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COALITION OF API LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTS PROPOSITION 34

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Speakers at a "Yes on 34" press conference included (from left) Robin Toma, executive director of the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations; criminal defense attorneys Angela Oh and Mia Yamamoto; Robin Lee, representing the KW Lee Center for Leadership. (Photo by J.K. Yamamoto/Rafu Shimpō)

A broad coalition of leaders in the Asian and Pacific Islander community are speaking out in support of Proposition 34 — a ballot initiative that would replace the death penalty with life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Proposition 34, the SAFE (Savings, Accountability and Full Enforcement) California Act, will save the state's taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, protect the innocent from execution, and direct funds to local law enforcement to solve more rapes and murders, proponents said.

At a press conference held Friday at Empress Pavilion Restaurant in Los Angeles Chinatown, API community leaders and civil rights advocates urged others to get out and vote yes on 34.

According to a recent survey released by the National Asian American Survey (NAAS), 22% of APIs are undecided on Prop. 34 and can be a critical swing vote.

The press conference was kicked off by Clarissa Woo of the Yes on Prop. 34 — SAFE California campaign. "Our death penalty system is broken beyond repair," she said. "With Proposition 34, we can fix our justice system to ensure the guilty are punished, the innocent are spared and our taxpayer dollars are invested in education and public safety instead of a flawed system. But we have to voice our support by voting for Prop. 34."

Criminal defense attorney Angela Oh, who was a member of President Bill Clinton's Commission on Race, talked about racial bias and the unjust nature of the death penalty. "Since reinstatement of the death penalty in the U.S., 140 innocent men and women have been freed from Death Row. In California, hundreds of innocent people have been wrongfully convicted of serious crimes; three were sentenced to death."

Furthermore, the death penalty is costly, said Dennis Huang, executive director of the Asian Business

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Association-Los Angeles. "Most Californians don't realize that the death penalty is actually more expensive than life imprisonment. The state would save \$130 million a year by passing Prop. 34."

"We need to fix our justice system by replacing the death penalty with life in prison without the possibility of parole," said Trisha Murakawa, former president of the ACLU of Southern California.

Ben Nate of the Asian Pacific American Leadership Project added, "Prisoners on Death Row have been found to be innocent decades later. Prop. 34 is the only way to make sure we don't execute an innocent person."

"Prop. 34 stops the waste of money spent on a failed death penalty system, and holds criminals accountable by requiring that they work and pay restitution to victims and increase resources for solving crime," said long-time human rights activist Robin Toma. "Voting yes on Prop. 34 also means we can replace a death penalty system that is unfairly tilted by racial prejudice, and prevent the irreversible injustice of mistaken executions, protecting everyone's human rights."

The Yes on 34 — SAFE California Campaign is supported by over 1,400 organizations, including the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, *Los Angeles Times*, Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (AP3CON), California Nurses Association, California Democratic Party, California League of Women Voters, California State Labor Federation, California Catholic Conference of Bishops, California State NAACP, American Civil Liberties Union, law enforcement professionals, family members of murder victims, and more than 11,000 individuals.



From left: Thoa Tran, a community advocate from Orange County; Trisha Murakawa, past president of ACLU of Southern California; Clarissa Woo, director of public policy advocacy at ACLU of Southern California and representative of the Yes on 34 campaign. (Photo by J.K. Yamamoto/Rafu Shimpō)

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