

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Feb. 7, 2012	CONTACT: Leonie Campbell-Williams, AAJC (202) 492-4591, lcampbell@advancingequality.org <div style="text-align: right;"> Jennifer Okray, AAI (773) 271-0899 x252, JOkray@aaichicago.org </div>
--	--

Asian American Center for Advancing Justice Urges Hoekstra to Remove Insensitive Ad Immediately

WASHINGTON—Members of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice (Advancing Justice)—Asian American Institute, Asian American Justice Center, Asian Law Caucus and Asian Pacific American Legal Center—are outraged by former Michigan congressman Pete Hoekstra’s 30-second advertisement that aired Super Bowl Sunday in Michigan.

Stewart Kwoh, president and executive director of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, noted “Mr. Hoekstra’s ad plays on racially-charged stereotypes and could encourage anti-Asian sentiment in Michigan and across the country. The idea of “yellow peril” has a long, ugly history in the United States, and has no place in today’s society.”

Asian Americans experienced similar race baiting by politicians in the 1980s against Japanese automakers that in 1982 led to the vicious killing of Chinese American Vincent Chin in Detroit by autoworkers angry about Japanese competition.

“Mr. Hoekstra’s Super Bowl advertisement is a not very subtle form of race baiting,” said Karen K. Narasaki, president and executive director of the Asian American Justice Center. “The portrayal of an actress using a fake Asian accent and speaking broken English is highly offensive. It is not sardonic, as he claims. It is moronic and dangerous.”

“It is one thing to raise concerns about America’s ability to remain competitive in a global market, but it is out of bounds to frame it in xenophobic terms. As history has shown us in the case of Vincent Chin, race baiting can lead to serious, unintended consequences,” Narasaki continued.

Moreover, the fear Mr. Hoekstra is trying to exploit in the advertisement is not grounded in fact. China currently owns approximately 8 percent of the United States’ debt according to “Business Insider,” and the American people own most of the U.S. debt.

“It’s most shocking that Mr. Hoekstra, an immigrant himself, would produce an ad so insensitive and divisive,” said Tuyet Le, executive director of the Asian American Institute. “With Asian Americans totaling close to 6 percent of the U.S. population, Mr. Hoekstra made serious missteps in respect to Asian American voters by producing such a despicable ad.”

Hyeon-Ju Rho, executive director of the Asian Law Caucus, added: “Exploiting racist stereotypes for political gain is un-American, and Advancing Justice demands that Mr. Hoekstra immediately remove the advertisement and issue a public apology.”

#

*The **Asian American Center for Advancing Justice** (www.advancingjustice.org) works to promote a fair and equitable society for all by working for civil and human rights and empowering Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other underserved communities, and is comprised of the Asian American Justice Center (www.advancingequality.org), the Asian American Institute (www.aaichicago.org), the Asian Law Caucus (www.asianlawcaucus.org) and the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (www.apalc.org).*