

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION

House Bill 6172 without amendment

Sponsor: Rep. Hoon-Yung Hopgood

Committee: New Economy and Quality of Life

First Analysis (6-16-08)

BRIEF SUMMARY: The bill would create an Office of Asian Pacific American Affairs, and a state interagency Council on Asian Pacific American Affairs within that office, as well as an Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission, all located within the Michigan Department of Civil Rights.

FISCAL IMPACT: According to the Department of Civil Rights, if creation of the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission is formed in a manner similar to the Michigan Women's Commission, there would be an estimated annual cost of \$292,000.

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Although 13 million Asian American Pacific Islanders are now U.S. citizens, they have not always been welcome in America. For example, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 turned Chinese-Americans into the first "illegal aliens," barring them from ever becoming naturalized Americans, and stripping citizenship from those who had already become American citizens. The 1924 Immigration Act forbade Asians from entering the U.S. and sharply limited entry for Eastern and Southern Europeans. A total of 120,000 Japanese Americans--64 percent of whom were American-born citizens--were imprisoned for the duration of World War II as suspected "enemy aliens." In Detroit in June 1982, Vincent Chin (a Chinese) was beaten to death with a baseball bat by a Chrysler supervisor and his laid-off stepson, both angry about Japanese competition in the auto industry. Over several generations, Asian Americans have struggled to gain U.S. citizenship.

More than 240,000 Asian American Pacific Islanders (sometimes called APIs) are now residents of Michigan, about 2.4 percent of the state's population--a number that has doubled since 1990 and that continues to grow. These residents own and operate more than 16,000 local businesses, having an estimated \$5.5 billion in annual sales revenue. (An additional 500 Michigan companies are owned by foreign-born Asians.) Despite their presence, Asian Americans are "missing" in the state's history, politics, civil service, and judicial system.

Asian American Pacific Islanders are a diverse group of people--geographically, linguistically, culturally, and economically. They come from 50 countries, speak 100 languages and dialects (a reported 40 percent have language barriers), practice many kinds of religions, and represent a range of social and economic classes.

Further, a June 2008 study jointly issued by the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE), New York University, and the College Board documents the academic diversity among AAPI students--a fact often masked when Asian Americans are mistakenly referred to as the "model minority" group. See *BACKGROUND INFORMATION* below.

In order to give Asian American Pacific Islanders a voice and presence in state government policymaking--both to leverage global economic resources, and to combat discriminatory practices--legislation has been introduced to create an Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 6172 would create an Office of Asian Pacific American Affairs, and a state interagency Council on Asian Pacific American Affairs within that office, as well as an Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission, all located within the Michigan Department of Civil Rights.

Under the new act, *the Office of Asian Pacific American Affairs would do the following:*

- Provide the commission with information concerning the problems of Asian Pacific Americans and implement commission policy.
- Conduct studies and recommend solutions to the problems of Asian Pacific Americans in the areas of education, employment, civil rights, health, housing, senior citizens, mental health, social services, commerce, and other related areas.
- Recommend to federal, state, and local governmental departments and agencies the creation of services and facilities as the commission considers appropriate.
- Serve as a reporting agency for the collection and distribution of information concerning Asian Pacific American affairs.
- Apply for and accept grants and gifts from governmental and private sources.
- Request the services of all state and local governmental departments and agencies to assure that Asian Pacific Americans have access to decision-making bodies, the policies of which affect Asian Pacific Americans.
- Cooperate with departments and agencies to aid in effectuating the purposes of this act.
- Review the performance of state departments and agencies regarding the hiring and promotion of Asian Pacific Americans by state departments and agencies, and the provision of services to them by state departments and agencies.

- Review the curriculum programs, and policies of elementary, secondary, and post-secondary educational institutions regarding Asian Pacific Americans and the admission programs and policies of post-secondary educational institutions.
- Submit a full written report of its activities and recommendations each year to the governor, legislature, and various Asian Pacific American communities throughout Michigan.

A 15-member *state interagency Council on Asian Pacific American Affairs* would be created within the office. The interagency council would coordinate and provide for the exchange of information on all programs relating to services for Asian Pacific American people. The interagency council would also assist the office and commission in the development of an annual report which would be submitted to the governor, the legislature, and Asian Pacific American communities throughout the state.

The interagency Council would include the following leaders (or their designees):

The directors of the departments of Community Health, Human Services, Natural Resources, Agriculture, Civil Rights, Corrections, Management and Budget, Labor and Economic Growth; and also the executive director of the Women's Commission; the chair of the State Housing Development Authority; the Secretary of State; the Attorney General; the State Treasurer; the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and the State Personnel Director.

The Commission would do all of the following to advance the causes of Asian Pacific Americans located in Michigan:

- Stimulate and encourage the study and review of their status.
- Develop a unified policy and plan of action to serve their needs.
- Advise the Governor, the Legislature, and the new Office of Asian and Pacific American Affairs concerning the coordination and administration of state programs serving Asian Pacific Americans.
- Make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature regarding changes in state programs, statutes, and policies.
- Advise the Governor and the Legislature of the nature, magnitude, and priorities of their problems.
- Review, and advise the Governor and the Legislature on, Michigan's policies concerning Asian Pacific American affairs.
- Secure appropriate recognition of Asian Pacific American accomplishments and contributions.

- Review and approve the annual report by the Office of Asian Pacific American Affairs.
- Make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature regarding methods of overcoming discrimination against Asian Pacific Americans in public and private employment and civil and political rights.
- Work to ensure equal access to all levels of education for Asian Pacific Americans.
- Cooperate with and coordinate activities with the Commission on Spanish-speaking Affairs, the Michigan Women's Commission, and any other commission that deals with minority or ethnic affairs.
- Monitor, evaluation, investigate, advocate, and initiative programs for the betterment of Asian Pacific Americans.
- Serve as a reporting agency for incidents of anti-Asian and anti-Pacific Islander American harassment.
- Promote public awareness of Asian and Pacific Islander cultures.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

On June 9, 2008, New York University, the College Board, and the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE) published a 35-page report entitled "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders--Facts, Not Fiction: Setting the Record Straight" to point-out that many social problems routinely experienced by Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders--such as discrimination in employment and persistent poverty--are ignored because of the mistaken image of Asian-Americans as a homogeneous group of high achievers. To read the report, visit:

<http://www.collegeboard.com> or <http://www.edu/projects/care/>

ARGUMENTS:

For:

The Asian American experience in the United States is fraught with injustice and challenge. According to committee testimony, a recent survey conducted by the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity finds that 38 percent of Asian American Pacific Islanders report work-place discrimination based on national origin, although only three percent had filed a complaint. In statewide disease and wellness reports, Asian American's health care indices are often left out. A reported 40 percent of Asian Americans struggle daily to overcome a language barrier. This legislation can help the AAPI community to focus state and local resources on these serious social problems and their solutions.

The bill can also leverage economic development efforts. More than 240,000 Asian American Pacific Islanders are now residents of Michigan--a number that has doubled since 1990 and that continues to grow. These residents own and operate more than 16,000 local businesses, having an estimated \$5.5 billion in annual sales revenue. An additional 500 Michigan companies are owned by foreign-born Asians. An Asian Pacific American Commission could help the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to identify these efforts, and also to link with the global finance and supply networks that ensure their success.

POSITIONS:

The Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce supports the bill. (6-12-08)

The Governor's Advisory Council on Asian Pacific American Affairs supports the bill. (6-12-08)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.