

To Our Community,

The earth-shaking events that have characterized much of 2020 have underscored the importance of strong elected leadership in this country. The past year has ignited nationwide conversations about our country's plans to protect our most vulnerable populations, our essential workers, our businesses, and our land and natural resources. These conversations carry an unusual imminence as they take position on debate stages and campaign trails, their topics being anything but abstract thought experiments, evoking a national sentiment that this is an especially consequential year for American voters in shaping the immediate future of our nation. For Asian Americans, this may also be a crucial year for asserting our position in American politics.

We are approaching an election season of record voter eligibility among Asian Americans. This year, Asian Americans are expected to comprise nearly five percent of eligible voters in the United States. Despite the fact that we are the fastest-growing racial group eligible to vote in the United States, and have been growing significantly for years, the American political system has historically overlooked Asian American voters. Politicians across the spectrum routinely ignore Asian Americans in their efforts to garner support, and the rhetorical choices of some reveal that they perceive no consequences to insulting, discriminating against, or even endangering members of the Asian American community. Since March, President Trump has frequently referred to the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, as the "Chinese virus," drawing an association between the virus and persons of Chinese descent that has unsurprisingly correlated to a surge of incidents of discrimination, vandalism, and violence directed at Asian Americans and APA-owned businesses. This past May, Senator Tom Cotton of Arkansas and Senator Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee introduced the SECURE CAMPUS Act, legislation that would prohibit Chinese nationals from receiving visas to pursue graduate or post-graduate studies in STEM fields, based on a gross generalization that many Chinese scholars studying in the United States are spies and an all-too-familiar chilling argument that the measure is in the interest of national security. Media coverage of American politics has also demonstrated an apathy towards Asian American voters, falling short in its acknowledgement of APAs in politics despite the historic achievements of Asian American candidates this election cycle. Democratic Party presidential candidate Andrew Yang was repeatedly excluded from fundraising and polling graphics displayed by major news outlets during his campaign, and reporters have ignored vice presidential candidate Kamala Harris' South Asian roots when discussing her racial background. The erasure of Asian Americans from political discourse – and worse, the attacking of Asian Americans in political discourse – has been widely cited as a reason for low voter turnout among Asian Americans, as some read in it a message that Asian Americans are not welcome in the political process.

We write to remind you that as American citizens, it is your right to participate in the political process, and we urge you to exercise that right on November 3, 2020. We need not allow the failure of American politics to engage the Asian American community to become a reason for our own disenfranchisement. Nor do we as a community need to succumb to the obstacles that prevent many Asian Americans from voting, including a lack of language resources, voter purging practices, and antiquated voter registration policies. We encourage members of our community, if able and regardless of citizenship status, to partake in efforts to assist voting-eligible family

members, friends, and neighbors with the voting process. A number of resources are available through the links provided by the organizations signed on to this letter and listed below.

We recognize that the Asian American community is broad and diverse, harboring multitudinous and differing values. We understand that each of us, or our ascendants, arrived in this country for unique reasons, that our experiences cannot be melded together and generalized. Our political leanings may differ, but the one thing we all have in common is that we are all American. We each have the power and responsibility to advance our country in the way we believe is best. Over eleven million Asian American voices can make their presence in this country known in this year's election. All those voices together may just make a sound too loud to ignore.

Sincerely,

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Colorado (For Colorado and national voter resources, visit <https://www.apaba-colorado.org/Election-2020>)

APIAVote Colorado (For Colorado voter resources, visit <https://www.apiavote.org/colorado-election-information>)

Asian American Bar Association of Greater Chicago

Asian American Bar Association of Los Angeles

Asian American Bar Association of New York

Asian Chamber of Commerce of Colorado

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Maryland (For Maryland voter resources, visit <https://www.elections.maryland.gov/voting/index.html>)

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Tampa Bay

Asian Roundtable of Colorado

Austin Asian American Bar Association

California Asian Pacific American Bar Association

Chinese American Bar Association of Greater Chicago

Colorado Asian Culture and Education Network

Colorado Dragon Boat

Filipino American Lawyers Association of Chicago

Hop Sing Tong Denver

Mile High Japanese American Citizens League

National Filipino American Lawyers Association (For national voter resources, visit <https://nfala.com/vopro/>)

Orange County Korean American Bar Association

South Asian Bar Association of Colorado

Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association

Vietnamese American Lawyers of Illinois

*Further endorsements to come.*