

2025/05/05 APA Justice Monthly Meeting

APA Justice Meeting – Monday, 2025/05/05
1:55 pm Eastern Time / 10:55 am Pacific Time

1. CAPAC Updates

Speaker: Judith Teruya, Executive Director, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus. Judith.Teruya@mail.house.gov

[not on record]

2. Update from Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Speaker: Joanna YangQing Derman, Director, Anti-Profilng, Civil Rights & National Security Program, Advancing Justice | AAJC

First, a federal judge recently issued a preliminary injunction in *League of Women Voters v. Trump*, temporarily blocking the U.S. Election Assistance Commission from requiring proof of citizenship—like a passport—when registering to vote via the federal form. The ruling maintains current protections, where voters affirm citizenship under penalty of perjury. It is an important step in fighting this unlawful executive order.

Second, the Trump administration has reversed its decision to revoke 1,400 student visas and change the status of 4,700 others in the SEVIS database. While AAJC welcomes this reversal, the initial move caused fear and lasting harm among international students. Targeting students without due process sends a troubling message about America's commitment to education and innovation.

Third, in Texas, lawmakers have advanced HB 17 out of committee. AAJC is reviewing the bill and working with local partners on potential amendments. We expect more movement in the coming weeks.

Lastly, AAJC released a new qualitative report titled *Beyond Language Translation*, focused on how Asian Americans consume news, engage with online narratives, and

navigate misinformation. The goal is to better understand and challenge assumptions about how our communities access information.

3. Update from Asian American Scholar Forum

Speaker: Gisela Perez Kusakawa, Executive Director, Asian American Scholar Forum (AASF)

AASF has been contacted by international students who are living in a very fearful climate. We welcome the recent announcement to restore records for hundreds of students. AASF previously supported a federal lawsuit challenging these terminations, which were issued without notice, hearing, or legal justification.

The top three concerns we are seeing are:

- **Legal access** – Many students need initial legal consultations. ASF is working to build a low bono or pro bono legal network in the immigration space.
- **Continuing education** – Some students fear that fighting back could interfere with completing their degrees. We're exploring how universities can provide clearer pathways for students to graduate.
- **Housing** – Loss of status often means losing campus housing. Many students urgently need support to find alternatives.

It is critical we come together—nationally to address policy, and locally to support students through these challenges.

There are also ongoing concerns about the potential return of the China Initiative, either through Congress or in practice. One key case we are monitoring is that of Professor Xiaofeng Wang. AASF led a letter to Indiana University's Provost — joined by 750 organizations and professors across 40 states—raising concerns about the process surrounding his termination at Indiana University. This isn't just about one case, but about due process for scholars more broadly — especially when it comes to tenured faculty?

We continue to seek support for Professor Wang and his family. The termination affected not only him but also his wife, who had worked at Indiana University for many years.

Lastly, I want to highlight an upcoming **Know Your Rights** webinar, featuring Robert Fisher. It will be held **Monday at 11 AM ET** and focus on the intersection of criminal law, research security, and higher education. With increased university investigations, it is crucial scholars know their rights.

4. Update on the Case of Professor Gee-Kung Chang

Speakers:

- **Gee-Kung Chang 張繼昆**, Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology.
- **Robert Fisher**, Partner, Nixon Peabody

Attorney Robert Fisher started the discussion and said this is a very important time for the country and for the Asian American community. Though the China Initiative was officially ended, similar prosecutions are still happening—particularly targeting professors, scientists, and professionals with ties to China.

He shared how his team came to represent Professor Gee-Kung Chang. The wire fraud charges alleged that Professor Chang and a colleague from ZTE conspired to misuse J-1 visa students, supposedly having them work at ZTE while being paid by Georgia Tech.

However, the defense pointed out that even by the government's own account, the students were working at Georgia Tech. The indictment was defective—it failed to allege that the financial component was the actual object of the fraud. The court dismissed most of the charges with only one charge left.

The remaining visa fraud charge was also challenged. Professor Chang had no role in visa applications, and Georgia Tech had never provided training on compliance or foreign collaboration rules. Without any knowledge or training, there could not have been any intent to defraud. The government eventually dropped the final charge.

This case reflects a broader issue: many professors were encouraged to collaborate with China, only to later face prosecution when political attitudes shifted. These retroactive investigations have harmed careers and chilled academic collaboration, especially within the Asian American community.

Robert Fisher closed by expressing pride in defending Professor Chang and introduced him to speak next.

Professor Chang delves into his personal account of a harrowing legal ordeal. He recounts how, despite three years of federal investigation, no credible evidence was found against them. He was recruited to Georgia Tech in 2002 as an Eminent Scholar

Chair Professor after a successful career at Bell Labs, Telcordia Technologies, and OpNext Inc. He founded a major Industry–University Cooperative Research Center, sponsored by the National Science Foundation, managed dozens of projects, published over 300 papers, and mentored 20 Ph.D. students—including three Marconi Society Young Scholar Awardees. Even under investigation, he received a Distinguished Faculty Award in 2019.

However, everything changed on March 24, 2021, when Professor Chang was abruptly arrested at home by nine federal agents without a search warrant. He complied with the search, which turned up nothing. At arraignment, handcuffed and shackled, he saw the indictment for the first time. There were ten felony counts—two conspiracy charges alleging fraud against Georgia Tech and visa fraud, and eight counts of wire fraud, all based on a distorted interpretation of his academic and industry career. As a law-abiding citizen with no criminal history, he was released on a low bail amount, signaling the weak foundation of the charges.

The arrest and indictment, leaked to the media, triggered a wave of public humiliation. Professor Chang lost his reputation, career, lab, and peace of mind. Friends and colleagues distanced themselves. Despite this, he remained determined and immersed themselves in studying over a million pages of discovery documents, identifying flaws, falsehoods, and critical gaps in the prosecution’s case. Notably, there was no evidence of personal gain, criminal intent, or fraudulent activity.

Professor Chang highlights prosecutorial overreach, such as ongoing surveillance after the indictment and reliance on a false informant—a former student with known mental health issues and a record of violent threats. This student’s baseless allegations served as the foundation for the case.

A pivotal moment came in August 2023, when the prosecutor admitted in court that there was no financial or property gain and he failed to disclose this fact to the grand jury. As a result, in March 2024, the judge dismissed nine of the ten charges, including all major counts. The government offered several plea deals, even allowing the speaker to choose a misdemeanor in exchange for dropping all felonies—but Professor Chang refused, unwilling to admit guilt to something he did not do.

The stress culminated in a heart attack in May 2024, requiring emergency surgery and multiple stents. While recovering, Professor Chang feared he might not survive to see the case resolved.

Finally, after a pretrial interview, the last charge was dropped without a trial. On April 14, 2025, Professor Chang was fully exonerated. However, he reflects that freedom did not bring joy, but rather a somber relief. The experience left deep emotional and professional scars despite the legal victory.

5. Remarks by Connecticut Attorney General William Tong

Speaker: **William Tong** 湯偉麟, Attorney General, State of Connecticut

It took until 2018 for William Tong to be the first Chinese American elected Attorney General in any state. As of today, he is still the first Asian American elected to statewide office in Connecticut. It speaks in volumes.

William Tong emphasized that we still face xenophobia, racism, and scapegoating.

Asian Americans are viewed as quiet, passive, or unwilling to lead. And because we have very little political power as a community—something that is frequently overlooked, we hear calls for more AAPI voices at the table, and yet we remain underrepresented—especially East Asian Americans. While the South Asian community has made notable political strides, we are still far behind. William Tong is still the highest-ranking Chinese American state official in the country.

So what happens when someone like Professor Chang is targeted? These things still happen because we are often seen as perpetual foreigners. Many still do not view us as truly American. That is why we have seen the surge in anti-Asian hate incidents.

If we had more AAPI leaders in power—senators, governors, decision-makers—we would not just be reacting to discrimination. We could prevent it. But we are still seen as foreigners, no matter how long we've been here.

There are too few voices to speak up—and even fewer that are heard. That is why he raised his voice. Because someone has to.

William Tong has been very vocal on the question of birthright citizenship. He is a citizen by right of birth on American soil and derive his citizenship from the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Joseph Pierce, a Chinese American from Meriden, Connecticut, fought in the Civil War. Yung Wing, the first Chinese American Yale graduate and the first to pass the Connecticut Bar, did so more than a century ago.

We have been here for a long time. This idea that we all came in the late '70s or early '80s—it is just not true. We have been here for much of our nation's history, and we have contributed a great deal.

Many of us came here because our parents and grandparents were running for their lives—from the Japanese, from Communists, from war, famine, and displacement. Others came seeking the opportunity to build a better life. Ours is not a new story. It's an old story. And it is an American story.

William Tong ended with something journalist Amara Walker said after being harassed at an airport: "I'm as American as Korean barbecue." That struck him. Because he is as American as egg rolls and pork fried rice—not from Shanghai, but from Hartford.

We belong. Our stories matter. And when people are attacked because of how they look or where they are from, it is not just wrong—it threatens the fabric of who we are as a nation.

We need more voices, more solidarity, and more community. These fights should not be fought alone. Let's stand together, protect one another, and make sure no one in our community ever feels alone again.

6. Remarks by Former Census Bureau Director Robert L. Santos

Speaker: **Robert L. Santos**, Former Director, U.S. Census Bureau; Former President, American Statistical Association

Robert Santos was the first Latino and first person of color to hold the position of Director of the U.S. Census Bureau. He emphasized that accurate census and federal statistical data are central to identify disparities or direct resources fairly. This data reveals not only problems like poverty and inequality but also points to opportunities—like which communities could benefit most from broadband funding, CHIPS Act resources, or federal investments in schools and infrastructure. This data is foundational to targeting resources equitably.

But that data collection is under threat. Early in the new administration, executive orders forced agencies to remove any of those so-called “trigger words” like DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion), SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity), gender nonbinary terms from all federal statistical agency documentation, data systems, research reports, and publications. Agencies were given about 48 hours to comply, which meant shutting down websites and pulling critical data—even though no laws were broken. Compliance was required, and failure could have cost careers. This created a chilling effect across the federal statistical system.

Then came a hiring freeze. At the Census Bureau alone, about 600 open positions—including field data collectors—could not be filled. In April, nearly 1,000 Census Bureau staff departed—many of them key leaders and experts. These roles are crucial for surveys like the American Community Survey (ACS) and the Current Population Survey (CPS), which guide national and local policy. As the workforce shrinks, our ability to collect accurate data collapses, even as demand for it remains.

There are three major looming risks:

1. **Rollbacks to new race and ethnicity standards.** These allow for better disaggregation of Asian and Pacific Islander subgroups. We need that level of detail. But Robert Santos was heavily questioned at a House Oversight Committee hearing in December last year about why we need this level of granularity.
2. **A potential return of the citizenship question,** which would reduce participation and skew data—especially in immigrant communities.
3. **Making the American Community Survey (ACS) voluntary,** which would severely weaken the quality of federal data collection.

Even more concerning are reports of DOJ inquiries and potential access to protected, confidential data. Title 13 confidentiality must be preserved at all costs.

So what can we do? We need a two-pronged approach:

1. **Speak out**—defend the independence and integrity of data collection.
2. **Engage strategically**—show how good data supports economic growth and government efficiency.

This is like a natural disaster. Damage is happening—but we can minimize it and begin planning for recovery. That means building coalitions now, across all communities, to defend and eventually rebuild a fair and effective federal statistical system.

7. Update on Federation of Asian Professor Associations

Speaker: **Haifan Lin 林海帆**, President, Federation of Asian Professor Associations (FAPA); Eugene Higgins Professor of Cell Biology, Yale University

Haifan Lin was elected as the inaugural president of the [Federation of Asian Professor Associations](#) (FAPA) in 2024. FAPA was formed to protect the academic rights of AAPI faculty amid growing threats to academic freedom and due process, especially during heightened U.S.–China tensions. The unjust targeting of Chinese American scientists underscored the need for collaboration rather than isolation.

Several Asian faculty associations from accredited academic institutions across the U.S. came together with a shared mission to seek fairness and justice. FAPA is not a membership organization for individuals, but a national umbrella organization designed to coordinate and amplify these efforts toward a more just and inclusive academic future.

FAPA's missions are:

- To promote open collaboration in education, research, scholarship, and professional development.
- To advocate for and safeguard academic freedom, legal rights, and career advancement opportunities for its members.

Since forming its leadership team in October 2024, FAPA has established itself as a legally sound, independent nonprofit organization. It has streamlined governance, built a skilled volunteer team, partnered with Yale Law School for legal guidance, officially incorporated in Delaware on February 16, 2025, and is currently finalizing its 501(c)(3) nonprofit status.

FAPA has also launched several key initiatives:

- Conducted a nationwide wellness survey—led by the Columbia University Asian Faculty Association—to assess the climate and mental health of Asian faculty.
- Hosted public forums with leaders such as Azad Ranjanali from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and Ambassador Gary Locke to elevate the voices of Asian American scholars.

- Advocated for due process protections in federal investigations, particularly in cases involving foreign affiliations, and submitted policy recommendations to OSTP that balance national security with civil liberties.
- Publicly supported scholars such as [Professor Xiaofeng Wang](#) of Indiana University, whose termination—lacking transparency—raises serious legal and ethical concerns.
- Launched the [Synergy](#) newsletter to inform and connect the growing community.

FAPA's work goes beyond advocating for Asian faculty; it is about protecting the integrity of American academia. Racial profiling, political pressure, and the erosion of due process harm not only individuals but the entire academic system. Marginalizing any group puts others at risk, stifles innovation, and deprives students of mentors and role models. FAPA believes that diversity is not just a value—it is a strategic asset. Defending that asset is a collective responsibility.

FAPA calls for unity in building a more just academic future. It continues to partner with key organizations and invites faculty associations, administrators, students, and allies to join in efforts to drive policy change, share best practices, and support colleagues under threat—emphasizing that we are stronger when we stand together.

In the words of our founding message: **Diversity is our strength, and synergy is our power.**

* A video recording of Haifan Lin's talk is available at <https://youtu.be/oho2pPBXECg>

8. Q&A and Discussions

9. Next Meeting

The next monthly meeting will be held on Monday, June 2, 2025, starting 1:55 pm ET/10:55 am PT