

National Asian Pacific American Bar Association

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Judge Lucy H. Koh Becomes First Korean American Confirmed to be U.S. District Court Judge and the First Asian Pacific American Article III Judge Confirmed in the Greater Bay Area

WASHINGTON – Today, the U.S. Senate unanimously confirmed The Honorable Lucy H. Koh to serve on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, making her the first Korean American U.S. District Court Judge in United States history and the first Asian Pacific American Article III judge in the 160-year history of the Northern District of California. Magistrate Judge Edward M. Chen, whose nomination to the Northern District of California is still pending, was the first Asian Pacific American judge to serve on the court.

“This is a historic achievement for the Asian Pacific American community,” said Joseph J. Centeno, president of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association. “The glaring absence of an Asian Pacific American Article III in the Northern District California for over 160 years makes Judge Koh’s confirmation very meaningful to our community.”

Judge Koh was appointed to the California Superior Court for Santa Clara County in January 2008 by California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. Prior to her appointment, she was a partner at McDermott Will & Emery in Silicon Valley, where she specialized in intellectual property and commercial litigation. Judge Koh began her legal career in the public sector, serving as an assistant U.S. attorney in Los Angeles in the major frauds section, and in several positions at Justice Department headquarters in Washington, D.C., including Special Assistant to the U.S. Deputy Attorney General. Then FBI Director Louis Freeh gave Judge Koh an award for prosecuting a \$54 million securities fraud case. She also worked on the staff of the United States Senate Judiciary Committee.

“It is exciting to see Judge Koh confirmed as the first female Korean American Article III Judge in the United States,” said Karen K. Narasaki, president and executive director of the Asian American Justice Center. “Women and Asian Pacific Americans have long been underrepresented among federal judges, and five out of the nine Asian Pacific Americans the President has nominated to serve as federal judges have been women. It is heartening to see that the President is committed to increasing diversity on the federal bench.”

Judge Koh’s nomination received broad bipartisan support, including support from California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, former Massachusetts Governor William Weld, and Viet Dinh, former George W. Bush Administration Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Policy.

AAJC and NAPABA congratulate Judge Koh upon her historic confirmation. The organizations thank President Obama for nominating her and Senator Barbara Boxer for recommending her.

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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 over 40,000 attorneys and 63 local Asian Pacific American bar associations. Its members represent solo practitioners, large firm lawyers, corporate counsel, legal service 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 federal and state judiciaries, advocates for equal opportunity in the workplace, works to eliminate hate crimes and anti-immigrant sentiment, and promotes professional development of minorities in the legal profession.