

**Asian Pacific American Bar Association
of Los Angeles County**
12021 Wilshire Boulevard
Number 603
Los Angeles, California 90025

September 8, 2004



VIA FACSIMILE AND MAIL

Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: Oppose Elimination of Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander
American Affairs (California Performance Review)

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

On behalf of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Los Angeles County (“APABA”), I am writing to strongly urge you to reject the California Performance Review’s (“CPR”) recommendation to abolish the much-needed Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American (“APIA”) Affairs.

APABA is a nonprofit association of legal professionals, including lawyers and judges, which seeks to provide a vehicle and forum for the unified expression of opinions and positions upon current social, political, economic, legal or other matters or events of concern to the APIA communities. APABA is the only pan-Asian association of legal professionals in Los Angeles County, and its membership reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the APIA community in the greater Los Angeles area.

According to the 2000 Census data, Asians and Pacific Islanders were the fastest growing racial/ethnic group in Los Angeles County in the last decade, increasing by 35%. APIAs also grew by more than 50% across the state and 75% nationally. More than one third of all APIAs in the nation live in the State of California. The APIA population in Los Angeles County alone is larger than that of any state in the nation, including New York or Hawaii.

The APIA Commission was established in 2002 to address issues in the growing APIA communities regarding culture, language, well-being and history, which were not being adequately represented in California’s regulatory and legislative processes. The APIA Commission consists of 13 members appointed by the Governor and Legislature, and is charged with advising the Governor, Legislature, state agencies, departments, and commissions on issues relating to the social and economic development, and the rights and interests of California’s APIA communities. The APIA Commission serves as a statewide voice to bring forward concerns and issues in the APIA community directly to the policy

makers.

One of the CPR's stated goals is to increase government's accountability and responsiveness to the residents of the State of California. The CPR's recommendation to eliminate the APIA Commission and transfer its responsibilities to a newly formed Governor's Office of Community Affairs would greatly undermine that goal. According to the CPR, the new Office of Community Affairs would purportedly replace at least five distinct and diverse commissions and task forces, and would be "directly accountable to the Governor for the success or failure of the programs operated by these separate agencies." However, the APIA Commission does not administer any state programs. It serves as an independent advisory body to the Governor, Legislature, and other state entities. The APIA Commission's function is to bring together API leaders from different vocations, backgrounds, and regions of the State to give an impartial assessment of the needs of the community. The commissioners provide the Governor and the Legislature unfiltered feedback about community needs that might otherwise never reach Sacramento.

The CPR's proposal to abolish the APIA Commission further offers no value or fiscal benefit to the State. The APIA Commission receives no state funding and is supported entirely by private sources. The creation of an Office of Community Affairs, on the other hand, would require a significant number of staff to adequately serve the many diverse communities, greatly outweighing the cost of the existing APIA Commission. While the establishment of a Governor's Office of Community Affairs to create a focal point for access is a positive concept that could increase access for the State's many diverse communities, the Office should compliment, not replace a commission whose role is to independently advise the Governor and Legislature.

The APIA community worked hard to establish the Commission on APIA Affairs so that our voice could be better heard in Sacramento. Please help us make California government more accountable to our community. I urge you to reject the CPR's proposal to eliminate the APIA Commission. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (310) 777-1990.

Sincerely,

Teri T. Pham, President
Asian Pacific American Bar Association

cc: California Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus
Asian/Pacific Bar of California