

PRESS RELEASE

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**STATEMENT BY AAJC PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON
PRESIDENT BUSH'S STATE OF THE UNION**

Washington, D.C. – Asian American Justice Center President and Executive Director Karen K. Narasaki issued the following statement in response to President Bush's State of the Union address:

“The Asian American Justice Center (AAJC) appreciates President Bush’s call to enact comprehensive immigration reform. He has long recognized that our broken immigration system must be fixed, and that it cannot be fixed piecemeal or by enforcement measures alone. We were pleased to see members of Congress on both sides of the aisle respond enthusiastically to the president’s call for a long-needed overhaul of our nation’s immigration system.

As the legislative process moves forward, AAJC will pay careful attention to the elements and details of comprehensive immigration reform. These will include a workable path to legal status and eventual citizenship for undocumented immigrants and for future immigrant workers; reduction of the unconscionable backlogs in the family immigration system; meaningful labor protections for all workers in the United States and due process and justice for all those who go through our immigration system.

President Bush acknowledged the need to bring undocumented immigrants out of the shadows. This is good news for the Asian American community: there are approximately 1.5 million undocumented immigrants from Asia who are currently vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous employers, or by criminals who take advantage of their fear of being discovered. Successful comprehensive immigration reform will offer these immigrants opportunity to earn their way to legal status and eventual citizenship.

Another element of comprehensive immigration reform that is particularly important to the Asian American community is the elimination of tremendous backlogs in the family immigration system. Immigrants from Asian countries suffer from the longest backlogs. For example, a U.S. citizen who petitions for a son or daughter from the Philippines must wait approximately 14 years before he or she can legally immigrate to the United States join the parent. We hope that the administration will take an active role in addressing the plight of

these separated families.

AAJC also applauds President Bush for welcoming new immigrants and acknowledging their contributions to the United States. AAJC shares the president's belief that additional resources are needed for English and civics classes to facilitate the integration of immigrants.

Finally, President Bush called for an immigration system that is "worthy of America." AAJC believes that an integral element of such an immigration system is honoring the American tradition of making due process and a fair day in court available to all who come in contact with our immigration system.

AAJC looks forward to working with President Bush and Congress to make workable and just comprehensive immigration reform a reality."

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[The Asian American Justice Center](#), formerly known as NAPALC, is a national organization dedicated to defending and advancing the civil and human rights of Asian Americans. It works closely with three affiliates – the [Asian American Institute of Chicago](#), the [Asian Law Caucus](#) in San Francisco, and the [Asian Pacific American Legal Center](#) in Los Angeles – and over 100 community partners in 47 cities and 24 states in the country.