

# 2020 Policy Platform: A Framework

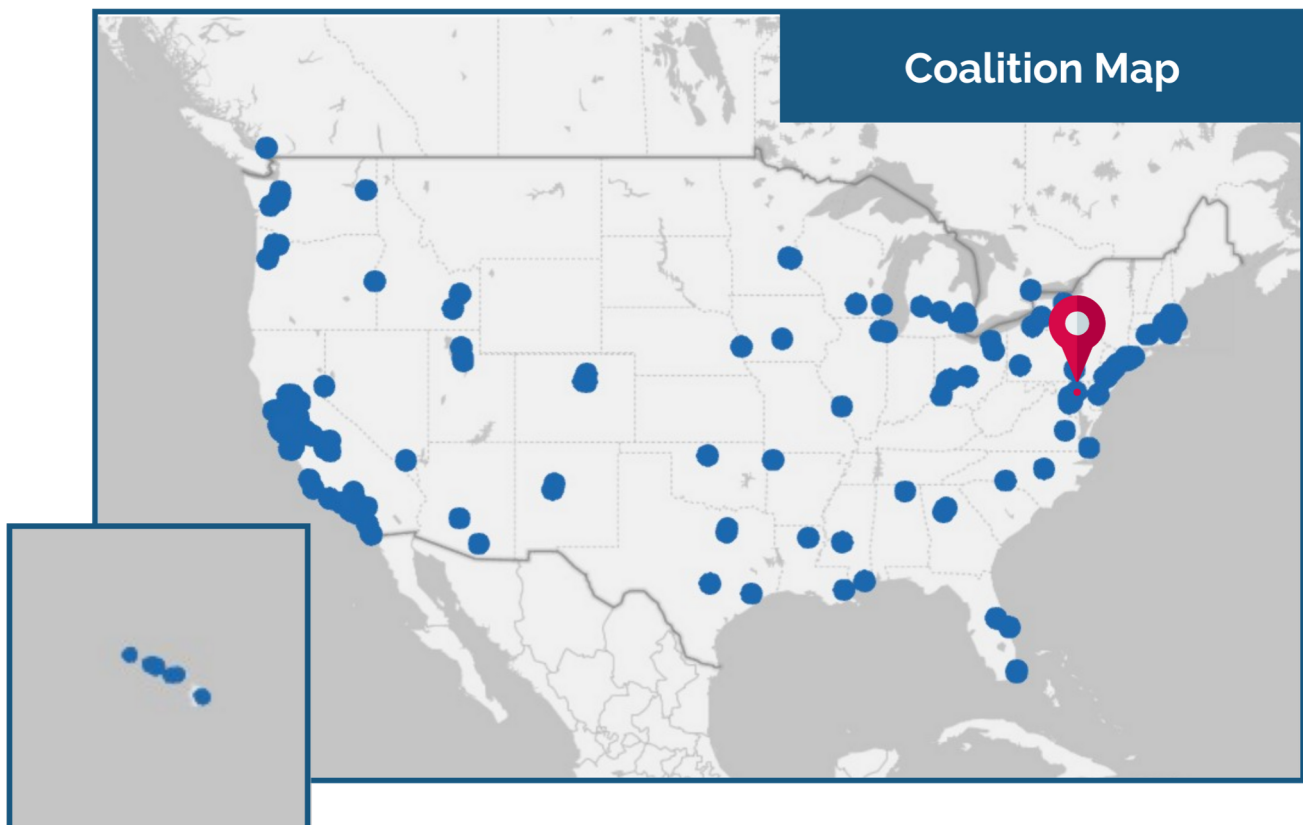


**PRESENTED BY**

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICANS (NCAPA)

# INTRODUCTION

In 1996, a small group of national Asian American Pacific Islander civil rights organizations recognized the need for a more unified AAPI voice at the federal level and came together to create the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA). Today, the coalition has 35 members and represents the diverse communities within the broader Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AA and NHPI) population—including East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander American communities. Our collective footprint through our members' chapters, affiliates and partners span across the country and into 3 territories.



With AA and NHPIs being the fastest growing demographic group in the country, with a total population of over 22 million, our mission is simple: convene leading organizations within the AA and NHPI community to organize and uplift our diverse voices in national public policy debates, as well as increase the visibility of our communities so that they we can no longer be ignored as we build a more unified movement amongst Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islander Americans.

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## CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE COALITION

- Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC (Executive Committee co-chair)
- Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) (Executive Committee co-chair)
- Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO) (Executive Committee Member)
- National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC) (Executive Committee Member)
- South Asian Bar Association of North America (Exec Committee Member)
- National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) (Executive Committee Member)
- Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA)
- Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS)
- Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF)
- APIAVote
- Asian& Pacific Islander American Scholars (formerly APIASF)
- Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy & Leadership (APPEAL)
- The Asian Real Estate Association of America (AREAA)
- Boat People SOS (BPSOS)
- Center for Asian American Media (CAAM)
- Center for Asian Pacific American Women (CAPAW)
- Council of Native Hawaiian Advancement (CNHA)
- Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)

- Hmong National Development (HND)
- Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)
- Laotian American National Alliance (LANA)
- Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics (LEAP)
- National Association of Asian American Professionals (NAAAP)
- National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)
- National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse (NAPAFASA)
- National Asian Pacific American Center on Aging (NAPCA)
- National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (NCAPACD)
- National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA)
- National Japanese American Memorial Foundation (NJAMF)
- National Queer Asian Pacific Islander American Alliance (NQAPIA)
- OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates (OCA)
- Payu-ta Inc.
- South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
- Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
- Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)

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**We will continue to fight for a seat at the table—and this policy framework reflects a thoughtful starting point—not an end to a discussion around the many policy priorities of our community. NCAPA intends to release a full policy platform in early 2020; however, we invite current elected officials, candidates, the community, and the public to join us in starting this critical conversation.**

*Disclaimer: This document is intended to be used to educate about policy issues affecting the AA and NHPI community.*

## ASIAN AMERICAN NATIVE HAWAIIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER VISIBILITY

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The AA and NHPI community continues to grow at a pace that by some estimates, projects us to eventually be the largest immigrant group in the country in a few decades. Despite this growth, and despite the tremendous contributions our communities continue to make, we believe more must be done to advance AA and NHPI visibility and access.

We believe that our country's leaders should commit to hiring staff that reflect the diversity of our community, while also making policy commitments to ensure that our populations are accurately represented statistically and have greater access to government programs.

### ***Disaggregated Data***

Disaggregation of demographic data is critical for Asian American, Southeast Asian Americans, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations. The failure to include detailed data on AA and NHPIs provides a misleading story about our communities in the United States. Aggregated data points in health, education, housing and other issues perpetuate the model minority myth – that all Asians are affluent and well-educated—this effectively masks the very real challenges certain groups actually face.

When data is disaggregated, a much more complex story emerges. We advocate for a government-wide disaggregated AA and NHPI data plan that assess and outlines a timeline to incorporate the collection of disaggregated data in all relevant federal programs. This would allow for a deeper understanding of our community and thus lead to better-informed public policy decisions.

### ***Language Accesss***

Equal access to government programs and systems is critical for ensuring all individuals in the United States are afforded the same treatment under the law. Language access concerns the ability of individuals, regardless of their proficiency in English, to access their rights to important services. We advocate for a full assessment of current language access programs across all government agencies, a subsequent action plan to improve language access at agencies, and call on lawmakers to ensure that language access be a core component (where applicable) in future legislation.

### ***Commitment to Hiring Asian American Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Staff***

Our community has consistently been underrepresented in senior staff roles in the White House and in Congress. We call upon our country's leaders to build their teams to reflect the people they represent, and hire AA and NHPI staff at all levels of their teams. Furthermore, we believe that AA and NHPI representation amongst senior leadership is especially important an challenge decisionmakers to elevate qualified AA and NHPIs into senior roles.

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## ADVANCING THE INTERESTS OF THE STATE OF HAWAII AND PACIFIC ISLAND TERRITORIES

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Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders trace their ancestry to the original peoples of Hawaii; the U.S. Territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI); and other Pacific Islands. Like Alaska Natives and American Indians, Native Hawaiians have a special political and legal relationship with the federal government due to their status as indigenous peoples who once exercised full sovereignty in areas that are now part of the U.S.

The U.S. also has a special historical and political relationship with other jurisdictions in the Pacific – namely the U.S. Territories and the Freely Associated States. Over the years, federal policies and programs have been designed or changed to take into consideration the unique circumstances of Native Hawaiians and residents of the Pacific Islander jurisdictions. The following recommendations are a few of the many policy solutions that should be put in place to advance the well-being of NHPI communities.



***Federal Recognition of Native Hawaiian Governance:***

Support self-governance by administratively or legislatively implementing federal recognition afforded to other indigenous peoples, including American Indians and Alaska Natives.\*

***Equitable Treatment and Support for U.S  
Affiliated Pacific Island Jurisdictions***

Support legislation that includes funding eligibility for American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas in key federal programs to support workforce investment and criminal justice. Restore Medicaid eligibility for Compacts of Free Association Migrants (Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau) and lifting of Medicaid limitations for Pacific Island territories.

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\*Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC) remains neutral on federal recognition for Native Hawaiians. Our focus is serving and representing NHPs who live on the continental U.S.

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## IMMIGRATION

AAPI experiences are heavily shaped by U.S. immigration policy. Over half of all Asian Americans, and one in six Pacific Islanders are foreign born. Our immigrant stories are diverse not only in where we come from, but also how we arrived. Many of our families trace their immigrant roots over generations, while others came more recently as refugees, and others as part of the skilled, or unskilled workforce.

Our current immigration system is in desperate need of reform; and we believe that the AAPI experience must be considered when discussing solutions. Whether it is the family immigration system, a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants or the humane treatment of new immigrants, the following section outlines our priorities around immigration.

### ***Comprehensive Immigration Reform***

We call upon policymakers and leaders to support comprehensive immigration that includes, but is not limited to the following components:

1. Creates a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants currently residing in the country;
2. Values all families by strengthening our family immigration system;
3. Protects immigrant workers;
4. Makes significant reforms to our detention and deportation system to ensure due process and human rights; and finally,
5. Creates a fair system that values all immigrants, regardless of income, education levels, and country of origin.

### ***End Inhumane and Anti-Immigrant Policies***

NCAPA stands in firm opposition to the anti-immigrant agenda that has defined the current Administration's approach to immigration. We call for an immediate end to the inhumane detention and family separation policies that continue to be a shameful reflection upon our country. We also demand that leaders take action to counteract the very real harm policies like the new public charge rule has had on immigrant communities.

The current Administration has been successful in inflicting deep damage upon this country through its use of fear. First, by stoking irrational fears of immigrants to justify their inhumane treatment, as well using violent policing to strike very real fear into the hearts of immigrant families.

Simply put: this must end. Our country's leaders should get back to building a country that is united by our values, rather than torn apart by hate.

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## CIVIL RIGHTS

Asian Americans and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders often face bias and discrimination in the workplace, at the polls, in their neighborhoods, in schools, and within the political process. While often being perceived as the “perpetual foreigner,” many AA and NHPs are often also targeted for their actual or perceived race, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or immigration status. We have watched with great concern as over recent years, hate crimes and hateful rhetoric against our communities has risen.

It is important to note that many of our community members are impacted by intersectional discrimination (for example, individuals who are both LGBTQ+ and immigrants), thus it is important that policy solutions be made with intersectional identities in mind.

Finally, NCAPA stands in solidarity with other communities of color, as we recognize that while the challenges our community face may be unique, we cannot expect justice for ourselves if we are not willing to support others who also deserve to live in an America that embraces its diversity. The following recommendations are a few of the many policy solutions that should be considered to advance and preserve civil rights of the AA and NHP community:

### ***Racial and Religious Profiling***

The ongoing racial profiling of our communities must end immediately. Whether it is the profiling of South Asian Americans and Sikh Americans, the Muslim ban, or Chinese American scientists, we believe far more attention and care must be given to these issues. In representing millions of proud Americans, NCAPA believes that the AAPI community should not serve as collateral for structural intolerance or national security fears. We call on our country’s leaders to end government-sanctioned, discriminatory profiling practices, and engage with our communities directly to find solutions together.

### ***Hate Crimes***

Our communities also continue to be targeted by racially motivated crimes and we have observed increases in racially-motivated attacks targeting our communities, especially South Asian Americans over recent years. We advocate for proactive steps to combat hate crimes. These steps include, but are not limited to:

- 1.Stronger enforcement against hate crimes;
- 2.Comprehensive reporting on hate crimes that includes data on the AAPI community;
- 3.A strategy to address hate speech in elections and on social media; and
- 4.Greater resources towards community engagement.

### ***Census and Voting Rights***

NCAPA continues to believe that the integrity of our democracy is at risk so long as voting rights and the Census are continually under attack. From voter suppression laws to the attempted citizenship question on the 2020 Census, we cannot ignore what appears to be intentional efforts to undermine the core of our democracy. We call for:

- 1.The strengthening of voting rights by restoring Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act;
  - 2.The full enforcement of Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act that requires language assistance in certain jurisdictions;
  - 3.Enforcement of Section 208 of the Voting Rights Act that allows LEP voters to bring in a person of their choosing to assist them in the voting booth; and
  - 4.Opposing voter suppression efforts, such as requirements for photo identification and proof of citizenship.
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## HEALTH

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Everyone should have access to resources and benefits that enable them to live healthy lives. Yet, AA and NHPs face persistent health disparities due to unequal access to quality health care services and a lack of understanding regarding communities' unique health needs. Many groups, such as Samoans, Koreans, and Vietnamese, continue to have disproportionately high uninsured rates as well.

Although AA and NHPs experience many serious mental health problems, they have the lowest utilization rates for mental health care among all populations. Moreover, many community members are limited-English proficient, low income, and face further barriers in accessing health care.

The following recommendations are a few of the many policy solutions that should be put in place to help AA and NHPs live healthy lives:

### ***Addressing Health Disparities***

We recommend that policymakers take action to reduce health disparities by supporting programs that prevent and treat issues relevant to AA and NHPs, including mental health, hepatitis B, reproductive health, and gender-based violence. We also call on them to provide an action plan to reduce health disparities, such as strategies found in the Health Equity and Accountability Act.

Finally, we advocate for greater resources to be committed to the Office of Minority Health, as well as a commitment to ensure that AAPs are included in the strategic vision of the office.

### ***Expand Immigrant Patient Protections and Access***

We call for actions to ensure that immigration status is not a barrier to health care by:

1. Removing restrictive immigration requirements for ACA and Medicaid eligibility;
2. Expanding the number and types of immigrants eligible for health insurance assistance;
3. Rescinding the Trump Administration's public charge rule that expands the use or potential use of public benefits to include Medicaid, SNAP, and federal housing assistance in order to deny an immigrant entry into the U.S. or ability to obtain a green card.

Finally, we advocate for greater resources to be committed to the Office of Minority Health, as well as a commitment to ensure that AAPs are included in the strategic vision of the office.

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## EDUCATION

AA and NHPI students and families face diverse educational challenges, including disparities in accessing high quality educational opportunities, to culturally competent and linguistically appropriate outreach. Many communities including Cambodian, Vietnamese, Hmong, and Laotian and Pacific Islander Americans have lower levels of educational attainment, and many communities have low-income and have high rates of poverty and English proficiency. As our community grows as the fastest growing racial and ethnic group in the U.S., it is important that AAs and NHPIs have the appropriate resources in schools to learn.

The following recommendations are a few of the many policy solutions that should be put in place to advance educational opportunities for AA and NHPI students:

### ***Support AA and NHPI Students***

We advocate for greater support for Asian American Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students. This includes:

1. Ensuring that schools have the capacity to serve our students by including high quality data;
2. Increasing resources for English Language Learner (ELL) students; and
3. Fully funding Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Higher Education Act (HEA) programs designed to meet the needs of minority, disadvantaged, non-traditional, and AA and NHPI students, especially programs serving ELL students.



### ***Support Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs)***

Our country's leaders should provide increased and sustainable support and funding for the AANAPISI Capacity Building Grant Program. Support the development of a sustainable entity, like the Asian American and Pacific Islander Association of Colleges and Universities (APIACU) that would be able to provide support to AANAPISI grantees and potential grantees. Furthermore, they should ensure that the required thresholds for the AANAPISI Capacity Building Grants are reflective of the changing demographics in the United States.

### ***Defend Affirmative Action***

As greater attention is given to high profile lawsuits aimed at dismantling affirmative action policies at various institutions of higher education, NCAPA believes it is important to make clear that the majority of the AA and NHPI community supports affirmative action policies. We recognize that while some community members may disagree, we believe a commitment to diversity is essential for creating environments for our students to thrive in. We oppose intentional discrimination that targets AA and NHPs; however, this *should not* be construed as opposition to affirmative action itself. We call on leaders to directly engage with our community to help build the public narrative that we should not be used as a "wedge" between other communities of color by those who wish to see an end to affirmative action policies.

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## HOUSING AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Like many communities, the American Dream for many AA and NHPIs is owning a home and having a well-paying job to support their families. And while certainly true that many within our community have thrived and achieved great success, it is also equally true that millions of AAPIs continue to struggle—according to Pew Research Center, our community has the greatest gaps in income inequality in the United States of America. The following section outlines a number of priorities for our community in the area of housing and economic justice:

### ***Support AA and NHPI Homeownership and Access to Housing***

While AA and NHPI homeownership has increased steadily over the last 8 years, we believe more should be done to ensure that greater access is given for responsible homeownership. Recognizing that reform of the government sponsored enterprises (GSEs), Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac remains an important issue confronting decisionmakers, we advocate for a seat at the table when substantive debates begin. Specifically:

1. Preserve a federal backstop and role in the housing finance market;
2. The Federal Housing Finance Agency should explicitly commit to, and provide an action plan for increased language access in the mortgage market via the GSEs;
3. Explore the use of alternative credit data to expand access to credit for traditionally underbanked or unbanked populations; and
4. Increase investment and support affordable housing programs for low income AA and NHPIs.

***Empowering AA and NHPI Workers***

According to a 2018 survey, 88% of the Asian American population believe that “workers [being] free from harassment and discrimination” is an “extremely important” or “very important” issue. We advocate for the following steps to be taken to protect AAPI workers:

1. Expand coverage under the National Labor Relations Act to all workers including those in garment, caregiving, and agricultural industries,
2. Ensure workers are being compensated fairly by supporting a living wage of at least \$15 an hour and bringing employers, workers, and government together at industry-wide bargaining tables to negotiate wages;
3. Protect AA and NHPI immigrant workers whose legal status can make them targets of discrimination, intimidation, and wage theft;
4. Strengthen AA and NHPI workers’ ability to unionize and negotiate for better workplace conditions by providing stronger deterrents and fairer remedies for workers who face retaliation, discrimination, or other employer interference.

***Protecting AA and NHPI Consumers***

Language barriers and lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate resources continue to leave many AA and NHPIs vulnerable to predatory or discriminatory lending practices. While nearly a decade removed from the financial crisis of 2008, we believe additional actions should be taken to ensure our consumers are protected:

1. Strengthen data collection on the AA and NHPI community in the mortgage, student loan, and other consumer credit markets;
2. Ensure greater AA and NHPI representation on consumer advisory panels at the independent financial regulators;
3. Increase resources at financial regulators towards making websites, outreach materials and legal documents language accessible.

## CONCLUSION

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We hope that you have found this policy framework helpful as an introduction to the various policy priorities of the AAPI community. As stated earlier, this document is intended to be the beginning of a broader conversation as we will release the full 2020 NCAPA Policy Platform early next year.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to us as we would welcome questions, and/or opportunities to engage further. Please feel free to contact our National Director, Gregg Orton at [gregg@ncapaonline.org](mailto:gregg@ncapaonline.org).

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