

‘We Have an Opportunity to Reinvent the JACL. Let’s Seize That Opportunity.’

By David Lin, JACL National President

Dear JACLers,

Happy New Year and welcome to the New Year issue of the Pacific Citizen!

It has been my honor and privilege to serve as the JACL National President since July 2012. Leading this prestigious organization for the past three and a half years has been an extremely rewarding experience. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your continued support of the JACL in 2015. JACL distinguishes itself for being the oldest and the largest Asian American civil rights organization in the United States, and our strength is clearly in our members and the broad geographic area represented by our organization.

As I look out into 2016, I see that our organization is faced with a couple of significant challenges — financial shortfall and the future of the Pacific Citizen. By the way, these two issues are intertwined to some extent.

Notwithstanding our continued focus on financial management, our 2015 financial performance has been projected to be significantly below budget. The bulk of the revenue shortfall can be attributed to investment income and the Pacific Citizen. We all know about the turbulent financial market in 2015, and that negatively impacted our results. As for the Pacific Citizen, we have seen a steady decline of its advertising revenues consistent with the general market trend of media advertising shifting away from traditional media, including newspaper print. It is further validated by corporations moving away from media buys in the Asian American newspaper.

Clearly, any amount of deficit is not acceptable, and the Finance Committee has taken the lead in formulating a corrective course of actions. To that end, the Finance Committee has been working with both the Executive Director and the Pacific Citizen Executive Editor to develop expense reduction plans for 2016. As part of the plan, we should also explore any potential funding sources to ensure we are not leaving anything on the table. With our dedicated staff, I am optimistic that we will figure out how we can best work through these challenges.

On the other hand, there are a couple of bright spots in the organization that I want to highlight. Our membership revenue for 2015 is projected to exceed the budget. That is wonderful news, and kudos to our Membership Coordinator and VP of Membership for their great work. In 2016, we will continue to place great emphasis on membership, for renewing current members and for recruiting new members.

In 2015-16, we continue to execute the exciting youth exchange program,

Kakehashi, in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Japan International Cooperation Center. We plan to bring a total of 180 youths in eight groups to Japan in this program year. I know that this program was extremely well-received by all youth participants, and it was truly a win-win for the JACL and for our partners. We look forward to another year of resounding success with this program.

In contemplating about the challenges we face, I cannot help but think of the kanji for “crisis” or 危機. As most of you would know, these two Chinese characters stand for “danger” and “opportunity.” I believe that is exactly where we are — the organization is faced with some significant challenges, but these challenges are also opportunities in disguise. If we deal with these challenges in a positive and productive manner by bringing our organization’s strengths to bear, we stand to reap the benefits of taking the organization to the next level by making it even better and stronger than we know it today. We have an opportunity to reinvent the JACL. Let’s seize that opportunity.

In closing, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding work of our staff and the National Board. In my opinion, JACL has one of the most talented, experienced and dedicated staff and National Board of any Asian American community-based organization. They work hard every single day to make JACL a better organization. With that, my heart-felt thanks to the JACL staff under the leadership of Executive Director Priscilla Ouchida and Pacific Citizen Executive Editor Allison Haramoto, and all my fellow National Board members! I also want to thank all of our members and supporters for your dedication and commitment to the JACL. I am grateful for all that you do, and I look forward to an exciting and transformative 2016! n