

PRESS RELEASE

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UNPRECEDENTED COALITION OF OVER 60 ASIAN AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS FILE LEGAL BRIEF SUPPORTING EQUAL MARRIAGE RIGHTS IN CALIFORNIA

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2007—A team of Asian American attorneys and advocates in Los Angeles and San Francisco announced today that a coalition of over 60 local, state, and national Asian American organizations will be filing a legal brief in support of equal marriage rights for gay and lesbian couples.

The amicus (“friend of the court”) brief is being filed in the consolidated *California Marriage Cases*, currently pending before the California Supreme Court. The *California Marriage Cases* are historic lawsuits urging the California courts to end the exclusion of loving and committed same-sex couples from marriage. The same-sex couples and their supporters ask the Court to hold that the state’s current law denying lesbian and gay persons the freedom to marry violates the Constitution’s guarantee of equality. The amicus brief filed today by the coalition of Asian American organizations seeks to support basic fairness for same-sex couples and their families, drawing from the Asian American community’s own past struggle with marriage discrimination in the state of California.

The amicus brief was supported by many of the nation’s largest and most prominent Asian American civil rights advocates, lawyers associations, social service organizations, and community groups. Supporting organizations represented nearly every major urban area in the state with a significant Asian American population, including San Francisco, the Silicon Valley, Los Angeles, Orange County, and San Diego. Together these organizations also reflect the broad diversity of the Asian American community, including Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, South Asian, and Southeast Asian organizations.

“By filing this brief, Asian American organizations are joining together in an unprecedented show of unity and support for equal marriage rights within the Asian American community,” said **Karin Wang, Vice President-Programs at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center**. “Together, we want to send a strong message to the California Supreme Court that Asian Americans support a just and fair California for all members of our community.”

“Asian Americans have fought hard to achieve marriage equality that was denied to us on the basis of race,” stated **Robert Chang, Professor of Law at Loyola Law School (Los Angeles) and currently visiting at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law**. “We must be committed to ensuring that this history is not forgotten and that marriage equality is not denied to lesbian and gay Asian Americans or to the broader lesbian and gay community.”

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Many of the endorsing organizations are not specifically focused on lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender issues, but articulated strong support for the brief. According to **Dae Joong Yoon, Executive Director of the Korean Resource Center (KRC)**, “The Korean Resource Center believes that every human being, regardless of immigration status, ethnicity, race, gender, age, and sexual orientation, should have equal rights. KRC supports efforts to achieve marriage equality and believes that same-sex couples should have the same legal rights of marriage as a matter of respecting the civil and fundamental human rights guaranteed by the Constitution.”

Paul Chan, President-elect of the Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association (SCCLA), said: "The Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association is one of the oldest and largest minority bar associations in California. As part of our mission, we promote the legal and civil rights of Chinese Americans and other Asian Pacific Americans. SCCLA takes social and political issues seriously and does not take positions on them lightly, but given the history of marriage discrimination against Chinese immigrants, we firmly and enthusiastically stand together with other civil rights groups in supporting marriage equality."

Vid Prabhakaran, Endorsements Chair of the South Asian Bar Association of Northern California (SABA-NC), declared: “The South Asian Bar Association of Northern California is proud to serve as an advocate for the South Asian community. As part of that mission, SABA-NC recognizes that minority communities often face similar challenges at various points throughout their histories. The South Asian community has felt the burden of laws and policies that limit their marriage rights in its past. Today, we stand with the gay and lesbian community – both inside and outside the South Asian community – as they face similar discrimination.”

Debee Yamamoto, Director of Public Policy for the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), stated, “In 1994, the Japanese American Citizens League became the first non-gay national civil rights organization after the American Civil Liberties Union to support marriage equality for same-sex couples. Current California laws deny same-sex couples the fundamental right to marry. As Japanese Americans, we recognize the detrimental effect that exclusionary laws have on communities. As advocates for civil and human rights, the JACL is proud to support this amicus brief and we urge the California Supreme Court to uphold the rights of same-sex couples.”

The legal brief team, many of whom donated their time and expertise to this project as volunteers or “pro bono” lawyers, included (in alphabetical order): **Robert Chang**, professor of law at Loyola Law School (Los Angeles) and currently visiting at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law; **Kevin Fong**, Esq., Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP (PWSP); **Alex Fukui**, Esq., API Equality-LA; **Alice Kwong Ma Hayashi**, Esq., PWSP; **Victor Hwang**, Esq., Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach (APILO); **Deanna Kitamura**, Esq., API Equality-LA; **Karin Wang**, Esq., Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC); **Andy Wong**, API Equality/Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA); **Brian Wong**, Esq., PWSP; and, **Doreena Wong**, Esq., API Equality-LA. Many others at APALC, API Equality-LA, API Equality-SF, APILO, and PWSP were also involved with the brief and outreach.

To download the brief and related documents online, please go to any of the following websites: APALC (www.apalc.org), CAA (www.caasf.org), or Lambda Legal (www.lambdalegal.org).

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List of organizations filing the brief:

API Equality
 API Equality – LA
 API Equality – SF
 Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay Area
 Asian American Institute
 Asian American Justice Center
 Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund
 Asian American Psychological Association
 Asian American Queer Women Activists
 Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum
 Asian and Pacific Islander Lesbian, Bisexual Women and Transgender Network
 Asian and Pacific Islander Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
 Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice
 Asian Law Alliance
 Asian Law Caucus
 Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team
 Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Los Angeles County
 Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance – Alameda
 Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance – Los Angeles
 Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California
 Asian Pacific Americans for Progress – Los Angeles
 Asian Pacific Bar Association of Silicon Valley
 Asian Pacific Islander Family Pride
 Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach
 Asian Pacific Islander Pride Council
 Asian Pacific Islander Wellness Center
 Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council
 Asian Pacific Women's Center
 Asian Women's Shelter
 Asian/Pacific Bar of California
 Center for the Pacific Asian Family
 Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA)
 Chinese Progressive Association
 Conference of Asian Pacific American Law Faculty
 Filipinos for Affirmative Action
 Gay Asian Pacific Alliance
 Gay Asian Pacific Support Network
 Institute for Leadership Development and Study of Pacific Asian North American Religion (PANA Institute)
 Japanese American Bar Association
 Japanese American Citizens League
 Khmer Girls in Action
 Korean American Bar Association of Southern California
 Korean Community Center of the East Bay
 Korean Resource Center
 Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance
 My Sister's House
 National Asian Pacific American Bar Association
 National Asian Pacific American Law Student Association
 National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
 National Korean American Service & Education Consortium
 Orange County Asian & Pacific Islander Community Alliance
 Pan Asian Lawyers of San Diego
 Philippine American Bar Association
 Satrang
 South Asian American Leaders of Tomorrow
 South Asian Bar Association of Northern California
 South Asian Bar Association of San Diego
 South Asian Bar Association of Southern California
 South Asian Network
 Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
 Southeast Asian Community Alliance
 Southern California Chinese Lawyers Associations
 Vietnamese American Bar Association of Northern California

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