



(/)

[Home \(/\)](#)

[About \(/about\)](#)

[Contact \(/contact\)](#)

[Issues \(/issues\)](#)

[Media Center \(/media-center\)](#)

[Helping You \(/services\)](#)

[COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#)
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REP LIEU LEADS 150 MEMBER LETTER URGING DOJ TO CONDEMN COVID-RELATED ANTI-ASIAN DISCRIMINATION



WASHINGTON - Today, Congressman Ted W. Lieu (D-Los Angeles County), along with Reps. Rob Woodall, Judy Chu and Pete Olson, led a bipartisan letter of 150 Members of Congress calling on Attorney General William Barr to publicly condemn acts of anti-Asian bias stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Members also urged AG Barr to provide regular status updates regarding the steps the Department of Justice is taking and will take going forward to combat this behavior.

In the letter, the Members wrote:

Dear Attorney General Barr:

Thank you for featuring the quote “Coronavirus is no excuse for hate” on the Department of Justice’s hate crimes website. The COVID-19 pandemic affects all Americans and has wrought enormous pain in the United States. Some Americans are facing increased discrimination as a result of the pandemic. We write to draw particular attention to an increase in verbal and physical attacks as well as discrimination towards Asian Americans who have been wrongly blamed for the virus’ spread. We respectfully request that you publicly condemn acts of anti-Asian bias, and provide us with regular status updates regarding the steps the Department of Justice is taking and will take going forward to combat this behavior.

Asian Americans are not responsible for the spread of coronavirus in the United States; yet, since the start of the pandemic they have experienced continued harassment, violence, and discrimination. As of June 3, the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council reported 2,066 incidents of coronavirus-related discrimination. These and numerous news reports have documented cases ranging from the denial of services at stores to verbal harassment on the subway to physical assaults.

In one particularly egregious instance, an individual in Texas stabbed three Asian Americans, two of whom were children, because he thought they were infecting others with COVID-19. In March, the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Houston field office acknowledged the likelihood of a surge in hate crime incidents against Asian Americans. And most recently, a new Ipsos survey conducted for the Center for Public Integrity found that more than 30 percent of Americans have witnessed someone blaming Asian people for the coronavirus pandemic.

We appreciate the op-ed the Department placed in the Washington Examiner generally stating that hate crimes will be investigated and prosecuted. However, the dangers faced by the Asian American community today are very real and deserve a strong and specific response by our government. In fact, on May 8, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights acknowledged its concerns “over the increase in xenophobic animosity toward Asian Americans (and perceived Asian Americans) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic” and unanimously issued recommendations urging federal agencies reduce this sentiment.

We note that in the early 2000s during the severe acute respiratory syndrome outbreak, the Bush Administration immediately took steps to prevent discrimination against Asian Americans by creating a community outreach team to monitor and document acts of anti-Asian bias and engage with the community.

Two years earlier following the September 11 terrorist attacks, the Administration had similarly sought to prevent attacks against Arab, Muslim, Sikh, and South Asian American communities by engaging with community leaders, conducting coordinated civil rights enforcement, and speaking out forcefully. While these prior responses were not perfect, they represented an important effort to acknowledge and address the specific discrimination.

Despite the fear present within the community, each and every day Asian Americans help to combat COVID-19. While Asian Americans comprise 7 percent of the U.S. population, 17.1 percent of active medical physicians are Asian American. Similarly, Asian Americans are serving our country by working

as nurses, health aides, and in many other essential occupations. Asian Americans are just as American as any other group of people in our country.

We respectfully request that you, as head of the Department of Justice, forcefully condemn anti-Asian bias to send an unambiguous message to all Americans that discrimination against this community is un-American and will not be tolerated. Further, we would ask that you update us regularly as to what steps the Department has taken to address our concerns. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

*Ted W. Lieu, *Rob Woodall, *Judy Chu, *Pete Olson, Abigail D. Spanberger, Adam B. Schiff, Adam Smith, Adriano Espaillat, Al Green, Alan Lowenthal, Alcee L. Hastings, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Alma S. Adams, Ph.D., Ami Bera, M.D., Andy Kim, André Carson, Andy Levin, Angie Craig, Ann McLane Kuster, Anna G. Eshoo, Anthony G. Brown, Ayanna Pressley, Barbara Lee, Betty McCollum, Bill Foster, Bill Pascrell, Jr., Bobby L. Rush, Bonnie Watson Coleman, Bradley S. Schneider, Brad Sherman, Brenda L. Lawrence, Brendan F. Boyle, *Brian Fitzpatrick*, Carolyn B. Maloney, Cedric L. Richmond, Chellie Pingree, Cheri Bustos, Colin Z. Allred, *Dan Crenshaw*, Danny K. Davis, Darren Soto, David N. Cicilline, David Trone, Dean Phillips, Debbie Mucarsel-Powell, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Denny Heck, Derek Kilmer, Dina Titus, Donald S. Beyer Jr., Donald M. Payne, Jr., Donna E. Shalala, Doris Matsui, Dwight Evans, Earl Blumenauer, Ed Case, Eddie Bernice Johnson, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Eliot L. Engel, Emanuel Cleaver, II, Eric Swalwell, Frank Pallone, Jr., Gerald E. Connolly, Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr., Grace F. Napolitano, Grace Meng, Gregory W. Meeks, Gwen Moore, Hakeem Jeffries, Harley Rouda, Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr., Ilhan Omar, Jackie Speier, Jahana Hayes, James P. McGovern, Jamie Raskin, Jan Schakowsky, Jared Huffman, Jason Crow, J. Luis Correa, Jennifer Wexton, Jerrold Nadler, Jerry McNerney, Jesús G. "Chuy" García, Jimmy Gomez, Jimmy Panetta, Joaquin Castro, Joe Neguse, John B. Larson, John Yarmuth, Joseph P. Kennedy, III, Josh Gottheimer, Juan Vargas, Karen Bass, Katherine M. Clark, Kathy Castor, Katie Porter, Kim Schrier, M.D., Lauren Underwood, Linda T. Sánchez, Lisa Blunt Rochester, Lucille Roybal-Allard, Lucy McBath, Marc Veasey, Marcia L. Fudge, Madeleine Dean, Mark DeSaulnier, Mark Pocan, Mark Takano, Mary Gay Scanlon, Max Rose, Mike Thompson, Nanette Diaz Barragán, Nydia M. Velázquez, Peter A. DeFazio, Peter Welch, Pramila Jayapal, Raja Krishnamoorthi, Rick Larsen, Ro Khanna, Ron Kind, Rosa L. DeLauro, Ruben Gallego, Sanford D. Bishop, Jr., Salud O. Carbajal, Sean Casten, Scott H. Peters, Sean Patrick Maloney, Seth Moulton, Sharice L. Davids, Sheila Jackson Lee, Stephanie Murphy, Steve Cohen, Steven Horsford, Susan A. Davis, Susie Lee, Suzan K. DelBene, Suzanne Bonamici, Sylvia R. Garcia, Ted Deutch, *Ted S. Yoho*, Thomas R. Suozzi, TJ Cox, Tony Cárdenas, Tulsi Gabbard, Veronica Escobar, Vicente Gonzalez, William R. Keating, Yvette. D. Clarke, Zoe Lofgren

This letter is supported by the following groups: American Federation of Teachers, Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Asian American Unity Coalition (AAUC), Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles, Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC, Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF), Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote), Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) AFL-CIO, Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs Association (APAPA), Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON), Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO), Chinese American Arts and Culture Association of New York, Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACAA), Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA), Committee of 100 (C100), Council of Korean Americans (CKA), Institute for Asian Pacific American Leadership and Advancement (IAPALA), Japanese American Citizens League (JAACL), KAHAL, Korean American Associations of the U.S.A, Korean American Federation of Los Angeles (KAFLA), Korean American Grassroots Conference (KAGC), Laotian American National Alliance (LANA), National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA), National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF), National Coalition for Asian Pacific Americans Community Development (National CAPACD), National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA), National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC), National

Urban League, OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates, Southeast Asian Resource Action Center (SEARAC), Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), Taiwanese American Citizens League (TACL), Taiwanese American Professionals - Atlanta (TAP-ATL), Taiwanese American Professionals - Austin (TAP-ATX), Taiwanese American Professionals - Boston (TAP-BOS), Taiwanese American Professionals - New York (TAP-NY), Taiwanese American Professionals - Orange County (TAP-OC), Taiwanese American Professionals - San Diego (TAP-SD), Taiwanese American Professionals - San Francisco (TAP-SF), Taiwanese American Professionals - Seattle (TAP-SEA, The 1882 Foundation, The 1990 Institute, The 80-20 Initiative, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, United Chinese Americans (UCA), United States Heartland China Association

READ THE FULL LETTER HERE (</sites/lieu.house.gov/files/2020-07-20%20House%20Letter%20to%20AG%20Barr%20re%20anti-Asian%20bias%20and%20COVID-19.pdf>)

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