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AIP: House Pushes to Resurrect China Initiative



According to the American Institute of Physics (AIP) on September 18, 2024, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation to reinstate the Justice Department’s China Initiative under a new name. The bill known as H.R. 1398 passed on a vote of 237-180, with support from 214 Republicans and 23 Democrats.

The legislation is unlikely to advance in the Democrat-controlled Senate, where the companion bill has only Republican cosponsors. In addition, the White House issued a statement strongly opposing the bill, stating it “could give rise to incorrect and harmful public perceptions that DOJ applies a different standard to investigate and prosecute criminal conduct related to the Chinese people or to American citizens of Chinese descent.”

Rising in opposition to the bill, Rep. **Jerry Nadler** (D-NY) said that resurrecting the “misguided” China Initiative would represent a “clear step backwards.”

“The China Initiative did not just waste valuable resources. If you were a person of Chinese descent working in American higher education, you were a suspect,” said Nadler, the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee. “Rather than keeping America safe, the China Initiative divided workplaces, ruined careers, and contributed to anti-Asian hate at the height of the pandemic,” he added.

Rep. **Judy Chu** (D-CA), chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, also took to the House floor in opposition to the bill. She described the China Initiative as “the new McCarthyism,” referring to fears of communist influence in the U.S. during the Cold War that were stoked by Sen. **Joseph McCarthy** (R-WI). “McCarthyism had deadly effects in the 1950s and so does the China Initiative, harming our country’s competitive edge by casting a chilling effect on our academic community,” Chu said. “While we all want to stop American secrets from being stolen, investigations should be based on evidence of criminal activity, not race and ethnicity.”

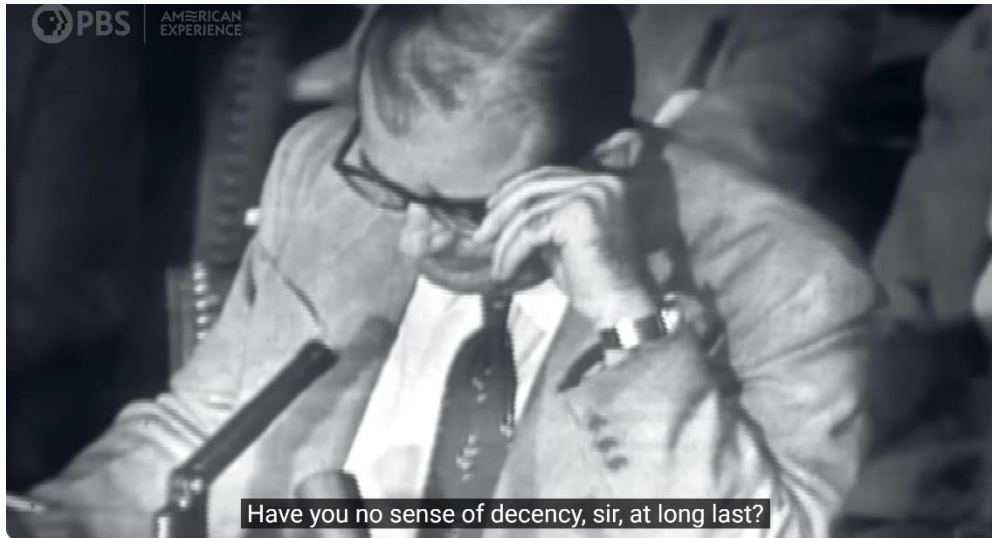
“This bill would essentially re-establish the DOJ’s harmful and ineffective China Initiative, in all but name,” said **Joanna Derman**, director of anti-racial profiling, civil rights, and national security for Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC, in an email. “Instead of reviving a program that we know led to the racial profiling of Asian immigrant and Asian American scientists, we should be discussing policy solutions that would actually attract and retain top talent in critical STEM fields,” Derman continued.

Last week’s vote is not the first time that the House has attempted to reinstate the China Initiative — a similar provision is in the House’s appropriations bill for DOJ. Various advocacy groups representing Asian Americans, such as the Asian American Scholar Forum and Stop AAPI Hate, have called for Congress to remove the provision from the final version of the appropriations bill.

AIP is a non-profit organization that promotes the advancement and dissemination of knowledge in the field of physics and related disciplines. Founded in 1931, it serves as a federation of scientific societies, supporting the physics community through a variety of initiatives, including publications, advocacy, education, and outreach.

Read the AIP report: <https://bit.ly/47yU0FU>. Read the White House statement: <https://bit.ly/3XvIXJ1>

What is McCarthyism?



"Have You No Decency?" | McCarthy | American Experience | PBS

McCarthyism refers to a period of intense anti-communist suspicion in the United States during the early Cold War, particularly in the late 1940s and 1950s. Named after Senator **Joseph McCarthy**, it is characterized by widespread accusations of communist infiltration in American institutions, often without substantial evidence. The movement targeted government officials, entertainment industry figures, educators, and union leaders, among others, accusing them of being Soviet sympathizers or communist spies.

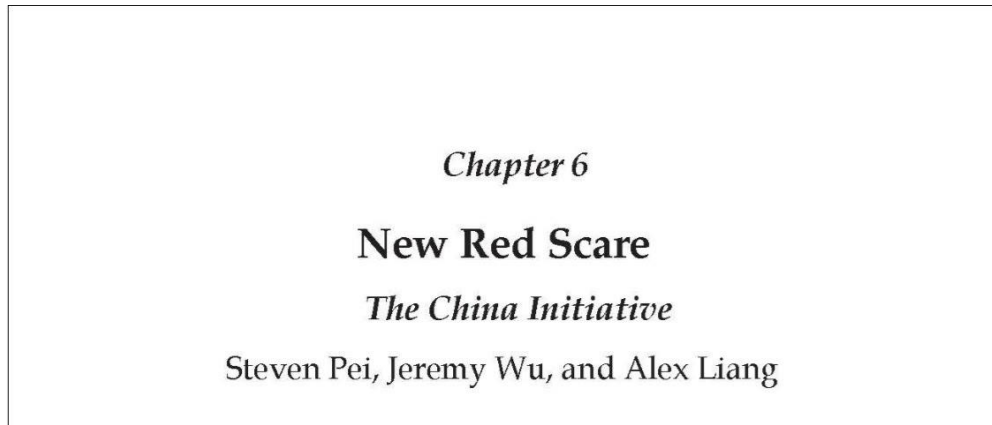
McCarthyism led to investigations by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and loyalty tests for federal employees. Many individuals lost their jobs, were blacklisted from industries (especially in Hollywood), or faced public shaming. The era also created a climate of fear and repression, where dissenting political views were suppressed.

The term "McCarthyism" now broadly refers to the practice of making baseless accusations or using unfair investigative methods to suppress dissent and stoke public fear. The movement began to collapse in 1954 after McCarthy's own credibility was questioned during the televised Army-McCarthy hearings. The famous moment during the hearings came when **Joseph Welch**, an attorney for the Army, confronted McCarthy with the line, "Have you no sense of decency, sir?" This marked a turning point in public opinion against McCarthy, leading to his censure by the U.S. Senate, and the eventual end of the era.

McCarthyism left a lasting impact on American politics and culture, often viewed as a cautionary tale about the dangers of political persecution and mass hysteria.

Watch the *PBS* video clip "Have You No Decency?" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svUyYzzv6VI> (5:46)

Book Chapter on New Red Scare



The FBI has a long history of surveillance of ethnic Chinese scientists in the United States. McCarthyism, the Economic Espionage Act, and more recently the China Initiative were initiatives adversely impacting Chinese and Chinese Americans living in the U.S. The stereotypes of Asian and Chinese scientists as “disloyal” stem from the perpetual foreigner trope. The key here is that most of them were U.S. citizens. They are as much an American as any other American, yet their “loyalty” is perceived as less trustworthy. This stereotype has harmful, life-altering consequences.

Read this and other chapters from the book [Communicated Stereotypes at Work](#) by **Anastacia Kurylo** (Editor, Contributor), **Yifeng Hu** (Editor, Contributor), **Wilfredo Alvarez** (Contributor), & 29 more. ASIN:B0CSK2PGY3. Lexington Books (May 15, 2024)

Opinion on Don't Bring "China Initiative" Back and More Statements



On September 19, 2024, *The Hill* published an opinion by Mike German, senior fellow in the Brennan Center for Justice's Liberty and National Security Program and a former FBI special agent.

According to the opinion, allies of **Donald Trump** aim to revive the China Initiative, a failed Trump-era program targeting economic espionage by Chinese agents, which led to racial profiling and harm to U.S. science. The Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 proposes its return, while Congress recently passed a bill to rebrand it as the "CCP Initiative."

Originally launched in 2018, the China Initiative became a tool for targeting Chinese and Asian American researchers, rather than catching spies, leading to a chilling effect on scientific research. Although FBI Director **Christopher Wray** claimed widespread China-related misconduct, most investigations did not result in espionage convictions, instead focusing on minor administrative offenses.

Read *The Hill* opinion by Mike German: <https://bit.ly/47yBPQI>

Read more statements condemning the revival of the China Initiative:

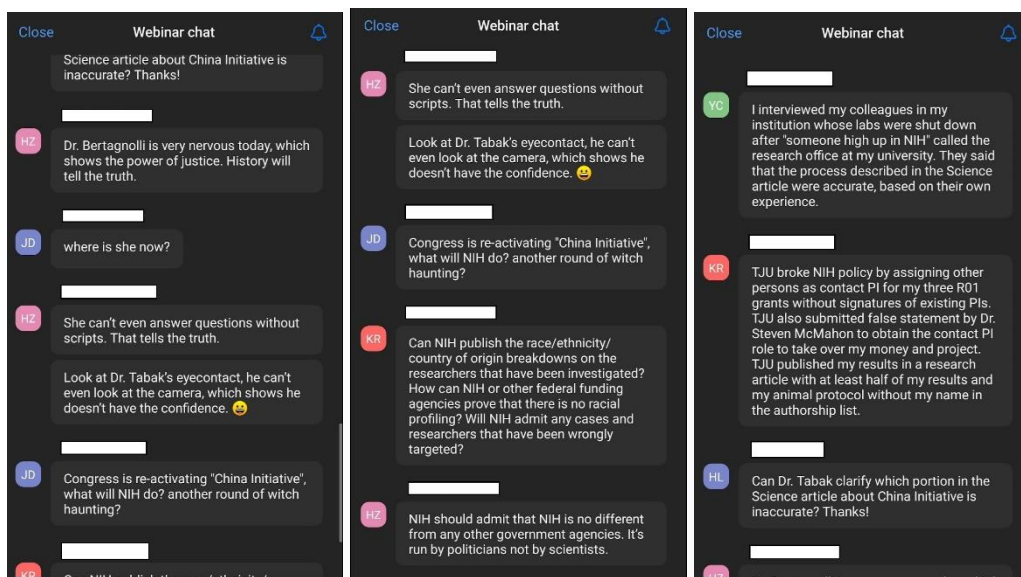
2024/09/20 1990 Institute: [The 1990 Institute condemns H.R.1398, legislation that reestablishes the China Initiative](#)

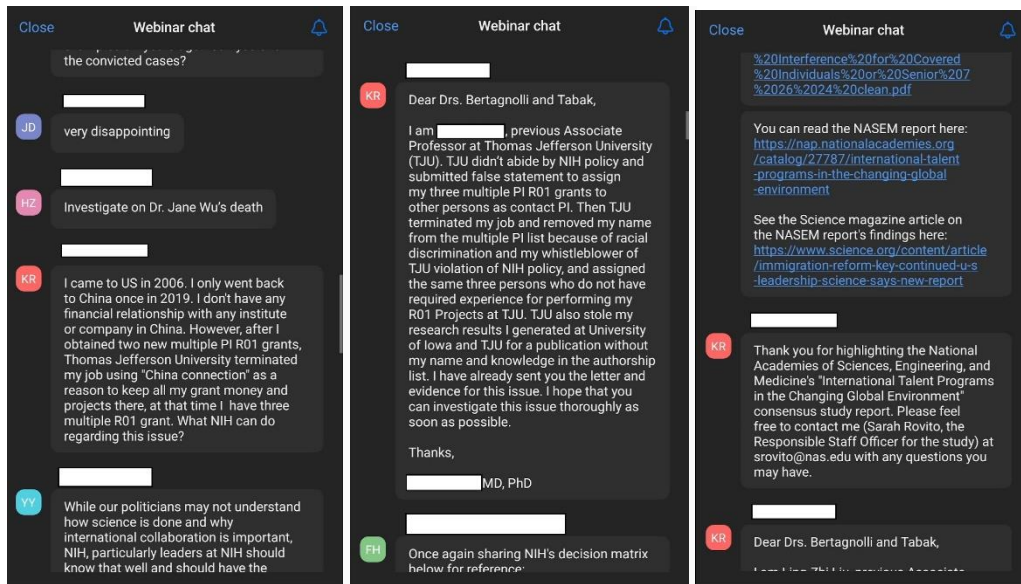
2024/09/18 AAASE: [Open Letter to Congress](#)

2024/09/18 OCA: [OCA Condemns Measures Fueling Xenophobia and Discrimination](#)

2024/09/09 ACE: [Letter to House Leaders](#)

AASF Forum with the National Institutes of Health





On September 19, the Asian American Scholars Forum (AASF) hosted a public forum with leadership from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The speakers included NIH Director Dr. **Monica M. Bertagnolli** and NIH Principal Deputy Director Dr. **Lawrence A. Tabak**.

AASF Executive Director **Gisela Kusakawa** moderated the forum. In her opening remarks, Dr. Bertagnolli acknowledged the valuable contributions of Asian scholars to the U.S. scientific community and reaffirmed NIH's commitment to building relationships with Asian scholars to address the most challenging research challenges in health sciences collaboratively. Dr. Bertagnolli expressed deep concern over the fallout that the U.S. government's efforts to address troubling actions from China have had on Asian scholars and the difficulties they face. She stated, "We are here to tell you: we hear you, and we see you. We are ready to work together with you as partners in a productive manner."

Kusakawa asked about Dr. Bertagnolli's vision for NIH in the future, and how NIH can create a warm and welcoming environment to protect and empower Asian scholars. Dr. Bertagnolli highlighted that one of NIH's strengths is its inclusiveness, which brings together the best scientists from diverse backgrounds to address cutting-edge scientific challenges. She noted that ensuring that Asian scholars feel welcome in this environment is crucial. She also noted that rebuilding trust in NIH among Asian scholars, especially those who have lost confidence in the government and NIH, remains an ongoing effort.

Dr. Bertagnolli listed a number of steps to make Asian American scholars feel included and welcomed at NIH. She said that today's forum was aimed at clearing up misunderstandings, and listening to the voices of Asian scholars. She also said NIH will provide more training on research integrity, use new disclosure forms, and explain NIH's new policy matrix, which further

clarifies NIH's response to foreign adverse influence. She thanked Asian American organizations including AASF for their input in developing these policies.

Kusakawa mentioned the recent passage of a bill in the House of Representatives attempting to reinstate the China Initiative and asked how NIH handles political pressure while protecting Asian scholars from excessive scrutiny and maintaining the integrity of NIH research. Dr. Bertagnolli said this was a very important question and emphasized that, regardless of the political climate, NIH remains committed to ensuring the quality and integrity of the research it funds. These policies, on the one hand, are a responsibility to taxpayers and, on the other, help protect researchers from undue foreign influence, which has long been a core principle of NIH policy, well understood by researchers.

Dr. Bertagnolli specifically emphasized that, in 2022, NIH began updating its Policies & Procedures for Promoting Scientific Integrity in response to a presidential memorandum. Dr. Bertagnolli reiterated that maintaining research integrity and protecting it from harmful foreign influence has always been NIH's policy.

During the subsequent session, NIH Principal Deputy Director Dr. Lawrence A. Tabak continued to answer questions from AASF. In his responses, Dr. Tabak denied that NIH specifically targeted Chinese researchers based on their ethnicity and stressed that NIH's investigations targeted certain behaviors that potentially violate the agency's policy, not focused on individuals. He clarified two additional misunderstandings: first, that NIH is not involved in the now-defunct Department of Justice's China Initiative; and second, that NIH does not have the authority to stop research funding to an institution or university due to the actions of an individual.

Dr. Tabak also mentioned that while NIH does not have the power to suggest actions to members of Congress proactively, it always cooperates when lawmakers request technical explanations and support. NIH can use these opportunities to clarify relevant issues to legislators and educate them on specific issues.

Kusakawa further raised the issue of how to overcome the underrepresentation of Asian scholars in leadership positions. Dr. Tabak explained that NIH's previous approach was to train senior researchers with the hope that they would move into leadership roles. Now, however, they have begun training younger researchers hoping to address the problem more effectively.

Finally, Dr. Tabak praised the work of organizations like AASF. He stated that NIH looks forward to collaborating with AASF and universities to strengthen connections with Asian scholars. More than 600 people registered for the forum, and over 60 questions were submitted. The record of this event will be available publicly.

Juan Zhang, editor at *US-China Perception Monitor*, contributed this report.

Comments and Questions Submitted by APA Justice

APA Justice submitted the following comments and questions for the AASF Forum with NIH:

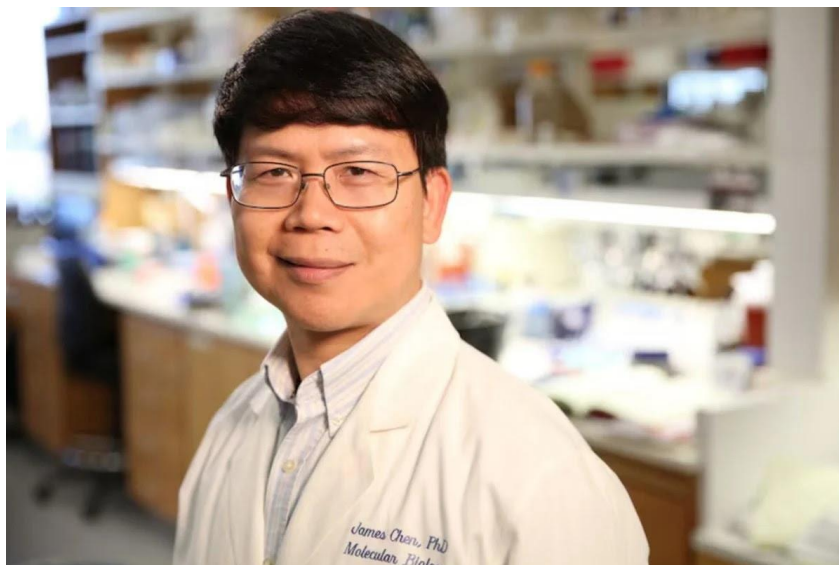
"Dr. Bertagnoli's recent statement was an important first step. The forum is another positive step to repair relationships and rebuild trust.

"While it is important to turn the page and move forward, it is equally essential to reflect on what went wrong and the lessons learned from all sides over the past six years—particularly with the looming threat of a China Initiative revival.

"Over the past six years, both intended and unintended consequences have emerged. Hundreds if not thousands of researchers, an overwhelming proportion of them were of Chinese origin, were placed under suspicion, surveilled, investigated, or prosecuted—many of them continue to this day. More than 100 scientists and researchers lost their jobs and had their reputation and finances ruined. At least two prominent Chinese American researchers—one from Northwestern University and another from Arizona State University—died by suicide, reportedly as a result of inquiries or investigations initiated by the NIH.

"Does the NIH believe all these scientists and researchers were treated fairly and justly? Will the NIH conduct a review of some, if not all, of these cases to assess the fairness of the process and hearing of their appeals? Will the NIH work with institutions, faculty, and the Asian American and scientific communities to establish a consistent due process framework, ensuring that the accused have a fair opportunity to refute charges and defend themselves?"

Dr. Zhijian “James” Chen Wins “America’s Nobel”



According to *Forbes*, *South China Morning Post*, and multiple media on September 19, 2024, Dr. **Zhijian “James” Chen** 陈志坚 won the 2024 Albert Lasker Basic Medical Research Award, which is also known as "America's Nobel."

Dr. Chen is Professor of Molecular Biology and Director of the Center for Inflammation Research at University of Texas Southwestern (UTSW) Medical Center and the George L. MacGregor Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Science. He was recognized for his discovery of the cGAS enzyme that senses pathogens like viruses and bacteria and triggers the body's immune system. His work provides clues for new treatments of cancer and other diseases.

“Dr. Chen’s research has elucidated the process by which our bodies fight off invasive pathogens, including viruses, bacteria, and other microbes, through the detection of wayward intracellular nucleic acids. Insights into this signaling pathway provide a foundation for new approaches to the treatment of cancer and autoimmune diseases as well as vaccine development,” said **Daniel K. Podolsky**, M.D., President of UTSW.

Shan-Lu Liu, a professor of virology at Ohio State University, also said that Dr. Chen's discovery had "opened new avenues" for understanding autoimmune diseases. "Dr Chen's work not only enhances our understanding of immune mechanisms, but also provides potential strategies for treating diseases linked to immune dysregulation," Dr. Liu said.

Dr. Chen is the fourth UTSW faculty member to win a Lasker Award. The previous three winners are all Nobel laureates.

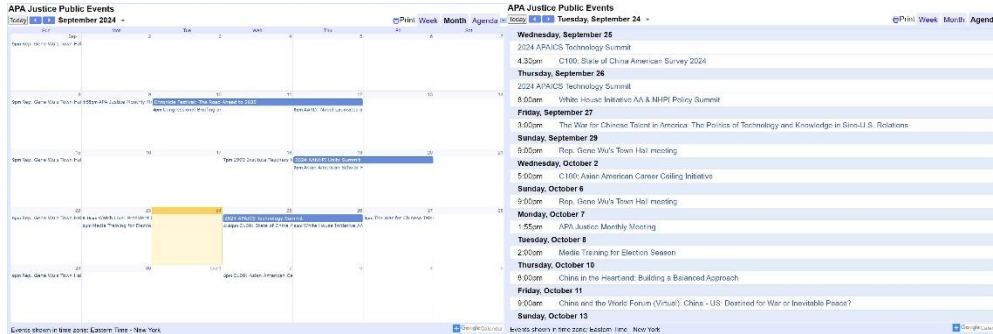
The Lasker Awards recognize significant achievements in medicine and biomedical research. Since 1945, the Lasker Foundation has awarded more than 400 prizes to outstanding scientists and clinical researchers. A total of six individuals were recognized this year with awards in three categories — basic research, clinical research, and public service. Each award carries a stipend of \$250,000.

Dr. Chen is the sixth scientist of Chinese origin to receive a Lasker Award. He is also the second Chinese recipient in the basic research category, more than six decades after biochemist **Choh Hao Li**, who won in 1962. Dr. Chen, 58, was born in a rural area of China's southeastern Fujian province. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in biology from Fujian Normal University in 1985, he won an overseas scholarship to the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he earned a PhD in biochemistry in 1991. He set up a lab at UTSW in 1997 and was elected to the US National Academy of Sciences in 2014.

Read the *Forbes* report: <https://bit.ly/3zDR9yK>. Read the *South China Morning Post* report: <https://bit.ly/3Bm3doN>

News and Activities for the Communities

1. APA Justice Community Calendar



Upcoming Events:

- 2024/09/25 C100: State of Chinese American Survey 2024
- 2024/09/25-26 APAICS Technology Summit
- 2024/09/26 White House Initiative AA& NHPI Policy Summit
- 2024/09/27 The War for Chinese Talent in America: The Politics of Technology and Knowledge in Sino-U.S. Relations
- 2024/09/29 Rep. Gene Wu's Town Hall Meeting
- 2024/10/02 C100: Asian American Career Ceiling Initiative
- 2024/10/06 Rep. Gene Wu's Town Hall Meeting
- 2024/10/07 APA Justice Monthly Meeting
- 2024/10/08 Media Training for Election Season
- 2024/10/10 China in the Heartland: Building a Balanced Approach
- 2024/10/11 China and the World Forum (Virtual): China-U.S.: Destined for War or Inevitable Peace?

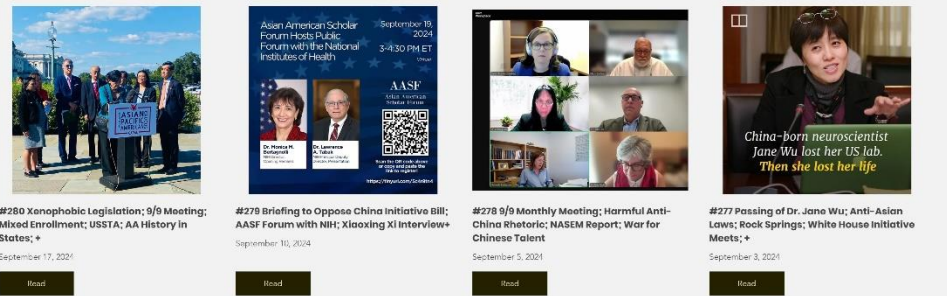
The Community Calendar has moved. Visit <https://bit.ly/3XD61qV> for event details.

2. APA Justice Newsletter Web Page Moving to New Website

Newsletters

APA Justice began publishing a free periodic newsletter about 4-7 times a month in July 2020. You can subscribe [here](#). Visit the [Virtual Library](#) to search the entire collection.

Filter by year
All



The image shows a grid of four newsletter preview cards. Each card features a thumbnail image, a title, a date, and a 'Read' button. The first card shows a group of people at a podium with a sign that says 'ASIAN PACIFIC TASK FORCE'. The second card is a blue graphic with text about an AASE forum. The third card is a screenshot of a video conference with several participants. The fourth card shows a woman speaking with a caption: 'China-born neuroscientist Jane Wu lost her US lab. Then she lost her life'.

- #280 Xenophobic Legislation; 9/9 Meeting; Mixed Enrollment; USSTA; AA History In States; +**
September 17, 2021
- #278 Briefing to Oppose China initiative Bill; AASF Forum with NIH; Xiaoxing Xi interview+**
September 10, 2024
- #278 9/9 Monthly Meeting; Harmful Anti-China Rhetoric; NASEM Report; War for Chinese Talent**
September 5, 2021
- #277 Passing of Dr. Jane Wu; Anti-Asian Laws; Rock Springs; White House Initiative Meets; +**
September 3, 2021

As part of its continuing migration to a new website under construction, we are moving the Newsletter webpage to <https://www.apajusticetaskforce.org/newsletters>. Content of the existing website will remain, but it will no longer be updated. We value your feedback about the new web page. Please send your comments to contact@apajustice.org.

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