

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, May 18, 2020

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**White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI) Successfully Holds Virtual Events to Commemorate AAPI Heritage Month**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross and U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao, Co-Chairs of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, were the keynote speakers at virtual events to commemorate Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month 2020 hosted by the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI).

“During these challenging times, it is more important than ever to celebrate the achievements- and reflect upon the contributions- that Asian Pacific Americans have made to our country. The pandemic has impacted all Americans, but the Asian Pacific American community has been especially hard hit,” Secretary Chao said. “By working together, we can help ensure that the Asian American and Pacific Islander community is served, protected and recognized for its many accomplishments and contributions to our country.”

Secretary Chao began the week-long program of events with opening remarks on Monday, May 11th. She was followed by *A Conversation on AAPIs in Leadership*, which brought together AAPI leaders from both the private and public sectors to discuss the advancements of AAPIs into leadership positions. The speakers also highlighted the work that each of their organizations is doing to support the AAPI community through the current challenges of the pandemic.

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) participated in an informative panel discussion titled *Doing Business with the Federal Government* on Tuesday, May 12th. SBA Administrator Jovita Carranza provided updates on disaster relief funds available through the SBA’s Paycheck Protection Program and provided information on federal resources for small business owners.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of Labor Patrick Pizzella and Acting Director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management Michael Rigas participated in a Wednesday, May 13th segment focused on workforce development, which was followed by a panel discussion on *Advancing AAPIs in the Federal Government*. Representatives from the Labor Department and the Office of Personnel Management were joined by the Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) and the Asian American Government Executive Network (AAGEN).

The week’s events concluded with the annual National AAPI Business Summit, co-hosted by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Minority Business Development Agency. Secretary Wilbur Ross provided the keynote address and senior officials from the Department shared resources and insights from the federal government as it relates to the current challenges facing AAPI-owned businesses.

“The entrepreneurial spirit of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community will lead to new innovations that will save lives, capitalize on market opportunities, and return our country to prosperity," said Secretary Ross. “The Asian American and Pacific Islander community contributes every day to making America a caring, and exceptional nation. And, through the CARES Act, the Department of Commerce is doing everything it can to ensure that AAPI community businesses remain viable during this global health emergency.”

Through these virtual events, the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI) presented resources from the federal government available to the AAPI community in addition to encouraging and uplifting remarks from some of the most senior officials in the Trump Administration. Throughout the week, we were also joined by Commissioners from the President’s Advisory Commission on AAPIs including Commissioners Michelle Steel, Jan-Ie Low, Grace Lee, Prem Parameswaren, Helen Van Etten, and Chair of the Commission, Dr. Paul Hsu.

President Trump established the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and the President’s Advisory Commission on AAPIs (PAC-AAPIs) in May 2019 to empower Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to improve the quality of their lives, raise the standard of living for their families and communities, and more fully participate in our nation’s economy. In proclaiming May 2020 as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, the President said, “we recognize the more than 20 million Americans of Asian and Pacific Islander descent who make irreplaceable contributions to our Nation’s economy, security, and culture. We are especially grateful for those who have served and are currently serving in our Armed Forces, and those serving their communities as first responders. Together, we will continue to live out the promise of our founding and build a better future for all Americans.”

Events were recorded and are available for viewing at [www.mbda.gov/aapihm2020](http://www.mbda.gov/aapihm2020).

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***About WHIAAPI & PAC-AAPI****: The White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI) and the President’s Advisory Commission on AAPIs (PAC-AAPI) work to broaden access by Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) employers and communities to economic resources and opportunities, thus empowering AAPIs to improve the quality of their lives, raise the standard of living for their families and communities, and more fully participate in our economy. The President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (PAC-AAPI) is established pursuant to Executive Order 13872 (May 13, 2019) to advise the President, through the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Transportation. The PAC-AAPI and the WHIAAPI Office is located in the US. Department of Commerce and the Minority Business Development Agency* *provides financial and administrative support for the performance of the Commission’s functions.*