law. The Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division has grown more over the last year than at almost any other point in history, adding more than 100 new personnel, and new energy and vigor to the vital task of enforcing our nation’s civil rights laws.**

- The Obama Administration has made the prosecution of hate crimes a top priority. In October of 2009, the President signed the Mathew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act which expanded DoJ’s ability to prosecute more cases of racially-motivated violence, including violence motivated by animus toward immigrants or AAPIs because of their race, national origin, color, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.
- In his first month in office, President Obama also signed the [Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act](#) to fight pay discrimination and ensure fundamental fairness for female workers.
- The DoEd issued guidance in the form of a "Dear Colleague" letter to support educators in combating bullying in schools by clarifying when student bullying may violate federal education anti-discrimination laws. The guidance also makes clear that protections exist against harassment of members of religious groups based on shared ethnic characteristics as well as gender and sexual harassment of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgender individuals. The letter provides examples of harassment and illustrates how a school should respond in each case.
- In 2009, DoEd, DoD, DoJ, HHS, DoA and DoI formed the Obama Administrations Inter-Agency Task Force on Bullying. In August 2010, the Obama Administration hosted the first ever National Bullying Summit and launched both the Stop Bullying Now Campaign and [www.bullyinginfo.org](http://www.bullyinginfo.org), a national database of effective anti-bullying programs.
- On April 4th, Vice President Biden and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan introduced comprehensive guidance to help schools, colleges and universities better understand their obligations under federal civil rights laws to prevent and respond to the problem of campus sexual assault. The new guidance makes clear the legal obligations under Title IX of any institution receiving federal funds to respond promptly and effectively to sexual violence.
- The Obama Administration has made anti-bullying efforts a top priority. In March 2011, President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, the Department of Education, and the HHS welcomed students, parents, and teachers in addition to non-profit leaders, advocates, and policymakers to the White House for a Conference on Bullying Prevention.
- Since 9/11, DoJ has investigated more than 800 incidents involving violence, threats, vandalism and arson against persons perceived to be Muslim or to be of Arab, Middle Eastern, or South-Asian origin. The Civil Rights Division and U.S. Attorneys offices have brought prosecutions against 50 defendants in such cases, with 46 convictions to date.
- On April 27, 2011, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced the elimination of the list of countries whose nationals have been subject to registration under the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS)—effectively ending the NSEERS registration process through the publication of a notice in the Federal Register: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-04-28/pdf/2011-10305.pdf>

## **Ensuring Secure and Safe Communities**

**Making Homeownership More Affordable and Secure for AAPIs: Owning your own home is at the heart of American Dream. That is why the Administration has worked to address the foreclosure crisis and revitalize the communities hardest hit by foreclosures. The Administration also has worked to ensure that rental and affordable housing is fair and non-discriminatory.**

- The Administration launched Making Home Affordable (MHA), which includes mortgage modification and refinancing programs, a critical piece of the Administration's broad efforts to stabilize the housing market and provide relief to struggling homeowners. Downloadable materials from the MHA website are available in a variety of languages, including: Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Hmong, and Tagalog.
- HUD has awarded a \$785,000 grant to administer a national housing counseling program targeting Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in 10 states. Since January 2009, almost 80,000 AAPI households have received help with resolving or preventing Mortgage Delinquency through HUD's Housing Counseling Program.
- President Obama established the Hardest Hit Fund in February 2010 to provide targeted aid to families in states hit hard by the economic and housing market downturn – many of those states are places where AAPI families are most affected by the foreclosure crisis. The first five states to receive aid each experienced a 20 percent or greater decline in average home prices: Arizona, California, Florida, Michigan and Nevada. The program was expanded to provide support to five states with high percentages of their population living in areas of economic distress due to unemployment: North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island and South Carolina.
- HUD has announced over \$6.92 billion in funding to help stabilize neighborhoods hard-hit by foreclosure through Neighborhood Stabilization Grants. These grants will provide targeted emergency assistance to state and local governments to acquire, redevelop, or demolish foreclosed properties. These awards are aimed at helping reverse the effects of the foreclosure crisis – and will reduce blight, bolster neighborhood home values, create jobs and produce affordable housing and will have a large impact on minority communities.
- The Justice Department's Civil Rights Division has created a Fair Lending Unit within the Housing and Civil Enforcement Section to address discriminatory lending that contributed to the nation's housing crisis, as well as discrimination resulting from the foreclosure crisis.

**Protecting Our Air and Water; Cleaning Up Our Communities: Under this Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has taken critical steps toward ensuring that AAPIs and all Americans are protected from air and water pollution and from toxic chemicals that harm their health. There are too many places in America today where the environmental, health, and economic burdens of pollution fall disproportionately on poor and minority communities. This Administration has proposed far reaching changes that will positively impact the health of AAPI communities:**

- Increasing investments on programs that clean up our communities: The President's Recovery Act allowed the EPA to make major investments in cleaning polluted sites - known as brownfield properties – including abandoned corner gas stations, old textile mills, and abandoned industrial properties. These investments target under-served and economically-disadvantaged neighborhoods – places where environmental cleanups and new jobs are most needed.
- Additionally, the EPA is conducting outreach efforts on chemical exposure to nail salon workers, engaging dry cleaners in best management practices and safer alternatives in relevant regions, educating the AAPI communities about contaminated fish, and providing infrastructure support for wastewater and drinking water facilities in Hawaii and Pacific Island Territories.

## To Win the Future, We Must Invest in Infrastructure

**Supporting our Nation's Infrastructure: The U.S. Department of Transportation supports a broad infrastructure that provides transportation access for a range of individuals, including individuals from the AAPI communities.**

- According to the U.S. Decennial Census, AAPIs are approximately three times as likely to use public transportation to get to work compared to other Americans. The U.S. Department of Transportation provides grants to support both urban and rural transportation services. In addition, the U.S. Department of Transportation, HUD, and the EPA recently created an interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities to help promote equitable affordable housing, provide more transportation options, and lower transportation costs for homeowners and renters while protecting the environment in communities nationwide.
- The U.S. Department of Transportation has an Office of Small and Disadvantage Businesses (OSDBU) to facilitate access for under-represented groups and has developed 11 Small Business Transportation Resource Centers (SBTRCs), including one that is specifically focused on AAPI outreach.

**Ensuring energy security and prosperity:** The mission of the Department of Energy is to ensure America's security and prosperity by addressing its energy, environmental, and nuclear challenges through transformative science and technology solutions. Our nation's Pacific Islander communities play a pivotal role.

- Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the President invested \$46.6 million for various energy projects in the Pacific Islands. Highlights include:
  - \$19.1 million in State Energy Program funds to the Guam Energy Office to invest in territory-level energy efficiency and renewable energy priorities
  - \$1.1 million in Weatherization Assistance Program funds to scale-up existing weatherization efforts on the island, creating jobs, reducing carbon emissions, and saving money for Guam's low-income families
  - \$9.6 million for Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants (EECBG) to develop, promote, implement, and manage local energy efficiency programs
  - \$166,000 for the Energy Efficient Appliance Rebate Program, which offers consumer rebates for purchasing certain ENERGY STAR® appliances.
- American Samoa and Northern Mariana Islands also each received \$29 million under ARRA for similar energy projects. These are energy solutions that will strengthen economy in the territories and create jobs at the local level.
- The State Energy Program (SEP), administered by the Department of Energy, provides resources directly to the States and Territories for energy efficiency and renewable energy. Funded at \$3.1 billion under the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, SEP fosters cost-effective energy solutions that result in reduced energy costs for consumers, small businesses, and government. SEP implements projects crossing all the energy technology sectors: buildings, transportation, industrial, and power technologies.
- The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) enables low-income families to permanently reduce their energy bills by making their homes more energy efficient. Funds are used to improve the energy performance of dwellings of needy families using the most advanced technologies and testing protocols available in the housing industry. During the past 33 years, WAP has provided weatherization services to more than 6.4 million low-income households. Families receiving weatherization services see their annual energy bills reduced by an average of about \$437, depending on fuel prices. Because the energy improvements that make up weatherization services are long lived, the savings add up over time to substantial benefits for weatherization clients and their communities, and the nation as a whole.

**Increasing Access and Participation of Underserved AAPIs:** On October 14, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the [Executive Order](#) reestablishing the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (Initiative). The Initiative, co-chaired by U.S. Department of [Education Secretary Arne Duncan](#) and U.S. Department of [Commerce Secretary Gary Locke](#), is housed within the U.S. Department of Education. The Initiative works to improve the quality of life and opportunities for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders by facilitating increased access to and participation in federal programs where they remain underserved. The Executive Order also established the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and the Federal Interagency Working Group. Working in conjunction, the Commission and Federal Interagency Working Group are comprised of individuals, executive branch departments and agencies representing a broad spectrum of fields and programs impacting Asian Americans and Pacific Islander communities. In March 2011, the White House Initiative presented a report to the President of 23 Federal agency plans that lay out how each agency will increase access and participation within their programs of AAPI communities that remain underserved.

**Ensuring that the Federal Government Better Reflects Our Country: President Obama has named more AAPIs to top posts than any of his predecessors.**

- AAPIs are serving at every level of government and in every policy arena. Most notably President Obama appointed three AAPI Cabinet Secretaries: Secretary of Commerce Gary F. Locke, Secretary of Energy Steven Chu and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.
- The breadth and scope of those appointments across the government reveal this Administration's commitment to having a government that reflects our country's great diversity. Furthermore, each and every appointee has been selected because of the strength of their qualifications for the critical work they're carrying out for the American people in every area of our government. Excellence and diversity are not mutually exclusive, and the strength of senior appointments in this Administration shows that we can and must do better in the civilian ranks.
- In order to ensure that we are reaching and including this Nation's diverse and talented citizens, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management has created three new offices to lead our efforts - the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Senior Executive Service Office and the Student Programs Office. Combined, these offices will work together to develop strategies to add diversity to our permanent Federal Workforce, including AAPIs.

**Making Strides:** This is just a sample of how the work being done by the Administration is impacting communities across the country. We have made great strides in the last two years; however, we still have much more to do. The President is going to continue to work hard every single day to move our country forward for AAPIs and all Americans.

*For more information on any of these issues, please visit [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) or any Federal agency Web site)and use the “search” function by entering key words to pinpoint the information you need.*

**On Jobs**

The U.S. Department of Labor– [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov)  
Information on local One-Stop centers – [www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)  
Job Corps program – [www.dol.gov/jobcorps](http://www.dol.gov/jobcorps)  
My Skills My Future Career tool – [www.myskillsmyfuture.org](http://www.myskillsmyfuture.org)  
My Next Move Career Tool - [www.mynextmove.org](http://www.mynextmove.org)

**On the Economy**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act – [www.recovery.gov](http://www.recovery.gov)  
Wall Street/Financial Reform – [www.financialstability.gov](http://www.financialstability.gov)  
Community Development Financial Institutions Fund – [www.cdfifund.gov](http://www.cdfifund.gov)  
Minority Business Development Agency – [www.mbda.gov](http://www.mbda.gov)  
Small Business Administration – [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)

**On Education**

Department of Education – [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)  
Race to the Top – [www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html)  
Student loans – [studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/index.jsp](http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/index.jsp)

**On Health Care**

Affordable Care Act Implementation – [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov)  
Department of Health and Human Services – [www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)  
Office of Minority Health – [minorityhealth.hhs.gov](http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov)

**On Energy**

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program –  
[www1.eere.energy.gov/wip/eecbg.html](http://www1.eere.energy.gov/wip/eecbg.html)  
Weatherization Assistance Program – [www1.eere.energy.gov/wip/wap.html](http://www1.eere.energy.gov/wip/wap.html)  
Energy Education & Workforce Development – [www1.eere.energy.gov/education](http://www1.eere.energy.gov/education)  
Workforce Development Teachers & Scientists - [www.scied.science.doe.gov/scied/sci\\_ed.htm](http://www.scied.science.doe.gov/scied/sci_ed.htm)

**On Community Investment and Development**

White House Office of Urban Affairs – [www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/oua](http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/oua)  
Department of Housing and Urban Development – [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov)  
Community Development Financial Institution Fund – [www.cdfifund.org](http://www.cdfifund.org)

**On Civil Rights and Civil Liberties**

Department of Justice – [www.justice.gov](http://www.justice.gov)  
Department of Justice Civil Rights Division – [www.justice.gov/crt](http://www.justice.gov/crt)  
Interagency Working Group on Limited English Proficiency – [www.justice.gov/crt/lep](http://www.justice.gov/crt/lep)  
Housing and Urban Development Fair Housing Division – [www.hud.gov/offices/ftheo](http://www.hud.gov/offices/ftheo)

**On Protecting our Environment**

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)

**On Immigration**

Department of Homeland Security – [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov)  
*United States Citizenship and Immigration Service* – [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)

To learn how to elevate your voice and help your community, visit the [White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders](http://www.whitehouse.gov/aapi)—[www.whitehouse.gov/aapi](http://www.whitehouse.gov/aapi).