

## First Asian American Caucus Meeting Held in Chicago - MabuhayRadio

Written by

Tuesday, 31 July 2012 19:18 - Last Updated Friday, 03 August 2012 01:00

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By JOSEPH G. LARIOS

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CHICAGO (*jGLi*) – From nothing to something.

This was the hope of State Rep. Louis I. Lang (D-IL-16th), deputy majority leader of the Illinois General Assembly, as he presided over the first Asian-American Caucus meeting in the state of Illinois last July 27 at the Bilandic Building at 160 N. La Salle, 6th Floor in Chicago, Illinois. The Caucus hopes to have a member from the ranks of the Asian-American community in the future.

“We want to get rid of the barriers faced by Asian Americans in getting into the housing

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program, for instance, or propose budget that will impact on the Asian-American community,” said Mr. Lang shortly after he adjourned the meeting that he described as introductory sessions with Asian Americans.

The meeting was attended by nine Illinois legislators, including State Rep. Fred Crespo (D-IL-44), who is married to Filipino American Dorothy Acacio Luz, a native of Baguio City

. The meeting was spearheaded by the Asian-American Institute, a member of the Asian-American Center for Advancing Justice (AAI) and its Pan-Asian Voter Empowerment (PAVE) coalition.

It was just a meet-and-greet session by the Caucus that does not have any Asian American member although the General Assembly has 177 members. But aside from the nine legislators, who attended, one more called by phone while four more expressed interest to attend the next meeting after the November elections, Mr. Lang said.

Rep. Crespo said the General Assembly really cares about Asian-American issues and “we just want to be accessible to them.” The Latino legislator (he’s from Puerto Rico) said the Caucus will reach out to the Asian-American community even as his district composed of Schaumburg and Hoffman Estate is having a growing Asian American presence.

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As part of its ongoing policy and advocacy platform, AAI, PAVE and state legislators got HB4510, the State Asian Employment Plan, passed on May 31, 2012

. On the morning of the Caucus meeting, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn signed it into law marking an important first step in addressing the Asian-American communities' needs.

### **REPORTING ASIAN-AMERICAN HIRING**

The first official meeting of the Caucus with the pan-Asian PAVE coalition discussed their strategy for moving a State agenda that reflects the needs and interests of all Asian Americans across the metropolitan Chicago area. PAVE is a coalition of Asian-American organizations coordinating Get out the Vote work, conducting immigration workshops, and advocating on behalf of their communities on issues such as voting rights, small businesses, healthcare and school reform in metropolitan Chicago.

Several of the legislators forming the Asian-American Caucus sponsored HB4510 and were instrumental in helping it become law. HB4510 requires the state to report their hiring practices when it comes to Asian Americans including reporting on their bi-lingual capacity to better determine how the communities' needs are being served.

The AAI and PAVE see reporting as a first step of many that are needed to help bring about improved services to underserved communities, ensure equitable representation of Asian Americans in state employment, and to advocate for Asian Americans in higher government positions that deal with policy and strategy in areas that are important to our communities. The PAVE coalition applauds Governor Quinn's signing of HB4510 and looks forward to many more victories for the Asian American community through its partnership with the Asian-American

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Caucus.

The legislators who attended first Caucus meeting last July 27 were Representatives Lang, Edward Acevedo (D-IL-2nd), Elaine Nekritz (D-Northbrook-57th), Daniel Biss (D-Skokie), Crespo, Mike Tryon (R-66th) and Naomi Jakobsson (D-Urbana) and Senators Antonio Munoz (D-Chicago) and Ira Silverstein (D-IL-8th).

The PAVE coalition includes the following: Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment, Asian-American Institute, Cambodian Association of Illinois, Chinese-American Service League, Chinese Mutual Aid Association, Coalition for a Better Chinese-American Community, Hamdard Center for Health and Human Services, Indo-American Center, Korean-American Community Services, Korean-American Resource and Cultural Center, Lao-American Community Service, Lao-American Organization of Elgin, and Muslim Women Resource Center. # # #

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