

# Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Strengthening Our Economy and our Country

Posted by Rozita Villanueva Lee on October 14, 2011 at 11:25 AM EDT

I came to Las Vegas, Nevada 32 years ago from Hawaii, where I was born and raised. Like so many other diverse people in the state of Nevada, I have made this place my home and have been embraced by the community. I have seen my community change dramatically over the years. The 2010 Census indicates that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) make up over 10 percent of the population in Nevada, and that nationwide, AAPIs are the fastest growing ethnic group. I am proud to serve on President Obama's Advisory Commission on AAPIs. In my role as a commissioner, I advise the White House Initiative on AAPIs about the issues facing my community. Almost every day, I meet with stakeholders, organizations, and advocates—from youth to elders, from performing artists to business leaders in the local chambers of commerce, from labor union members to veterans groups and churches. What I hear is an overwhelming concern about the economy, and about housing stability and affordability, as illustrated by some startling statistics.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Nevada has the highest unemployment rate in the country—at 13.4 percent. Nevada also posted the nation's highest state foreclosure rate for the 56th straight month in August 2011, with one in every 118 housing units with a foreclosure filing during the month. It breaks my heart to have seen so many friends lose their jobs and lose their homes during these difficult economic times.

Their experiences are the reason we are convening a **Town Hall on Jobs and Housing** in Henderson, Nevada, in honor of the two year anniversary of the signing of the executive order that reauthorized the White House Initiative. The Town Hall is an opportunity for Administration officials to hear from the community about the issues most important to them, but also to raise awareness of the Administration efforts to create jobs, strengthen small businesses, preserve homeownership, and expand housing opportunities. The President's advisers on jobs and the economy, and officials from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Small Business Administration will listen to and answer questions on federal resources for employment retraining for green jobs, starting and growing small businesses, housing counseling, and financial literacy services. Participants can walk away with hands-on, practical knowledge of how to get help during these difficult economic times. President Obama believes that in this time of national crisis, inaction is not an option. That's why he proposed The [American Jobs Act](#), a bold set of initiatives to strengthen the recovery and create jobs for all Americans. These measures—which will expand opportunities for the long-term unemployed to reenter the workforce, provide incentives for businesses to hire, and make investments in revitalizing schools, infrastructure and neighborhoods—will help create new job opportunities in AAPI communities and across the country.

I listen to the real life experiences that people are going through every day, and I work with the White House Initiative to make sure that our government is responding to these needs.

*Rozita Villanueva Lee serves on the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.*