



NATIONAL ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

May 18, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Senate Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
361-A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Re.: Nomination of Edward M. Chen to the United States District Court for the Northern District of California

Dear Senators Reid and McConnell,

I write on behalf of the undersigned Asian Pacific American organizations to support the nomination of Magistrate Judge Edward M. Chen to the United State District Court for the Northern District of California. The organizations represent diverse constituencies on a wide variety of issues but share a common interest in ensuring that qualified Asian Pacific Americans have the opportunity to succeed and excel in the legal profession.

Judge Chen is clearly well-qualified to serve as a federal district court judge. He has served for nine years as a magistrate judge on the court to which he has been nominated. Last year, after a thorough review of his performance, the district judges of the court reappointed Judge Chen to a new eight-year term. The American Bar Association and Bar Association of San Francisco have also meticulously examined Judge Chen's record and have given him their highest ratings. Judge Chen's courtroom demeanor has earned the respect and support of former federal prosecutors, law enforcement and the business defense bar. He is also supported by judges and business and civic leaders from both sides of the aisle.

Judge Chen's confirmation is especially meaningful to the Asian Pacific American community, in part because he has devoted his career to serving the public and our community. As a lawyer, he has represented Asian Pacific American businesses, residents, workers and consumers against discrimination. He was a member of the legal team that represented Fred Korematsu in successfully overturning his World War II conviction for failing to comply with the Japanese internment order. Judge Chen also has a long history of community service on behalf of

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organizations involved in providing low cost housing, educational and recreation services for disadvantaged youths.

Judge Chen's confirmation has historic significance to our community. The Northern District of California, the district to which he has been nominated, serves one of the largest populations of Asian Pacific Americans. In San Francisco, where Judge Chen is expected to serve if confirmed, 35% of the population is Asian Pacific American. The federal district court in San Francisco is the original forum for many landmark United States Supreme Court decisions since the 1800s that have affected Asian Pacific Americans, including cases such as *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*, *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, *United States v. Korematsu*, and *Lau v. Nichols*. For over 150 years, no Asian American had ever served on its bench until Judge Chen was appointed as a federal magistrate judge. If confirmed, Judge Chen would be the first Article III judge of Asian and Chinese descent to serve on this court.

Judge Chen was first nominated by President Obama in August 2009 and has been reported out by the Senate Judiciary Committee twice. Despite the widespread respect and support he has earned from the bench and bar and the outstanding ratings he has received from the ABA and his local bar association, Judge Chen's confirmation has been delayed longer than any other judicial nominee this term. The criticisms focusing on his prior work as an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union and distortions of his speeches and writings have been unfair and inaccurate. Judge Chen understands the difference between advocate and judge. This is most clearly demonstrated by the fact that no Senator has criticized any of his more than 300 published rulings as a judge.

We strongly believe that Judge Chen's nomination should be promptly presented to the Senate for a full vote. We understand that Senator Feinstein, who recommended Judge Chen to President Obama, has sought a time agreement to allow for a debate on the Senate floor and a vote on Judge Chen's confirmation. On behalf of the Asian Pacific American community, we urge that you, as Senate Leaders, take the steps necessary to allow this vote to occur without further delay.

Sincerely,



Joseph J. Centeno  
President

On behalf of:

Arizona Asian American Bar Association  
Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Chicago Area  
Asian American Bar Association of Kansas City  
Asian American Bar Association of Ohio

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Asian American Justice Center

Asian American Lawyers Association of Massachusetts

Asian Bar Association of Las Vegas

Asian Law Alliance

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Colorado

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of the Greater Washington D.C. Area

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Los Angeles County

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Maryland

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Pennsylvania

Asian/Pacific Bar Association of Sacramento

Asian Pacific Bar Association of Silicon Valley

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of South Florida

Asian Pacific American Community Support and Service Association

Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Asian Pacific American Women Lawyers Alliance

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum

Asian/Pacific Bar of California

BPSOS

Central California Asian Pacific American Bar Association

Filipino Bar Association of Northern California

Japanese American Citizens League

Korean American Bar Association of Southern California

Korean Resource Center

Korean American Resource and Cultural Center

Korean American Bar Association of New Jersey

Korean American Bar Association of San Diego

Louisiana Asian Pacific American Bar Association

Missouri Asian-American Bar Association

National Federation of Filipino American Associations

National Korean American Service & Education Consortium

OCA

South Asian Bar Association of Northern California

Vietnamese American Bar Association of Northern California

Vietnamese American Bar Association of Washington

cc: Senator Patrick Leahy  
Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Senator Barbara Boxer  
Senator Jeff Sessions