ASIAN AMERICAN ADVOCACY DAY

#AAPIRISING: THE NEW SOUTH
OUR ORGANIZATION

Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta is the first and only nonprofit legal advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the civil rights of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) in Georgia and the Southeast.

Founded in 2010 as the Asian American Legal Advocacy Center (AALAC), our organization became part of the national Asian Americans Advancing Justice affiliation in 2014. Since then, we have re-organized our focus areas more specifically into four groups: Policy Advocacy, Organizing & Civic Engagement, Impact Litigation, and Legal Services.

OUR VISION & MISSION

OUR VISION

Our vision is a social movement in which communities of colors are fully empowered, active in civic life, and working together to promote equity, fair treatment, and self determination for all.

OUR MISSION

We are a nonprofit legal advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the civil rights of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) in Georgia and the Southeast.

For more information visit advancingjustice-atlanta.org
POLICY ADVOCACY
We lead and shape public policy that impacts Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) and all immigrant populations in Georgia. We educate our communities through workshops, publications, and community issue forums. We are at the forefront of policy advocacy and champion the civil rights of AANHPIs in the Southeast.

ORGANIZING & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
We aim to affect deep, long term shifts in power, behavior, and culture through community-building and education, leadership development, issue-based and electoral campaigns, and coalition-building.

IMPACT LITIGATION
Our litigation department combines impact litigation with other strategies to expand legal protections for AANHPI and other marginalized communities and to advocate against laws and policies that are unjust or oppressive. We primarily focus on the areas of immigrant justice and voting rights.

LEGAL SERVICES
We provide a range of free and low cost immigration legal services to refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrants in Georgia. Our multilingual staff provides immigration legal services to help eligible persons and their families obtain legal status and citizenship and provides legal representation in removal proceedings. In addition, the Legal Services Program collaborates with various community partners and immigrant rights organizations to hold free legal workshops and community education programs in Georgia.

For more information visit advancingjustice-atlanta.org
2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

POLICY AGENDA

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta

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About Us

Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta is the first and only nonprofit legal advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the civil rights of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) in Georgia and the Southeast.

Through our work, we envision a social movement in which communities of color are fully empowered, active in civic life, and working together to promote equity, fair treatment, and self determination for all.

Founded in 2010 as the Asian American Legal Advocacy Center (AALAC), our organization became part of the national Asian Americans Advancing Justice affiliation in 2014. Since then, we have re-organized our focus areas more specifically into four groups:

- Policy Advocacy
- Organizing & Civic Engagement
- Impact Litigation
- Legal Services
Celebrating its 10th Annual Asian American Advocacy Day this year, Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta has been at the frontlines fighting back against legislation that impacts AAPIs and communities of color. After contacting every AAPI voter in Georgia, the work of continuing to build a culture of civic engagement remains. Our work is immensely important during the legislative session because we are one of the only immigrant rights groups that has a regular presence at the State Capitol each year. The Georgia Legislature meets once a year for forty working days to discuss and pass laws that affect our state. Each year, legislators introduce harmful anti-immigrant legislation that without fail slowly chip away at the livelihoods of immigrants in Georgia. These bills include everything from targeting undocumented students and families to singling out legal permanent residents for no reason other than their citizenship status or the language that they speak. We work collaboratively with other immigrant and civil rights groups to make sure that we stand united and work on issues that impact people of color.

Policy Priority Areas

As an organization, Advancing Justice-Atlanta works on four main policy areas during the legislative session:

- Advancing and Defending Immigrant Rights
- Protecting and Expanding Voting Rights for AAPI Voters and Communities of Color
- Championing Economic Justice
- Increasing Access to Education

Each year, we work on legislation within those policy areas that affect our immigrant communities.
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta’s 2021 Legislative Agenda represents our commitment to protect and advance immigrant rights in Georgia. Our 2021 agenda addresses key issues the immigrant community faces. During the upcoming legislative session, we will continue to focus on four key policy areas: immigrant rights, voting rights, economic justice, and access to education. Transformative policies are needed to make Georgia a better place for all who call it home.

Here’s a snapshot of what we will focus on in 2021:

**IMMIGRANT RIGHTS**

Every legislative session, legislation is introduced that will directly or indirectly impact the immigrant community. As such, we are prepared to fight against harmful anti-immigrant legislation and push for:

- Expanded access to driver’s licenses for immigrants as a partner in the Freedom to Drive Georgia Coalition
- Family reunification and the expansion of family-based immigration
- Protected pathways to citizenship for all immigrants

**VOTING RIGHTS**

During the 2020 election cycle, we worked around the clock to monitor polling locations, assist voters with language barriers, and pushback against any actions by local and state election officials that would harm immigrant voters. With much discussion already taking place on voting rights and new legislation being proposed, we will:

- Defend and protect the voting rights of AAPI voters and communities of color
- Defend and protect AAPI voters and communities of color against gerrymandering proposals
- Advance legislation that would ensure a fair, transparent and equitable redistricting process
- Demand language equity for limited English proficient Georgians who deserve the opportunity to participate in the voting and redistricting process

**ECONOMIC JUSTICE**

Economies are more successful when they are fair and equitable. As we continue to battle a global health pandemic with rising numbers of Georgians battling Covid-19, we will continue to see economic impacts. Even as we recover and attempt to get back to business as usual, immigrant communities should be included in restoring local and state economies. Immigrant communities should be provided the opportunity to thrive economically as well. Legislation that targets the economic rights of immigrants must be corrected to create a just and balanced economy for all Georgians. We will:

- Pushback on discriminatory legislation that would diminish economic opportunities for immigrants to make a better life for themselves and their families
- Support opportunities for low-income immigrants who need public services, without fear of jeopardizing their immigration status
- Support worker rights and minimum wage increases

**ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

Georgia has had one of the fastest rates of growth from immigration. In previous years, educational reform aimed at covering immigrant families and their students fell short of providing complete access. Today, policies are still in place that create barriers for immigrant youth and young adults. We will:

- Pushback on policies that create barriers to entry into state adult education programs and flagship universities for immigrant students
- End the ban on undocumented students from Georgia’s top public colleges
- Support in-state tuition options for undocumented students who have graduated from Georgia high schools
What We Are Up Against

Each year, the Georgia Legislature introduces legislation that directly or indirectly impacts immigrant communities.

Voting Rights

During the 2021 legislative session, we have seen 40 + anti-voting rights bills introduced. The work to undermine democracy and disempower voters has dominated the legislative session thus far. While bad bills still permeate other areas, anti-voting rights bills are the primary focus of legislators on both sides of the aisle. This year, unlike before we are taking a strategic approach to defending against bills that would undo the hard work of AAPI voters and communities of color.

"Non-Citizen" Markers

In 2021 we have also seen bills targeting immigrants and singling them out through their driver’s licenses and identification cards. Driver’s licenses for non-citizens are already marked with the words “Limited Term.” These kinds of bills would add additional wording to identify “non-citizens”, or change the design or orientation of a non-citizen driver's license. These identifiers would make it easier to discriminate against and unfairly impact refugees, permanent residents, and immigrants in general.

DACA/Undocumented Immigrants Access to Education

Without fail, each year legislation is introduced to further limit the rights of undocumented immigrants in Georgia. In 2021, we see this again with a restrictive tuition equity bill. Georgia is one of few to have a policy prohibiting undocumented students, including those with DACA, to enter the top four public universities in the state, as well as denying access to in-state tuition.
How We Fight Back
Our tactics for advancing and protecting AAPI and immigrant rights

**Educate. Advocate. Mobilize.**

Our legislative advocacy includes a series of tactics that help fight back against anti-immigrant measures. Our legally-researched policy briefs serve as resources for legislators on both sides of the aisle and help to inform debates in the legislature. Advancing Justice - Atlanta staff provide expert testimony as well as prep impacted individuals to speak on their experiences.

The most effective way to fight back is to build communities of power using AAPI and immigrant voices. To educate our communities, we founded the Georgia Immigrant Rights Alliance, the only statewide immigrant-led policy table. We send out regular action alerts to our mailing list, and actively use our social media presence to engage community members to make calls and send emails. To increase language equity, we translate key information into different languages for our communities.
2021 Policy Agenda

Advancing Justice’s 2021 policy agenda represents our commitment to protect and advance AAPI and immigrant rights in Georgia. Our agenda addresses some of the key issues the AAPI community faces. We must build on the momentum from recent elections, and develop transformative policies that are community-driven. In order to move Georgia forward, we will take strategic approaches to making Georgia a better place for all who call it home. We will continue to focus on our key policy priority areas and expand efforts within each.

Advance and Defend Immigrant Rights

- Support family reunification and the expansion of family-based immigration
- Support and protect pathways to citizenship for all immigrants
- Eliminate systems that cause mass incarceration and detention of immigrants and people of color
- End surveillance of immigrants and communities of color
- Ensure, equality, and due process in adjudication and enforcement of immigration laws
- Expand access to driver’s licenses for immigrants as a partner in the Freedom to Drive Coalition
Protect and Expand Voting Rights for AAPI Voters and Communities of Color

- **Eliminate barriers to voting while expanding access**
  - Eliminate the “exact match” policy
  - Allow for same-day voter registration
  - Establish language equity council to ensure access to the ballot for limited English proficiency voters
  - Create a more streamlined process that encompasses language equity
- **Expand access to the ballot by providing additional voting opportunities**
  - Increase early voting to 45 days prior to Election Day
  - Standardize the number of early voting sites for all counties
  - Allow voters to vote anywhere in their county on Election Day
- **Address issues with absentee to ensure equal access statewide**
  - Accept absentee ballots that have been postmarked by Election Day
  - Create an easier and more electronic method to request and track absentee ballots that is available in multiple languages
  - Define and set guidelines for county officials to expedite absentee ballots
  - Standardize procedures on how to handle rejected absentee ballots (signature mismatch, birthdate issues, etc.)
Empower AAPI Communities Through Redistricting - The Future of Voting Rights in Georgia

- **Ensure that redistricting in Georgia is done in accordance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965**
  - There must be clear criteria for redistricting with enforceable standards that is adopted at all levels of government which are in accordance with the VRA
  - Without the protections of Section 5 of the VRA, the Georgia legislature must adopt transparency and voluntarily inform the public of redistricting proposals
  - All legislative mapping proposals should be required to go to hearing during which public comment is available for Georgians

- **Ensure that POC and immigrant communities who have been historically disenfranchised by gerrymandering have an opportunity to participate in redistricting processes**
  - There should be language equity as demonstrated by translating public facing materials into a minimum set of languages required to reach diverse Georgians (for example Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Mandarin/Cantonese, Hindi, Arabic).
  - Also demonstrate language equity by providing for interpretation where necessary and feasible.
  - Given that accurate data of BIPOC communities is limited in Georgia, redistricting committees should conduct mapping input sessions outside of legislative committee hearings, where BIPOC and immigrant communities have a better opportunity to review maps and make recommendations informed by their lived experiences and knowledge of their own communities.
• **Conduct fair and transparent redistricting at the local level**
  
  - While state legislative standards for fair and transparent redistricting are ideal, we must also ensure that county and local governments adopt their own policies to ensure that their residents are informed about redistricting proposals and have an opportunity to give input during the mapping process.
  - End at-large districts that, especially at the local level, prevent immigrant and POC communities from getting the representation they deserve.
Advancing Immigrants’ Educational, Health, and Economic Opportunities

- Support opportunities for MARTA expansion through the Metro area
- Provide language access for public agencies that provide food assistance, health care, and more
- Support opportunities for low-income immigrants who need public services, without fear of jeopardizing their immigration status
- Support worker rights and minimum wage increases
- Expand Medicaid and close the coverage gap
- End the ban on undocumented students from Georgia’s top public colleges
- Support in-state tuition options for undocumented students who have graduated from Georgia high schools
Building Communities of Power
Establishing a culture of civic engagement

Elderly Korean couple votes with translated sample ballots provided DeKalb County
AJC coverage of DeKalb County becoming the first county to provide sample ballots and voting info in Korean & Spanish
Georgia Speaks is a coordinated campaign that calls on counties across Georgia to sign the Advancing Justice - Atlanta's pledge for language equity, agreeing to implement language equity best practices such as:

1. Following the federal DOJ Four Prong Analysis for Determining Language Access Necessity
2. Implementing Quality Control on Current Translation Offerings
3. Establishing a Language Equity Advisory Council
4. Mandating Language Equity for Key Election Materials
5. Mandating Language Equity for COVID Vaccination Information and Materials
6. Committing to Equity and Transparency by Requiring Language Equity in the Redistricting Process

Our organization has launched the Georgia Speaks campaign in DeKalb and Gwinnett County. These are just the first steps to achieving language equity across Georgia.

**LANGUAGE EQUITY VERSUS LANGUAGE ACCESS**

**LANGUAGE EQUITY:**
When all people, including individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) can communicate and participate effectively in all parts of society including government, economy, and culture

**LANGUAGE ACCESS:**
When all people, including individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP), can utilize and take advantage of all of the resources and services that allow them to communicate and participate effectively in society
LET’S TAKE A LOOK AT GWINNETT COUNTY:

Gwinnett County Population:
- As of 2019, there are 936,250 residents living in Gwinnett County. Twelve percent of those residents are non-Hispanic Asians.

Language:
- 37.6% of people speak a language other than English at home
  - This is more than double the rate in Georgia: 14.4%
  - More than 1.5 time the rate in the United States: 22%
- 15% of people speak English less than “very well”
- The most commonly spoken languages other than English:
  - Spanish: 165,822 speakers
  - Vietnamese: 25,220 speakers
  - Korean: 18,707 speakers

Birth Place:
- 27.3% of Gwinnett County’s population is foreign-born
  - More than double the rate in Georgia: 10.3%
  - More than double the rate in the United States: 13.7%
- Of the foreign-born population, 34% are from Asia
  - 47% are from Latin America
- Gwinnett County has a higher population of foreign born residents compared to neighboring counties like Dekalb, Hall, and Forsyth by more than 10%
HB 228 - the labeling of noncitizens on driver’s licenses and ID cards

We oppose any bill that targets immigrants and noncitizens. HB 228 would require that any license issued by the Department of Drivers Services have “BEARER NOT U.S. CITIZEN – NOT VOTER ID” clearly written on them.

**Bill Status:** House Second Readers 2/3/2021; No hearing scheduled yet

**The Ask:** OPPOSE HB 228. Do not vote for it to get out of committee

**Talking Points:**

- HB 228 would require that driver’s licenses for all noncitizens in Georgia be marked “BEARER NOT U.S. CITIZEN – NOT VOTER ID.” HB 228 perpetuates the false and dangerous narrative of widespread noncitizen voting in Georgia or anywhere in the U.S. It is a solution in search of a problem.

- HB 228 would also stigmatize noncitizens in Georgia. Marking driver’s licenses with the words ‘BEARER NOT U.S. CITIZEN – NOT VOTER ID’ invites discrimination against and harassment of noncitizens, including during encounters with immigration officials or law enforcement officers. Such a clear demarcation could also lead to discrimination in other settings where individuals are required to provide ID, like at the bank and when applying for housing. It may even deter noncitizens from applying for a license at all.

- HB 228 also conflates the purpose of voter ID law, which is to verify identity, not citizenship. In particular, HB 228 would place an undue burden on new Americans exercising their right to vote. Under HB 228, a new American who obtained their driver’s license before becoming a citizen would be unable to use their driver’s license as voter ID at the polls. Instead, they would be required to expend time and money to obtain a new driver’s license or secure an alternative form of voter ID.

- With nearly one-third of Asian Americans in Georgia not having citizenship, this is a significant problem.

- Bills like these may jeopardize Georgia’s relationship with foreign companies that have business here, such as Kia, Delta, and Mercedes, by forcing their top executives to have different driver’s licenses, suggesting that Georgia is not willing to engage in a global economy.
**HB 228 - the labeling of noncitizens on driver’s licenses and ID cards**

**Target Legislators**

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