

National Asian Pacific American Bar Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 22, 2010

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NAPABA Applauds the Nomination of Tani Cantil-Sakauye for Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court

WASHINGTON - Yesterday, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger nominated Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye to be the Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court. Justice Cantil-Sakauye would be the first Asian Pacific American to serve as chief justice for any state high court in the continental United States. She would also be the first Filipino American to serve on a state high court in the continental United States and the first Filipina to serve on a state high court.

"The nomination of Justice Cantil-Sakauye is truly a historic moment for the Asian Pacific American legal community and I hope that her confirmation will proceed quickly," said Joseph J. Centeno, president of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association.

Justice Cantil-Sakauye is currently an Associate Justice for the Third District Court of Appeal in Sacramento. Before that, she served as a superior court judge for the Sacramento County Superior Court and as a municipal court judge - appointed at the age of 30 - for the Sacramento County Municipal Court. Justice Cantil-Sakauye also served in the office of Governor Deukmejian and as a deputy district attorney in the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office. She was honored as a NAPABA Trailblazer in 2003. Justice Cantil-Sakauye has received high praise from Democrats and Republicans alike for her intellect, collegiality, and judicial temperament. Many people also have praised her administrative skills, an important quality for the Chief Justice position.

Justice Cantil-Sakauye has a life story inspiring for all Americans. She is the daughter of former Filipino farmworkers, and earned money for law school by dealing blackjack at a casino in Lake Tahoe and working at a restaurant. Justice Cantil-Sakauye has been and remains active in her community, including with her church, the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, and the Asian/Pacific Bar Association of Sacramento.

Asian Pacific Americans represent about 5 percent of the state judiciary in California although they make up approximately 13 percent of the state's population. Justice Cantil-Sakauye must be confirmed by the California Commission on Judicial Appointments and then approved by voters on Nov. 2, 2010, before she may serve as Chief Justice.

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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.