

RACIAL DIVERSITY AMONG TOP SENATE STAFF

This report is critical to understanding diversity among top staff in the U.S. Senate, including chiefs of staff, legislative directors, and communications directors in Washington, DC personal offices of U.S. Senators, as well as staff directors assigned to committees. Data reflect Senate employment in April 2015.

The report was written by James R. Jones, a sociology PhD candidate at Columbia University. Read the full 31-page report at JointCenter.org.

Key findings show:

- **Although people of color make up over 36 percent of the U.S. population and over 28 percent of the citizen voting-age population, they represent only 7.1 percent of top Senate staffers.** Of the 336 top Senate staffers, our analysis finds evidence of only 24 staffers of color (12 Asian-Americans, 7 Latinos, 3 African-Americans, and 2 Native-Americans). African-Americans make up 13 percent of the U.S. population but only 0.9 percent of top Senate staffers, and Latinos make up over 16 percent of the U.S. population but only 2.1 percent of top Senate staffers.
- **Senate offices representing states with large Hispanic and African-American populations hire few senior staffers of color.** Latinos make up from 15 to 46 percent of the population in ten states (AZ, CA, CO, FL, IL, NJ, NM, NV, NY, and TX), yet hold only 8.5 percent of the available top staff positions in these states' U.S. Senate offices (five positions in AZ, FL, and NM). African-Americans represent from 17 to almost 38 percent of the population in ten states (AL, DE, GA, LA, MD, MS, NC, SC, TN, and VA), yet hold only 1.7 percent of the total top staff positions in these states' U.S. Senate offices (one position in SC).

- **Top Democratic Senate staff members are much less diverse than the Democratic voting base.** While those who self-identified as Democrats nationwide were 22 percent African-American and 13 percent Latino, top Democratic U.S. Senate staff as a group is 0.7 percent African-American and 2.0 percent Latino. There is no African-American chief of staff, legislative director, or communications director in the Washington, DC personal office of any Democratic Senator.

- **Senators should take several steps to increase diversity:**
 - be more transparent about who works in each office
 - 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 GW the 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

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