



ASIAN PACIFIC INTEREST SECTION

State Bar of Texas

WELCOME MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The Asian Pacific Interest Section (APIS) of the State Bar of Texas contributes to the APA community in many ways. It helps convey important information from the State Bar to our members, it gives APA attorneys and those interested in Asian issues an opportunity to serve as leaders, and, most importantly, it creates a sense of community for APA lawyers across the entire state.

Many of Texas’ major cities have robust and active Asian American Bar Associations and South Asian Bar Associations. I have had the pleasure of working with a number of them and know the great work these organizations are doing. APIS exists to support those efforts and to connect the local bar associations with one another. APIS also exists to serve the many APA attorneys across the state that are not involved in local bar associations because your city does not have one, or you are tied up with other commitments.

APIS is also committed to rapid-response issues that we may encounter as an APA community, whether it be responding to natural catastrophes or responding to local and federal changes in immigration law, APIS strives to ensure that the APA community knows what resources are available and APA lawyers know how they can be helpful. Please visit and join our Facebook page where we regularly post this type of information: [APIS Facebook Page.](#)

2017 - 2018 OFFICERS

Chair	Punam Kaji
Chair Elect	Chi Reece
Vice Chair	Paul Yin
Treasurer	Jim Thomas
Secretary	Teresa Messer

www.TexasAPIS.org
www.facebook.com/groups/TexasAPIS

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Each year, APIS hosts an annual conference in Austin, Texas in April. This event will take place again in April 2018. More details are pending, but we are excited to continue the tradition of bringing our attorneys together to share ideas, build valuable connections, and leave inspired (along with earning CLE credit).

The APA legal community has served me since I was a law student. The mentorship, support, and networking opportunities have been invaluable and meaningful. I am thrilled to have an opportunity to serve you as Chair of APIS. The APIS Officer Board and Council Members, whom you can learn more about in this newsletter, share these values of service and dedication to the APA legal community. We are excited for this year to come.

Please use these newsletters as an opportunity to learn about events, issues, and legal resources. Also, please contact me and share with me information, ideas, or questions at any time through my term, which ends in the Summer of 2018. My contact information is punam.kaji@gmail.com or punam.kaji@haynesboone.com.

Sincerely,
Punam Kaji
APIS Chair

APIS Officers



(Left to Right: Punam Kaji, Chi Reece, Paul Yin, Jim Thomas, Teresa Messer)

Chair - Punam Kaji

Punam practices Labor and Employment at Haynes and Boone, LLP in Houston, Texas (soon moving to Dallas, TX). She has been on the APIS Officer Board since 2015, serving as Vice Chair, and then Chair-Elect. She is on the Board of the South Asian Bar Association (SABA) of Houston and was honored with a "Best Public Service" award by SABA Houston in 2016. Punam was Co-Chair of Public Service of the Dallas Asian American Bar Association (DAABA) in 2013 and was awarded Member of the Year. She volunteers with various domestic violence organizations and is on the Board of the Young Professionals for DAYA in Houston, Texas.

Chair Elect - Chi Reece

Chi Reece is an attorney at Vacek, Kiecke & Colmenero, LLP where she counsels business and real estate clients in a variety of transactional matters related to leases, acquisition and disposition, entity structuring and branding, trademark matters, vendor contracts, financing, private securities offerings and contract negotiation and review. Chi is active in the Austin Asian American Bar Association, serving as president in 2014.

Vice Chair - Paul Yin

Paul Yin is an attorney at Thompson & Knight in Houston. Paul provides federal and state tax planning advice on the formation, operation and disposition of partnerships and limited liability companies. Paul is also experienced in mergers and acquisitions, private equity fund formations, Texas state and local tax incentives for wind-

-energy projects, and tax controversy matters. Paul is an active Board Member of the Organization for Community Advocates (OCA) and previously served on the Social and Mentorship committees of the Asian American Bar Association of Greater Houston.

Treasurer - Jim Thomas

Jim Thomas is a patent attorney at Fletcher Yoder P.C. in Houston with a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Texas and a Master's degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Houston. Jim's practice includes patent prosecution with the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office in a wide variety of technical areas, opinion work for patent infringement and invalidity analysis, and coordinating patent harvesting workshops. He has been active in a number of organizations taking on various roles, such as panel coordinator for the annual conference held by the South Asian Bar Association of North America, city committee member for the Texas Minority Council Program, and committee member for the Corporate IP Management Sub-Committee in the Intellectual Property Owners organization.

Secretary - Teresa Messer

Teresa Messer is the principal at the Law Office of Teresa Messer and practices immigration law. She is an active board member of BPSOS and the Houston Northwest Bar Association. She serves on the State Bar of Texas Laws Relating to Immigration and Nationality Committee.

Council Members

Zeena Angadicheril - The University of Texas System (Austin)

Alice Liu Cook - Disability Rights New Mexico (New Mexico)

Daniel David Hu - U.S. Attorney's Office (Houston)

Michele Wong Krause - The Wong Krause Law Firm (Dallas)

Catherine Le - Law Firm of Catherine Le PLLC (Houston)

Albert J. Li - Ottobock North America, Inc. (Austin)

Cindy Y. Lin - King & Spalding LLP (Houston)

Patsy P. Yung Micale - U.S. Department of Homeland Security (Dallas)

Toni D. Nguyen - Upland Software (Austin)

Bill Richmond - Platt Cheema Richmond PLLC (Dallas)

Ann Chao Sheu - Assistant District Attorney in Collin County (Dallas)

Gina Shishima - Norton Rose Fulbright (Austin)

Albert Tan - Haynes and Boone, LLP (Dallas)

Lisa S. Tsai - Reid Collins & Tsai LLP (Austin)

Charlene Tsang-Kao - Marathon Oil Corporation (Houston)

Wesley K. Young - Local Search Association (Dallas)

Member Spotlight

AMAR RAVAL

"The experience has given me an exciting opportunity to be a small part of a potential change in the law."



"Teaching has given me a whole new appreciation of both the Bhagwad Gita and learning to connect with a new generation."

Firm/Company: Partner Berg Plummer Johnson & Raval, LLP

Practice area(s): I represent individuals in ERISA, bad faith insurance, personal injury, and business litigation matters.

Hometown: I was born in London, Ontario, but I moved to Houston when I was 4. H-town all the way!

Undergrad education: I graduated with a double major in History and Political Science from Houston Baptist University in 2000.

Law school education: I graduated from Loyola Law School in Los Angeles in 2003. Although I no longer live in LA, I am still very close with a number of my law school friends.

Describe a Career Highlight: getting to argue at the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in February 2017. The issue was the standard of review applicable in ERISA cases, and I had to try to convince the Court that Texas law changed 26 years of 5th Circuit jurisprudence. It was also my first ever argument to any appellate court. Since I consider myself a trial lawyer, I was not used to arguing before a panel of judges. I was very nervous the night before, but it all came together once I stood at the lectern. The Court wrote a "special concurrence" requesting that the 5th Circuit reevaluate its caselaw, and the Court recently agreed to en banc review. The experience has given me an exciting opportunity to be a small part of a potential change in the law.

Involvement with Community Activities and Professional Organizations: I am the outgoing President of SABA Houston, having previously served as Secretary, Treasurer, and President Elect. I've cherished my time with SABA, having met so many people locally and nationally through the organization. Many of them are now close friends. I am also a member of the Houston Trial Lawyers Association, Houston Young Lawyers Association, Houston Bar Association, State Bar College, and a Fellow of the Texas Bar Foundation. In the community, I served on the Bellaire Board of Adjustment from 2013-2017. In the last year, I also started teaching 10th graders at my Sunday school, Chinmaya Mission Houston. Teaching has given me a whole new appreciation of both the Bhagwad Gita and learning to connect with a new generation.

Favorite TV show: just about any cooking show.

Favorite Sports Team: Houston Rockets fan since 1990.

Interests/ Hobbies: I like to work out at the gym to get out the work related stress. On weekends, I try to stay active outdoors, whether it's running, cycling, tennis, or basketball. I also love reading.

Favorite restaurant: Mala Sichuan. There's something about the spicy peppercorns that numb the tongue that make me want to go back for more.

 Article

Thinking Globally, Running Locally

by Ketan Kharod



I want to talk to you about the November 2016 election. No, not *that* race. About my campaign for City Council in Sunset Valley, Texas (spoiler alert - I won!). While some aspects of my race are unique to our city, I'd like to share some lessons I learned in the hope it will encourage more APIS members to serve others through elected office.

Pick the right race

Sunset Valley is a small, rural-feel city surrounded by the City of Austin. We have a small residential population and a large commercial base, with many of the same challenges as a larger metro area. Our city council consists of volunteers, and residents place a premium on electing members who are interested in living and serving in the city -- this is not seen as a springboard to a higher, partisan office. Not only was this race the right "size" for me, it allows me to work on issues directly impacting my local community. That may not be everyone's cup of tea, so be sure to aim for a position that allows you to work on issues that matter to you, not just a title.

Lay the groundwork

Next, educate yourself on what experiences are expected for a successful candidate. In my case, I was already on our city's public safety and budget committees, so I was familiar with the "ins and outs" of our city's budget and hot-button issues. I also had served on a non-profit board and had a strong relationship with our local elementary school as a parent and volunteer. Of course, I had done these things because I believed in them - not to pad my resume - but they helped make the case as to why I was running during my campaign. The point is: you are running on the record you build long before you declare your candidacy, so don't wait to get started.

Don't be afraid to ask for help!

Running a successful campaign takes time (and money) - there's no way around it. Being somewhat of an introvert, I was thankful my race did not require many campaign events (fundraisers, meetings with local groups/clubs, etc.), though our city's culture also placed a higher worth on word-of-mouth and in-person meetings than printed materials or social media (more door-to-door visits, less Facebook posts). All of this takes time away from your family, your practice, and other interests - so be realistic on how much time you can commit and make sure your well-wishers are along for the ride. And for larger races, it is important to have the right team in place (campaign manager, treasurer, etc.) - you just can't do it all yourself.

Ultimately, Sunset Valley residents elected me in a three-way race. With my friend Sean Hassan's victory in a local community college district race, it was the first time two South Asians won contested races in Central Texas (Sean's victory was a much larger race that required much more campaign effort). Hopefully each of these new wins, combined with the electoral victories of established state representatives like Gene Wu and Hubert Vo, district judges like Ravi K. Sandill (Harris Co.) and Todd Wong (Travis Co.), and others in local races across the state, will help ease the path for members of our community who are interested in running in the future.

Ketan Kharod is the founder of the Kharod Law Firm, which represents whistleblowers and people injured by negligence or corporate misconduct, and serves as "of counsel" to Waters & Kraus, a national plaintiff's litigation firm. He is a proud alumnus of the UT School of Law and Georgetown University's School of Public Policy. Ketan is a past board president of the Asian Family Support Services of Austin (AFSSA), which assists individuals and families affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking, and has assisted on pro bono matters for AFSSA and Volunteer Legal Services.

Member News & Accomplishments



Rehan Alimohammad of Wong Fleming in Sugar Land was elected chair of the State Bar of Texas Board of Directors. Alimohammad is the first attorney of Asian descent to hold the position.



Neal Sarkar of AZA Law in Houston received the Rising Star Award at the 2017 National Convention for SABA of North America.



Gina Shishima of Norton Rose Fulbright LLP in Austin received the Judge David Wellington Chew Award at the 22nd Annual APIS Conference.



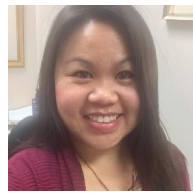
Hope Shimabuku of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in Dallas received the Diversity Award at the 22nd Annual APIS Conference.



Andrea Tran of Schlumberger in Houston received the Outstanding Mentor Award at the 22nd Annual APIS Conference.



Teresa Messer of the Law Office of Teresa Messer in Houston received the Pro Bono Award at the 22nd Annual APIS Conference.



Julie Chen Allen of Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission in Austin, **Christine Hoang** of the Texas Education Agency in Austin, and **Hao Ni** of Ni, Wang & Massand, PLLC in Dallas, each received the Best Lawyer Under 40 Award at the 22nd Annual APIS Conference.



Poorav Rohatgi of Haynes & Boone LLP in Houston was selected to serve as a Houston Young Lawyers Foundation Fellow.

To submit member news or accomplishments, please email tmesser@teresamesser.com

Local Bar Association Events



NATIONWIDE

NAPABA Convention 2017

November 2-5, 2017

Marriot Marquis, Washington, DC

- For more information, see page 9 of this APIS newsletter.

STATEWIDE

State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting

June 21-22, 2018

Marriot Marquis, Houston, TX

- Join APIS for a Section Meeting, CLE, and Reception.
- For more information, click [here](#).

Annual APIS Conference

The conference is tentatively scheduled for April 2018 in Austin, Texas. We will confirm details once the event has been finalized. Please visit www.texasapis.org for updates.

DALLAS

DAABA 10th Annual Awards Night

September 29, 2017 at 6:30 p.m.

Hyatt Regency Hotel Downtown, Dallas, TX

- For more information, click [here](#).

SABA Dallas Gala

October 27, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.

2626 Commerce Event Center, Dallas, TX

- Includes comedy show, cocktail hour, 3-course meal, and open bar
- To Purchase Tickets: <https://squareup.com/store/sabadfw>

To submit local bar association events, please email tmesser@teresamesser.com

Announcements

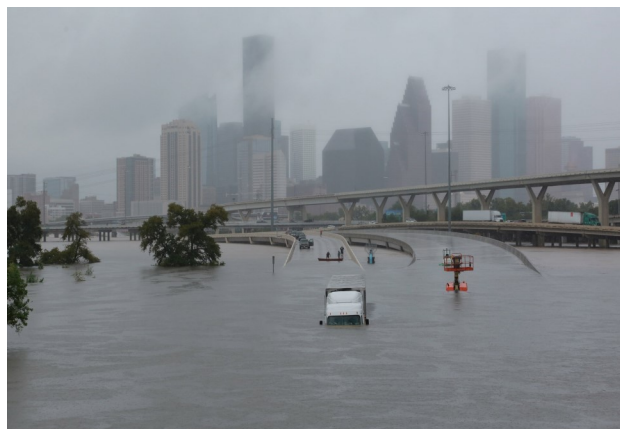


The 2017 NAPABA Convention will take place at the Marriott Marquis in Washington, D.C. Nov. 2-5. The NAPABA Convention is an annual gathering of Asian Pacific American attorneys, judges, law professors, and law students. NAPABA represents the interests of over 50,000 attorneys and over 80 national, state, and local Asian Pacific American bar associations. Join us as we celebrate our 29th Convention and convene over 2,000 attendees in D.C.!

- Advanced Date Deadline is October 19, 2017
- To register for the convention, click [here](#).
- To reserve a hotel room, click [here](#).
- To become a convention sponsor, click [here](#).

Hurricane Harvey Relief Efforts

Our thoughts go out to our fellow Texans who have been affected by Hurricane Har-



vey. APIS has been in communication with local APA organizations and various legal nonprofits and pro bono services to determine the best ways we can collectively serve those affected by Hurricane Harvey. We are discussing both immediate legal needs and long-term needs. Please contact APIS Secretary, Teresa Messer (Tmesser@teresamesser.com) for more details or if you or someone you know has been impacted by Hurricane Harvey and is looking for assistance.

To submit announcements, please email tmesser@teresamesser.com