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Asian American Pacific Islander Youth Urge Congress to Pass DREAM Act Today

WASHINGTON— As the lame-duck session comes to a close, Asian American and Pacific Islander student leaders from nearly 60 universities across the country sent a letter to Congress urging members to pass the DREAM Act before the end of the year.

Frustrated that passage of the historically bipartisan legislation has been blocked, members of the Youth Advisory Council, a project of the Asian American Justice Center (AAJC), took action.

"The DREAM Act allows students to pursue their dreams and allows America to fulfill its claim as a nation found[ed]and built by immigrants," Ling of Stony Brook University said. "It allows students who grew up in their communities to give back to the country that educated and raised them and makes sense from every perspective. These students did not willfully break the law because they were brought to the U.S. without their knowing of the immigration rules and should not be punished."

One in 10 students who would be covered by the DREAM Act are Asian American while 65,000 DREAM-eligible students graduate from high school each year.

"The DREAM Act is an excellent opportunity for both parties to show voters that they can, and will, work together to fix our shattered immigration system," said Karen K. Narasaki, AAJC president and executive director. "Congress must act now and vote yes on the DREAM Act."

The House is expected take up the bill today and the Senate may vote later today as well. The DREAM Act would allow eligible undocumented youth who were brought to this country as young children the opportunity to become citizens.

Tuyet Le, executive director of the Asian American Institute, said, "We commend Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Speaker Nancy Pelosi for continuing to push this important legislation forward. We hope Congress will heed voters' call for movement on immigration reform and pass this important piece of legislation immediately."

Last week the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the DREAM Act would generate \$2.3 billion in tax revenue over 10 years.

"Besides being the right thing to do, passing this legislation is also fiscally responsible," said Titi Liu, executive director of the Asian Law Caucus.

Passage of the DREAM Act would mean that more of the Asian American community's best and brightest young people can become successful and productive citizens.

"We urge Congress to give these outstanding young people the chance to give back to America," Stewart Kwoh, president and executive director of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, said.

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The Asian American Justice Center (www.advancingequality.org), a member of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice (www.advancingjustice.org), works closely with its sister organizations – the Asian American Institute in Chicago (www.aaichicago.org), the Asian Law Caucus (www.asianlawcaucus.org) in San Francisco and the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (www.apalc.org) in Los Angeles – to promote a fair and equitable society for all by working for civil and human rights and empowering Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other underserved communities.