



National Asian Pacific American Bar Association
News Release

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NAPABA, APABA-SF, AND GOAABA CELEBRATE THE REPEAL OF THE ALIEN LAND LAW FROM FLORIDA'S CONSTITUTION

WASHINGTON — The National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA), the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of South Florida (APABA-SF), and the Greater Orlando Asian American Bar Association (GOAABA) celebrate the repeal of the anti-immigrant “Alien Land Law” from Florida’s Constitution. On Election Day, Tuesday, November 6, 2018, Florida voters passed an amendment to repeal the Alien Land Law from their state Constitution. Florida added the provision to its Constitution in the 1920s, as part of an anti-Asian and anti-immigrant sentiment that legally prohibited aliens from holding real estate and real property in Florida.

“Thanks to the efforts of APABA-South Florida, GOAABA, and NAPABA, the discriminatory language of the Alien Land Law will be removed from Florida’s Constitution,” said NAPABA President Daniel Sakaguchi. “This amendment was long overdue. The Alien Land Law enshrined the second-class treatment of immigrants and Asian Pacific Americans under the law. We applaud Florida voters for repealing this vestige of discrimination and anti-immigrant sentiment from their state Constitution.”

“APABA of South Florida is proud that Florida’s voters took to the polls to repeal the Alien Land Law from the state Constitution,” said APABA-SF President Benjamin W. Dowers. “APABA of South Florida thanks NAPABA and GOAABA for working arm-in-arm in collaborating with the Florida Constitutional Revision Commission, educating voters through events and information, and reminding people that voting matters. We look forward to working with NAPABA and GOAABA to further social equality in Florida and all other states.”

“GOAABA thanks our fellow Floridians for repealing the Alien Land Law, a historically based racial and economic discriminatory provision targeted specifically against our Asian forebears, from the Florida Constitution,” said GOAABA Past President Jessica K. Hew. “We also thank the Florida Constitutional Revision Commission, who ensured that the Alien Land Law was placed on the Florida ballot as obsolete and inappropriate. Although decades overdue, we are pleased that our years of efforts toward the goal of a repeal, together with the efforts of APABA-SF and NAPABA, have been realized to effectuate a change for equality today and brighter future tomorrows for all Floridians.”

Florida’s Alien Land Law reflected the long history of discrimination against Asian Pacific Americans in the United States. Florida was the last state in the nation to have an Alien Land Law in its Constitution. Passed in 1926, the law prohibited aliens ineligible for citizenship from owning property. At the time of passage, Asians were barred from citizenship under federal immigration law.

NAPABA, APABA-SF and GOAABA have worked for over a decade to advocate for repeal of the Alien Land Law. NAPABA, APABA-SF, and GOAABA recognize the many volunteers and leaders who played a role in these efforts, with special thanks to Alice K. Sum of Fowler White Burnett, P.A., in Miami and Jessica K. Hew of Hew Law, PLLC, in Orlando, for their leadership on the amendment passed on Tuesday.

For more information, the media may contact Nisha Ramachandran, NAPABA interim communications manager, at 202-775-9555 or nramachandran@napaba.org.

The National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA) is the national association of Asian Pacific American attorneys, judges, law professors, and law students. NAPABA represents the interests of almost 50,000 attorneys and over 80 national, state, and local Asian Pacific American bar associations. Its members include solo practitioners, large firm lawyers, corporate counsel, legal services and non-profit attorneys, and lawyers serving at all levels of government.

NAPABA continues to be a leader in addressing civil rights issues confronting Asian Pacific American communities. Through its national network of committees and affiliates, NAPABA provides a strong voice for increased diversity of the federal and state judiciaries, advocates for equal opportunity in the workplace, works to eliminate hate crimes and anti-immigrant sentiment, and promotes the professional development of people of color in the legal profession.

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