

The 2020 Presidential election cycle was historic for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. From making history by attracting a presidential candidate to directly address the AAPI electorate to over 1.1 million viewers, to increasing their participation by over 47% over 2016, AAPI voters were more engaged than ever before! APIAVote is proud to have played an important role in making this possible and we are grateful to our donors whose investments fueled our efforts.

Our impact was powered by the increased investments from our long-time supporters, as well as, strong support from new funding partners. Together, we invested more broadly and deeply in AAPI communities across the U.S. and provided the training and resources that allowed our partners to successfully pivot to meet the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic created.

### **2020 in Review: Invest broadly and early in our diverse community's needs**

While no one was prepared for the unprecedented impact the COVID-19 pandemic would have on the daily lives of every American, particularly the impact of anti-Asian hate and violence, APIAVote and its network of community based organizations were able to quickly adapt and pivot. Our preparedness was a result of our broad investments and early training and staging. By starting the Norman Y. Mineta Leadership Institute training in 2019 we were able to train over 1,800 community leaders, volunteers, and some US Census staff in 50 regions nationwide. Our readiness for the 2020 cycle empowered our CBO partners to not only help increase the turnout of first time AAPI voters by 24%, overperforming other voters by 10%, and encourage Census participation, but also provide critical public services including helping with unemployment applications, and distributing Personal Protective Equipment.

AAPI voter enthusiasm in 2020 was high across almost all our communities according to our Asian American Voter Survey. A contributing factor was our heavy investments in our direct mail campaign, digital ad purchases, and ethnic media buys. Our efforts allowed us to reach over 1 million AAPI eligible voters through our multi-touch voter engagement strategy that included "Reclaiming Your Voice," mailers and 33 days of phone and text banking. Of these voters contacted, 75% turned out to vote. That's 15 percentage points higher than the national turnout rate of 59.7%!

We supplemented these efforts by reaching over 3 million AAPIs through our digital ad campaign. Earlier in the year, we purchased over \$420,000 in ads with Asian ethnic media outlets not covered by the U.S. Census including Hmong, South Asian, and other outlets that are in English but focused on Asians. This investment was crucial not only as an effective tool to encourage Census participation, but also in supporting these important news outlets that were affected by the pandemic.

The 2020 presidential election cycle also saw an incredible increase in mis and dis-information. To monitor and combat the barrage of content, we recruited and trained volunteers to track and provide counter-messaging and inoculation content on both mainstream and social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WeChat, and ethnic media. From our engagement in this threat to fair and inclusive elections, we are building up our capacity to more effectively counter and inoculate against problematic content in the growing landscape of social media platforms.



In 2020, we were also able to expand our youth engagement program to include, for the first time, high school aged youth. This expansion became important as schools shut down and the threats of harassment and violence against Asian Americans grew. We were able to quickly adapt our programming to virtual platforms to provide our participants with safe spaces to network, receive mentorship, and process the anxiety and trauma we all experienced during the pandemic. This included our investment in the Youth Ambassador Program with whom we disbursed \$18,500 Ambassador organizations on 31 college campuses and student organizations to conduct virtual voter registration drives and workshops for voter and census education. Our programming engaged over 2,000 high school and college students.

### **Moving Forward: Building Power to Wield Power requires your sustained support**

As we celebrate the successes of 2020, we are focused more than ever on finding ways to continue building civic engagement in our AAPI communities, as well as, increase our capacity to wield our growing electoral power. The incredible turn out of AAPI communities in Georgia, Arizona, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and around the country, highlights a few crucial lessons: 1) invest broadly and early; 2) meet the needs of our diverse communities; and 3) invest in the young and emerging electorate.

To meet the exponential growth and diversifying needs of our AAPI communities, your sustained support is needed every year to see similar gains in the midterms and the 2024 Presidential election. Your sustaining support would allow us to:

- **Invest early in growing AAPI communities:** By expanding our network of partner CBOs and establishing a national cohort of volunteers to harness and activate the growing interest and energy to empower AAPI communities year round and every year
- **Build an activist pipeline:** There is an awakening of AAPI activists, young and young-in-spirit, across the country. We are building on our youth ambassador program a pipeline development program to provide safe spaces for the armies of activists to process, heal, and focus their energy on building power through community.
- **Increase our intensity to combat mis and dis-information:** Your support will help us develop an infrastructure and larger network of volunteers, organizers, and other community leaders to engage in the new digital organizing landscape.
- **Develop a National directory of AAPI organizations:** To ensure our communities are not left behind in times of crisis and to facilitate better response by government, corporate, and philanthropic responders we will pursue the development and maintenance of a national directory of AAPI serving organizations.
- **Invest in our organizational capacity:** To meet this moment and be prepared for the future needs of our AAPI communities.

We would not be able to consider our growth without the incredible investments from our long-time funding partners, and the strong support from our new funders. Realizing our shared vision will require sustained and deepened investments beyond Presidential and midterm elections. Kevin Hirano, our new Director of Development and Communications, or I will be following up with you to discuss this report and how you would like to join our effort to meet this moment to build power to wield power.



## Highlights of 2019-2020 Accomplishments:

- **Conducted over 50 Norman Y. Mineta Leadership Institute training sessions** that trained over 1,800 community leaders, volunteers, and some US Census staff in the 2020 Census, volunteer recruitment and retention, and voter engagement.
- **Produced Census and Voting public service announcements (PSAs) in 26 languages**, including PSAs specifically for South Asian tv and radio stations.
- **Created and hosted 29 language specific resource pages on APIAVote's website** featuring translated Census information. Five translated pages provided "Know Your Voting Rights" and 1-888-API-VOTE voter hotline information, as well as voter guides created by the local partners to ensure that translated and culturally appropriate materials, tools, and content were widely available.
- **Received over 5,000 calls on the Asian Voter Hotline between October through November.** Volunteers answered callers' questions so individuals and households could cast their vote early or on election day.
- **Sub-granted over \$240,000** to 14 of our CBO partners.
- **Designed and distributed over 50,000 APIAVote/AARP Count Us In bags** across the US that allowed partners to distribute information about Census and voting. A number of partners also coupled it with food and/or PPE distribution to their communities in a socially distant and safe manner
- **Purchasing over \$341,000 in ads with Asian ethnic media outlets** to reach the top 5 Asian languages not covered by the U.S. Census, as well as ad buy in Hmong, South Asian, and other outlets that are in English but focused on Asians.
- **Coordinated a Presidential Town Hall** that featured, for the first time in history, a presumptive presidential candidate to directly address the AAPI electorate with **over 1.1 million viewers.**
- **Coordinated our first ever National AAPI Leadership Summit** to engage the thousands of attendees who have not been traditionally active in organizing for the elections, but became recently inspired. We organized 60 workshops that focused on 3 tracks: policy, organizing, and convening to meet those locally.
- **Reached over 1,000,000 AAPI households** through our multi-touch outreach program that included the "Reclaiming Your Voice" mailers and 33 days of phone and text banking. We produced, coordinated and disbursed 36 different version of the "Reclaiming Your Voice" mailer to meet the individual community needs of our network of CBO partners
- **Reached over 3 million AAPIs through the most comprehensive nonpartisan digital ad campaign.** Using new geo-targeting technology, the strategy involved setting up virtual perimeters around Asian grocery stores and community centers in high density AAPI neighborhoods to collect cell phone IDs. We used these IDs to serve targeted ads to increase voter awareness and mobilization to identify and reach a larger more diverse audience.
- **Produced the Asian American Voter Survey, the only national pre-election survey for the 2020 presidential election cycle focused on Asian American** positions towards candidates and parties, political leanings and where they stand on issues in partnership with AAPIData, Asian American Advancing Justice - AAJC and AARP.
- **Monitored and combated mis and dis-information on both mainstream and social media platforms**, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WeChat, and ethnic media. In addition to reporting instances of mis/disinformation, we recruited



and trained monitors to engage and provide counter-messaging and inoculation content.

- **Produced the "Your Vote Your Voice" PSA series** with 26 prominent Asian American celebrities aimed to help voters make a voting plan, know your rights, and combat disinformation around voting and the elections. **The series received 3,810,380 completed video views.**
- **Granted \$18,500 to 33 Ambassador organizations on 29 campuses nationwide** to conduct voter registration drives and organize workshops for relevant voter and census education within their respective AAPI campus communities. 170 students who engaged through the Ambassador program signed up to support APIAVote's phone banking initiatives
- **Empowered our Youth Advisory Board to lead the inaugural high school cohort.** Led by representatives from our Youth Advisory Board and Ambassadors, high school mentees met on a weekly basis with APIAVote staff, trainers, and program mentors to discuss the importance of AAPI civic participation, relational organizing, AAPI identity/history and more. Interest in this program far outpaced our capacity and we will be expanding this program.
- **Conducted workshops on Census and Civic Engagement at collegiate AAPI student conferences**, such as the East Coast Asian American Students Union (ECAASU) 2020 Conference, Midwest Chinese American Student Association (MCASA) 2020 Conference, Kappa Phi Lambda's National Conference, APIA Scholars Young Professionals Conference, Kansas State University Asian American Student Association's (KSU AASU) "Fall into the Polls" workshop and panel, Civic Leadership USA (CLUSA) 2020 "Young Leaders of America" National Summit panel, as well as an extensive Youth Track as part of APIAVote's National AAPI Leadership Summit

