

Organizations Concerned About Racial Diversity Among Top Senate Staff

November 18, 2016

Incoming U.S. Senators
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Racial Diversity Among Your Top Staff

Dear Senators-Elect Cortez Masto, Duckworth, Harris, Hassan, Van Hollen, and Young:

Congratulations to you all on your victories in last week's election. As each of you put together your staff, it is critical to do so with a recognition of the profound lack of racial diversity that currently exists among staff in the U.S. Senate, and to take an approach that embraces inclusiveness. One clear factor that drives the lack of diversity is that people of color are not in applicant pools and tend not to be interviewed for top positions.

We are writing to ask that each of you interview at least one person of color for all of the top staff positions in your Washington, DC office, and that each of you ultimately hire a person of color for at least one of these positions. For the positions in your personal offices, we identify top staff positions as Chief of Staff, Legislative Director, and Communications Director.

Collectively, we represent 52 organizations of color from around the nation, and many of us have branches in your states. One key goal we share is to increase racial diversity among top Senate staff.

As you know, top Senate staff positions are important to all Americans. Top staffers provide political and policy expertise, develop legislation, act as surrogates for Members, run offices, and hire, manage, and dismiss employees. While Senators make the final decisions, top Senate staff possess significant influence in shaping the legislative process and oversight of federal components that have over four million civilian and military personnel and budgets totaling over \$3.5 trillion. Top Senate staff positions are also important because the Senate has several unique responsibilities, including the confirmation of federal judges, cabinet secretaries, ambassadors, and many other top federal agency officials.

Historically, diversity among top Senate staff has been a challenge for both Democrats and Republicans. **While people of color account for over 36 percent of the population of the United States, these groups represent only 7.1 percent of top Senate staff.**

	Black	Latino	AAPI	Native Am.
U.S. Population	13.3%	17.6%	5.8%	1.2%
Top Senate Staff in Personal Offices	0.7%	2.3%	3.7%	0.3%

For more details, see the 31-page December 2015 report by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, [*Racial Diversity Among Top Senate Staff*](#).

As a new Member of the U.S. Senate, you have a unique opportunity to dramatically increase diversity among top staff. Hiring just one African American top staffer, for example, would increase African American personal office top staff representation by 50 percent over 2015 levels. Many of you enjoy significant racial diversity in your states (chart below). Ensuring racial diversity among your top staffers in Washington, DC would enhance the deliberation, innovation, legitimacy, and outcomes of your office and of the Senate as a whole.

State	Name	Black Pop.	Latino Pop.	AAPI Pop.	Native Am. Pop	People of Color
California	Kamala Harris (D)	6.5%	38.8%	15.2%	1.7%	62.2%
Illinois	Tammy Duckworth (D)	14.7%	16.9%	5.6%	0.6%	37.8%
Indiana	Todd Young (R)	9.6%	6.7%	2.2%	0.4%	18.9%
Maryland	Chris Van Hollen (D)	30.5%	9.5%	6.6%	0.6%	47.2%
Nevada	Catherine Cortez Masto (D)	9.3%	28.1%	9.3%	1.6%	48.3%
New Hampshire	Maggie Hassan (D)	1.5%	3.4%	2.6%	0.3%	7.8%

The lack of diversity among top Senate staff is not caused by a complete absence of strong candidates of color. Several groups—including those comprised of current and former U.S. Senate staffers—have compiled files of resumes of strong candidates of color for top positions. We are happy to share this information with you, and also meet with you to discuss best practices for identifying and attracting strong candidates of color.

Regards,

American Association of Blacks in Energy

Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum

Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC

Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIA Vote)

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance & Institute for Asian Pacific American Leadership & Advancement

Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)

BPSOS

Center for APA Women

Color Of Change

Congressional Black Caucus Foundation

Financial Services Professionals

Hmong American Partnership

Hmong National Development

IMPACT

Inclusv

Japanese American Citizens League

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

Khmer Girls in Action

Laotian American National Alliance

Latino Victory Foundation

Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc. (LEAP)

League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)

NAACP

National Action Network

National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association

National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)

National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum

National Association of Investment Companies

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)

National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development

National Coalition on Black Civic Participation

National Congress of American Indians

National Congress of Black Women, Inc.

National Congress of Black Women, Los Angeles Chapter

National Congress of Black Women, Metro Chicago Chapter

National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)

National Council of La Raza (NCLR)

National Federation of Filipino American Associations

National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)

National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA)

National Urban League

National Council of Asian Pacific Islander Physicians

OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates

OCA Greater Houston

Rainbow PUSH Coalition

SALDEF

South Asian Bar Association of North America

South Asian Fund For Education, Scholarship & Training (SAFEST)

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)