



THE CHINESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF HAWAII

夏威夷中華總商會



LANTERN

NEWSLETTER

February & March, 2021

OFFICERS 2020-2021

President

Elvira Lo

President-Elect

Russell J. Lau

1st Vice President

Jonathan Cook

2nd Vice President

Gabriel Lee

3rd Vice President

Michael P.H.F. Young

English Secretary

Yu Shing Ting

Chinese Secretary

Jack Zhang

Treasurer

Sherman G.B. Wong

Assistant Treasurer

Sarah Moy

Imm. Past President

Michele C. Choy

Executive Vice President

Wen Chung Lin



Chinese Chamber executive board send Lunar New Year Greeting to all the Community leaders and societies in Honolulu, and L.A. PRC Consulate General, and TECO Honolulu office.

Chinese New Year

January 1, 2021, was marked by a virtual “ball drop” in a largely deserted Times Square instead of the traditional ball drop witnessed by a packed throng in person as well as through broadcast news around the world. Quite likely, most people celebrating the passing of what Queen Elizabeth II once called an “annus horribilis” (horrible year) in Latin, especially so for the arrival and spread of the SARS-Cov2 virus around the world and the start of a more hopeful new year, with the prospect of several new COVID-19 vaccines and the prospect of the start of an economic recovery, beginning this summer or fall. One can hope that 2021 will indeed be an “annus mirabilis” or wonderful year, not only for Chamber officers, direc-

tors, and members, but also for everyone in the U.S. and around the world.

However, for billions of Chinese around the world, Friday, February 12, marked the start of a new lunar year, the Year of the Ox. Due to the pandemic, however, “the world’s largest annual migration” of millions of Chinese city workers back to their home towns and villages was somewhat subdued and de-emphasized by the China authorities. At the same time, it should be noted that COVID-19 is largely under control in China, life appears to be normalized to what it was like in the Before Times, and the Chinese economy, now second only to that of the U.S., is the only national economy that is currently expanding, the *New York Times* noting on February 17 that China is now the largest trading partner for the European Union.

With the start of 2021, collection of FICA for employees/employers and SECA for the self-employed continues. The cap of earnings subject to one tax or the other is \$142,800, a “modest increase” from \$137,700 in 2020. However, according to Pulitzer Prize-winning *LA Times* business writer **Michael Hiltzik**, billionaires in the U.S. had finished with their Social Security taxes for 2021 in the first few days of January. Those who are fortunate enough to have kept their jobs despite COVID-19 and the Trump recession will be paying the tax for all or most of the year. One long overdue tax reform is for Congress to “scrap the cap” so that everyone’s earnings are subject to the tax throughout the year.

Chamber Director Election Results

The Chamber held its annual election of directors on March 5. Newly elected to the Chamber board are insurance agent **Gordon Au** and MG **Stephen Tom (Ret)** while reelected directors are **Tina Au**, **Ina Chang**, **John Chang**, **Michael Ching**, **Lishan Chong**, **Lee-Ann Choy**, **Bradford Chun**, **Cy Feng**, **Deanne Ho**, **Joanna Mak**, **Sarah Moy**, **Lawrence Tseu**, **Michelle Wong**, and **Angela Wu-Ki**. The directors will serve a term from June 1, 2021 to May 31, 2024.



President
Elvira Lo

Aloha members, friends of Chinese Chamber, we are in the spring of 2021, there are many exiting and positive things happening in Honolulu and great programs going on with the Chamber.

Oahu officially enters Tier 3 of city's reopening plan, social gatherings can have up to 10 people, plus more relax restrictions, and Mayor Blangiardi mentioned that the earliest Oahu could move to Tier 4 is March 25.

Current qualifications for a COVID-19 vaccine as of March 15:

- Be between the ages of 65 and 74 years old.
- Be a person aged 16 or older with a high-risk medical condition.
- Be an essential worker.

With that says Chamber can start to plan to resume the Narcissus Festival, events and in person membership meetings.

So far we are planning to have the Installation Banquet in mid July, Golf Tournament in October, Queen search will also resume in summer.

CCCH was invited by Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii on partnering to promote the Business Pivot Grant Program in December, also translating

the Grant Documents in both Simplified and Traditional Chinese. In January, we sent out email on information about re-opening of PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) guideline released by SBA, we are proud to accommodate a lot of Chinese speaking businesses reach out to Chamber for assistant on how to apply PPP loan.

On Feb 7 and 9, both **KITV** and **KHON** interview the CCCH on New Year Celebration and activities, sadly as everyone, I had to tell them it's been postponed to next year.

CCCH hosted a webinar "What to Expect from Hawaii Commercial Real Estate in the Year of OX?" on March 17, noon to 1 pm, Presenters: Cushman & Wakefield ChaneyBrook. A panel of local experts to give insights to Hawaii Commercial Real Estate trends. Amidst a sizzling residential market, commercial real estate activities are dependent on the COVID-19-impacted Hawaii Economy. Is the COVID-19 vaccine the key for Hawaii's economic recovery? Are there commercial real estate sectors doing better than other? How can business strategic planning leverage real estate for survival or profitability? Ray Tsuchiyama real estate advisor was the Moderator, along with Rock Tang, Senior VP, Director of Investment and Leasing INDUSTRIAL-Jack Roney, RETAIL - Barinna Poon, Senior Associate INVESTMENTS - Ryan Sakaguchi, Senior VP. All 5 experts shared their insight and forecast with CCCH members and extended this workshop to the **QUAD CHAMBER** members, and we thank you to **Japanese Chamber, Korean Chamber and Philippine Chamber** and their Presidents and members who participate at the workshop. We have over **75 participants**, an unbelievable experience and informative workshop to bring you up to date on Hawaii's commercial real estate market 2021. This is a value of \$75.00 seminar and we offer to members for free.

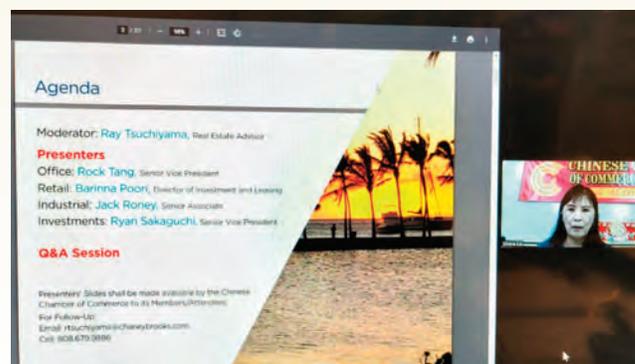
On March 25, noon-1 pm CCCH brings you an **exclusive invitation from Merrill Lynch**. An extreme rare opportunity offer to CCCH and Quad members for free, these are top notch analysts in Wall Street, only for ML premium clients, and now members can learn about the Equity Market from 5000 miles away, all because our **Past President Betty Brow** who make a very special onetime arrangement to share with us.

Direct From Wall Street N.Y. Merrill Lynch features **"Market Outlook on 2021 with Head of Global Wealth Management Portfolio and Investment Strategy for Global Research" Topic is Market Outlook and Merrill's Investment Principles for 2021 and beyond. Feature Derek Harris, Managing Director and Head of Global Wealth Management Portfolio and Investment Strategy for Global Research N.Y. Along with Justin Devery, VP in Global Investment Strategy N.Y.**

For all those who attended must felt so special to be able to spend a great one hour with these top analysts and learnt so much about the Global Market Sentiment and equity stocks information for 2021.

The Chamber office renovated the ADA project for the stairs, hallway, and men and women's restroom in January and February, now we have a very modern restroom with sensor light system, also installed the security camera system where Tina can view the front door, hallway on screen.

I encourage you to keep giving CCCH support, participate at all our virtual webinars to advance knowledge on various commerce subjects. We look forward to meet up in person soon this summer.



Subject: NEWS RELEASE: Notice of rehabilitation work of localized streets in Downtown/Chinatown



**NEWS RELEASE
MAYOR RICK BLANGIARDI
DEPARTMENT OF DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, March 5, 2021
Communications Office: 768-6928

Notice of rehabilitation work of localized streets in Downtown/Chinatown

HONOLULU – The Department of Design and Construction would like to notify the public of street rehabilitation work in Downtown/Chinatown, beginning Monday, March 8, 2021. The project includes the resurfacing and reconstruction of asphalt concrete pavements, construction of concrete bus pads, tree stump removals, and the installation of signs and bike lane facilities. The project also includes upgraded curb extensions at three intersections along Pauahi Street (Pauahi Street/Maunakea Street, Pauahi Street/Smith Street, and Pauahi Street/Nu‘uanu Avenue) with the installation of permeable pavers, minimal bollards and flatter corners. Work is expected to be complete in late summer 2021, weather and unforeseen conditions permitting.

To minimize traffic flow disruptions and to accommodate access, scheduled work will be done Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and at nights, between the hours of 6:30 p.m. to 6 a.m., Sunday through Friday.

Residents and local traffic such as deliveries and trash collection will be allowed during construction. Several Biki bike stations have been temporarily relocated because of the project. Motorists are advised to use alternate routes and exercise caution when proceeding through the project area. We apologize for the inconvenience and thank you for your patience.

Rehabilitation work is also set to begin on South King Street, Bishop Street, and other areas of Downtown Honolulu, later this year. Details to that project will be announced at a later date.

—PAU—

**UPCOMING CHANGE:
DIAL 808 TO MAKE LOCAL CALLS**

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has adopted 988 as a new three-digit number to be used nationwide to reach the National Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Crisis Lifeline starting July 16, 2022. All telecommunications carriers and VoIP service providers are required to take part in the initiative.

In order for 988 to work, all service providers must implement mandatory 10-digit local dialing. Therefore, starting October 24, 2021 local calls, including those on the same island, will require that you dial area code 808 + telephone number.

What will be the new dialing procedure?

To complete a local call, starting October 24, 2021 you will need to dial area code 808 + telephone number. This applies to all local calls within your area code that are currently dialed with seven digits.

Who will be affected?

Anyone with an area code 808 telephone number will need to make a change from 7-digit local dialing to 10-digit local dialing.

When will the change begin?

Beginning October 24, 2021, you must dial 808 + telephone number for all local calls. On and after that date, local calls dialed with only 7 digits may not be completed, and a recording will inform you that your call cannot be completed as dialed. You must hang up and dial 808 + telephone number. Until July 16, 2022 customers must continue to dial 1-800-273-TALK to reach the National Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Crisis Lifeline. Beginning July 16, 2022 dialing “988” will automatically route your call to the Lifeline.

What will you need to do?

In addition to changing the way you dial local calls, all services, automatic/speed dialing equipment and other types of equipment that are programmed to complete calls to 7-digit local numbers will need to be reprogrammed to complete calls to 808 + telephone number. Some examples are life safety systems or medical monitoring devices, PBXs, fax machines, Internet dial-up numbers, fire or burglar alarm and security systems or gates, speed dialers, mobile or other wireless phone contact lists, call forwarding settings, voicemail services and other similar functions. Be sure to check your website, personal and business stationery, advertising materials, personal and business checks, contact information, your personal or pet ID tags and other such items to ensure the area code is included.

Here are some links to on information to reprogram your speed calling/dial and call forwarding functions on your Hawaiian Telcom Business phone services:

- [How to reprogram Speed Calling, and Call Forwarding on your Centrex Biz Plus phone service](#)
- [How to reprogram Speed Dial and Call Forwarding on your Business Voice \(Business All-in-One\) service](#)

How will this affect my Hawaiian Telcom Single Number Service (SNS)?

SNS service will continue to operate. However, end-users must dial 808 before the seven-digit telephone number for the call to complete.

What will remain the same?

- Your telephone number, including current area code, will remain the same.
- The price of a call, coverage area, and other rates and services will remain the same.
- What is a local call now will remain a local call regardless of the number of digits dialed.
- You will continue to dial 1 + area code + telephone number for all inter-island and long-distance calls. Hawaiian Telcom Business customers with SNS will not need to dial 1.
- You can continue to dial just three digits to reach 711 (relay services) and 911 (emergency services).
- Any 211, 311, 411, 511, 611 or 811 services available in your community can still be reached by dialing its three-digit code.
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can still be reached by dialing 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Who can you contact with questions?

You can visit the FCC website at [fcc.gov/suicide-prevention-hotline](https://www.fcc.gov/suicide-prevention-hotline).



Market Outlook and Platform Overview with Derek Harris and Justin Devery

We are pleased to invite you to join Merrill Lynch for a special, by invitation only, Webinar with Derek Harris, Managing Director and Head of Global Wealth Management Portfolio and Investment Strategy for Global Research, and Justin Devery, Vice President in Global Investment Strategy for a Market Outlook and Merrill's Investment principles for 2021 and beyond

Thursday, March 25, 2021 | 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. HST

We hope to see you there!

To join, please click the link below
[START MY EVENT](#)

FEATURING
Derek Harris
 Managing Director, Associate Director of Research
 Head of Global Wealth Management Portfolio
 And Investment Strategy for Global Research,
 Merrill Lynch



FEATURING
Justin Devery
 Vice President, Research Analyst
 Global Investment Strategy,
 Merrill Lynch



HOST
Betty Anli Brow
 Financial Advisor
 Merrill Lynch





Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii is hosting a webinar
What to Expect from Hawaii Commercial Real Estate in the Year of the Ox?

Date: Wednesday, March 17th, 2021 12 Noon-1 PM
 Presenters: Cushman & Wakefield ChaneyBrooks Honolulu Office

A panel of local experts to give insights to Hawaii commercial real estate trends.

- Amidst a sizzling residential market (especially in single-family homes that pushed up median home prices from Kauai to Hawaii Island), commercial real estate activities are dependent on the COVID-19-impacted Hawaii economy.
- Is the COVID-19 vaccine the key for Hawaii's economic recovery (tourism, consumer spending) that will yield positive effects for Hawaii commercial real estate?
- Are there commercial real estate sectors doing better than others – what are the key factors?
- How can business strategic planning leverage real estate (leasing, investments) for survival or profitability?

The Year of the Rat created monumental business decision-making, but the Year of the Ox could be even more influential, as this Quarter's decisions shall bear fruit over the next 12 highly critical months.

MODERATOR --Ray Tsuchiyama, Real Estate Advisor
OFFICE -- Rock Tang, Senior Vice President and Tenant Representative
RETAIL -- Barinna Poon, Director of Investment and Leasing
INDUSTRIAL -- Jack Roney, Senior Associate
INVESTMENTS -- Ryan Sakaguchi, Senior Vice President (Capital Markets)

Q & A Session moderated by **Ray Tsuchiyama**

RSVP by 3/15/21, First Come, First Served, Limited Seats.

A value of \$75.00, now **FREE** to Chamber Members

Reservation: [Click the link https://forms.gle/KUsqWSVW4bzTNQeT6](https://forms.gle/KUsqWSVW4bzTNQeT6)
 or call (808)533-3181

Tax Time is Coming

With the start of the new year, Americans who earn income from work or investments are receiving various “tax information” forms with figures to be included in your federal and Hawaii income tax returns. Tax season this year begins on February 12, two weeks later than last year. This marks the start of when people can file their federal tax returns. According to a February 22 *Forbes* article, the delay is partly due to a backlog of 6.7 million 2019 tax returns, and with a processing rate of 200,000 returns a month, nearly three years would be needed to clear the backlog. In the meantime, another estimated 16 million 2020 paper tax returns are coming in between now and the extended due date of Monday, May 17. (Note that according to the March 23 *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, the laggard Hawaii Department of Taxation still expects your Hawaii returns by April 15).

There may be one or two unusual amounts that were unique last year. Most of us have received a check for \$1,200, mislabeled as a “stimulus” payment, but was actually an advanced tax credit and therefore not taxable. If you lost your job due to pandemic shutdowns and received the additional \$600 CARES Act weekly federal benefit in addition to the problematic State of Hawaii unemployment compensation, that is considered “ordinary income” and taxable. You should receive a Form 1099-G showing what you are paid and any taxes withheld, according to a February 12 *Forbes* article on ten tax tips.

Finally, if you’re like most taxpayers and take the standard deduction rather than calculate an itemized deduction and made cash donations to charities in 2020, there’s a new \$300 “above-the-line” charitable deduction per tax return. For gifts under \$250, credit card statements or cancelled checks will provide substantiation; for gifts above that amount, you’ll need a written acknowledgment from the charity.

ACA Enrollment Reopens

Open enrollment for health care coverage under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, ran from November 1 to December 15, 2020. (Open enrollment, either to sign up when eligible or to change or add coverage, for the Medicare 2021 plan year ran from October 15 to December 7, 2020).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the health care needs for Americans all over the country. Some 22 million Americans lost their jobs last spring, and along with that went any employer-provided health insurance. According to a July 2020 consumer advocacy group Families USA report, an estimated 5.4 million Americans became uninsured to May. That’s in addition to nearly 30 million Americans who aren’t covered by Medicare, Medicaid or Obamacare, and this in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic.

So on January 28, President Trump signed executive orders to allow newly unemployed Americans to sign up for health coverage between February 15 and May 15. (While it is true that loss of a job and health care coverage is a “qualifying life event” that allows signing up outside the usual annual time frames, which his predecessor cut in half in 2020, the task is reportedly quite com-

plicated). According to a March 22 *NY Times* report, over 200,000 have now signed up for coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which health policy experts say shows the desperate need for coverage of those who lost it during the pandemic. (That of course would not be a problem if, like all other industrialized countries, the U.S. had universal single-payer medical care coverage of all its residents). In addition, two deep-red GOP-controlled states, Alabama and Wyoming, are belatedly considering widening Medicaid coverage, an option open to all 50 states since at least 2014 under the ACA. (For those who may have forgotten, in 2010 not a single Republican in the House or Senate voted to pass the ACA). Late breaking news: On March 23, the Biden administration announced that the special enrollment period is now extended three months, to August 15.

American Rescue Plan Act

A pressing problem facing President Biden and Congress is the economic devastation resulting from 2020 shutdowns in many states and the need to help businesses and people. In 2020, five “stimulus” bills totaling \$3.8 trillion were passed by Congress, while President Biden got Democrats to pass a \$1.9 trillion “relief” bill in February, with a likely multi-trillion dollar follow-up infrastructure bill later in 2021. In light of the \$3.8 trillion for COVID-19 stimulus as well as the \$1.2 trillion added to the national debt by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, which largely benefitted the ultra-rich and large multinational corporations, Republicans complaining about spending in the American Rescue Plan, which largely benefits Americans in the lower two income quintiles, is unwarranted.

And while President Biden has been much criticized for not being “bipartisan” in getting the ARPA passed through reconciliation, the record over the years shows that no Republicans in the House and only three in the Senate voted for the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and not a single Republican voted for the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA or “Obamacare”). So the party-line vote in the House and Senate for the ARPA should be no surprise. Meanwhile, outside the D.C. Beltway, a number of Republican governors and mayors were publicly urging support of the ARPA, which includes \$350 billion for states and localities hard hit by the pandemic, as well as the public. Polls before and after enactment show 70% support among the public. The latest poll, from Politico/Morning Consult on March 17, shows that 72% of Americans support the law (95% of Democrats, 69% of independents, and even 44% of Republicans). And with \$1,400 checks arriving for most Americans (as well as monthly checks for the expanded Child Tax Credit), the immediate relief will likely see an increase in support, unlike the 2010 ACA, which didn’t take effect until 2014.

Over the last year, Congress has had concerns about businesses, some of which have had to suffer through at least one shutdown. Over that time, some businesses were forced to permanently shut down. In order to provide some relief, Congress devised the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) as part of the CARES Act, with \$349 billion for businesses with 500 employ-

ees or less, but a number of problems arose, including initially problematic administration by the Small Business Administration, which ostensibly assists “small businesses” with up to 300 employees. In the first go-round last spring, a number of publicly traded corporations, which could have raised money through stock or bond issues, were helped by their Big Bank lenders to borrow PPP fund, squeezing out genuine small businesses that could try to navigate the Byzantine steps to get a loan or shut down. One small business was approved for the princely sum of \$1!

Last April, the Associated Press identified at least 94 large companies or their subsidiaries, which had received \$365 million in PPP loans. One egregious example was Shake Shack (NASDAQ: SHAK) which had \$100 million cash on hand, yet applied for and was given the maximum \$10 million loan, subsequently returned after a public uproar. Another successful maximum loan applicant was Ruth’s Chris Steak House (NASDAQ: RUTH), along with Taco Cabana (NASDAQ: FRGI) and Potbelly (NASDAQ: PBPB).

On a happy note, in light of the closures or more than 100,000 restaurants in the last year, the \$1.9 trillion ARPA includes \$28.6 billion for the Restaurant Revitalization Fund for restaurants, bars, and restaurant groups with 20 or less locations. Grants of up to \$5 million for single restaurants and \$10 million for restaurant groups will be made through the SBA. Some \$5 billion is available for businesses, such as food trucks, food stalls, and caterers, whose revenues were less than \$500,000 in 2019. This time, the financial relief is better geared to food service operations, unlike the PPP, as noted in a February 23 *NY Times* article on the Independent Restaurant Coalition. Specifically excluded from eligibility are publicly-traded companies and restaurant groups with more than 20 locations.

Mask Up!

For nearly a year, one of the Three Ws has been to wear a face mask to cover your mouth and nose to protect yourself and others. (There are of course some politicians and “influencers” who disdain use of masks to at least protect others, despite state or local rules requiring them, as well as some mainland states that don’t think that their residents or visitors need that minor inconvenience). So for those who choose to wear a mask, there have been choices: cloth, surgical or N95/KN95/FC94.

With cloth masks, the more layers – two or preferably three – the better. A step up are three-ply surgical masks used by medical personnel during medical procedures and by first-responders. These masks are made of non-woven material and are more effective at blocking particles than cotton cloth. At the top are N95 face masks that will filter out 95% of airborne particles. (The N95 is made in the U.S. by companies like 3M, the KN95 is made in China, and the Face Covering 94 is made in South Korea; all offer equivalent protection). Hearst Newspapers’ LIFT editor **Joshua Sargent** has a January 28 article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on the differences between the N95/KN95/FC94 and surgical masks.

As the SARS-CoV-2 virus has spread, however, it has mutated, and new variants from the UK (B.1.1.7) and South

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Mar 17 • Wed

CCCH Virtual Webinar “What to Expect from Hawaii Commercial Real Estate in the Year of the Ox?” – Quad Chambers Invited
Zoom Virtual Meet – 12:00 p.m.

Mar 23 • Tue

Executive Committee Meeting
Chamber Office – 6:00 p.m.

Mar 25 • Thu

CCCH Virtual Webinar “Market Outlook and Merrill’s Investment Principles for 2021 and beyond” – Quad Chambers Invited
Virtual Meet – 12:00 p.m.

Mar 26 • Fri

Election of 2021-2022 New Officers

Mar 30 • Tue

Board of Directors Meeting
Google Virtual Meet – 12:00 p.m.

Apr 20 • Tue

Executive Committee Meeting
Chamber Office – 6:00 p.m.

Apr 27 • Tue

Board of Directors Meeting
Google Virtual Meet – 12:00 p.m.

The LANTERN a monthly publication of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii
8 South King Street • Suite 201
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Ph: (808) 533-3181 / 533-3886
Email: info@chinesechamber.com

Editor: Gerald Y.Y. Chang

Graphic Designer: Angela Wu-Ki

Staff: Wen Chung Lin, Tina Ge

Africa (B.1.351) are apparently more highly transmissible (and perhaps more lethal), so that by late January, Dr. **Anthony Fauci** was recommending two masks, such as a multi-layer cloth mask on top of a surgical mask, and the CDC began making a similar recommendation in early February.

With the emphasis on upgrading to an N95 or equivalent mask or double masks, fly-by-night scammers are offering fakes online. According to the Department of Homeland Security, by mid-February, more than 11 million counterfeit N95 masks had been seized. However, help is on the way. On February 16, the ASTM, an international standard setting organization, announced a standard for N95 masks, setting minimum fit, design, performance and testing requirements for face masks as well as requiring user instructions, package labeling, and a permanent tag on the mask. In addition, on February 6, CNN Health had an article on how to tell fake N95 masks, and on February 17, *New York Times* columnist **Brian Chen** explained how to buy an N95 mask online.

Even for those who have completed the two-shot vaccine regiment, Dr. Fauci still recommends continued use of face masks. While that individual will no longer have to worry about getting sick with COVID-19 if exposed to an infected person, he or she may still get the virus in their nasal pharynx and infect others as well as test positive. So it may just be that face masks will be with us for a long time, especially if the experts are correct that the UK variant becomes the dominant strain – 50% or more of cases – in the U.S. by the end of March. (In a February 21 appearance on “CNN Sunday,” Dr. Fauci said that while the U.S. might get back to some semblance of Before Times “normality” by the end of this year, people will probably have to wear masks into 2022).

That same day, the American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association, and the American Nurses Association all cautioned against premature easing of restrictions as some states are now doing. On Monday evening, February 22, President Biden held a candlelight ceremony at the White House to commemorate a mind-boggling 500,000 Americans who have died and to console the loved ones they left behind. (Ironically, on February 23, 2020, his predecessor claimed that “we have it very much under control” and crowed that “we’ve had no deaths,” a claim belied by the first U.S. death on February 29).

That death toll is a staggering number, difficult to comprehend, yet experts say that many of those deaths did not have to happen, had there been a coordinated nation-wide effort to contain the SARS-CoV-2 virus early in 2020 instead of downplaying the seriousness of what is NOT comparable to the seasonal flu. As it is, earlier in February, the CDC was projecting 534,000 deaths by February 27 while the IHME projects as many as 645,000 by June 1, but if 95% of Americans wore face masks, the death toll would be 34,000 less. And Harvard Medical School’s Dr. **Abraar Karan** said in late January on CNN that the U.S. could end the pandemic in four weeks if 100% of Americans wore N95 masks. Sadly, with so many Americans refusing to wear a mask or wearing one covering only their mouth, that end result will not happen any time soon.



THE CHINESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF HAWAII

8 South King Street • Suite 201 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813