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**Asian American Institute Testifies at Illinois House Redistricting Hearing**

Chicago, IL- Asian Americans from around the Chicago area will be testifying in front of the Illinois House Redistricting Committee on Thursday to prevent fragmentation of the Asian American community through redistricting. According to the Asian American Institute and its partner organizations, the Illinois Asian American community has grown by nearly 40 percent over the last decade but has never seen an Asian American elected to the Illinois General Assembly.

"The Asian American community in the Chicago area has been very active in the redistricting process to further our goals of political self determination. We participate in this crucial process because we understand that how our communities are divided in terms of state districts can vastly impact our ability to elect candidates of our choice," says Ami Gandhi, Asian American Institute's legal director. Asian American community members have been participating in the redistricting process by testifying at Illinois redistricting hearings and meeting with legislators.

Over the last decade, Asian Americans have significantly increased voter registration, voter turnout and overall civic engagement. As Asian Americans become a more prominent population in the state of Illinois, the rate of civic participation is also increasing.

The hearing on April 21, 2011, is one of the public hearings scheduled by the Illinois House Redistricting Committee to solicit input for the redistricting process.

"With the new Illinois Rights Act of 2011, which provides us with a powerful tool to protect the voting rights our community, we are hopeful that our participation and our input will be taken seriously. While Asian Americans are made up of different ethnicities and languages, we share a common experience culturally and socio-economically," says Hye Young Lee, program director at Korean American Community Services, located in Albany Park.

"During the years post 9-11, South Asians and Muslims has seen a sharp rise in prejudice and hate crimes targeted toward community members. In our enclaves, we have strong support from our legislators who have worked with us to have town hall meetings to address hate crimes and other community concerns. For community members who live in nearby districts, elected officials have been less responsive or don't feel it is necessary to work with us because our numbers are smaller. For this reason, it is imperative to continue to further identify West Ridge and Albany Park as one united community of interest as many South Asians, both Muslims and non-Muslims live, work, and worship in this area," says Mr. Ahmed Ansari of Islamic Circle of North America in Chicago.

The Asian American Institute, a member of Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, calls on state leaders to listen and respond to Asian American voices during the redistricting process and beyond, keep the Asian American community whole, and make the entire redistricting process transparent.

Redistricting testimonies can be found on AAI's website at [aaichicago.org](http://aaichicago.org).

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*The Asian American Institute ([www.aaichicago.org](http://www.aaichicago.org)) is one of the leading pan-Asian nonprofit organizations in the Midwest, dedicated to empowering the Asian American community through advocacy, by utilizing research, education, and coalition-building. Asian American Institute, Asian American Justice Center, Asian Law Caucus, and the Asian Pacific American Legal Center are members of Asian American Center for Advancing Justice.*

