



Name in English: Michael F. Eng
Name in Chinese: 伍国庆 [伍國慶]
Name in Pinyin: Wǔ Guóqìng
Gender: Male
Birth Year: 1946
Birth Place: Oakland, California
Current location: Monterey Park, California
Philanthropy: Yes

Profession (s): Politician, Lawyer, Professor

Education: Bachelor of Arts, Political Science, University of Hawaii; Master of Arts, American Studies, University of Hawaii; Juris Doctor, University of California, Los Angeles

Awards: 2002, Outstanding Library Trustee, California Public Library Advocates (formerly the California Association of Library Trustees and Commissioners); Legislator of the Year Award, Community College Association; Visionary Award, Asian Pacific Community Fund; Distinguished Leadership Award, Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association; Political Impact Award, Asian Pacific Islander Policy Summit; Extraordinary APA Award, Pacific Citizen; Outstanding Public Service Award, Asian Pacific Islander Public Affairs Association; Immigrant Defender Award, California Immigrant Policy Center; Making An Impact Award, Chinese American Citizens Alliance-L.A. Lodge; Community Partner Award, Asian Pacific American Dispute Resolution Center; Friend of the Community Award, Korean American Community Lawyers Association; Commitment Award, Asian Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Task Force; Civil Rights/Social Justice Award, Organization of Chinese Americans-Sacramento

Contribution (s): Mike Eng was born and raised in California and came of age during the 1960s and 1970s, a particularly turbulent time in California history and in the history of the Asian American community. He grew up as a self-described "radical" who contemplated becoming a minister while studying at the University of Hawaii but eventually decided to become an immigration attorney. After graduation from the law school at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where he was credited with creating the nation's first college class on Asian American legal history, he began his law practice in 1975 becoming a co-founder of the immigration law firm of Eng and Nishimura. Mike Eng dealt directly with the wave of Chinese immigration that completely changed much of the California social and political scene and with time went from political radical to mainstream liberal.

Mike Eng and his wife, [Judy Chu](#), became part of a new wave of Chinese American politicians that came of age in the late 1980s and 1990s. Their political rise was part of the evolution of Chinese America that had resulted from the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act (Hart-Celler Act) that allowed greater immigration by Chinese and

other Asians and relaxed family reunification rules. The city of Monterey Park in Southern California where they lived saw an influx of new Chinese immigrants that profoundly changed the demographics of the city in the 1980s from majority white to majority Asian by 1990. Many of these new residents were uninterested in local politics as they tried to build businesses and families. Like many Americans before them though they learned that politics had a way of finding them even when they tried to avoid it.

Longtime residents saw businesses and neighborhoods transform almost overnight and felt displaced and even threatened by the changes. In 1985, the Monterey Park city council proposed that English be declared the official language of the city and sponsored ordinances that would require all signs to use only English. Ostensibly this was so police and firefighters could identify businesses during emergencies although nobody could cite any incident in which this had been a problem. This wasn't simply an issue of immigrant Chinese versus whites though but of newer community members versus older and more established ones. Among the council members supporting the measures was Lily Lee Chen, a founder of the Committee of 100 and the first Chinese American elected to the Monterey Park city council in 1982, who'd become the first Chinese American mayor of the city in 1984.

Businesses were ordered to identify themselves by category in English on their signs. Among the bizarre effects of the ordinance as written was that well known franchises such as McDonald's would have had to add "restaurant" to their signs. The Los Angeles Times said, "One bookseller dealing only in Chinese books said he saw no point to attracting people who cannot read Chinese by adding English to his sign." This proposals led to the creation of a coalition of affected immigrant community groups that successfully challenged the proposed ordinances as a violation of free speech rights. Among the leaders were Mike Eng, by then also a part-time community college instructor and [Judy Chu](#), a community college psychology professor. In 1988, with the political connections husband and wife had built up during the challenges to the English-only ordinances, Judy successfully ran for a seat on the city council and eventually became mayor. In 2001, Judy successfully ran for a seat representing the 49th Assembly District in the California State Assembly which includes Monterey Park. Mike Eng then ran for her seat on the city council and assumed office in 2002, eventually becoming mayor in 2004. Because of state term limits, Judy Chu ran for and won a seat on the California State Board of Equalization in 2007 before winning a special election in 2009 for a seat in the United States House of Representatives. Again, Mike Eng ran for office and succeeded his wife in her California State Assembly office.

During his tenure in the California State Legislature from 2006 to 2012 he chaired three of the Legislature's critical Assembly policy committees: Transportation, Banking and Finance, and Business and Consumer Protection and, was a member of the Assembly Education Committee for three terms. This was a critical period in California history as the worst economic crisis to hit the world since the Great Depression struck in 2008 and led to many foreclosures and the destabilization of banking institutions across the nation. In response, Mike Eng authored California's "Homeowner Bill of Rights" to address the mortgage foreclosure crisis and make it easier for Californians to keep their homes. The economic crisis also caused chaos in the always contentious state budgeting

process as tax revenues fell. Mike Eng's budget solutions helped stem the loss of funding for community colleges and ensured long-term funding for mass transit. To protect the environment he also authored the "Human Right to Water Law," the first state law in the nation that recognized water as a human right. He also authored legislation that overhauled California's vehicle smog check process resulting in the removal of 70 tons of pollutants daily.

Due to term limits, Mike Eng left the State Assembly in 2012 and ran for and won a seat on the Board of Trustees of the Los Angeles Community College District, the largest community college district in the United States. He took office in 2013. During his education career he has taught at the Los Angeles Trade Technical College, UCLA, and the University of the West.

Philanthropy: Mike Eng served on the Board of Directors of the West San Gabriel Valley Boys and Girls Club and on the Garfield Medical Center Board of Directors. He also served three terms on the Monterey Park City Library Board of Trustees and chaired the successful library building campaign that raised funding for an \$18 million library expansion. He has also provided free immigration legal advice to immigrant working families.

Publications/Patents:

Immigration Law and Defense, [co-author] National Lawyers Guild, Clark Boardman Callaghan (1979) ISBN-13: 978-0876321096

External Links:

<http://www.engnishimura.com/attorneys/michael-f-eng-senior-partner-and-founder>

<http://www.laccd.edu/Board/Pages/Mike-Eng.aspx>

http://articles.latimes.com/1986-02-27/news/ga-12258_1_new-ordinance

<http://advanced-citizen.com/legislators-detail.php?id=46>

<http://mikeengfortrustee.com/awards/>

Tritia Toyota, *Envisioning America: New Chinese Americans and the Politics of Belonging*, Stanford University Press, 2009 p. 162-163