

APIA VOICE



The Official Newsletter of APIAVote-Michigan

December 2011

Friends,

Tuesday, November 8, 2011 marked an important Election Day in many jurisdictions. Many cities and townships have local city council or school board elections. In Detroit, the city charter revision was approved by a vote. Asian American candidates ran for office this year in places like Ann Arbor, Grand Blanc, Hamtramck, Novi, and Troy.

In other news, the 2012 Presidential Election Cycle is upon us! The Republican presidential debate is on and voters are starting to tune in about issues of concern. With the incredible growth of the Asian American community in Michigan, we have a unique opportunity to mobilize and make sure that our voices are heard in the upcoming election.

APIAVote-Michigan is gearing up for our 2012 nonpartisan voter registration, education, and mobilization effort, and we need your help! One of our goals is to double the number of voter registrations that we completed in 2008. We can't do it alone. Can you donate \$25 or whatever you can afford before the end of the year? Visit www.apiaivotemi.org to donate online.

Below are a few highlights from our work this year.

In March, the U.S. Census Bureau released new population estimates, showing that between 2000 and 2010, the Asian American population grew at the biggest rate compared to all racial groups in Michigan. Sally Kim spearheaded our **redistricting advocacy project**, urging redistricting committees and commissions to keep APIA populations geographically together as communities of interest. We made an impact on the redistricting map adopted in the county with the highest APIA population and provided testimony or information to five counties along with the State House and Senate.

In June, we held our **first annual dinner** at the Troy Marriott! Thank you to everyone who attended. Your support has made a huge difference. Stay tuned for information about the 2012 annual dinner.

In the summer, we launched our groundbreaking **community needs assessment project** in Southeast Michigan and are working with Prasanna Vengadam as our project coordinator! The needs assessment is underway and we conducted phone surveys, field surveys, and an online survey. The project was funded by the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan.

In September, we partnered with the New American Leaders Project, ACCESS and Michigan Voice to host a **Ready to Lead? training** for prospective candidates for office. The training was for immigrants/refugees and children of immigrants/refugees. The training was a huge success, with candidates from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds planning to run for state legislative, school board, and city council positions! Stay tuned for another excellent training in the future.

We are starting an **Asian American immigration story collection project** and will be working with our Youth Leadership Corps on this exciting initiative. You may be hearing from us – we want to hear your story!

I'd like to welcome my friend Priti Shah to the APIAVote-Michigan board! Priti will be serving as co-community liaison for Southeast Michigan with Mohana Walambe. Thank you to Lisa Chin for her service in this position.

Thank you for what has been a great year so far. ...It's not over yet! Please do your part and make a donation today at www.apiaivotemi.org. See you soon,

Stephanie Gray Chang
President

Voting rights update: Bilingual ballots for Hamtramck voters

Recently, the U.S. Census Bureau announced the new jurisdictions and languages covered under Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act. These jurisdictions must provide bilingual ballots, translated voter registration forms and interpreters.

Guess what? **Hamtramck is now on the list!** English language learning Bangladeshi American voters in Hamtramck will now have greater access to the vote on Election Day 2012. The Bangladeshi American voting age citizen population in Hamtramck has reached/surpassed the 5% threshold.

"We're ecstatic that more Asian Americans will be able to exercise their right to vote -- and that the voting process will accommodate an increasingly diverse electorate," said Glenn D. Magpantay, Director of the Democracy Program at the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF).

APIAVote-Michigan looks forward to working with various national and local partners to ensure that this requirement is implemented next year.

Mission Statement:

Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote - Michigan is a non-partisan organization that serves the Asian Pacific Islander American community through civic participation, advocacy, and education.

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Statement Regarding Michigan SB 754

Our mission is to serve the APIA community through civic participation, advocacy, and education. In our relatively short history, we have registered approximately 1500 individuals to vote, the vast majority from the APIA community. The APIA community faces many challenges to participating in our country's democracy – language barriers, lack of familiarity with the political process, and, sometimes, distrust of government due to the history of home country political corruption.

For that reason, APIA community voter registration rates tend to hover around 50-60 percent, significantly lower than that of other communities. Once registered, APIA voters do turn out to vote at high rates. It is clear that the assistance APIAVote-Michigan and other nonprofit organizations provide to potential voters in taking the first step to complete the voter registration form and in providing information about the election process and voting rights is critical.

Now, Senate Bill 754 has been introduced in Michigan. This piece of legislation makes it more difficult for organizations to increase civic participation and engage residents in the democratic process. SB 754 goes against what the United States stands for by creating barriers to involvement in democracy and the organizations that strive to make this possible for marginalized communities across the state. APIAVote-Michigan opposes unnecessary impediments to a constitutional right for all citizens.

Statement Regarding Michigan HB 5060

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It is clear removing barriers to the voting process is imperative among the APIA community. Now, House Bill 5060 has been introduced in Michigan.

The bill mandates that organizations engaged in voter registration efforts provide an extensive amount of information, including the name and address of every agent of the organization who is helping to register voters in Michigan. Any changes in the information they submit must be reported promptly to the Department of State as well.

In addition, someone from the organization will be required to attend a training developed by the Secretary of State, and is then required to train all other members of the organization registering voters. The bill does not specify where or how the trainings will be offered, making them vague and presumably inaccessible.

Lastly, voter registration forms gathered by the organization within a week of an election must be turned in to the election authorities within one business day. These requirements are arduous stipulations adding an unreasonable burden to small nonprofits like ours who rely mostly on volunteers to increase the voter registration and participation rate in our community.

The state of Michigan would be better served and represented by bills that support the democratic process rather than those that create barriers to equitable participation.

This piece of legislation makes it harder to engage residents in the democratic process more difficult by requiring no reason absentee voters to pick up their ballot in person with state identification.

Currently, the following populations are exempt from this requirement and can receive their ballot by mail or online—those 60 or older; expect to be away while polls are open, are physically unable to get to the polls, in jail awaiting arraignment or trial, can't attend for religious reasons, or will be working as an election official in another precinct. Eleven percent of Americans surveyed do not have government-issued photo ID.

Those without photo ID are disproportionately the elderly, students, women, people with disabilities, low-income people and people of color.

In the 2004 Current Population Survey, registered Asian American voters were 8.5 percent less likely to say that they voted in

Michigan SB 754 Summary:

SB 754 would amend the Michigan Election Law to do the following:

- Require picture ID for those who registered to vote in person.
- Require the application of a person who did not present a picture ID to be considered a mail registration application.
- Allow a voter registration applicant to submit a mail registration application to a "third party voter registration organization."
- Require a third-party voter registration organization to register with the Department of State and require the Department to maintain a database of registered organizations.
- Require the Secretary of State to develop a training program for third-party registration organizations and require an organization to participate in the program before engaging in voter registration activities.
- Require a third-party registration organization to transmit to the applicable clerk within one business day a registration the organization received within seven days before the close of registration for a Federal election.

states requiring a form of identification to vote compared to states where one only must give one's name.

Most other states already allow no reason absentee voting for all voters by mail or online. Additionally, claims that no reason absentee voting increases voter fraud is unfounded. House Bill 5060 fundamentally limits the very purpose of expanding no reason absentee voting to all voters by maintaining preferential treatment to a select few who may apply by mail or online. House Bill 5060 goes against what the United States stands for by creating barriers to involvement in democracy for marginalized communities across the state. APIAVote-Michigan stands against unnecessary impediments to a constitutional right for all citizens.

The state of Michigan would be better served and represented by bills that support the democratic process rather than those that create barriers to equitable participation.

Meet Mohammad, APIAVote-Michigan's newest intern!

Mohammad is a Wayne State University student who will be coordinating our Youth Leadership Corps as well as spearheading our immigration stories oral history project. Here's a little bit more about him:

How did you get involved in APIAVote?

I got in APIA Vote through, the DAY(Detroit Asian Youth) Project in the summer of 2010. I met Stephanie Chang in during that summer and I helped her register voters in the Hmong Soccer tournament along with other DAY project members. Since then I've participated in several APIA events including when I helped to collect surveys in the 2012 Hmong Soccer Tournament.

What do you envision for the immigration stories project?

I envision the immigration stories project to produce content that allows people to understand the hardships, struggles, and achievements of Asian immigrants.

This is important because I believe these stories could be used to help unite the many different cultures and nationalities of the Asian diaspora which would help us gain more representation and power within the government. We as a voting electorate would have a much louder voice and the concerns of our communities could be much better represented. In my opinion the immigration stories we are trying to get through this project are on their own are of the utmost importance because it allows people the opportunity to share their own histories that helped shape the present that we now live in.

Why should youth get involved with the Youth Leadership Corps?

Youth should get involved in APIAVote because it would give them the opportunity to experience proactive

ways in which they could get involved within their respective communities, through projects like public education campaigns to voter registration outreach campaigns. Youth would be involved in work that could help them learn about grassroots organizing, and social justice. The projects that the youth get involved with would also give them the opportunity to gain valuable, speaking, communication, and media oriented skills through workshops and projects management. The immigration stories project in particular is a new project that promises youth the opportunity to work with media and build communication and speaking skills. Youth can get involved with APIAVote by joining our Facebook page, visiting our websites, or reaching out to APIA community members.



Mohammad, with President Stephanie Chang at the November YLC meeting.



Asian & Pacific Islander American Vote- Michigan

APIAVote-Michigan is taking design submissions for our new T-shirt! We're looking for a design that will capture our goals of civic participation, advocacy, and education.

Submission guidelines:

- Must relate to our mission statement (see page 1)
- Must contain no more than three-colors
- Submissions are due by January 2nd, 2012
- Send your submissions to RJ (quiambao.rj@gmail.com).

In addition to having your work featured on our official T-shirts, the winner will also receive two free tickets to our annual gala dinner!

T-Shirt Design Contest!

APIAVote-Michigan

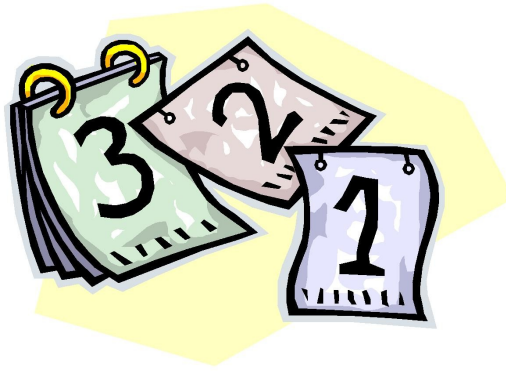
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SAVE THE DATE!



Asian American voter engagement training
 March 17-18
 University of Michigan Ann Arbor
 Time and exact location TBD

Come learn how to register, educate and mobilize Asian American voters in Michigan as we kick off our 2012 voter registration drives! This will be an interactive and fun training. Food will be provided. More information coming soon!



CPL Michigan

State Political Leaders Fellowship • Springboards • Partnership Trainings

Calling all emerging leaders! Center for Progressive Leadership is partnering up with MOSES (Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength) for the 2012 Civic Engagement Academy... and as of today, we are taking applications!

Do you care about your community and want to know how to be most effective in making the changes you want to see a reality? Do you have ideas and opinions you want to implement to make your neighborhood or city better? Have you gotten a taste of the power of community organizing and political action through volunteering on a campaign, rallying, or protesting and want to do more?

If you are ready to take the plunge from wanting community change to making it happen, the CPL Michigan Civic Engagement Academy is the program for you!

Apply for the program today!

Through 50 hours of training over 5 months, as well as peer coaching, networking, and community engagement projects, you can build a foundation of essential organizing and leadership skills that will help you shape your community and enhance your leadership by:

Developing a broader understanding of the political landscape in Michigan, including who holds power in your community, where your power comes from, and how to influence those with power.

- Learning more about the issues and policies that most impact your communities, as well as how these intersect with other communities.

- Deepening your awareness and improving your ability to collaborate across issues and communities.

- Strengthening core leadership skills to engage more fully in organizing, advocacy, issue and electoral campaigns.

- Identifying long-term leadership goals and developing a clear plan to increase your political involvement.

- Feeling empowered and equipped to take on a greater leadership role in your community.

The trainings will be held Jan. 28th-29th, Feb. 18th-19th, March 24th-25th, April 28th -29th, and June 2nd-3rd in Detroit, Michigan.

Participation in all weekend workshops is required. Individuals from across the state are encouraged to apply. The cost of the full 5 month training, including lunch and materials, is just \$200, though partial scholarships are available based on need.

To apply for a scholarship, fill out the Community Engagement Academy application and indicate in that application that you need a scholarship. Applications are due Dec. 15th. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to email Dessa Cosma at dcosma@progressiveleaders.org.

More than ever, we need to be investing in and building the political leadership to create the Michigan we want to live in.

And we need your help to make it happen.

All the best,
 Dessa Cosma
 Michigan Program Director
 Center for Progressive Leadership
www.progressiveleaders.org