One of the most dynamic success stories in the history of Americans with disabilities is coming to Hawaii, December 20, and bringing a message with him—"Never, never, never give up!" Dr. Young-Woo Kang, was recently nominated by President Bush and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to be one of 15 members of the National Council on Disability, an independent federal agency which makes recommendations to the President and Congress on issues affecting 54 million Americans with disabilities. Kang will target his remarks to all who seek inspiration including more than 230,000 Hawaii residents who have some form of disability (approximately 19 percent of Hawaii’s population).

Kang will speak on “Changing Your Weakness into an Asset,” Friday, December 20, 10:30-11:30 a.m., at the University of Hawaii Art Auditorium. In addition, Kang will conduct an educational seminar entitled “From Bad Luck to a Presidential Appointee,” Saturday, December 21, 10 a.m.-Noon, at the Korean Presbyterian Church of Honolulu, 2122 Metcalf Street. At the KPCH, there will also be a three-part series of inspirational talks in Korean language 3 nights in a row from Friday through Sunday (December 20 -22), 7-9:30 p.m.

Blinded as a teenager by a sports injury; Dr. Kang’s remarkable success story, produced as a full-length movie and re-enacted for television, leads from despair to national prominence. “Loosing my eyesight was not a barrier but a stepping stone for success in my life,” Kang said. “I never allowed my blindness to prevent me from making a difference in this world.”

Orphaned and blind in a Korean society that treated blind people as outcasts, Kang refused to accept a downtrodden role. Instead of allowing the tragic events of his young life to destroy him, he drove himself to pursue a college education while others told him it couldn’t be done. Kang became the first blind person to be admitted to the prestigious Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea. After graduating with honors, he went on to become a Rotary Foundation Scholar at the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania, and he became the first blind Korean to earn both a masters degree (Psychology) and a doctorate (Special Education).

In addition to his recent confirmation to the National Council on Disability, Kang has written many books including “Two candles shining brightly in the darkness of the world,” which has been translated into six languages and made into a talking story book for the U.S. Library of Congress. Kang received the Asian American Society Outstanding Contribution and Achievement Award in 2001. His determination to turn weaknesses into assets throughout his life has helped forge significant improvements in the lives of people.
with disabilities throughout the world.

Sponsoring Dr. Kang’s inspirational series of talks is the National Technical Assistance Center for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders with Disability (NTAC), Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa. NTAC focuses on the unique issues of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) with disabilities throughout the country by providing technical assistance support to improve employment opportunities for this population. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are one of the fastest growing minorities in the United States, with Hawaii having the highest percentage of AAPI residents. The U.S. Census Bureau projects this group to grow from approximately 9.5 million in 1997 to more than 35 million, or 9 percent of the U.S. population, by the year 2050.