



Asian American Bar Association of New York

Association Name: Asian American Bar Association of New York (AABANY)

Association Address/ Phone: Grand Central Station, P.O. Box 3656, New York, NY 10163-3656 / Phone: (718) 228-7206

Website: www.aabany.org
Founded: 1989

Number of Members: Approximately 1,200

President: Linda Lin of New York (Liberty International Underwriters)

Brief Vision: AABANY represents the interests of New York Asian Pacific American (APA) attorneys, judges, law professors, legal professionals, paralegals and law students. Its mission is to improve the study and practice of law, and the fair administration of justice for all by ensuring the meaningful participation of APAs in the legal profession. It seeks to be a voice, resource and advocate for APAs.

Brief History: In 1988, after the New York State Judicial Commission on

Minorities held hearings regarding the treatment of minority litigants and court employees, Rockwell Chin approached Commissioner Serene K. Nakano to discuss the need for an organization for Asian American attorneys. The National Asian American Bar Association Planning Committee invited various New York City attorneys to Chicago in October 1988, where they founded a formal association of Asian American lawyers.

After AABANY's incorporation on Oct. 20, 1989, more than 180 attorneys and law students attended an inaugural reception at New York University Law School. Before the meeting concluded, more than 60 people had joined AABANY.

AABANY's members include practicing attorneys in the private and public sectors, in-house lawyers, judges, professors and law students.

AABANY is an accredited CLE provider and has sponsored or co-sponsored as many as 80 hours of CLE programs annually. In 2010, it sponsored or co-sponsored more than 90 events for law students, practicing attorneys and the APA community.

AABANY has 20 active committees.

Signature Events: AABANY hosts an Annual Dinner around the time of the Lunar New Year in February. This year's 22nd Annual Dinner attracted more than 560 attendees.

Other annual events include a wine tasting and networking reception for law firm attorneys and in-house counsel; a Fall Conference with a full-day of CLE programs; and programs celebrating Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month. This year, AABANY also celebrated Diversity on the Bench on May 12.

Most pressing concern regarding the legal profession: The current economic climate has proved challenging for lawyers at all levels, from law students to recent graduates to seasoned practitioners, all of whom have faced difficulties in finding or maintaining employment.

AABANY has created programs to help its members sharpen their career-seeking skills and provide opportunities to network and find potential openings. AABANY is aware that the number of APA attorneys in the higher ranks of large law firms is small, which does not help young APA lawyers looking for role models or mentors. This under-representation of APA attorneys in leadership is reflected in the government and public sector and on the bench.

AABANY strives to increase diversity on the bench because the Judiciary cannot be effective if it does not reflect the diversity of the community that it serves. Although we have made some strides in increasing judicial diversity, much more needs to be done.

Most important current project / initiative: AABANY is developing an Academic Committee of APA law professors that will use programs and events to promote the interests of APA lawyers engaged in or seeking careers in legal academia. The Academic Committee plans to publish a law journal showcasing the best in legal scholarship generally and particularly examining issues affecting the APA community and APAs in the legal profession.

If your association had no budget restrictions, what project / initiative would you first take on?

New York has one of the largest APA populations in the country and, contrary to the model minority myth, many APAs live at or below the poverty line. No organization exclusively provides direct legal services to that population. Although many community and legal assistance groups help indigent clients obtain free legal help, they often do not have the language capability to assist indigent APA clients with their legal problems.

Pressing needs in the APA community include matters concerning immigration, housing, employment and domestic violence.

If AABANY had the resources, it would play a central role in helping to establish and operate a direct legal-services corporation to serve the APA community. ♦

The Bar Around The Corner is a project of the New York State Conference of Bar Leaders, www.nyscbl.org.