

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Governor Vetoes Voting Rights Bills Important to Asian and Pacific Islander Americans**

SACRAMENTO, CA – With the 2008 election cycle approaching, Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed AB 614, legislation authored by Assembly Member Mike Eng and sponsored by Asian Americans for Civil Rights & Equality to improve ballot access for limited English proficient voters throughout the state. In addition, the Governor also vetoed three other bills that would have improved civic engagement opportunities for Asian and Pacific Islander Americans (APIAs) - SB 382 (Oropeza), AB 1294 (Mullin & Leno), and AB 122 (Solorio). However, on a positive note, he did sign AB 288 (Price) into law.

- AB 614, authored by Assembly Member Mike Eng, would have highlighted effective best practices for reaching California's limited English proficient voters and improved compliance with state and federal voting rights laws.
- SB 382, authored by Senator Jenny Oropeza, would have allowed a new citizen to register and vote until the close of polls for the election immediately following the date when that individual became a citizen.
- AB 1294, authored by Assembly Members Gene Mullin and Mark Leno, would have allowed jurisdictions to conduct local elections using ranked choice voting.
- AB 122, authored by Assembly Member Jose Solorio, would have provided candidates with notifications outlining the provisions of law that prohibit voter intimidation and deception.
- AB 288, authored by Assembly Member Curren Price and signed into law by the Governor, will provide election officials with funds to conduct voter education that is necessary to combat confusion and misperception when acts of voter intimidation are perpetrated.

In California, APIAs represent 14% of the state population; however, the community's share of political power is much less. Despite the dramatic growth in population, APIAs still only represent 5% of California's likely voters and face many barriers to voting.

"The right to vote is one of the most important rights conferred by U.S. citizenship, whether by birth or naturalization," says Vincent Pan of Chinese for Affirmative Action. "We are incredibly disappointed that Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed a number of measures designed to increase civic engagement of Californian voters."

"Barriers to voting, including complicated voting materials, voter intimidation incidents such as the one that occurred in an Orange County Congressional campaign last year, and unfamiliar voting processes, pose challenges for many voters," remarks Gen Fujioka of Asian Law Caucus. "Addressing these barriers is needed to make the ideals of having an inclusive democracy a reality."

"Without translations or bilingual poll workers provided under voting rights laws, citizens needing assistance face tremendous barriers to being able to cast their ballots. I have personally witnessed voters leaving poll sites without voting because they did not receive language and other voting assistance," says Eugene Lee of Asian Pacific American Legal Center. "AB 614 would have assisted election officials to utilize best practices in responding to the needs of limited English proficient voters."

AACRE is a partnership of Chinese for Affirmative Action, Asian Pacific American Legal Center, and Asian Law Caucus, dedicated to bringing a voice for California's diverse APIA community to the state's capital.

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