

Testimony Submitted to the Platform Committees of
The Democratic National Convention
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My name is Mee Moua. I am the President and Executive Director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC. We are a national civil rights organization based in Washington, DC working to advance the civil and human rights for Asian Americans and to build and promote a more equitable society for all.

As a community, Asian Americans are growing in numbers and in strength, and deservedly should have our voices heard in the issues that affect our community. By 2060 it is projected that one out of every ten Americans will be Asian American. Given this significant growth, it is important to note that Asian Americans continue to be overlooked by both political parties. In a recent survey of Asian American voters, 62% them have not been contacted by the Democratic Party and 72% have not been contacted by the Republican Party.

This means that political candidates at the national, state, and local levels are missing untapped voter potential, and WE are not getting our voices

heard on the issues that matter to our community. Today, I submit testimony on 5 issue areas for your consideration.

Issue Number 1, Census 2020: Critical decisions are being made that will impact outreach and participation in the U.S. Census. Efforts like the amendment introduced by Senator David Vitter this week to add a question about immigration status is an attempt to chill participation and is counter-productive to the goal of the US Constitution to count every person living in this country. Also, maintaining a mandatory American Community Survey is critical for obtaining important disaggregated, socioeconomic data points and we cannot let Congress make the American Community Survey voluntary. A fully funded Census 2020 and a mandatory American Community survey serves to ensure an accurate count of ALL Americans.

Issue Number 2, Voting Rights: Asian Americans have faced and continue to face barriers to voting, including direct discrimination at the polls. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, the extension of the Act in 1975 to cover “language minorities” and the re-authorization of the language access provision of the Act in 2006 have guaranteed millions of voters the opportunity to fairly and equally participate in elections.

Unfortunately, in *Shelby County versus Holder*, the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Since the 2013 decision, voting discrimination has flourished across the nation as states and localities rushed to push through laws to limit early voting, increase barriers to voting, and dilute minority voting strength through redistricting. Recently, in North Carolina, a South Asian American voter faced a “spelling test” when he and his wife voted in Wilmington. We cannot allow our community to be intimidated or threatened in the democratic process. We must restore full voting rights protections under the Voting Rights Act.

Issue number 3, Immigration Reform: Earlier this month, thanks to President Obama, family members of Filipino American World War II veterans were able to submit applications for parole to receive special permission to live in the U.S. while awaiting their approved visas. Due to the existing backlog for family-based visas, these veterans have been waiting years, and sometimes decades, to bring their children to the United States. While we celebrate that they are able to reunite with their families, there are still millions of families who are stuck in this backlog and nowhere near reunification with their loved ones. Any fix to our broken immigration system must fix this inhumane visa backlog problem.

As we fight to reunite our families, we also fight to keep our families from being separated. In 2014, building on the success of the DACA program,

President Obama announced an expansion of DACA to older undocumented immigrants and the creation of a similar deferred action program for undocumented parents of U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents, known as DAPA. Over 4 million, including nearly 500,000 AAPIs, would benefit from DAPA and expanded DACA. While we are hopeful that the Administration will prevail in court and families can begin applying for this important relief, there is a greater, permanent solution that must be instituted by law and we will work hard to make that a reality.

Issue Number 4, The Supreme Court Vacancy: We fear that the vacancy on the Supreme Court will adversely affect the daily lives of AAPIs, especially if critical issues are sent back to the lower courts with a 4-4 split. We are also concerned for the decisions that hang in the balance given that the court is on track to hear a historically low number of cases next term.

The Senate must do its job to act on the President's Supreme Court nominee AND all judicial nominees. The American people deserves a fully functioning judicial system.

Issue number 5, Affirmative Action in higher education:

Advancing Justice | AAJC fully supports equal opportunity and affirmative action in higher education, as part of our broader support for diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunity for communities of color. We oppose

quotas on any racial or ethnic groups, which already are prohibited by law AND we strongly support admissions policies that are inclusive of all underrepresented communities. Efforts to dismantle the current admissions systems serve to marginalize currently underserved communities, including many Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Fostering educational diversity and greater opportunity is critical to our nation's future in an increasingly global economy and interconnected world. Sixty-four percent of Asian American registered voters support affirmative action policies in higher education. We refuse to be used as the wedge and the tactical face to challenge affirmative action policies.

Advancing Justice | AAJC seeks to amplify the voices of our communities who are often invisible and excluded from the policy discussions and decisions that affect us. As you draft your platform, remember that the Asian American community is watching and measuring whether we matter to your core strategies and how you will count us among your base.