

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Senate and House Democrats hosted the 2008 Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Town Hall. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA-8), Chairwoman of the Senate Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), and Chairman of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) Mike Honda (D-CA-15), were joined by their colleagues to meet with members of the AAPI community.

Reid continued, “I want you to know that Senate Democrats led and won the fight to restore benefits to World War II Filipino veterans; a fight you care about passionately. I know that your community has many other goals too. I am confident that when you go back home today, you will be able to tell your friends and neighbors that Senate Democrats are committed to your community and that we are working with you to strengthen our economy, help small businesses, and support middle class families.”

Later Pelosi remarked, “This is the third time we have come together for the AAPI Town Hall and I am glad to see that this annual event is becoming a Democratic tradition. Including all diverse voices is critical to making sound policy. Democrats know that the AAPI community is our partner and that we have to work together to strengthen our relationship. Today during this town hall, the voices of all Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders across our country have been heard.”

“During this Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, it's not only important to recognize the many achievements of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community in our country, but to ensure that their interests and input are an important component of the Democratic agenda for years to come. Through your efforts and attendance at meetings such as this, and our Asian Small Business Forum earlier this month, you are helping to promote a dialogue that will create policies and solutions that benefit your community and all Americans. Thank you for coming today,” said Stabenow.

“I am thrilled by the success of the third annual Asian American and Pacific Islander Town Hall. I would like to thank Speaker Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Reid, Senator Stabenow, and the

rest of Democratic Leadership for their continued commitment to the AAPI community,” said Honda. He continued, “At the town hall, Democratic Leadership and members of CAPAC stood together in their resolve to bring justice for our Filipino veterans. The Senate recently passed legislation that would recognize their valiant service to our country. It is now our turn in the House of Representatives to fight for these veterans who heroically fought for our freedoms during World War II.”

During the town hall panel discussions Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Congresswoman Hilda Solis (D-CA-32) took questions from the audience about health care. Congressman David Wu (D-OR-1) discussed education initiatives. Congressman Al Green (D-TX-9) explained economic development and housing issues to town hall participants. Congressmen Honda and Bob Filner (D-CA-51) focused on veterans’ issues, including benefits for Filipino veterans, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the G.I. Bill. Irene Bueno, a leader in the AAPI community and a former Special Assistant to President Bill Clinton, moderated the town hall.

Rep. Wu explained, “Last September, the House passed a historic higher education program that expands college opportunities for low-income Asian American and Pacific Islander students. Today’s town hall will allow members of the AAPI community to learn more about this program and other pressing education issues.”

Rep. Green added, “This town hall provides an important forum to highlight the impact of the current foreclosure crisis on the Asian American Pacific Islander community. Subprime loans among Asian Americans nearly tripled between 2004 and 2005, yet many of these borrowers may have qualified for prime loans. Asian American borrowers are in need of language and culturally appropriate services, materials and resources to ensure equal access to financial services.”

During the town hall participants also heard remarks from Assistant Majority Leader Dick Durbin (D-IL), Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI), Representatives Bobby Scott (D-VA-3), Xavier Becerra (D-CA-31), Doris Matsui (D-CA-5), and Diane Watson (D-CA-33).

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The Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) is a bicameral and bipartisan caucus 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. Founded in 1994 by then Congressman Norman Mineta, and currently chaired by Congressman Michael Honda, CAPAC has been addressing the needs of the AAPI community in all areas of American life. For more information on CAPAC, please call (202) 225-2631 or visit <http://www.honda.house.gov/capac> .