



WHITE HOUSE INITIATIVE ON ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS

On October 14, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the Executive Order reestablishing the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (Initiative). The Initiative, co-chaired by U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan and U.S. Department of Commerce Secretary Gary Locke, is housed within the U.S. Department of Education, and led by Executive Director Kiran Ahuja. The Initiative works to improve the quality of life and opportunities for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders by facilitating increased access to and participation in federal programs where they remain underserved.

The Executive Order also established the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and the Federal Interagency Working Group. Working in conjunction, the Commission and Federal Interagency Working Group are comprised of individuals, executive branch departments, agencies, and offices representing a broad spectrum of fields and programs impacting Asian Americans and Pacific Islander communities.

The Initiative works collaboratively with the White House Office of Public Engagement and the designated Federal agencies to increase Asian Americans and Pacific Islander participation in programs in education, commerce, business, health, human services, housing, environment, arts, agriculture, labor and employment, transportation, justice, veterans affairs and economic and community development.

The Initiative seeks to highlight both the tremendous unmet needs in the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities as well as the dynamic community assets that can be leveraged to meet many of those needs. The Initiative focuses on crosscutting priority areas that may reach across all issue areas and agencies, including, for example, advancing research, data collection, analysis and dissemination for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders; ensuring access, especially linguistic access and cultural competence, for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; and encouraging public and private-sector collaboration and community involvement in improving the health, education, environment and well-being of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

This historic Executive Order initiates another avenue of access to the federal government for Asian American and Pacific Islander communities and affirms President Obama's commitment to Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.