

**The Governor's Advisory Council on Asian Pacific American Affairs:
A retrospective on four years of progress**

In May 2005 Governor Jennifer M. Granholm signed Executive Order 2005-10, creating the Governor's Advisory Council on Asian Pacific American Affairs. Under the leadership of Dr. H. Sook Wilkinson, the Council made steady progress in its role of advising the Governor, and providing access to government for the Asian Pacific American (APA) community. This article serves as a progress report as we salute the formation of the new Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs, as signed into law by the Governor on January 12, 2009.

It is with pride that the members of the Advisory Council point to several areas of progress in the course of the drive to create "One Michigan." Those areas of progress include the following:

Of great importance to the medical community, the Governor's Advisory Council was successful in its effort to eliminate the redundancy of foreign nursing school graduates having to take the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) test in order to become certified as nurses here in Michigan.

The Advisory Council was a co-sponsor with the Council of Asian Pacific Americans and several other organizations for the first statewide APA leadership conference held on September 13, 2008 in East Lansing. The conference drew people from the entire state to discuss issues of importance to the community. The civil rights track included such topics as how to handle a civil rights case, and voting rights awareness. The health track covered mental health services delivery, and cultural and inter-generational differences within the APA community. The business track covered starting a business, and what roles APAs can play in Michigan's economic growth.

Individuals from the Advisory Council testified on Michigan driver license availability for foreign nationals, advocating to extend the availability of Michigan driver licenses to foreign nationals who are legally residing in Michigan but are not permanent residents (green card holders) of the United States. Several Advisory Council members were instrumental in getting Enrolled House Bill 4505 passed on February 15, 2008 to remedy the driver license availability issue. Enrolled House Bill 4505 became Act. No. 7, Public Acts of 2008.

Last year, the Advisory Council did its part to educate the public about the Michigan Anti-Bias Crime bill, House Bill 6341. That bill would expand the categories of incidents covered under the definition of a bias crime.

Perhaps the hallmark of the Governor's Advisory Council's work was the passage of House Bill 6172, as shepherded through the legislature by Rep. Hoon-Yung Hopgood and State Senator Hansen Clarke. The Enrolled Bill 6172 was just signed into law by Governor Granholm on January 12, 2009, effective on January 13; it creates a

legislatively-mandated Asian Pacific American Commission. While advisory councils may come and go, the passage of the House Bill ensures that the Asian Pacific American community will continue to have a strong voice.

The Advisory Council must acknowledge the wonderful leadership of its chairperson, Dr. H. Sook Wilkinson, and vice chair Jayashree Kommareddi, and the support of the staff of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, including former Director, now Wayne County Circuit Judge Linda V. Parker, counsel for the council George Wirth, and Lynn McNamara. The work of the council would not progress without such leadership and support.

With the creation of an Asian Pacific American Commission, the Governor's Advisory Council on Asian Pacific American Affairs is transitioning into a supportive role with the Asian Pacific American Commission. During this transition, the Governor's Advisory Council on Asian Pacific American Affairs can point to a legacy of four years of accomplishment.