

WASHINGTON, DC – This week, as the Senate continues the debate on the Secure Borders, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Reform Act, the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) urges the Senate to take special notice of several amendments that will critically affect the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community.

Rep. Mike Honda (CA-15): "As it stands, the Senate immigration bill veers away drastically from our nation's longstanding tradition of family-based immigration," said Rep. Mike Honda (CA-15), Chair of CAPAC. "I commend Senators Clinton, Dodd, Hagel, Menendez, and Obama, who are taking critical steps to uphold our nation's commitment to family values in immigration. I urge the Senate to support their amendments throughout the week. Other amendments would dangerously rollback the scant due process protections currently available to immigrants."

Rep. Neil Abercrombie (HI-01): "On the Statue of Liberty are the words, 'Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free . . .,'" said Rep. Neil Abercrombie (HI-01), Chair of CAPAC's Immigration Task Force. "The Senate immigration bill, particularly with several proposed amendments, would make the Statue bow her head in shame. The question before Congress is whether those words by Emma Lazarus remain a genuine expression of our national ethos or a just a quaint American myth."

"No part of this 'country club' approach by the party of family values is more hypocritical than its provisions which devalue family ties. While I commend efforts to reduce the destructive impact on family-based immigration, I still have grave concerns about the underlying structure of its point system."

"This is not really an immigration bill. It is, at best, an attempt to create a permanent indentured servant class with no real hope for upward mobility. If this bill is supposed to advance or protect the American dream, we had better wake up."

Summary of Amendments:

CAPAC supports the Clinton-Hagel-Menendez amendment, the Menendez-Hagel amendment, the Dodd amendment, and the Obama-Menendez amendment.

- The Clinton-Hagel-Menendez amendment would amend the "immediate relative" category for family-visa petitions to include minor children and spouses of legal permanent residents (LPRs). This amendment would promote family reunification among LPRs who have played by the rules and are waiting patiently in line to reunite with their loved ones.

- The Menendez-Hagel amendment would ensure fairness for U.S. citizens and their families. The current Senate immigration bill contains a provision that would address the current family backlog for green card applications, but only for those who applied before May 1, 2005. Applications filed by U.S. citizens to sponsor their family members after this cut-off date – an estimated 833,000 – would be nullified. The amendment would change this "cut off" date from May 1, 2005 to January 1, 2007. It would also add 110,000 green cards a year to ensure a meaningful backlog reduction.

- The Dodd amendment would honor the bond between U.S. citizens and their parents by increasing the green card cap to 90,000 for parents, extending the duration of the parent visa, and ensuring that penalties imposed on overstays are not unfairly applied. Without this amendment, the proposed legislation would remove parents from the "immediate relatives" category, subjects them to an annual cap of 40,000 green cards, and creates a new parent visitor visa category that would allow them to stay in the United States for only 30 days.

- The Obama-Menendez amendment would sunset the merit-based point system after five years. The point system as it stands is a substantial departure from the guiding principles of current immigration law. Particularly, the point system disproportionately favors those with higher education, and fails to adequately account for one of the touchstones of American immigration policy: family reunification. This amendment would provide Congress the opportunity to reevaluate the point system in five years.

Among the amendments that CAPAC opposes are the Cornyn amendments, the Inhofe amendment, and the Coleman-Bond amendment.

- The Cornyn amendments would gut the immigration bill by making millions of undocumented immigrants ineligible for legalization. These amendments would undercut our nation's principles of fairness and due process, and critically undermine the already scant due process protections available to immigrants, in an atmosphere that is already anti-immigrant.

- The Inhofe amendment would declare English the national language and restrict the ability

of the government to communicate effectively with American citizens, immigrants, and visitors.

- The Coleman-Bond would task city and county officials, public health providers, and police and public safety personnel with the responsibility of enforcing federal immigration laws. This amendment would keep cities, public health officials, and police departments from deciding how to best protect and serve their communities.

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The Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) is a bicameral and bipartisan caucus of Members of Congress of Asian and Pacific Islander descent and Members who have a strong dedication to promoting the well-being of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Founded in 1994 by then Congressman Norman Mineta, and currently chaired by Congressman Michael Honda, CAPAC has been addressing the needs of the AAPI community in all areas of American life. For more information on CAPAC, please call (202) 225-2631 or visit <http://www.honda.house.gov/capac> .