

# PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 12, 2007

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## **ASIAN AMERICAN LEADERS CONDEMN GOVERNOR'S VETO OF MARRIAGE EQUALITY BILL STRUGGLE FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY CONTINUES**

FRIDAY, October 12, 2007—Asian American community leaders and organizations expressed strong disappointment today in Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's veto of AB 43, legislation that would have given same-sex couples the ability to marry. Authored by Assemblymember Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, and sponsored by Equality California (EQCA), the bill was passed by even wider margins in both the California State Assembly and Senate this year than a similar bill that was sent to the Governor's desk in 2004.

"Each of us deserves the same opportunities to realize our hopes and dreams," says Clarence Wong, Steering Committee Member of API Equality-SF. "By excluding gay and lesbian families in our Asian American communities from marriage, the Governor has effectively prevented these families from having the same opportunities as everyone else. It is disappointing that our Governor cannot stand in support of all families in California." According to UCLA's Williams Institute, there are over 13,000 gay and lesbian families in our Asian American communities that are being excluded from marriage.

The legislation was endorsed by numerous Asian American community leaders and organizations, including: Board of Equalization Vice Chair, Judy Chu; California State Controller John Chiang; Asian Americans for Civil Rights and Equality (AACRE); Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California; Asian Pacific American Bar Association (APABA); Asian Law Caucus; Chinese for Affirmative Action; and, the Japanese American Citizens League—Pacific Regional Office.

In addition, six Asian American legislators in the California State Assembly and Senate approved the bill, including: Assemblymember Mike Eng, D-Monterey Park; Assemblymember Mary Hayashi, D-Castro Valley; Assemblymember Ted Lieu, D-Torrance; Assemblymember Fiona Ma, D-San Francisco; Assemblymember Alberto Torrico, D-Newark; and, Senator Leland Yee, D-San Francisco.

"In spite of the Governor's veto, the struggle for marriage equality in California continues," says Karin Wang, Vice President-Programs at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center and Steering Committee Member of API Equality-LA. "Although we are disappointed in the Governor's decision, it is only a temporary setback. Asian American leaders and organizations throughout the state will continue to fight for equal marriage rights for gay and lesbian members in our communities. We also believe that this is a fight for a fairer and more just California."

Although the Governor's veto is a major disappointment, other efforts are underway to secure marriage equality in California. Recently, API Equality, along with its partners, API Equality-LA and API Equality-SF, spearheaded an amicus brief (also known as "friend of the court" brief) in support of the *Consolidated Marriage Cases* to win the freedom to marry for same-sex couples in the state. The case is currently before the California Supreme Court, and a decision is not expected until March 2008 at the earliest.

*API Equality is committed to working in our Asian and Pacific Islander communities for equal marriage rights and fair treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) families through community organizing, media outreach, public education, and legal and legislative advocacy.*

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