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NAPALC Opposes John Roberts' Confirmation as Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court

Washington, D.C., Sept. 26, 2005 – The National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC) announced its opposition to Judge John Roberts's confirmation to the position of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States of America.

“It is with disappointment that we have come to the decision to oppose Judge John Roberts for Chief Justice,” said Karen K. Narasaki, president and executive director of NAPALC. “Although there were concerns about substantial issues raised by what little written record was released, we had hoped that the testimony he gave during his confirmation hearing would reveal a commitment to civil rights that was not apparent in his record. Unfortunately, his answers have done little to allay the fears and concerns of those working to protect the civil rights of this country.”

Before the Senate's Judiciary Committee hearings began, NAPALC had expressed concerns about Roberts's sparse judicial record and the records that were released when he was a lawyer during Reagan Administration. At that time, Roberts drafted materials that would have required plaintiffs in Voting Rights Act cases to prove intentional discrimination in election rules. This would have allowed many discriminatory voting schemes to go unchallenged.

Not only did his Senate testimony not provide substantial information, Roberts' answers to questions on civil rights and other issues were disappointingly evasive and non-committal.

Supreme Court decisions continue to have an immense impact on the lives of Asian Americans, ranging from *Gong Lum v. Rice* (1927), an unsuccessful challenge to school segregation that would later be overturned by *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, to *United States v. Korematsu* (1944), where the Court upheld the internment of Japanese Americans. Often, cases where the rights and liberties of minorities are at question are decided by a very narrow 5-4 margin.

Because of the important role of the Supreme Court, a nominee's judicial record and hearing testimony usually provides insight into his or her judicial philosophy or what type of approach he or she would take to civil rights issues that are central to NAPALC's mission.

“We regretfully believe that John Roberts would fail to champion civil rights in a manner that would ensure that all communities will be full participants in the rights and liberties that our constitution promises,” said Aimee J. Baldillo, attorney for race relations and anti-Asian violence at NAPALC. “The confirmation hearings did not convince us that Roberts would decide cases important to our key issues with an empathy and understanding of how those decisions affect our communities.”

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The National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (www.napalc.org) is a national civil rights organization dedicated to advancing and defending the civil rights of Asian Pacific Americans. The Asian American Institute (www.aaichicago.org) of Chicago is a pan-Asian not-for-profit organization whose mission is to empower the Asian American community through advocacy by utilizing research, education, and coalition building. The Asian Law Caucus (www.asianlawcaucus.org) of San Francisco is the oldest Asian Pacific American legal group in the nation. The Asian Pacific American Legal Center (www.apalc.org) is the only organization in Southern California dedicated to providing the Asian Pacific American community with multilingual, culturally sensitive legal services and civic education.