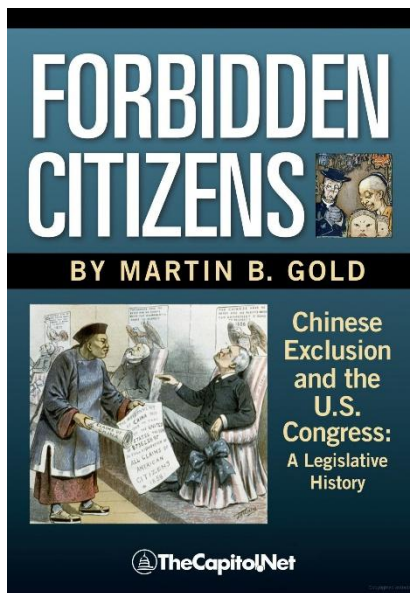


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### Forbidden Citizens: Congressional Regrets of Chinese Exclusion Laws



During the APA Justice monthly meeting on May 4, 2026, **Martin B. Gold**, Partner of Capitol Counsel LLP, provided a comprehensive account of the successful effort, roughly 15 years ago, to secure congressional resolutions expressing regret for the Chinese Exclusion Laws—an effort that unfolded over more than three years (2009–2012) and required careful legal, political, and strategic coordination.

The initiative began in 2009 in the office of Representative **Judy Chu 趙美心**, shortly after her election. A coalition of Chinese American and broader Asian American organizations met to explore how Congress might formally acknowledge the historical injustice of the exclusion laws.

Marty, then a partner at Covington & Burling, helped lead the effort on a pro bono basis. This allowed the team to dedicate substantial legal resources to researching what turned out to be a complex legislative history—not just the well-known Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, but a series of eight related laws enacted between 1879 and 1904, which collectively restricted immigration, denied naturalization, and institutionalized discrimination against Chinese immigrants. These laws remained in effect until their repeal in 1943 under President **Franklin D. Roosevelt**.

From the outset, Marty emphasized that success depended on bipartisan support. Representative Chu secured a Republican co-sponsor in the House, while in the Senate, Republican **Scott Brown** served as lead sponsor with Democratic support from **Dianne Feinstein**.

Notably, both Chu and Brown were relatively junior members of the minority party in their respective chambers—making the effort more challenging and underscoring the importance of coalition-building and strategic positioning.

The resolutions were introduced in May 2011 and referred to the Judiciary Committees in both chambers. In the Senate, leadership from Judiciary Committee Chair **Patrick Leahy** and Ranking Member **Chuck Grassley** enabled the resolution to move forward.

The Senate passed the resolution on October 6, 2011, by unanimous consent—a significant milestone that demonstrated broad bipartisan agreement.

The House process proved more difficult. Some members raised concerns that the resolution could be interpreted as criticizing immigration controls more broadly. The issue was not limited to immigration; the historical laws also denied Chinese immigrants the ability to naturalize, based on explicit claims that they could not assimilate.

This combination of immigration and citizenship issues made the resolution more politically sensitive.

The turning point came through intervention from House leadership, specifically the office of Majority Leader **Eric Cantor**. His Chief of Staff, **Neil Bradley**, played a key role in breaking the impasse.

At Cantor's direction, staff worked with Representative Chu to negotiate a compromise that would allow the resolution to move forward. As a result, the House version passed on June 8, 2012. While its language differed somewhat from the Senate version, the core substance and intent remained aligned.

Marty emphasized that passage of the resolutions was not the endpoint. Without continued engagement, he noted, the achievement could easily have faded from public awareness.

To prevent that, he and others undertook an extensive education effort, delivering roughly 50 talks across the country—from New York to Honolulu—primarily to Chinese American and Asian American audiences. These efforts focused not only on what Congress had done, but also on the broader historical context and significance of the exclusion laws.

Marty highlighted several lessons from the effort:

- **Bipartisanship is essential:** Meaningful legislative achievements, particularly on sensitive historical issues, require support from both parties.
- **Coalition-building matters:** Success depended on coordination among community groups, legal experts, and congressional offices.
- **Leadership intervention can be decisive:** The House breakthrough came only after direct involvement from senior leadership.
- **Substance requires rigor:** The effort was grounded in deep legal and historical research, covering multiple decades of legislation.
- **Education must follow legislation:** Without continued outreach, even significant achievements risk being forgotten.

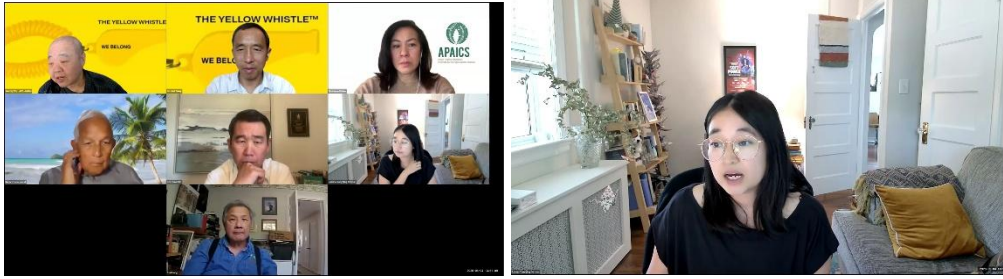
Marty concluded by expressing pride in the success of the effort and in the role played by Covington & Burling in supporting the work on a pro bono basis. He emphasized that both the legislative accomplishment and the historical lessons behind it remain important to preserve and communicate.

Marty's 616-page book, [\*Forbidden Citizens: Chinese Exclusion and the U.S. Congress — A Legislative History\*](#), was released on July 4, 2012. It was the first comprehensive legislative history of the Chinese exclusion laws passed by Congress. The book was named an Honor Book by the Asian and Pacific American Librarians Association and won a Benjamin Franklin Award. It is widely regarded as an important and timely work given ongoing debates about immigration, discrimination, and civil rights.

APA Justice produced a timeline visualization based on Marty's book at <https://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/entry/78461/1882-Chinese-Exclusion-Act/>.

Watch a video of Marty's talk at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUqYIJYn0Hk> (7:10).

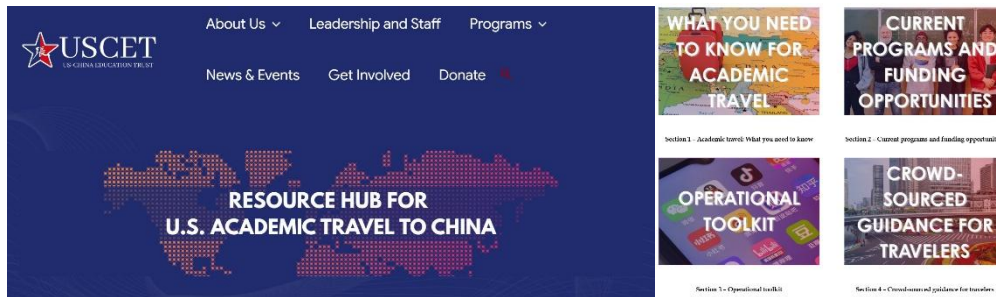
## Updates from Advancing Justice | AAJC



During the May 4 APA Justice monthly meeting, **Joanna YangQing Derman**, Program Director, Advancing Justice | AAJC provided updates on three topics:

1. **FISA Section 702** Congressional activity in the days before recess produced a messy outcome: the House passed a 3-year clean extension that included an unrelated provision banning central bank digital currency, but the Senate Majority Leader rejected that provision as a poison pill. The immediate result is a 45-day extension to continue pushing for reforms — specifically a warrant requirement and closing the data broker loophole. She gave a special acknowledgment to CAPAC for co-leading a reform letter with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), and supported by the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC).
2. **China Initiative H.R. 1468** — the "Protect America's Innovation and Economic Security from the CCP Act," advanced by the House Judiciary Committee in March — would effectively reinstate the defunct China Initiative under a new name. AAJC has been working in coalition with Stop AAPI Hate, Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA), and Asian American Scholar Forum (AASF) to oppose it. While it is unclear if or when the bill will reach the House floor, AAJC is circulating an opposition letter to the Hill, expected to go out by end of that week. Contact Joanna at [jderman@advancingjustice-ajc.org](mailto:jderman@advancingjustice-ajc.org) for more information.
3. **SBA Policy Changes** New Small Business Administration (SBA) rules now require 100% U.S. citizen ownership to qualify for SBA loans — reversing prior policy that allowed limited foreign ownership. The changes affect the flagship 7(a) and 504 loan programs, microloans, and surety bonds, and include new documentation requirements and nationality-based restrictions specifically targeting individuals with ties to China and Hong Kong. Joanna warned that these changes create barriers to capital access for AAPI-owned small businesses — one of the fastest-growing entrepreneurial segments in the country — and risk discrimination based on perceived foreign ties rather than actual financial risk. AAJC has endorsed the Investing in the American Dream Act (Sponsored by **Edward J. Markey** and Rep. **Nydia Velázquez**) and participated in a closed-door listening session with the senator alongside AAPI small business leaders.

# USCET: New Resource Hub on Academic Travel to China



On May 11, 2026, the US-China Education Trust (USCET) released a new online Resource Hub on academic travel to China. The free platform provides practical guidance for students, scholars, faculty, and researchers navigating study, research, and collaboration opportunities in China amid today’s evolving U.S.-China academic exchange environment.

The Resource Hub was developed in response to the sharp decline in Americans studying in China—now fewer than 2,000 students annually—highlighted in USCET’s [2026 America’s China Talent Challenge report](#).

Designed primarily for travelers in the social sciences and humanities, the Hub offers vetted information on visas, technology, security, academic freedom, funding opportunities, and institutional considerations. It also compiles lessons and perspectives from recent travelers to help users better understand current conditions and make informed decisions about academic engagement in China.

USCET notes that the guidance reflects the experiences and best practices of scholars, students, and institutions involved in academic travel since 2020. The materials are intended as informational resources and should be considered alongside institutional policies, official government guidance, and individual circumstances.

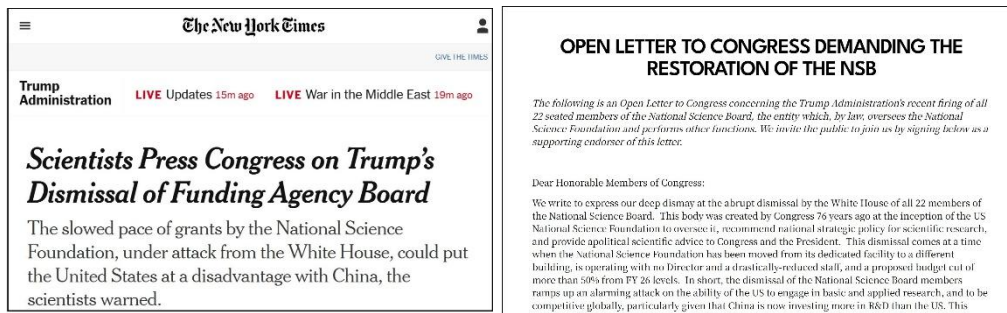
Key features of the Resource Hub include:

- **Operational Toolkit:** Practical guidance on logistics, including visa processes and technology, as well as addressing security and academic freedom concerns.
- **Funding and Programs:** A database of current fellowships, funding opportunities, and active academic programs (summer study, research) in China.
- **Crowd-Sourced Guidance:** Insights and lessons from recent travelers, offering on-the-ground perspectives.
- **Target Audience:** Focused on students, faculty, and researchers in the social sciences and humanities.

For more information, visit the USCET Resource Hub: <https://uscet.org/resource-hub/>.

USCET formally launched the Resource Hub for Academic Travel to China on May 4, 2026 at a public webinar event "Should I Study in China?" The program brought together students and scholars to discuss current conditions on the ground, suggestions for navigating the academic environment in China today, and identifying how the Resource Hub can support travelers weighing the decision of whether to go to China. Watch the launch event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbYDDG1-cJo> (59:20).

## NYT: 2,500 Scientists Open Letter to Congress



The image shows a screenshot of a New York Times article on the left and an open letter to Congress on the right. The article, titled "Scientists Press Congress on Trump's Dismissal of Funding Agency Board," reports that the National Science Foundation (NSF) is under attack from the White House, leading to a slowdown in grants and a disadvantage in competition with China. The open letter, titled "OPEN LETTER TO CONGRESS DEMANDING THE RESTORATION OF THE NSB," is signed by 2,500 scientists and urges Congress to restore the board, which oversees the NSF. The letter expresses deep dismay at the dismissal of all 22 members of the board and calls for the restoration of the board to ensure the NSF can continue to support scientific research and innovation.

According to *The New York Times*, there is mounting concern among scientists and former research officials following **Donald Trump's** dismissal of all members of the National Science Board, the independent body that oversees the National Science Foundation. More than 2,500 scientists signed a letter urging Congress to restore the board, calling the move an "alarming attack" on U.S. scientific research and innovation.

The scientists warned that disruptions to NSF governance and funding could weaken America's global scientific leadership at a time when China is rapidly increasing its investments in research and development. The concern was reinforced by the NSB's own 2026 science and engineering report, finalized before the board's dismissal, which concluded that China had overtaken the United States in overall research and development expenditures.

Established in 1950, NSF distributes billions of dollars annually to support research across fields including artificial intelligence, astronomy, engineering, and the social sciences. Former board members and agency leaders say NSF is now operating under severe strain, with no confirmed director, staffing reductions, relocation disruptions, and proposed budget cuts exceeding 40%. According to the Grant Witness Project, the agency had committed only about 10% of its appropriated funding by May 1—roughly half the pace of previous fiscal years.

Several former board members said relations with the administration deteriorated sharply in 2025 after NSF canceled hundreds of active research grants without consulting the board.

Shortly afterward, NSF Director **Sethuraman Panchanathan** resigned, followed by additional departures from board leadership. Former members described increasing frustration over limited transparency and repeated responses from agency officials that key decisions were still “under discussion” with the administration.

The report also highlights concerns that normal oversight processes were increasingly bypassed. Former board members pointed to a proposed \$900 million Arctic research vessel project that appeared in the president’s budget request without undergoing standard NSB review procedures. **Keivan Stassun**, who chaired the board’s committee on large facilities, said the proposal “had not gone through any of the normal processes” before the board was dismissed.

The White House defended the firings by citing constitutional concerns related to a 2021 Supreme Court ruling and argued that NSF remains aligned with Trump’s goal of strengthening American technological leadership. Former board members, however, warned that the combination of weakened oversight, funding uncertainty, and leadership instability places the agency in a “very precarious position” and could have long-term consequences for U.S. scientific competitiveness and national security.

Read the *New York Times* report: <https://nyti.ms/4wpw5Vq>. Read the scientists’ open letter to Congress: <https://bit.ly/4d68Ubb>

## Science Editorial on Resistance



A *Science* editorial examines the growing anxiety within the American scientific community following federal grant cancellations, immigration restrictions on foreign scientists, and repeated attempts by the Trump administration to sharply reduce science funding. Although Congress ultimately restored much of the funding, delays in distributing grants and continuing political uncertainty have left many researchers uncertain about how to respond.

The editorial centers on a conversation Science editor-in-chief **H. Holden Thorp** had with historian **Timothy Snyder**, author of *On Tyranny*, about how scientists and universities should balance resistance to political pressure with the need to protect institutions and maintain

professional ethics. Snyder argues that universities should allow criticism and activism rather than suppress them, while recognizing that different institutions and individuals may respond differently depending on their circumstances.

The discussion highlights the importance of scientific integrity, using the refusal of the *Annals of Internal Medicine* to retract a vaccine-related study at the request of **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.** as an example of maintaining professional standards under political pressure. Snyder emphasized that scientists cannot effectively respond to attacks by abandoning their own ethical and evidentiary standards.

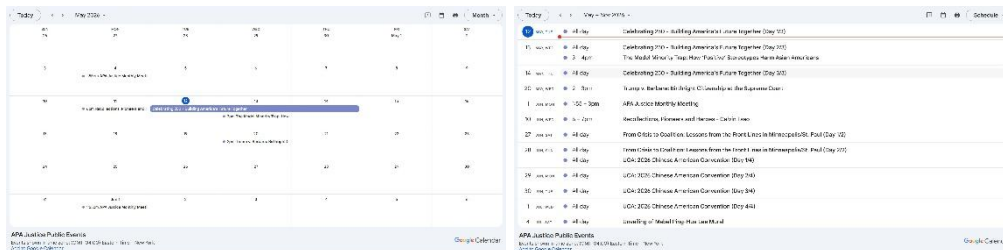
The editorial also explores the unequal nature of public debate, noting that critics of science often make broad political claims while scientists feel compelled to respond with rigorous evidence and precision. Snyder argues that this imbalance is common during periods of authoritarian pressure and that scientists should not imitate political rhetoric in response. Rather than prescribing a single form of activism, Snyder suggests that scientists contribute in different ways depending on their roles and personal circumstances. Some may engage publicly through protests or advocacy, while others may support the broader effort through local actions, mentoring, communication, or simply defending professional norms within their institutions. The editorial concludes that protecting science will require sustained collective action, clearer public communication about the value of research, and mutual support across the scientific community. While not everyone must become a public activist, Snyder argues that scientists should avoid passivity and that those taking visible risks in defense of science deserve broad backing from their peers.

Read the *Science* editorial and watch the interview with Timothy Snyder:

<https://bit.ly/4ts490k> (35:38)

## News and Activities for the Communities

### 1. APA Justice Community Calendar



#### Upcoming Events:

2026/05/12-14 Celebrating 250 - Building America's Future Together

2026/05/13 The Model Minority Trap: How 'Positive' Stereotypes Harm Asian Americans

2026/05/20 Trump v. Barbara: Birthright Citizenship at the Supreme Court

2026/06/01 APA Justice Monthly Meeting  
2026/06/10 Recollections, Pioneers and Heroes - Calvin Tsao

Visit <https://bit.ly/3XD61qV> for event details.

## 2. Cato: Trump v. Barbara: Birthright Citizenship at the Supreme Court



The banner features a blue background on the left with white text. It includes the date and time (May 20, 2026, 2-3 PM EDT), the location (Live Online), and social media sharing options (X, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Email). A yellow 'Register' button with a right-pointing arrow is at the bottom left. The event title is written in a large, elegant serif font on the right side.

LIVE ONLINE POLICY FORUM

DATE AND TIME  
May 20, 2026  
2 - 3 PM EDT

LOCATION  
Live Online

SHARE THIS EVENT  
X f in ig e

Register →

# *Trump v. Barbara:* Birthright Citizenship at the Supreme Court

**WHAT:** Trump v. Barbara: Birthright Citizenship at the Supreme Court

**WHEN:** May 20, 2026, 2:00-3:00 pm ET

**WHERE:** Webinar

**HOST:** Cato Institute

**Speakers:**

- **Paul Finkelman**, President William McKinley Distinguished Professor of Law and Public Policy, Emeritus, Albany Law School and Visiting Professor of Law, University of Toledo College of Law
- **Dan Greenberg**, Senior Legal Fellow, Cato Institute
- **Ilya Somin**, Professor of Law, George Mason University, and B. Kenneth Simon Chair in Constitutional Studies, Cato Institute
- **Jack Chin**, Edward L. Barrett Jr. Distinguished Professor of Law and Director of Clinical Legal Education, UC Davis School of Law.

**DESCRIPTION:** Does the Fourteenth Amendment guarantee birthright citizenship to persons born in the United States to parents without permanent immigration status? This is an insightful discussion with a group of scholars who will break down Trump v. Barbara, consider the recent Supreme Court oral argument, and explore the approaches the Court might take as it reaches a decision.

**REGISTRATION:** <https://bit.ly/4dg8Kwt>

###

APA Justice Task Force is a non-partisan platform to build a sustainable ecosystem that addresses racial profiling concerns and to facilitate, inform, and advocate on selected issues related to justice and fairness for the Asian Pacific American community. For more information, please refer to the new APA Justice website under development at [www.apajusticetaskforce.org](http://www.apajusticetaskforce.org). We value your feedback. Please send your comments to [contact@apajustice.org](mailto:contact@apajustice.org).

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