

# 2026/03/02 APA Justice Monthly Meeting

**APA Justice Meeting – Monday, 2026/03/02**

**1:55 pm Eastern Time / 10:55 am Pacific Time**

## 1. Update from Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Speaker: Dennis Jing, Staff Attorney, Anti-Profilng, Civil Rights & National Security Program, Advancing Justice | AAJC

Advancing Justice | AAJC: [Anti-Profilng, Civil Rights & National Security Program](#)

Substituting for Joanna YangQing Derman who was on leave, Dennis Jing, Staff Attorney of the Anti-Profilng, Civil Rights & National Security Program, Advancing Justice | AAJC, provided two key updates.

First, he reported that AAJC continues to monitor developments related to the China Initiative and the Commerce, Justice, and Science (CJS) appropriations process for Fiscal Year 2027. In prior years, AAJC and its partners have successfully worked with allies in Congress to remove harmful language directing the Department of Justice to reestablish the China Initiative. Ensuring that similar provisions are excluded again this year remains a high priority, and AAJC will continue outreach and provide updates as developments unfold.

Second, Dennis discussed the upcoming expiration of Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), which lapses on April 20, 2026, unless Congress acts. While Section 702 allows warrantless surveillance of non-U.S. persons abroad for foreign intelligence purposes and is considered vital to national security, AAJC and a broader surveillance reform coalition are advocating for stronger safeguards in any reauthorization. These include warrant requirements, enhanced privacy protections, and measures to prevent disproportionate impacts on civil liberties—particularly for Asian American, Pacific Islander, and immigrant communities with ties abroad. Advocacy efforts with congressional offices are ongoing ahead of the reauthorization deadline.

## 2. Update from Asian American Scholar Forum

Speaker: Gisela Perez Kusakawa, Executive Director, [Asian American Scholar Forum](#) (AASF), [gpkusakawa@aaforum.org](mailto:gpkusakawa@aaforum.org)

Gisela highlighted three major updates. First, she discussed the recent hearing in the case involving Dr. Jane Ying Wu and Northwestern University. Although Dr. Wu was not charged following a 2019 NIH investigation, her family has alleged that the university took damaging actions against her, including limiting her work, closing her lab, reassigning grants, isolating her, and involuntarily admitting her to a psychiatric unit. The court allowed several claims—including a discrimination claim—to move forward, and written discovery will proceed. AASF is closely monitoring the case, has organized support from more than 1,000 faculty signatories, is preparing a nonprofit letter with Advancing Justice AAJC, and will host an educational webinar featuring Dr. Wu’s daughter. Gisela emphasized that the case reflects the broader employment and institutional ripple effects of the China Initiative.

Second, she noted that AASF is monitoring reports of potential efforts to bar individuals of Chinese descent, including permanent residents, from certain federal employment roles. AASF is assessing these developments and will keep the community informed about any actions requiring response.

Finally, she ended on a positive note, announcing AASF’s inaugural AIX Summit in New York City on April 17. The summit will highlight Asian American leadership in artificial intelligence and research, featuring prominent scholars and scientists, and aims to celebrate achievements while strengthening the pipeline of future talent in the United States. For more information, visit <https://www.aasforum.org/2026/02/17/inaugural-aasf-aix-summit/>

### **3. Remarks by Mayor Kaohly Her**

Speaker: [Kaohly Her](#), Mayor, St. Paul, Minnesota

Mayor Kaohly Her made history as Saint Paul’s first Hmong American mayor and was sworn in on January 2, 2026.

Mayor Kaohly Her reported a troubling escalation of immigration enforcement in Minnesota, particularly targeting AAPI communities—including many law-abiding residents and citizens who are not criminals or national security threats. She cautioned that conditions are “far worse than what you see on the news,” describing individuals with valid documentation, long-time lawful status, and deep community roots being detained or swept into enforcement actions. Many were transferred to out-of-state detention facilities and later released once their lawful status was verified—only to be left to make their own way home.

These were residents who had complied with federal check-ins for years, maintained steady employment, paid taxes, and raised families, yet were suddenly portrayed as public safety threats. Mayor Her emphasized that some had decades-old convictions or had been wrongfully convicted as minors tried as adults, or accepted plea deals years ago without fully

understanding immigration consequences. Many had since rebuilt their lives, contributing meaningfully to their communities, and were not violent offenders or national security risks.

Mayor Her also expressed concern that ICE enforcement actions are sometimes carried out by agents insufficiently trained to properly assess complex immigration documentation. She described situations in which individuals presented valid paperwork, yet agents either could not interpret it correctly or proceeded with detention pending later review. She underscored that lawful residents—including U.S. citizens—were often detained first and sorted out later.

She described the systematic nature of targeting, noting that Hmong, Southeast Asian, and Korean communities were disproportionately affected. Agents went “door-to-door asking who the Asian neighbors were and where they lived,” and enforcement ramped up months before it drew broader attention. The community’s hyper-invisibility meant early incidents received little public notice, and protective measures had to be organized at the grassroots level, including accompaniment to federal check-ins, coordination with local churches, and establishing networks to support residents detained out-of-state. Mayor Her also linked the escalation to the shooting death in St. Paul shortly after she took office, noting that broader visibility of these threats only came after incidents affecting other communities.

In response, the City of St. Paul enacted ordinances limiting ICE activity on city property, requiring agents to display identification, and prohibiting face coverings to reduce confusion with local law enforcement. The city provided support to small businesses impacted by enforcement actions—some of which saw revenues drop 60–70%—backed legal challenges, coordinated community safety efforts, and organized strategies for protests and large gatherings to ensure constitutional rights were observed.

At the state level, collaboration with the governor and attorney general expanded clemency hearings—from one per year to four per year, with eight reviews of paperwork annually—resulting in hundreds of pardons for immigrants whose past or unjust convictions had placed them at risk despite years of lawful conduct. Mayor Her highlighted that these measures “meant the world” to affected families and reinforced her central message: the individuals being detained are community members—not criminals or national security threats—and deserve fairness, competence, and due process.

## 4. Remarks by Rep. Grace Meng

Speaker: Grace Meng, Chair, [Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus](#) (CAPAC)

- CAPAC: [2025 End-of-Year Report](#)

Judith Teruya, Executive Director, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), [Judith.Teruya@mail.house.gov](mailto:Judith.Teruya@mail.house.gov)

As Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), Rep. Grace Meng leads a non-partisan and bicameral caucus with more than 80 members to promote the well-being of the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) community.

Congresswoman Grace Meng thanked the APA Justice team for convening monthly meetings that allow community leaders to collaborate and support one another. She offered special gratitude to Mayor Kaohly Her, praising her “fearless leadership in the face of adversity and chaos” and noting that while the road ahead will be long, the mayor shared practical ideas that can be advanced both locally and nationally.

Turning to national politics, Rep. Meng criticized the president’s recent State of the Union address, saying it focused more on himself than on helping the American people. She pointed to what she described as broken promises, particularly to Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities—such as pledges to lower costs, protect Medicaid, and allow legal immigration. Instead, she said, the administration attempted to eliminate the Minority Business Development Agency (which House Democrats preserved) and is seeking to change Small Business Administration loan rules in ways that would make it harder for community members to access capital. She also condemned intensified immigration enforcement actions that, as described by Mayor Her, have separated families—including those here legally and without criminal records. Rep. Meng said people are being unlawfully arrested, detained, or deported by masked agents, sometimes based on accent or appearance, leaving many afraid to leave home without carrying identification.

Rep. Meng stressed that despite efforts to signal that AAPI communities do not belong or to erase their contributions from American history, their role is foundational to the nation. As the country approaches its 250th anniversary, she highlighted historic milestones—from Filipino sailors arriving in Morro Bay in 1587, to Chinese laborers building the transcontinental railroad, to Asian American athletes representing the United States at the recent Winter Olympics. She underscored that “our history is American history” and said both the good and the bad should be told for generations to come. She referenced legislation she authored, signed into law in 2022, establishing a commission to study the creation of the first national museum dedicated to AAPI history in Washington, D.C., noting that the bipartisan commission is traveling the country to advance that vision.

Rep. Meng said our goal is not merely survival but ensuring families can thrive, lead, and leave the next generation better off. She highlighted the work of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) in advancing equity, defending rights, and promoting economic opportunity. Marking the nation’s 250th anniversary since the Declaration of Independence, she affirmed that whether families arrived through Ellis Island, worked on Hawaiian plantations, or

came as refugees, their stories embody the American dream. At this critical moment, she said, the community “won’t back down” but will continue fighting for an equitable and affordable America where the American dream is within reach for all, closing with Lunar New Year and Ramadan greetings and wishes for safety and health.

## 5. Update from National APA Museum Commission

Speakers:

- Chiling Tong, Co-Chair, [National APA Museum Commission](#)
- Krystal Ka’ai Hetherington, Executive Director, [National APA Museum Commission](#)

Co-Chair Chiling Tong and Executive Director Krystal Ka'ai gave a joint presentation about the bipartisan, congressionally appointed Commission to Study the Potential Creation of a National Museum of Asian Pacific American History and Culture. The commission, created through legislation authored by CAPAC Chairwoman Grace Meng, is charged with delivering a comprehensive plan of action to the U.S. Congress and the President that will lay the groundwork for Congressional authorization of a national museum dedicated to honoring the achievements, progress, and lasting impact of Asian Pacific Americans. The Commission is currently accepting public comments through June 30, 2026 that can be submitted online at [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfftgwX\\_3tTV-RLfvL2pkD8-Msc5n98xoNe5R6EHWclpcXX6w/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfftgwX_3tTV-RLfvL2pkD8-Msc5n98xoNe5R6EHWclpcXX6w/viewform). Learn more about the Commission and sign up for one of their upcoming listening sessions at <https://nationalapamuseum.org/>

## 6. Webinar on What AAPI Community Needs to Know about Mass Surveillance

Speaker: [Mike German](#), Retired Fellow, Brennan Center for Justice

Mike German thanked APA Justice and the participants for their work and noted that although he retired from the Brennan Center last fall, he agreed to help organize a public webinar. The webinar aims to raise awareness about mass surveillance programs—particularly the reauthorization of Section 702 and related national security authorities—that he said are fueling aspects of the current ICE crackdown. He emphasized that the Asian American community has long been unfairly targeted as a national security threat, including during the China Initiative, and that these surveillance programs continue to disproportionately impact the community.

Mike announced the upcoming webinar, titled “Mass Surveillance and the ICE Crackdown: What the AAPI Community Needs to Know,” scheduled for March 24 at 4 p.m. Pacific (7 p.m. Eastern). The event is intended to educate the public about how ICE uses technology and law enforcement information, what is being done to address these practices, and how community members can support ongoing advocacy efforts. The program will feature a keynote speaker and a panel of experts in electronic surveillance and privacy, representatives of impacted individuals and communities to share firsthand experiences, and Asian American civil liberties and privacy advocacy groups to provide guidance on where people can seek help and direct resources. He encouraged participants to save the date and look out for further details.

## **7. Q&A and Discussions**

## **8. Next Meeting**

The next monthly meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 6, 2026, starting 1:55 pm ET/10:55 am PT