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PRESS RELEASE

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New Report Reveals the *Devastating Wait* of Family Separation; Report Highlights Importance of New Legislation Seeking to Fix the System

LOS ANGELES, September 25, 2008 – The Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC) released a new report today exploring the current family immigration system and the backlogs which trap millions of Asian Americans and other immigrants waiting to sponsor family members.

A Devastating Wait: Family Unity and the Immigration Backlogs, highlights stories of Asian Americans waiting for their family members in the backlogs. “The long-term separation of families required under the current system runs counter to the American values of family unity we all uphold,” said Sara Sadhwani, immigrant rights project director at APALC.

“With ten to fifteen year waiting periods for family preference visas, many families suffer undue hardships and the family unit crumbles,” said Dan Huang, the report’s principle author. “It is believed that such long waits have led to the large number – an estimated 1.5 million – of undocumented Asian immigrants who choose to overstay their visas rather than continue to wait in the backlogs.” The report details the inner-workings of the family immigration system, including family visa categories, quotas and expected wait times. The report also highlights the impact on diverse Asian and Pacific Islander immigrant communities and their family members left behind in their home countries.

The report is released just days after the introduction of new legislation by Congressman Mike Honda (D-CA) and Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ), which looks to resolve key elements of the broken family immigration system. *The Reuniting Families Act*, offers practical solutions for clearing out family immigration backlogs, including:

- Recapturing hundreds and thousands of used and unclaimed employment based and family based visas due to bureaucratic delay and placing them into the pool of usable visas;
- Reclassifying lawful permanent resident spouses and children as “immediate relatives” and exempting them from numerical caps on family immigration;
- Increasing per country limits to 10% and helping countries with great numbers of employment based and family based visa applications;
- Allowing families to reunite despite the death of a petitioner;
- Recognizing the sacrifices of our military by exempting children of World War II Filipino veterans from numerical caps; and
- Promoting increased judicial discretion for family members in removal proceedings to immigrate on a legal visa despite bars to reentry.

“Recent polling shows that 84% of Asian American voters in Los Angeles County favor a reduction of these tremendous backlogs¹,” said Sadhwani. “We are pleased this legislation has been introduced and look forward to supporting and promoting it under a new Congress and Administration next year.”

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¹ Asian Americans at the Ballot Box, The 2006 General Election in Los Angeles County.