

Letter to President-Elect Biden to End Justice Department's "China Initiative"

On January 5, 2021, a group of community organizations, advocacy groups, science associations, and individuals sent a letter to President-elect Joe Biden urging the incoming administration to end the Justice Department's "China Initiative" and take further steps to combat the pervasive racial bias and targeting of Asian American and Asian immigrant scientists, researchers, and students by the federal government. Among the signatories are people who have been directly impacted by the government's unjust prosecutions of Asian Americans.

More about the letter and press release at <https://bit.ly/3kyUvH9>

Letter Calling for a House Hearing on the Racial Profiling of Asian American and Chinese Scientists

[Thomas Bloom Raskin](#), son of Rep. Jamie Raskin, died at age 25 on New Year's Eve. He was a second-year student at Harvard Law School. Condolences to Rep. Raskin and his family may be sent to jamie.raskin@mail.house.gov or to the congressman's district office at 51 Monroe St., Suite 503, Rockville, MD 20850.

Out of respect for the Raskin family, there will be a short delay in sending the letter to Rep. Raskin, who chairs the House Subcommittee Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, calling for a House hearing on the racial profiling of Asian American and Chinese scientists. During this pause of a few days, individuals and organizations may still sign on to the letter here: <http://bit.ly/38j0hgY>

GAO Finds Holes in U.S. Policies; "China Initiative" Chair Leaves DOJ; **Civil Rights Alert**

On December 28, 2020, Science published [Report finds holes in U.S. policies on foreign influence in research](#). [The GAO Report](#) says U.S. agencies need to flesh out and clarify their policies for monitoring the foreign ties of the researchers they fund after examining the practices of the government's five biggest funders of academic research: the National Institutes of Health (NIH), NSF, NASA, the Department of Energy (DOE), and the Department of Defense (DOD).

According to Science, the GAO report is likely to spur efforts in Congress aimed at preventing China and other nations from using funding and other connections to gain improper access to research funded by the U.S. government, which reportedly expended about \$42 billion on science and engineering research at universities in fiscal year 2018. But at least one of the agencies under scrutiny—the National Science Foundation (NSF)—is pushing back on the idea that its policies are lax. It is warning that tougher rules could hinder its ability to fund the best science.

According to [NPR](#), John Demers, Chair of the "China Initiative" will be leaving the Department of Justice.

Civil Rights Alert. On January 5, 2021, the Washington Post reports [Trump administration seeks to undo decades-long rules on discrimination](#). In the final days of the Trump administration, the Justice Department is seeking to change interpretation of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which bars discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin by recipients of federal funding. Under these rules, actions are considered discriminatory if they have a discriminatory effect, what's known as a "disparate impact," on protected groups. Under the new version, only intentional discrimination would be prohibited.

According to the report, a notice about the change was filed for regulatory review at the White House last month. The planned change was pushed in late December by William P. Barr, one of his last acts as attorney general. Typically regulations of this magnitude are published first as proposals and the government collects public comment before publishing its final version. It would be unusual to publish a final regulation — particularly one of this magnitude — without going through that process. A government website that tracks the regulatory process shows meetings on this proposal are scheduled with White House officials as late as the morning of Jan. 20, inauguration day.

APA Political Representation

A record number of [21 Asian American and Pacific Islander lawmakers](#) was seated when the 117th United States Congress was sworn in on Jan. 3, 2021. Asian Pacific Americans newly elected to the House of Representatives are Kai Kahele

(D-HI), Marilyn Strickland (D-WA), Young Kim (R-CA), and Michelle Steel (R-CA). Strickland, Kim, and Steel are the first Korean American women elected to the House.

On December 29, 2020, 116 current and incoming Members of Congress, led by Rep. Judy Chu (CA-27), Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), sent [a bicameral letter to President-elect Joe Biden](#) urging him to name an Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Cabinet Secretary. So far, in a departure from the past four Administrations, none of the 12 Cabinet Secretaries nominated thus far by the President-elect have been AAPI. The Members requested a meeting between President-elect Biden and members of CAPAC to discuss the importance of AAPI inclusion and the significance of not having an AAPI Secretary serving in a presidential Administration for the first time in over 20 years. Norman Mineta was the first Asian American cabinet member in U.S. history when he became Secretary of Commerce in July 2000.

President Bill Clinton (1993-2001): Norman Mineta (Commerce)

President George W. Bush (2001-2009): Elaine Chao (Labor), Norman Mineta (Transportation)

President Barack Obama (2009-2017): Steven Chu (Energy), Gary Locke (Commerce), Eric Shinseki (Veteran Affairs)

President Donald Trump (2017-2021): Elaine Chao (Transportation)

President-Elect Joe Biden (2021-): **None**

There are roughly 4,000 politically appointed positions in the executive branch. [The Washington Post](#) tracks 756 of them among about 1,250 that require Senate confirmation.

2020 Ended With A Positive Story

The year 2020 was one of unprecedented challenges that saw our nation increasingly divided, unable to control the COVID-19 pandemic that was filled with anti-Asian hate and continuing profiling of hundreds if not thousands of Chinese American scientists under investigations and prosecutions. However, it ended with a positive story on humanity in which the heroes and victims in an anti-Chinese hate crime are not even of Chinese origin. On December 27, 2020, [a virtual event](#)

was held with Professor Steven Pei as the host to conclude a successful GoFundMe campaign.

During the event, Zach Owen and Bawi Cung expressed their appreciation for the generous donations of more than \$121,000 from over 2,700 individuals. President Qiang Gan and Treasurer Lin Li of ACP Foundation Dallas reported the state of the finances and various details of the fundraiser. Other organizers for the fundraiser include OCA Greater Houston (H.C. Chang and Cecil Fong); Reagan Hignojo, friend of the Cung Family; United Chinese Americans (Steven Pei); and APAPA Austin Texas Chapter (C.J. Zhao).

More about the story of Zach Owen and the Bawi Cung family at [http://bit.ly/AAJA Current State](http://bit.ly/AAJA_Current_State)

Mourning and Honor

Shirley Young, one of six founders of The Committee of 100 and its First Chair, [passed away](#) in New York City on December 26, 2020. She was 85 years old. Yo-Yo Ma, Henry Tang, and Oscar Tang, [surviving co-founders of C100](#), stated in a public tribute that “Shirley cared deeply for the mission and future of C100. It was her wish that all members will come together, as accomplished citizens of this country, to enhance the role of all Chinese Americans.”

[Columbia Law School announced](#) last month that its Center for Chinese Legal Studies will be named for Hong Yen Chang, who not only made history in 1886 as the school's first Chinese graduate but also went on to become the first Chinese American to be admitted as a lawyer in the country. He did so during a period of labor unrest and fears about the loss of white racial purity in the country, which led to discriminatory legislation like the Chinese Exclusion Act.

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