



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 30, 2026

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AAPI Equity Alliance Celebrates 50 Years of Legacy & Leadership for the Asian American & Pacific Islander Community

***AAPI Equity Alliance to Host Gala and Policy Summit Honoring Leaders in
Government, Civil Rights, Civic Engagement, Arts & Culture***

LOS ANGELES – AAPI Equity Alliance will celebrate its 50th anniversary on Thursday, May 21st, at the California Science Center in Los Angeles, with two milestone events: the inaugural policy summit, “**AAPI Power: Democracy in Action,**” immediately followed by the anniversary gala, “**50 Years of Leadership & Legacy.**”

Founded in 1976—initially as the “Asian Lunch Bunch” and then Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council (A3PCON)—the coalition has worked to bring together Asian American and African American communities after the 1992 Uprising, ensure health care access for immigrant communities and increase AAPI voting power in local elections.

“Over the past five decades, our coalition has unified as one voice to champion racial equity, engage civically and keep vulnerable AAPI communities safe,” said Manjusha P. Kulkarni, executive director of AAPI Equity Alliance. “Our gala and policy summit honors our founders’ legacy to build AAPI community power and mobilize the AAPI voting bloc for critical upcoming elections.”

The “**50 Years of Leadership & Legacy**” evening gala will recognize its founders and generations of leaders vital to AAPI Equity Alliance’s founding and growth. Leaders in government, civil rights, civic engagement, and arts & culture will also be honored. Honorees include Assemblymember Mike Fong, 49th District; Snehal Desai, Brindell & Milton Gottlieb Artistic Director, Center Theatre Group; Angelica Salas, Executive Director, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA); and Isa Kelawili Whalen, Executive Director & Founder, API Advocates.

“I’m proud to see the impact AAPI Equity Alliance has had over the past 50 years and am hopeful for the future,” said Ron Wakabayashi, who was elected the organization’s founding president in 1978, when it was known as Asian Pacific Planning Council (APPCON).

“In the early 1970s, the AAPI community was much smaller and the visibility of AAPIs was very low. Asian Pacific Planning Council played a critical role in helping government officials

recognize the specific nuances and needs of AAPI communities that were not acknowledged,” said Wakabayashi.

Earlier in the day, the “**AAPI Power: Democracy in Action Policy Summit**,” will convene policy and elected officials, community leaders, nonprofit staff members, and students to discuss urgent issues impacting AAPIs, including ensuring the future of our democracy, protecting immigrant communities, and galvanizing civic participation for the 2026 midterm elections. Featured speakers include opening keynote speaker Texas State Representative Gene Wu; Los Angeles City Councilmember Nithya Raman; and closing plenary speaker Arshad Hasan, Principal, Convey Communications.

“With key races shaping the future of California and Los Angeles County, the summit will focus on real solutions for civic engagement in AAPI communities,” said Kulkarni. “It is critical for us to elevate our diverse community voices and energize voters to be a driving force in shaping our democracy and our future. At a time of rising challenges and high-stakes elections, AAPI communities cannot afford to sit on the sidelines.”

For more information, visit the links provided for the Summit and Gala.

- **AAPI Power: Democracy in Action Policy Summit** – Thursday, May 21, 9 A.M. - 4 P.M.: bit.ly/AAPIPOWER
- **AAPI Equity Alliance Gala: 50 Years of Leadership & Legacy** – Thursday, May 21, 5:30 P.M. - 9 P.M.: bit.ly/anniversarygala50

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About AAPI Equity Alliance:

AAPI Equity Alliance (AAPI Equity) is a coalition of 50 community-based organizations serving the diverse needs of the 1.6 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Los Angeles County and beyond. It is dedicated to improving the lives of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders through civic engagement, capacity building, and policy advocacy.