

Biden lauds input of Asian-Americans

Written by Administrator
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Vice President Joe Biden addresses the Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Opening Ceremony, at the U.S. Department of the Interior in Washington on May 6, 2014. (Official White House photo by David Lienemann)

WASHINGTON — Vice President Joe Biden, highlighting the achievements of generations of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs), spoke at the opening ceremony for the 2014 Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Tuesday.

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The event was hosted by the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and the U.S. Department of the Interior.

“We are honored to have Vice President Biden speak to the AAPI community at this historic moment in time,” said the Initiative’s executive director Kiran Ahuja.

“AAPIs are fast on the rise, and it’s important to both recognize the community’s great diversity and the importance of government and community working together to address the unique challenges we face.”

Also highlighted in the program were President Barack Obama’s newest appointees to the President’s Advisory Commission on AAPIs that were ceremonially sworn in at the kickoff event.

Sri Srinivasan, United States Circuit Judge, United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit ceremonially swore in 14 new and two returning commissioners who will serve as the eyes and ears of the AAPI community for the Obama Administration.

The commissioners are:

Dr. Tung Nguyen (incoming chair), Dr. Mark Ann Young Okada (incoming vice chair), Dr. N. Nina Ahmad, Michael Byun, Ravi Chaudhary, Lian Cheun, Billy Dec, Bill Imada, Kathy Ko Chin, Daphne Kwok, Dee Jay Mailer, Diane Narasaki, Shekar Narasimhan, Maulik Pancholy, Linda X. Phan and Lorna May Ho Randlett.

The Commission is charged with working to improve the quality of life for AAPIs through increased participation in and access to federal programs.

The members will advise the President on innovative ways to engage AAPIs across the country and to improve their health, education, environment and well-being.

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Additionally, during the ceremony, the outgoing commissioners were thanked for their efforts with the release of a report highlighting its accomplishments.

“We look forward to following in their footsteps of the outgoing Commission to help open the government’s doors to the community,” said Dr. Nguyen.

“We’re excited to have such a passionate, talented group of individuals in this new Commission to lead this important work ahead.”

This year, the theme for AAPI Heritage Month is “I Am Beyond,” led by the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center.

The phrase captures the aspirations of the American spirit and how Americans of Asian and Pacific Islander descent have always sought to excel beyond the challenges that have limited equal opportunity in America.

During the opening ceremony, there was also a panel discussion on the “I Am Beyond” theme and its implications by Pancholy, Okada, activist and journalist Helen Zia, and executive director of the National Korean American Service & Education Forum DJ Yoon.