



Government of the District of Columbia
Muriel Bowser, Mayor



Mayor's Office on Asian & Pacific Islander Affairs
David Do, Director

Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs

Commissioners' Biographies

Surjeet Ahluwalia is Executive Director of Asian American LEAD, a youth development organization supporting low-income and underserved Asian Pacific American youth in the region. A child of a white American mother and a Sikh father from India, Surjeet has had to work to define her ethnic identity for herself. As such, she relates to AALEAD youth's struggles to do the same. Surjeet has lived in the District for 12 years and is currently living in Ward 2. Surjeet has a Master's in Public Policy degree from Harvard Kennedy School and a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Rochester.

Gregory Cendana, strategist, politico and coalition builder, is the first openly gay and youngest-ever Executive Director of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance and Institute for Asian Pacific American Leadership & Advancement. He also serves as the Co-Chair of the DC Asian American & Pacific Islander Democratic Caucus, Chair of National Council of Asian Pacific Americans, as Treasurer for the Labor Coalition for Community Action and is the youngest General Board member of the AFL-CIO. Gregory has been named one of Washington DC's most influential 40-and-under young leaders, one of the 30 Most Influential Asian Americans Under 30 & the "Future of DC Politics". Previously, he served as President of the United States Student Association (USSA), where he played an integral role in the passage of the Student Aid & Fiscal Responsibility Act and Healthcare & Education Reconciliation Act. In his spare time, Gregory enjoys singing karaoke, choreographing dances and trying to cook.

Easten Law was raised in the D.C. metropolitan area and has lived in Ward 3 for the past five years with his wife and two children. Easten formerly taught Intercultural Communication at American University's School of International Service and is currently studying for a PhD. in Theological and Religious Studies at Georgetown University. He continues to provide trainings and lectures in intercultural competency with NGOs and faith communities engaging dynamics of race, ethnicity, and culture with a special interest in the cultural sustainability of D.C.'s Chinatown. Easten also actively advocates for affordable housing and promotion of inter-religious dialogue through New Community Church, based in the Shaw neighborhood.

Sapna Pandya has been serving as the Executive Director of Many Languages One Voice since April 2010. Previously, she served for five years in New York City as Director of Programs for the South Asian Health Initiative (SAHI) at the Center for Immigrant Health (CIH) of the New York University School of Medicine, helping South Asian and other Asian Pacific Islander (API) immigrants in New York City navigate barriers, including language, to health care. Sapna has created curricula and conducted training sessions on cultural competence and how to provide language services for diverse audiences nationwide, including government agencies, health providers, educators, elected officers, and other stakeholders. She is also active in local, national, and international campaigns for social justice. Sapna holds a Master's degree in Public Health from the George Washington University and is an alumna of the CORO Immigrant



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Leadership Training Program and Rockwood Leadership Institute. She was born in Washington, DC, and speaks Spanish in addition to her native languages of Hindi/Urdu, Gujarati, Marathi and English.

Benjamin Takai is an Epidemiologist focusing on HIV prevention monitoring and evaluation at the DC Department of Health. Mr. Takai is responsible for evaluating current HIV prevention initiatives and provides guidance to Health Department Leadership. Mr. Takai has also served as the co-chair for the National HIV Monitoring and Evaluation workgroup, a body who was tasked with advising the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on national HIV surveillance. Prior to joining the Commission for Asian and Pacific Islander affairs, Mr. Takai served as the health policy advisor for the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs. Mr. Takai received his BS in Biology from Bates College and his MPH in Epidemiology from George Washington University. A third generation Washingtonian and ward 4 resident, Mr. Takai also enjoys teaching yoga in his free time as well as volunteering at events in support of both the AAPI and the LGBTQ communities.

Martha Watanabe is a founding member of the Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs and served as Chair from 1990-93. She has been a resident of Ward 6 for thirty years and has seen a lot of changes in the District over those years. She remains committed to helping provide a voice for the growing Asian American and Pacific Islander community in the District to the Mayor and DC government agencies. During the day, Martha is a Management Analyst at the Department of Justice. She serves in an advisory capacity to several national Asian American and Pacific Islander organizations. In her spare time, as a "hobby," she is a special events coordinator.