



ASIAN AMERICANS
**ADVANCING
JUSTICE**
AAJC

March 8, 2021

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Chair, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

On behalf of Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC and the 24 undersigned organizations representing Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, we write to express our strong support for the confirmation of Vanita Gupta to serve as the Associate Attorney General of the United States.

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC (Advancing Justice | AAJC) is a national non-profit, non-partisan organization that works through policy advocacy, community education, and litigation to advance the civil and human rights of Asian Americans and to build and promote a fair and equitable society for all. Founded in 1991, Advancing Justice | AAJC is one of the nation's leading experts on civil rights issues of importance to the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community.

As the nation reels from the white supremacist attack on Congress, and Asian American communities face unprecedented levels of hate incidents amidst the pandemic, we urge the Senate to speedily confirm Vanita Gupta as Associate Attorney General to help lead the Justice Department during this critical time.

The position of Associate Attorney General is the third highest ranking position at the Justice Department and supervises key divisions responsible for civil rights enforcement and engagement with our communities. Ms. Gupta's decades of experience as a civil rights lawyer, Justice Department official, and civil rights leader make her the right person for this incredibly important role at this critical moment in our nation's history.

Vanita Gupta is a trailblazer in the civil rights community. In 2014, she became the first South Asian American to lead the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, leading critical efforts to reform our criminal justice system, enforce federal voting rights laws, prosecute hate crimes, and fight discrimination in education, housing, lending, and employment. Her unwavering commitment to the protection of civil rights and her leadership in advancing criminal justice reforms has made her a trusted leader among national civil rights advocates. As the first woman and Asian American to head The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, she has broken new ground in the nonprofit advocacy space, and with her nomination to the position of Associate Attorney General, Ms. Gupta would become the first Asian American and woman of color to serve as in that position – making her the highest ranking Asian American at the U.S. Department of Justice in its history.

Ms. Gupta previously served as Deputy Legal Director at ACLU, overseeing the organization's criminal justice reform work. While at ACLU, she also served as director of ACLU's Center for Justice, leading their campaign to end mass incarceration. One of many notable cases she spearheaded was a lawsuit which resulted in a settlement with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency to improve detention conditions for asylum seekers. Ms. Gupta also displayed extraordinary leadership at LDF, a lead civil rights organization that has championed the cause of racial justice in our courts for the past 80 years. During her time at LDF, Ms. Gupta led a successful effort to overturn the wrongful drug convictions of 38 individuals in Tulia, Texas, who were later pardoned by then-Governor Rick Perry.

We are thrilled to see a child of immigrants step into such an important leadership position in the Biden-Harris Administration, as she will bring the lived experience of immigrant communities to the role. She is a longtime champion of human and civil rights advocacy and understands what is at stake for the Asian American community and fellow communities of color as we all work to undo the harm done in recent years.

Ms. Gupta is precisely the thoughtful, collaborative, and visionary leader that our nation needs in this role at the U.S. Department of Justice. We believe Ms. Gupta will not only restore integrity to the Justice Department; she will also set a new standard for excellence, equity, and inclusivity in our justice system. We urge the Senate to confirm Vanita Gupta as Associate Attorney General as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Asian Law Caucus
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Los Angeles
American Citizens for Justice/Asian American Center for Justice
Asian American Federation
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote)
Asian Law Alliance
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project



Boat People SOS (BPSOS)
Burmese Rohingya Community of Wisconsin Inc.
Chinese American Progressive Action
EMBARC
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National CAPACD - National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
New American Leaders
OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates
OCA-Greater Houston
SHK Global Health
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
Virginia Civic Engagement Table

Cc: Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary