

Senate Staff Diversity Fact Sheet

The Problem

In December 2015, there were 336 top Senate staffers (Chiefs of Staff, Legislative Directors, Communications Directors, and Staff Directors), but only 24 staffers of color--12 Asian Americans, 7 Latinos, 3 African Americans, and 2 Native Americans.

	Black	Latino	AAPI	Native Am.	POC
U.S. Population	13.3%	17.6%	5.8%	1.2%	37.9%
Top Senate Staff	0.9%	2.1%	3.6%	0.6%	7.1%

Currently, of the 39 Staff Directors of full Senate Committees (both Majority and Minority), none are Latino or African American.

This is a problem for both Democrats and Republicans. For example, although African Americans account for **22% of Democratic voters**, they account for less than 1% of Democratic top staff. Of the 5 African-American top staffers in the U.S. Senate, only one is a Democrat (the other four are Republicans). Democrats have:

- No African-American Chiefs of Staff
- No African-American Communications Directors
- No African-American Staff Directors
- Only one African-American Legislative Director

Why is this a problem?

Top staffers in Washington, DC:

- Manage the Senate legislative agenda
- Shape the \$3.8 trillion U.S. federal budget
- Provide oversight of all federal agencies
 - Collectively has over 4.1 million employees
- Hire, manage, and dismiss Senate staff

Senate has the power to confirm:

- U.S. Ambassadors
- Federal Judges
- Cabinet Secretaries
- Other top federal agency commissioners and officials

Solutions

All Senators should take several steps to increase diversity:

- Interview and hire people of color as legislative assistants, so that at least half of the LAs in an office are POC
- Be more transparent about who works in each office through the collection of demographic data
- Employ the National Football League's (NFL) "Rooney Rule" in all hiring processes
- Establish a competitive, senior-level minority fellowship, and hire interns and fellows from APAICS, CBCF, CHCI, and the GW Native American Political Leadership Program
- Centralize diversity resources for Senators and staff
- Develop and adopt a diversity plan for each personal office and committee office
- Require implicit bias training for staff who make hiring and staff evaluation decisions
- Support legislation for a Chief Diversity Officer for the U.S. Senate

Local civil rights groups can:

- Provide quotes and be available to press
- Ask your Senator for a regular check-in (e.g. conference call) about staff diversity and hiring
- Generate local interest on the issue of hiring diversity by speaking out at local events

Media outlets can:

- Educate the public about the importance of top staff and racial diversity, and ask your Senator about the status of the issue.

For a link to Senate Position Descriptions (Personal Office and Committee), click [here](#).

Resources

[Racial Diversity Among Top Senate Staff](#), Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (December 2015) (31-page report showing that African Americans are 13.3% of the U.S. population but only 0.7% of top personal office staff, Latinos are 17.6% of the population but only 2.3% of top staff, AAPIs are 5.8% of the population but 3.7% of top staff, and Native Americans are 1.2% of the population and 0.3% of top staff).

The Joint Center also produced [this two-minute video](#) reviewing the findings of the report.

[“Senate Democrats Adopt Staff Diversity Rules.”](#) *Roll Call* (March 7, 2017) (Lawmakers approved use of the Rooney Rule for Senate office hiring).

[“Schumer wants to boost Senate staff diversity by taking a page from NFL.”](#) *Christian Science Monitor* (March 1, 2017) (Senate minority leader Schumer asked fellow Democrats to adopt new rules to promote staff diversity in the Democratic party).

[“Schumer to introduce rules for diverse Senate hiring.”](#) *Politico* (February 28, 2017) (Senate Minority Leader Schumer will ask his caucus to adopt new rules to produce staff diversity).

[“National Urban League Delivers Resumes to Senate.”](#) *PayScale Career News* (February 21, 2017) (NUL delivered senior-level resumes of African-American candidates to senators who represent states with a high percentage of minority residents).

[“The US Senate Has a Diversity Problem in Its Staff.”](#) *Black Enterprise* (January 31, 2017) (Halls of Congress lack color and how to hold Congress accountable in hiring).

[“Diversity lacking in appalling congressional staff hiring.”](#) *Philadelphia Tribune* (January 27, 2017) (Discusses NUL Roundtable and proposed solutions such as the Rooney Rule and NUL’s plan to send resumes of people of color to Senate leaders).

[“U.S. Senate fails on diversity.”](#) *Louisiana Weekly* (January 23, 2017) (NUL President/CEO Marc H. Morial discusses recent roundtable and NUL’s proposed steps to address Senate Diversity).

[“Bill Could Be Big Step Toward Increasing Diversity on Capitol Hill.”](#) *NBC Washington* (January 16, 2017) (Discusses Senate Black Legislative Caucus proposed plan to create the Office of the Chief Diversity Officer of the Senate).

[“Groups push Senate on Staff Diversity.”](#) *The Advertiser* (January 13, 2017) (Discusses recent roundtable hosted by NUL and proposed steps to help address Senate Diversity).

[“Schumer under fire for lack of diversity on Senate staff.”](#) *NY Post* (January 12, 2017) (Discusses lack of Senate diversity and plans of Senator Chuck Schumer to appoint a Director of Engagement and to standardize “Rooney Rule”).

[“Advocates Slam Senate Democrats for Failing to Hire More Blacks, Latinos.”](#) *Black Press USA* (January 9, 2017) (Lauren Victoria Burke discusses the role that the Joint Center and the National Urban League have played in advocating for increased Senate Diversity).

[“CBC places Blacks in power on Capitol Hill.”](#) *Louisiana Weekly* (January 9, 2017) (Discusses lack of diversity in Senate and the CBC’s commitment to inclusion).

[“Minority-oriented think tank lauds Sen. Thom Tillis for hiring diversity.”](#) *Charlotte Observer* (January 9, 2017) (Discusses Joint Center comments on the hiring of Courtney Temple as Legislative Director for Senator Thom Tillis).

[“Lack Of Diversity In Hiring Plagues Senate On Both Sides Of The Aisle.”](#) *The Seattle Medium* (January 11, 2017) (Discusses NUL roundtable on Senate Diversity and highlights specific Senators who should look to diversify their teams).

[“Sen.-Elect Harris Hiring Black Legislative Director.”](#) *Roll Call* (December 27, 2016) (Senator-Elect Kamala Harris named Clint Odom as her Legislative Director--making him the only African-American Legislative Director in the Senate).

[“CBC Chairman G. K. Butterfield Calls for Increased Congressional Staff Diversity.”](#) *LA Sentinel* (December 15, 2016) (CBC Chair G. K. Butterfield urges the United States Congress to take immediate action to diversify governmental offices on Capitol Hill).

[“Advocates Push New Senators to Add People of Color to Their Senior Staff.”](#) *The Washington Post* (December 14, 2016) (Janell Ross reveals that Senator-elect Duckworth & Harris have hired people of color in other top staff positions outside of Chief of Staff, Legislative Director, & Communications Director).

[“Both Parties Guilty of Lacking Diversity in Senate Staff.”](#) *The Philadelphia Tribune* (December 10, 2016) (The lack of Senate staff diversity is prevalent on both sides of the aisle - Democrats and Republicans).

[“Senate Dems Scramble After Report Shows the Most 'Diverse' Staff is Actually Republican.”](#) *The Daily Caller News Foundation* (December 8, 2016) (Minority lobbyists plan to push the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee to diversify their vendors and staff).

[“The U.S. Senate Fails to Reflect America's Diversity.”](#) Center for American Progress (December 8, 2016) (The Senate Black Legislative Staff Caucus echoes the Joint Center's push for more staff diversity in the Senate).

[“Senate Dems Shamed for Nearly All-White Top Staffers.”](#) *Politico* (December 7, 2016) (Noting that the Senate's only African-American Chief of Staff works for Republican Sen. Tim Scott).

[“Senate Staff Diversity Efforts Turn to New Congress.”](#) *Roll Call* (December 1, 2016) (This article is an extension of the article written on November 29th. Although the Senate will become more diverse in 2017, their staffs still lack diversity. New efforts underway to produce outside pressure to make staffs

more diverse. The article includes statements from individuals such as Maria Meier, who currently oversees the Senate Diversity Initiative in Sen. Reid's office).

[“Soft Bigotry of Senate Democrats.”](#) *New York Daily News* (November 30, 2016) (Shaun King explores the thoughts of a respected Senate staffer on Senate Diversity initiatives. The staffer expressed little confidence in the diversity initiative. The staffer also advocated for more work to be done to truly make the Senate more diverse).

[“Kamala Harris names Nathan Barankin as Chief of Staff.”](#) *SFGate* (November 30, 2016) (Kamala Harris named longtime aide Nathan Barankin as her Chief of Staff and several former prosecutors to her transition team).

[“Black Senate Staffers Push for More Diversity.”](#) *Roll Call* (November 29, 2016) (The Senate Black Legislative Staff Caucus sent a letter and document of recommendations to Senate leaders and every Senate office to establish a nonpartisan Senate Diversity Initiative).

[“Senator-Elect Cortez Masto's 7 Senior Staff Picks.”](#) *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (November 28, 2016) (Out of her seven senior staffers, Senator-Elect Cortez Masto has hired a Latino Communications Director--Senator Reid's Senior Adviser for Hispanic Media).

[“Paul Ryan's 'White' Selfie With Interns Shows Lack of Diversity in Washington.”](#) *The Guardian* (July 18, 2016) (Article discusses the selfie Paul Ryan took with Hill interns last summer that was overwhelming white. The selfie was a visual illustration to help explain the lack of diversity in staff position. Because Hill experience is often necessary for a full time staff position, the lack of diversity among interns is something that should be addressed).

[“New Report Reveals Top Senate Positions Remain Overwhelming White and Male.”](#) *The Network Journal* (December 9, 2015) (Article highlights the key findings of the Joint Center report as well as provides commentary from Joint Center President Spencer Overton as to how to move forward. For the details of the Joint Center report, please see the last resource which outlines the statistics).

[“The U.S. Senate Is Still One of the World's Whitest Workplaces.”](#) *The Atlantic* (December 8, 2015) (Article highlights that staff diversity in the top rungs of the Senate hasn't changed much since the 1980s, despite periodic efforts to highlight and remedy the problem. It also uses the Joint Center report to provide the data to support the claim that the US Senate is still overwhelming white).

[“On Capitol Hill, the United States is a Very, Very White Place.”](#) *The Washington Post* (December 8, 2015) (Article highlights the key findings of the Joint Center report. People of color make up 36 percent of the U.S. public and 28 percent of those old enough and eligible to vote in the United States, but they are included in just 7.1 percent of all senior-level Senate staff, according to the study).

Speaker Quotes

Don Cravins, Jr., Vice President of Policy and Executive Director of the Washington Bureau for the National Urban League

“As a former Chief of Staff in the U.S. Senate, and the only African-American Chief at the time, I’ve seen firsthand the affect that a lack of diversity among senior staffers can have on the legislative process and our laws. This is both a moral issue and an issue of public policy. Our government must be representative of the people it serves by ensuring that all have a seat at the table. The National Urban League will continue to call for all current and newly-elected senators to consider qualified African-American candidates from the vast talent pool that exists.”

Jennifer DeCasper, Chief of Staff to the Senator Tim Scott (R-SC)

“Diverse people bring diverse skill sets and creativity to the table. It incorporates upbringing, life experiences, religious beliefs, and so much more, but there is an intentionality about it. If you want your office to reflect the community in which you serve, you have to be deliberate in seeking diversity. If you are not intentional in going beyond the standard resume banks, then what you are left with is homogeneous, uncreative, uninformed thought. With a uniquely qualified staff, only then can we begin to draft policy that will actually benefit the very people we serve--people from all walks of life, backgrounds, and cultures.”

Spencer Overton, President of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

“The fact that there are only 21 staffers of color out of the 297 top Senate staffers in personal offices is an issue, and the challenge is not a lack of qualified candidates. Lack of diversity is also a bipartisan problem in the Senate. Strong, highly-qualified people of color are more than capable of contributing substantially in these positions. It is incumbent upon all Senators to prioritize staff diversity. A diverse staff provides the opportunity for not only descriptive, but also substantive representation--bringing more inclusive and representative voices to the decision-making table.”

Arturo Vargas, Executive Director of the National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund

“The U.S. Senators-elect have a singular opportunity to bring a measure of diversity to the U.S. Senate workforce by filling their top staff positions with candidates from the rich talent pool of highly qualified Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans and others who are ready for these positions. NALEO Educational Fund is helping to increase the pipeline of qualified Latinos and Latinas to work on the Hill to ensure that our community has a voice and role in the important policy making work of the U.S. Senate.”