

# VA-API CAUCUS

Virginia Asian American & Pacific Islander Caucus

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## **Virginia Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus Commemorates Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month of May**

RICHMOND, VA — The month of May is historic for the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. May 7, 1843, marks the first arrival of Japanese immigrants, and May 10, 1869, was when the transcontinental railroad, built mostly by Chinese workers, was completed. That is why, since 1992, our nation has officially celebrated May as AAPI Heritage Month.

AAPIs are truly diverse, with over 50 ethnic groups and 100 different languages. Yet, some common issues and experiences bring together this fastest growing ethnic group in America.

For example, while AAPIs make up 6% of Virginia's population, over 400,000 are of limited English proficiency, making it hard to access government services. Many face discrimination at their workplace and in schools, and they lack access to healthcare and other social safety nets.

AAPIs in Virginia and across the nation continue to face hate crimes and violence rooted in xenophobia that existed throughout history. While COVID may be a recent phenomena, the Chinese Exclusion Act, Japanese internment camps, and targeting of Sikhs and Muslims are just some examples of how members of our communities have been dehumanized in the past.

One year ago, the Virginia Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus (VAAPIC) was formed to address the concerns of AAPI communities in Virginia. During our first legislative session as a caucus, we introduced a robust policy agenda and achieved some positive results for AAPIs.

As VAAPIC observes our first AAPI Heritage Month, we celebrate these achievements with fellow AAPIs while rededicating ourselves to ensuring that their government works for them.

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*The Virginia Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus (VAAPIC) is a legislative organization recognized by the General Assembly to serve as a collaborative voice for Virginia's Asian American and Pacific Islander communities by identifying public issues of interest and to develop formal positions, facilitate discussions, and advocate for policy outcomes.*