



AP(Eye) on The Hill

NAPAWF's monthly policy newsletter

May 2009 edition

www.napawf.org

Change is definitely in the air here in Washington, DC, and we don't just mean the coming and going of the cherry blossoms. The first hundred-plus days of the new Obama Administration and the 111th Congress has offered progressive API women and girls a true promise of change. NAPAWF is proud to elevate the voices of API women and adagenda for social justice and human rights. Here's our monthly update of the policy items we've been watching or working on.

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Administration Watch

White House Announces Plans for Immigration Reform

In early April, President [Obama renewed his commitment to passing comprehensive immigration reform](#) this year after a growing number of [senior Democrats](#) signaled their support to fix the country's broken immigration system. The White House supports the creation of a pathway to residency for the approximately 12 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S., and acknowledged the need to reduce the enormous backlog of applications for family reunification. Immigration reform is a critical issue for Asians and Asian Americans in the U.S. An estimated 1.5 million undocumented immigrants are from Asia, and 2 million Asians have been waiting in the family-based visa backlogs for years and sometimes decades to reunite with loved ones in the United States. As co-chair of the [National Coalition for Immigrant Women's Rights \(NCIWR\)](#), NAPAWF will be advocating for just and humane immigration reform that advances the human rights of immigrant women and their families.

ACTION ALERT!

Help build a political space for policy makers to pass humane immigration reform! NCWIR has a limited number of **FREE** copies of the Emmy-winning film, [Made in L.A.](#) for member organizations to host community screenings. Contact [Lan](#) to receive your FREE DVD and community screening kit!

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NAPAWF-led Campaign to Reverse the Immigrant HPV Vaccine Mandate Reaches Critical Milestone; Your Action Needed

On April 8, 2009, the CDC published its [proposed Criteria for Vaccination Requirements for U.S. Immigration Purposes](#). Currently, any vaccine recommended to the general U.S. population by the CDC's Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) is automatically mandated for immigrants applying for visas and legal permanent resident status adjustment. The passage of these criteria would create a review process for the CDC to review vaccines recommended by ACIP and evaluate whether a mandating the vaccine for immigrants is appropriate. Passage of the criteria would also mean that the HPV vaccination mandate on immigrants will be reevaluated. As such, the mandate will likely be reversed as the HPV vaccine does not meet the proposed criteria because it does not protect against a disease likely to cause an outbreak or a disease that has been eliminated or is in the process of being eliminated in the U.S.

NAPAWF leads a working group of immigrant rights, reproductive justice and public health advocates to reverse the HPV vaccination mandate on immigrants. The CDC's notice for public comment came just two weeks after NAPAWF spearheaded and sent an [organizational sign-on letter](#) urging the CDC to expedite its publication of the criteria to begin the process of reversing the HPV vaccination mandate on immigrants. NAPAWF, along with National Partnership for Women & Families, National Women's Health Network, American Social Health Association, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health and California Latinas for Reproductive Justice drafted joint comments in support of the proposed criteria and developed [model comments](#) for other organizations to use.

ACTION ALERT!

Reproductive justice for immigrant women and girls is at stake! Tell the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to reverse the Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination mandate for immigrant women and girls.

Please sign the [petition](#).

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From Capitol Hill

House Passes Hate Crimes Legislation

In a bipartisan vote, the House approved the [Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009](#) (H.R. 1913) on April 29. The bill expands the

definition of hate crimes to include crimes conducted with a gun, bomb, or other "dangerous weapon" that are motivated by gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Republican efforts to replace strike "gender identity" and include "pregnant women" and "unborn children" to the list of protected groups were rejected in committee. The Senate version of the bill, entitled the Mathew Shepard Hate Crimes Prevention Act was introduced by Sen. Kennedy (D-MA) earlier in the month and is expected to reach the floor for a vote in the coming weeks.

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Congressmembers Offer Hope to Bi-national Filipina Lesbians and their Children

On April 22, 2009, Senator Feinstein and Rep. Speier introduced a rare [private bill](#), the passage of which would grant Shirley Tan legal permanent resident status. Shirley came to the U.S. from the Philippines on a visitor's visa in 1989 and petitioned for asylum in 1995 because she was afraid to go back to a cousin who had murdered her mother and sister. Since then, Shirley has built a life for herself in the U.S., and shares a home with her same-sex partner of 23 years and twin 12-year-old boys. In January 2009, Shirley received a deportation order because her asylum petition was denied, and she was subsequently arrested and held in immigration detention.

While the bill will not likely pass, it does allow Shirley to remain in the U.S. until the 111th Congress ends its session in December 2010. Her best chance of remaining in the U.S. is through passage of the [Uniting American Families Act](#) (UAFA), a bill that would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow permanent same-sex partners of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents to obtain lawful permanent resident status in the same manner as spouses of citizens and lawful permanent residents, will pass. NAPAWF applauds Rep. Speier's and Sen. Feinstein's efforts to help Shirley stay with her family. Shirley's story is just one of the many cases in which families are torn apart because the law discriminately prohibits same-sex partners of U.S. citizens from obtaining lawful permanent resident status.

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Senate Moves Closer to Health Care Reform

The Senate Finance Committee completed its three-part series of roundtable discussions on [reforming the health delivery system](#), [expanding health care coverage](#), and [financing health care reform](#). The roundtable participants included a number of representatives from the health insurance industry who agreed during the coverage roundtable to eliminate the discriminatory

practice of [gender rating](#), a trend in the individual private insurance market that charges women higher premiums than men. NAPAWF has been hard at work attending Hill visits and working in partnership with patient advocacy organizations to ensure that quality, affordable health care is available and accessible for all API women and their families, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, immigration status, or language ability.

ACTION ALERT!

Everyone has a health care story. What's yours?

If you've ever encountered a challenge with accessing or receiving quality, affordable health care for yourself or a loved one, NAPAWF wants to hear your story. Tell us your experience and how it can be addressed in health care reform.

Please email [Priscilla](#) to share your story.

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Congress Approves Budget Resolution

On April 29, the House approved the conference report for the FY2010 budget resolution (S. Con. Res. 13). The Senate also passed the conference report on the same day. For the most part, the resolution endorsed the President's priorities, setting the stage for health care reform, climate change and a number of other legislative tasks including reauthorizing children's nutrition programs and limiting the role of private lenders in student loans. Notably, Congress demonstrated its commitment to pass health care reform by requiring the Senate to vote on health care by October 15. Under this instruction, floor debate would be limited and the legislation can pass with a simple majority, instead of the usual 60 filibuster-proof majority.

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NAPAWF Submits HHS Comment in Support of Reversing "Provider Conscience" Regulations

On March 9, 2009, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services published its long-awaited [proposal to rescind](#) a health regulation pushed through in the 11th hour by the Bush Administration. The so-called "Provider Conscience" Regulations, which went into effect on January 20th, purports to give health providers and entities the ability to refuse to provide services

they find objectionable. In reality, these harmful regulations limit patient's access to vital health care services and information, particularly for women seeking reproductive health services, such as contraception, counseling and information necessary to make decisions about their own health.

NAPAWF, along with the Center for Reproductive Rights and the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health drafted and submitted [joint comments in support](#) of the proposal to rescind the "Provider Conscience" regulations.

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In the Courts

FDA Allows Sale of Plan B Emergency Contraception to 17-year Olds

On April 22nd, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced that they would authorize the sale of non-prescription emergency contraceptives to individuals 17 years and older. This is in compliance with a March 23rd court order by the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York's for the FDA to extend over-the-counter access to Plan B to 17 year olds within 30 days of its decision. The court order was a huge [victory](#) for the Center for Reproductive Rights, who first brought suit against the FDA in 2005. API women have disproportionately high rates of unplanned pregnancies and abortions. Thus, improving over-the-counter access to Plan B is an important step in helping young API women exercise better control over their reproductive health. To learn more, read [NAPAWF's issue brief on EC](#).

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U.S. Supreme Court Re-examines Voting Rights Act; API Civil Rights Groups Weigh In

On April 29, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments regarding the constitutionality of the enforcement provision of the Voting Rights Act in *Northwest Austin Municipal Utility District Number One v. Holder*. The landmark Voting Rights Act, originally enacted into law in 1965, establishes comprehensive safeguards against discrimination in voting based on race, color, national origin or language status. NAPAWF signed on to amicus briefs filed in the U.S. Supreme Court by the [Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund](#) and the [Asian American Justice Center](#) to uphold the constitutionality of the enforcement provision of the Act.

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NAPAWF is the country's only progressive, multi-issue organization for Asian & Pacific Islander women and girls that is building a movement to advance social justice and human rights. [Join us!](http://www.napawf.org) Visit www.napawf.org to get connected.