



ADVANCING EQUALITY

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News Release
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**Asian American Advocates Deeply Concerned About Provisions in
Senate Proposal to Cut Family Immigration Categories**
"AAJC Urges Senators to Defend Family Immigration"

Washington, D.C. – Today, the Asian American Justice Center (AAJC) expressed concern about a compromise proposal offered by Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Jon Kyl (R-AZ) that does not fully address the need for workable comprehensive immigration reform. Under this plan, there is a legalization program with a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. However, the adult children and sibling categories of the family-based immigration system would be effectively eliminated and replaced with an untested merit-based system, there is no path to permanency for temporary workers and non-citizens will receive inadequate due process protections.

"The close door negotiations produced a flawed bill that will end America's historic commitment to the full reunification of families," said Karen K. Narasaki, president and executive director of AAJC. "The proposed system is inconsistent with deeply held American values and these elements of the agreement must be addressed in order to win the support of the Asian American community."

Stewart Kwoh, executive director of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, added, "This bill does not respect family values. It unfairly invalidates family-based visa applications submitted after May 2005 and eliminates the ability of U.S. citizens to sponsor their adult children and siblings. We believe these provisions, if enacted into law, will result in an increase in undocumented immigration, because families will not stop trying to be together."

The proposal would not eliminate the ability of U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents to sponsor their spouses and minor children. However, it does set an arbitrary and unrealistic cap on the number of visas available for U.S. citizens to bring in their parents. An estimated 90,000 visas per year will be cut to 40,000.

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“This proposal compromises the ability of millions of American citizens to reunite with their adult children and siblings, and will undermine the most important ingredient in creating healthy communities,” said Gen Fujioka, program director for the Asian Law Caucus in San Francisco. “Families are the source of our social, cultural, and economic vitality. The Senate proposal makes it more difficult for talented and hardworking immigration to put down roots in the United States.”

“The proposal further undermines the due process rights of non-citizens.” said Tuyet Le, executive director of the Asian American Institute. “In addition, the proposed new temporary worker program may actually increase undocumented immigration by denying these individuals a path to citizenship and a legal way to join the communities they come here to build.”

The proposal would not allow immigrants waiting in the legalization process to bring in family members who are not already here. The 12 million undocumented would have to go through a 13 to 15 year process to become legal permanent residents before being able to permanently bring in even their spouse or minor child.

“Although the proposal includes a legalization program that provides a path to citizenship, AAJC has strong reservations regarding the workability of what these immigrants will be required to do,” said AAJC’s National Asian Pacific American Bar Association Partners Community Law Fellow George C. Wu.

“With the process moving forward, we are committed to working with Senators who respect this nation’s tradition of family reunification and who want workable and fair solutions to this nation’s immigration problems,” continued Narasaki. “We will continue to work to improve this bill, but if the needs of current and future American families are not met, we will have to oppose it.”

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The Asian American Justice Center (www.advancingequality.org) 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 in Chicago (www.aaichicago.org), the Asian Law Caucus (www.asianlawcaucus.org) in San Francisco, and the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (www.apalc.org) in Los Angeles – and nearly 100 community partners in 49 cities, 23 states and Washington, D.C.