



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans releases 2012 Legislative Priorities

The Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans (Council), a state agency that advises the Minnesota legislature and governor's office on behalf of the Asian Pacific community, has identified areas it will focus on for the upcoming 2012 legislative session.

Workforce and Economy

Employment & Economic Recovery – Getting a Piece of the Pie

As part of Governor Dayton's "A Jobs Plan for Minnesota" is a bonding bill and initiatives to help businesses grow and programs aimed at training the workforce for jobs of the future. A bonding bill funds publicly owned buildings, property, roads, and lands. A bonding bill is often referred to as a public works or jobs bill as most of the money will go to build, repair, renovate, or replace existing infrastructure. The Council supports the bonding bill as we believe it will provide jobs to Minnesotans. But we are also aware that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders' are underrepresented in the construction industry that will benefit the most from this bill. The challenge for the governor and the legislature is to make sure that Asian Pacific Minnesotans see real benefits from these initiatives by holding employers and contractors accountable via reports on recruitment, hiring, and retention.

- HF 645 - Collaborative Program to reduce unemployment

Education

Closing the Achievement Gap – Educational Success for Every Student

Education is critical for the economic and social wellness of our state. Education reforms need to account for the unique needs of Asian Pacific students and families. In March 2012, the Council will release a 35+ page report on the educational achievement of Asian Pacific students and hold a Day at the Capitol on March 19th to engage our public leaders on the importance of education. Community members are encouraged to attend and to speak to their legislators about the support our students, parents, and families need for educational success.

Bullying – Safe Schools for All Students

A recent study found that Asian Americans endure far more bullying at US schools than members of other ethnic groups, with teenagers of the community three times as likely to face taunts on the Internet, new data shows. Attorney General Lori Swanson and other state leaders have taken initiative to combat bullying in schools, but bullying is an issue that needs to be addressed by community members as well. We encourage those interested in addressing bullying and sharing stories about bullying to contact us.

- HF 1953 - Prohibits bullying and retaliation against bullying in public schools

Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans 2012 Legislative Priorities, continued

Health

Restoring PCA cuts

Last session, the legislature enacted a 20% wage cut for family members providing personal care assistance (PCA) to a relative. The Council is concerned about the impact these cuts have on the family members who need to provide PCA services to a relative due to linguistic and cultural needs. It can be difficult for family members to find a PCA provider that can address language barriers and provide culturally specific care to a loved one.

- HF 1907 / SF 1556 - Restores the 20% wage cut for family members providing PCA services.
- <http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2012/02/17/disability-cuts/>

Restoring EMA cuts

Recently, 2,300 Minnesotans received letters informing them that they would no longer qualify for Emergency Medical Assistance (EMA) beginning January 1, 2012. In addition, EMA would no longer cover such treatment as dialysis, chemotherapy, in-patient treatment, or mental health treatment. These changes impacted only non-citizens (includes legal residents) and the persons affected ranged from children to the elderly. The cuts to EMA threaten the lives of many Minnesotans and the Council will work with other partners to restore these needed services to non-citizens.

- HF 1888 / SF 1672 - Citizenship requirement eligibility provisions modified (MA)

State Government

Enabling Statute – Continue the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans

In 2011, the Minnesota legislature enacted the Sunset Law which created a Sunset Commission charged to review all state agencies, councils, boards, and commission and to make recommendations on sunsetting any or all of them. Many agencies, including most state boards, councils, and commissions, expire automatically at the scheduled date of review unless a new law continues the agency. In the spring of 2012, the sunset commission recommended that the Council not be sunsetted. A new enabling statute is needed to prevent an automatic sunset of the Council.

- HF 2048 – Providing for the continued existence of the Council
- HF 2154 / SF 1900 – Providing that certain councils do not expire
- HF 2555 - Sunset review changes implemented

Working with Government to Strengthen Communities

The Council will continue working with state government leadership on issues of concern for Asian Pacific Minnesotans, ranging from supporting education, health care and public assistance, eliminating health disparities, assisting refugee populations, and protecting human rights.

Human Trafficking

Creating awareness to spur community action

Human trafficking in the US has been rapidly increasing and has been estimated to have surpassed drug trafficking activities. Human trafficking is a crime against humanity and violates the most precious human rights of freedom from slavery. The Council is releasing a blog series to help raise awareness of human trafficking in Minnesota and to offer ways people can get involved.

Constitutional Amendment

Voter ID – Protecting the rights of our citizens

The requirement of needing a photo ID with a current address is quickly making its way through the legislature. If passed, the question of requiring a photo ID to vote will appear on ballots. The Council is concerned that this constitutional amendment proposal would disenfranchise many members of the Asian Pacific population, including low-income populations, people who cannot easily obtain a birth certificate (such as being born in a country they fled from as a refugee), and limited English proficient populations.