

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **AANHPI Organizations Convene Historic California Gubernatorial Forum, Elevating Community Voices Ahead of Election**

### **Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Californians Engaged Gubernatorial Candidates, Citing AANHPI Priorities for California's Future**

**LOS ANGELES** – A coalition of 40 leading Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) organizations from across Los Angeles county, led by the Korean American Democratic Committee (KADC) and Center for Asian Americans United for Self Empowerment (CAUSE), convened a historic California gubernatorial candidate forum on Saturday, April 18, in Los Angeles' Koreatown, bringing together community members, leaders, and candidates for a critical conversation on the future of the state and how they will support AANHPI priorities as Governor.

As the only gubernatorial forum in Los Angeles County hosted by and for AANHPI communities, the event created a powerful and unique opportunity for gubernatorial candidates to engage directly with one of California's fastest-growing and most influential constituencies.

Gubernatorial candidates who participated included Xavier Becerra, Tom Steyer, Tony Thurmond, Antonio Villaraigosa and Betty Yee, addressing issues central to AANHPI communities. Candidates discussed affordability and the economy, immigration, and the environment. .

"AANHPI Californians are voters, workers, business owners, and leaders. We belong and we matter. The individual we elect as California's governor must make sure we have a seat at the table that we deserve and have earned," said Esther Lim, president of Korean American Democratic Committee. "Genuine engagement, through meaningful inclusion and representation, helps repair institutional distrust and strengthens civic participation.

With more than 7.3 million AANHPI residents in California—representing over 15% of the state's population—the forum highlighted the AANHPI community's growing civic power and the importance of direct engagement in shaping California's future.

"AANHPI voices must be heard and reflected in the decisions that impact our lives," said Nancy Yap, executive director of Center for Asian Americans United for Self Empowerment (CAUSE). "If we want to advance equity and representation for AANHPI communities, this is what outreach, community organizing and engagement looks like."

A recording of the participating candidates' responses will be released with translations in multiple AANHPI languages by May 4, 2026, on [CAUSE's website](#), expanding language access to voter education resources for diverse AANHPI communities.

As the gubernatorial race continues, forum organizers urge AANHPI communities to stay engaged, get informed, and make a plan to have their voices count at the ballot box for the June 2, 2026 gubernatorial election. County elections officials will begin mailing each registered voter a vote-by-mail ballot on May 4, 2026.

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### **Economic and Demographic Power**

Over 7.3 million Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders reside in California, representing more than 15% of the state's population and one of its fastest growing communities over the past decade. AANHPI-owned businesses account for nearly 25% of the state's businesses, generating over \$200 billion in economic activity. The AANHPI community holds a collective \$2 trillion in consumer purchasing power and comprises nearly 20% of California's electorate.

### **Co-Hosting Organizations (40)**

Korean American Democratic Committee (KADC); Center for Asian Americans United for Self Empowerment (CAUSE); Through Peace; World Mission University; AAPI Equity Alliance; UCLA Asian American Studies Center's Asian American Pacific Islander Policy Initiative; Loyola Marymount University (LMU) Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts Political Science and International Relations; Pilipino Workers Center (PWC); Asian Dems of Los Angeles; 'Ahahui Kīwila Hawai'i o San Diego; Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California (AJSOCAL); Asian American Media Alliance (AAMA); Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Los Angeles County (APABA); Asian Pacific Community Fund (APCF); Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement; Cal State Los Angeles College of Ethnic Studies; Chinese American Citizens Alliance, Chinese American Museum; Daniel K. Inouye National Center for the Preservation of Democracy at the Japanese American National Museum (JANM); Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC); Faith And Community Empowerment (FACE); Hawaii's Daughters Guild of California; Khmer Girls in Action (KGA); Korean American Federation of Los Angeles (KAFLA); Leadership and Education through Gaagana Fa'asamoa (Le GaFa); Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC); Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC); Nikkei Progressives; OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates of Greater Los Angeles; Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance (OCAPICA); Pacific Islander Collective San Diego (PICSD); Pacific Islander Health Partnership (PIHP); Pilipino American Los Angeles Democrats (PALAD); PIVOT: The Progressive Vietnamese American Organization; Search to Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA); South Asian Network (SAN); Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC); Southern California Pacific Islander Community Response Team (SoCal PICRT); Thai Community Development Center (Thai CDC); United Cambodian Community (UCC) and others.