



CALIFORNIA ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

December 11, 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom
Office of the Governor
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

The Asian Pacific Islander (API) Legislative Caucus requests that you appoint an Asian Pacific Islander as California's next Attorney General. Asian Pacific Islanders are among California's fastest growing racial and ethnic groups with over half being immigrants to this country, but also communities with a long history in California going back to the founding of our state. Unfortunately, this history includes being the only racial group to be legally banned from immigrating to America, to be incarcerated during World War II and to be underrepresented in the leadership of California and the United States even today. We appreciate your record of support for our community and advocacy for civil rights throughout your public service.

With the recent vacancy in Kamala Harris' U.S. Senate seat, there are highly qualified API candidates that should be under consideration including State Controller Betty Yee and State Treasurer Fiona Ma whose appointment would maintain our community's representation in California and nationally. Our caucus values diversity and recognizes that for the U.S. Senate appointment there are highly qualified allies of the API community who also meet the needs of our state for representation.

The API community has long suffered from an American legal system that has historically been weaponized against our community. API are underrepresented among California judges and district attorneys and API businesses and individuals are frequent targets for exploitation by unscrupulous attorneys sowing tremendous distrust in API communities in the administration of justice in California. Your appointment of an Attorney General from the API community would be important to addressing California's history of discrimination and injustice toward all communities of color.

California has several highly qualified API attorneys who would be an outstanding Attorney General. Among current and former members of the API Legislative Caucus, we would put forward the following four candidates for your consideration.

Assemblymember Rob Bonta's (D-Oakland) holds a law degree from Yale Law School and has nearly 15 years of litigation experience in both the public and private sector. In 2012, Bonta became the first Filipino American to serve in the State Legislature and has been distinguished by authoring groundbreaking legislation to protect Californians in the area of criminal justice reform, consumer protection, environmental policy, and many other areas. From his early childhood, Bonta was exposed to the farmworker labor movement where his parents worked as farmworker organizers. His life has been shaped by service, integrity and social justice.

Assemblymember David Chiu has had a diverse legal career - as a Harvard Law School graduate, a law clerk for a Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals judge, a prosecutor with the San Francisco DA's Office, a civil rights attorney at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, Democratic Counsel to the U.S. Senate Constitution Subcommittee, and general counsel to a public affairs technology company. As a San Francisco Supervisor and Assemblymember, Chiu has passed 110 local ordinances and 64 state laws, advocating for and negotiating agreements on housing affordability, tenant protections, civil rights, public safety, the environment and consumer protections. Chiu is the son of immigrants and would be the first Chinese Attorney General in California.

Assemblymember Ash Kalra is the first Indian-American in the history of the California legislature and would be a transformational appointment for Attorney General having previously worked as a deputy public defender for over a decade. His commitment to economic, racial and social justice is demonstrated through his work in the legislature on behalf of workers as well as his work to root out racism from our criminal justice system. This is best evidenced by the recent signing of the landmark California Racial Justice Act.



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As a former prosecutor, state senator and veteran, Congressman Ted Lieu has built a statewide and nationwide progressive profile from his work on criminal justice reform, privacy, immigration and cybersecurity. Ted Lieu is a member of the House Judiciary Committee and Speaker Pelosi's leadership team where he has relentlessly challenged and beat back the Trump Administration's attacks on California. Ted currently represents a safe Democratic district where he has gained a statewide progressive profile and is a national "go-to" press critic of Trump's disastrous policies and has also worked as a litigator, clerked on the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals and continues to serve as a Colonel in the United States Air Force Reserves Judge Advocate General Corps, making an extremely qualified Attorney General.

In addition to these outstanding candidates from our caucus, the API Legislative Caucus will be working with the API community to identify additional exceptional candidates for Attorney General for your consideration. From our indigenous Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities to our recent refugee and immigrant peoples, API Americans are a diverse group even within our own community and that diversity is one of the great strengths of our state.

With the departure of Attorney General Becerra, we urge you to appoint an outstanding Asian Pacific Islander attorney as California's next Attorney General.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Pan".

Senator Richard Pan
Chair, Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus