

## Rep. Honda Meets with U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano

Written by Michael Shank  
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WASHINGTON, DC – Last week, Rep. Mike Honda (CA-15) and members of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) met with U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano, marking the first official meeting between CAPAC and the Secretary. Congressman Honda, CAPAC Chair Emeritus and Immigration Taskforce Chair, discussed a number of issues with the Secretary, including comprehensive immigration reform, protecting DREAM students after President Obama's recent announcement regarding high-priority versus low-priority deportation cases, and Rep. Honda's sponsored legislation, the Reuniting Families Act (H.R. 1796).

Congressman Honda opened the meeting by pushing for DHS field offices to implement the June 2011 memorandum by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Director John Morton, which directs ICE agents to exercise prosecutorial discretion in immigration removal proceedings. The memo outlines that individuals who are pursuing education and have been present in the United States since childhood should be considered low-priority in the case-by-case review of the pending 300,000 deportation cases, and that DHS should instead focus resources on high-priority individuals (felons, repeat offenders, or those who pose a clear danger to public safety).

In an effort to highlight that DREAM students continue to be deported even though they fit under the low-priority guidelines, Rep. Honda handed the Secretary a packet that contained personal testimonials from ten AAPI DREAM students. The packet also included statements from two organizations, the Asian Law Caucus and Families Inmigrantes y Estudiantes en la Lucha ("Immigrant Families and Students in the Struggle"), which reinforced the fact that DREAM students live in a constant fear of deportation, yet still have overcome significant barriers to pursue their dreams.

Congressman Honda also reinforced how reuniting families is a top priority for the AAPI community and needs to be included within any comprehensive immigration reform. Congressman Honda's sponsored legislation, the Reuniting Families Act, would reduce backlogs by alleviating lengthy wait times, retain family preference categories by reclassifying spouses and children of permanent residents as immediate relatives, increase the government's discretion in addressing family hardships, allocate unused employment-based and family-sponsored visas, as well as eliminate discrimination facing LGBTQ individuals in sponsoring their spouses.

Rep. Honda stated, "This week's meeting with Secretary Napolitano was a critical step in highlighting that comprehensive immigration reform is a top priority for CAPAC and the millions of AAPIs that we represent. Since nearly half of the 4.7 million individuals waiting to reunite with their loved ones are AAPI, we urged the Secretary that such reform needs to include reuniting families. As CAPAC's Immigration Taskforce Chair, I look forward to partnering with the

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Secretary and all offices within the Department of Homeland Security to protect DREAM students, to implement the Morton memo, and to continue advocating for comprehensive immigration reform that includes family reunification.”

Secretary Napolitano highlighted how she is a firm supporter of the DREAM Act, having previously testified on its behalf in Congress. Further, the Secretary assured that she would work more closely with ICE field offices to enforce the Morton memo guidelines and to focus agency resources on high-priority cases.

Secretary Napolitano quoted, “The Department of Homeland Security is committed to working with the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) on issues that affect the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. The inaugural meeting with CAPAC was a good opportunity to continue this critical dialogue with members of the AAPI community and I look forward to working with CAPAC in the future.”

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The Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) is comprised 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. Currently Chaired by Congresswoman Judy Chu, CAPAC has been addressing the needs of the AAPI community in all areas of American life since it was founded in 1994.