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PRESS RELEASE

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ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITIES ARE WORKING TO BOOST APPLICATIONS FOR THE CALIFORNIA REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

Community organizations to hold workshops to assist individuals with applications

Los Angeles – Community leaders are mounting a drive to boost the number of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders applying for California’s Citizens Redistricting Commission. In the past, the State Legislature redrew legislative boundaries every ten years after the census. Because of Proposition 11 (passed by voters in 2008), a 14-person Citizens Redistricting Commission will be in charge of redistricting in 2011. Mark Masaoka, policy coordinator at the Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council, stated that, “How the new district boundaries are drawn will profoundly affect the political future of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in California. How the lines are drawn affects who runs for office and who ultimately wins.”

The application process for the commission began on December 15, 2009 and will be open until February 12, 2010. As of January 14, 2010, only 282 of the 6,273 applicants are Asian American or Pacific Islander, or less than 5% of the applicant pool. People of color as a group make up only one-fifth of the applicant pool. In comparison, AAPIs represent nearly 15% of the state’s population and communities of color comprise over half the state. Warren Furutani, State Assembly Member and Chair of the California Asian and Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus, stated, “Although achieving diversity always takes work, if community-minded Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders take the time to apply, we can still have a diverse applicant pool, which will increase the chance of a diverse commission.” Up-to-date statistics can be found at <https://application.wedrawthelines.ca.gov/statistics>.

The commission will hold public hearings throughout California, evaluate relevant materials, and eventually draw the new district maps. The commission may hire staff and consultants in order to support its work.

The maps the commission draws will determine whether AAPI communities are kept together or split by district boundaries. “Ten years ago, Koreatown was splintered into several Assembly districts. This diluted our political voice. We must get involved to ensure that the commissioners understand the importance of keeping communities together,” said Grace Yoo, executive director of the Korean American Coalition.

Commissioners will serve until 2020; however, the vast majority of the commission’s work will occur from January to September 2011 since the district maps must be completed by September 15, 2011. From January

2011 until the adoption of the maps, the commissioners may spend 10-40 hours a week or more on their responsibilities. The commissioners are paid \$300 for each day they are conducting commission business and are reimbursed for their expenses.

Aquilina Soriano, executive director of the Pilipino Workers' Center, said, "Many important decisions about health care and jobs are made in Sacramento. Our communities having a voice on the commission is the first step to ensuring that we have a voice on these issues in Sacramento."

To apply for the commission, applicants must fill out an online form. The form can be found at www.wedrawthelines.ca.gov and is due by February 12, 2010. To assist community members in filling out the application, A3PCON is holding three application workshops:

Saturday, January 23, 2010 at 1:00 pm
Office of Samoan Affairs
20715 S. Avalon Blvd.
Carson, CA 90746

Wednesday, January 27, 2010 at 6:30 pm
Search to Involve Pilipino Americans
3200 W. Temple Street (Historic Filipinotown)
Los Angeles, CA 90026

Thursday, January 28, 2010 at 7:00 pm
Grapevine Arbor
324 S. Mission Drive (not Mission Road)
San Gabriel, CA 91776

After the application period is over, the 14 commissioners will be selected in a multi-step process that is supervised by the California State Auditor. Three auditors employed by the State Auditor will review the applications and select 120 applicants for interviews. The panel will then choose a final list of 60 applicants from which eight commissioners are randomly chosen. These eight commissioners will then pick the remaining six commissioners.

The commission members will be appointed by December 31, 2010. The commission will be made of five registered Democrats, five registered Republicans, and four individuals who are either decline-to-state or registered with a third party.

To serve on the commission, an individual must be a registered voter in California and meet minimum requirements regarding voter registration status and history of voting. Also, an individual must pass several disqualification provisions regarding one's political activities during the past ten years. Individuals who are appointed to the commission face restrictions on future political activities.

For more information about the commission or the workshops, contact Mark Masaoka at (213) 239-0300 or mark.a3pcon@live.com, or visit www.facebook.com/capaf2011. Also, the California State Auditor has information translated in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese posted on its website at www.wedrawthelines.ca.gov/toolkit.html.

The Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON) is a coalition of over 35 community-based organizations serving Los Angeles' Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. Since 1976, A3PCON has facilitated community empowerment through strategies of advocacy and consensus-building to respond to the future, emerging and unmet needs of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.

Founded in 1983, the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for civil rights, providing legal services and building coalitions to positively influence and impact Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and to create a more equitable and harmonious society. APALC is affiliated with the Asian American Justice Center in Washington, D.C.