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RACIAL DIVERSITY AMONG TOP STAFF OF THE DELAWARE CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

Karra W. McCray
Donald Bell
Spencer Overton

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Executive Summary

This report examines the racial diversity among the 10 top staffers of the U.S. House and U.S. Senate Members who represent Delaware. This report defines top staff (or “key” or “senior” staff) to include: chiefs of staff, legislative directors, and communications directors in Washington, D.C. personal offices; and staff directors assigned to full committees. The data reflect employment on June 1, 2018. Key findings show:

- People of color account for over a third of Delaware’s population (36.4 percent), but they account for just 20 percent of the top staffers who work for the U.S. House and U.S. Senate Members who represent Delaware.
- No top staffers of color work for Delaware’s two U.S. Senators. The Delaware congressional delegation’s two top staffers of color both work for U.S. House Member Lisa Blunt Rochester.
- African Americans accounted for 34 percent of the Democratic Party’s voters in Delaware in 2016, but they account for none of the seven top staffers who work for Delaware’s Democratic U.S. Senators.
- Mid-level staff positions are important “feeder” positions for top staff positions, and a diverse mid-level staff could signal a commitment to a diverse top staff in the future. Unfortunately, African Americans make up only 8.3 percent of Senator Carper’s mid-level staff and only 6.3 percent of Senator Coons’s mid-level staff.
- Three of Senator Carper’s four top staffers are women. Congresswoman Blunt Rochester employs the Delaware delegation’s only top staffer who is a woman of color. None of Senator Coons’s three top staffers are women.

Table 1: Top Staff Diversity in Washington, D.C. Personal and Full Committee Offices of Delaware U.S. House & Senate Members (in percentages and raw numbers)

Race	Percentage of Delaware Population	Percentage of Top U.S. House & Senate Staff	Number of Top U.S. House & Senate Staff
White	61.6	80	8
African American	21.1	10	1
Latina/o	8.6	0	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	3.6	10	1
Native American	0.4	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	2.7	0	0
TOTAL	98.0	100	10

Note: 2.1 percent of Delaware's population is listed as "some other race alone" according to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Introduction

This study analyzes the racial diversity of top staff in Washington, D.C. who work for the U.S. House Members and U.S. Senators who represent Delaware.

Hiring top staffers of color is not an act of charity. It is the right thing to do, and it results in better public policy. Diverse top staffers allow a Member to understand her or his constituents and effectively represent them in Congress. Economic and sociological studies demonstrate that diverse work teams lead to greater productivity, help organizations establish trust with their clients, and help organizations make more innovative decisions.¹ Diversity among top staff would also facilitate diversity in other sectors in Delaware and elsewhere, because top staff positions are pathways to other high-ranking positions in government, the private sector, and the nonprofit sector.

Unfortunately, although people of color account for 36.4 percent of Delaware’s population,² they account for just 20 percent of the top staff of the Delaware congressional delegation. Delaware’s two U.S. Senators have no top staff of color.

The Positions Analyzed in This Report

Members in both the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate each have a “personal office” in Washington, D.C. that helps them represent their state or district, and most Members have three top positions in their personal offices: chief of staff, legislative director, and communications director. In addition, Members serve on committees and oversee committee staff. Each full committee is led by a Chair who is a Member of the majority party, and most committees have a majority staff director who works under the Chair. The minority party’s committee Members are led by a Ranking Member, who generally oversees a minority staff director.

Like the Joint Center’s previous studies, this report focuses on full committee staff directors and the top three personal office positions: chief of staff, legislative director, and communications director. The structure of each office varies, but these positions are the most consistent throughout each office, and they provide a comprehensive assessment of top staff diversity.

Persons holding these positions are invested with hiring and firing powers and are given immense latitude in legislative and policy development. Collectively, these top staff manage a federal budget of over \$4 trillion and provide oversight of hundreds of government agencies with over 3 million civilian and military employees. Top staff often are the public face of the office, meeting with Members, staffers, lobbyists, constituents, the media, and members of the public. Top staff in the U.S. Senate also manage the confirmation process for commissioners, judges, ambassadors, and other appointees.

While some Members deem their state directors and district directors as top staff, this report focuses on top staff diversity in Washington, D.C. offices. Top staff in Washington, D.C. are often less visible to constituents in Delaware than state staff. In addition, top staff in Washington, D.C. often engage more directly with other congressional offices nationwide in negotiating federal legislation, appropriations, agency oversight, and the confirmation process. Recognizing that in some offices the state director is a “feeder” position to becoming chief of staff, this report analyzes the diversity of state directors along with U.S. Senate mid-level positions in Table 6 below.

Even though this report focuses on top staff in both chambers and contains a section on mid-level “feeder” positions in the U.S. Senate (see “The Pipeline: Racial Diversity Among Mid-Level Senate Staff”), people of color are employed in other positions that make significant contributions to congressional offices. This report, however, highlights a crucial issue—that few people of color hold senior-level positions. While there may be influential individual staffers of color who are not calculated in the data because their titles are not included in our analysis, this fact should not deflect from the larger insight that the top staff positions examined in this report do not reflect the racial diversity of Delaware, particularly in the Senate. This is a structural challenge for Congress as a whole, rather than a problem attributable to a single Member or a single political party.

Methodology

The Census Bureau defines *race* as a person’s self-identification with one or more social groups. This report contains five racial categories: White, African American, Latina/o, Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI), and Native American. The terms *African American* and *Black* are used interchangeably throughout the report. The report also includes a category for staffers who identify as biracial or multiracial to ensure that each individual is accurately represented.

To identify staff initially, the authors used LegiStorm, a database that contains the most comprehensive and accurate biographical and contact data for each Member and congressional staffer. Data reflect employment in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate on June 1, 2018.

To initially identify the race of each staffer, the authors used photographs from LegiStorm and visited social networking sites—such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter—listed for each staffer. The authors also reviewed Roll Call, constituent photographs, news clippings, and press releases. LegiStorm’s database includes the gender of each staffer.

Researchers emailed the data that the authors collected to staffers in each personal and committee office to provide an opportunity for the offices to correct any errors. The email listed all identified top staff of color by name and position in the office (or indicated that the data showed that the office had no top staff of color). The email asked the recipients to reply and correct any errors. Offices that did not respond were emailed at least two more times and given an opportunity to correct the data. Emails sent to the U.S. Senate also included data on mid-level “feeder” positions (defined below in the section entitled “The Pipeline: Racial Diversity Among Mid-Level Senate Staff”).

The authors provided additional opportunities to congressional staffers to correct the data. In the U.S. Senate, for example, a paper letter was hand delivered to each office providing an opportunity to reply. Also, the Asian American Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, and Native American staff associations sent relevant parts of the data to their members who work as staffers in the Senate. For example, the Senate Black Legislative Staff Caucus sent data on Black top and mid-level staff to their members who work in the Senate and asked whether anyone was missing. In the U.S. House, the authors took additional steps, which are outlined in the Joint Center’s September report *Diversity Among Top U.S. House Staff*.³

Due to rounding, total percentages presented throughout this document may not add up to 100 percent precisely.

Personal & Full Committee Office Diversity

This section analyzes each of the top staffers who work for Delaware congressional Members in Washington, D.C. personal offices (chief of staff, legislative director, and communications director) and full committees (staff director).

Senator Carper is the Ranking Member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, and oversees the minority staff director of the committee. Senator Coons is Vice Chair of the Senate Ethics Committee, but the committee is bipartisan and he does not oversee a minority staff director.

Of the 10 staffers who serve as full committee staff directors and personal office chiefs of staff, legislative directors, and communications directors for the U.S. House and U.S. Senate Members representing Delaware, two are people of color (20 percent). One is African American and one is Asian American/Pacific Islander. This is less than the 36.4 percent of Delaware’s population who identify as people of color.

Table 2: Top Staff Diversity in Washington, D.C. Personal and Full Committee Offices of Delaware U.S. House & Senate Members by Position (in raw numbers)

Race	Chief of Staff	Legislative Director	Communications Director	Staff Director
White	2	2	3	1
African American	0	1	0	0
Latina/o	0	0	0	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	1	0	0	0
Native American	0	0	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	3	3	3	1

House vs. Senate Top Staff Diversity

Delaware has greater diversity than the most states among top staff in the U.S. House, but less diversity among its U.S. Senate top staff. In Delaware, people of color account for 36.4 percent of the state’s population, 66.7 percent of the U.S. House top staff, and none of the top staff of the state’s U.S. Senate Members. The Joint Center’s 2015 Senate and 2018 House reports found that nationwide, people of color accounted for 38 percent of the population, 13.7 percent of top U.S. House staff, and 7.1 percent of top U.S. Senate staff.⁴

Table 3: Racial Representation of Delaware U.S. House Top Staff and Delaware U.S. Senate Top Staff (in percentages)

Race	Delaware Population	Delaware U.S. House Top Staff	Delaware U.S. Senate Top Staff
White	61.6	33.3	100
African American	21.1	33.3	0
Latina/o	8.6	0	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	3.6	33.3	0
Native American	0.4	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	2.7	0	0
TOTAL	98.0	99.9	100

Note: 2.1 percent of Delaware's population is listed as “some other race alone” according to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Race and Political Party Turnout

All three members of the Delaware congressional delegation are Democrats, and all three run for office in statewide elections.

While African Americans made up 34 percent of the total Democratic Party turnout in Delaware in 2016, they held only 10 percent of the 10 top staff positions in the Delaware congressional delegation, and none (0 percent) of the 7 top staff positions in the U.S. Senate.⁵

Table 4: Racial Representation of Top U.S. House and U.S. Senate Top Staff Compared with Delaware Party 2016 Turnout (in percentages)

Race	% of Total Democratic Party Turnout in Delaware in 2016	% of Delaware Democratic U.S. Senate & House Top Staff
White	60	80
African American	34	10
Latina/o	4	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	2	10
Native American	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	0	0
TOTAL	100	100

Note: Percentage of Party Turnout in Delaware in 2016 data was provided by [BlueLabs](#), an analytics and technology company.

Racial Diversity Among Top Staff

Table 5 details the racial demographics of the area represented by each Member of the Delaware delegation (the entire state) and the top staff who work for each Member.⁶ In the Joint Center’s 2018 report, *Racial Diversity Among Top U.S. House Staff*, we recognized Rep. Blunt Rochester for having diverse top staff. Senators Carper and Coons were not among the Senators recognized as having a top staffer of color in our 2015 Senate Top Staff Diversity Report, and our 2018 research also found they had no top staffer of color.

Table 5: Comparison of Top Staff to Population Represented by Member (in percentages)

Member	District	% Non-White Residents	% Non-White Top Staff
Sen. Carper-D	Statewide	36.4	0
Sen. Coons-D	Statewide	36.4	0
Rep. Blunt Rochester-D	Statewide (at-large)	36.4	66.6

The Pipeline: Racial Diversity Among Mid-Level Senate Staff

The diversity of mid-level “feeder” staff positions provide one indicator to predict future diversity among top staff. An examination of current mid-level staff provides a rough snapshot of part of the pool of talent that is currently gaining the relevant experiences and developing the relationships needed for promotion to top staff in the future.

The data in Table 6 reflect the racial diversity of staff in significant mid-level administrative, policy, and communications positions who work for U.S. Senators Tom Carper and Chris Coons. Senator Carper oversees mid-level committee staff in his roles as the Ranking Member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, and as Ranking Member of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. Senator Coons oversees mid-level committee staff in his roles as the Ranking Member of the Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and as Ranking Member of the Privacy, Technology, and the Law Subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

For the purposes of Table 6, “mid-level” positions include:

- Staff in the Washington, D.C. personal offices with the following titles: deputy chief of staff, administrative director, deputy legislative director, legislative assistant or equivalent (e.g., counsel, senior counsel, general counsel, chief counsel, special counsel, policy advisor), deputy communications director, or press secretary.
- State director, because this position serves as a “feeder” position to chief of staff in some offices.
- Subcommittee staff directors and full committee or subcommittee staff who work under either Senator Carper or Senator Coons with the following titles: chief clerk, deputy chief clerk, deputy staff director, policy director, communications director, deputy communications director, general counsel, deputy general counsel, senior policy advisor, policy advisor, budget director, or professional staff member.

While Senators Carper and Coons may currently lack diverse top staff, a diverse mid-level staff could signal a commitment to diversity among top staff in the future. Unfortunately, the data do not indicate such a commitment. Even though African Americans make up 21.1 percent of Delaware’s total population and 34 percent of the total 2016 Delaware Democratic Party turnout, African Americans make up only 8.3 percent of Senator Carper’s mid-level staff and 6.3 percent of Senator Coons’s mid-level staff.

According to the Senate Democratic Diversity Initiative, 46 percent of Senator Carper’s total staff and 21 percent of Senator Coons’s total staff are people of color.⁷ The relatively low diversity among mid-level staff and the complete absence of diversity among top staff suggest that Delaware U.S. Senate staff of color are concentrated in lower level positions and outside of Washington, D.C.

Table 6: The Pipeline: Racial Representation of Delaware U.S. Senate Mid-Level Staff (in raw numbers and percentages)

Race	Sen. Carper Raw Number	Sen. Carper Percentage	Sen. Coons Raw Number	Sen. Coons Percentage
White	19	79.2	15	93.7
African American	2	8.3	1	6.3
Latina/o	1	4.2	0	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	2	8.3	0	0
Native American	0	0	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	24	100	16	100

Gender Among Top Staff

While Delaware’s U.S. House Member has much more racial diversity among top staff than the U.S. Senators, Delaware’s U.S. Senate delegation has more gender diversity due to U.S. Senator Tom Carper. Of Senator Carper’s four top staffers, three are women. None of U.S. Senator Coons’s three top staffers are women. Congresswoman Blunt Rochester employs the Delaware delegation’s only top staffer who is a woman of color.

Table 7: Gender Breakdown among Top Staff of Delaware Congressional Delegation by Race (in percentages)

Race	Women	Men
White	37.5	62.5
African American	100	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	0	100

Table 8: Percentage of Top Staff of U.S. House and Senate Members from Delaware Who Are Women

Delaware Delegation	Women Top Staffers
U.S. House & Senate combined	40
U.S. House Only	33.3
U.S. Senate Only	42.9

Recommendations

No single solution to the lack of racial diversity among top staff of Delaware’s congressional delegation is sufficient. Change requires a clear commitment, strategic implementation, and monitoring of progress by Members. Individual U.S. House and U.S. Senate Members can take several steps to improve and maintain diversity in their offices:

- **Develop a written office diversity plan**, just as an office develops its own budget. The plan should include recruitment and hiring goals, as well as strategies that will be employed to retain people of color once they are hired. Existing staff should be tasked with implementing the plan, and Members should monitor and evaluate the performance of individual staff members and the office as a whole.
- **Track and annually disclose staff office demographic data.** It is difficult to fix a problem that goes unmeasured. Congress requires this disclosure from many federal agencies, government contractors, and other work organizations. Members of Congress should measure this same data and disclose it to their constituents.⁸
- **Adopt a version of the National Football League’s “Rooney Rule,”** which requires that the office interview at least one candidate of color for each vacant senior position.
- **Recruit diverse interns from Delaware, and pay them.** Unpaid internships often limit internship opportunities to young people from affluent families, and that creates a pool of talent for entry-level positions that does not reflect the diversity of Delaware. This entry-level pool eventually shapes the talent pool for mid-level and top staff positions. Members should also recruit interns and fellows from the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS), the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF), INSIGHT America, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI), the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute (CHLI), and the GW Native American Political Leadership Program (NAPLP).
- **Build a diverse pipeline of mid-level staff.** Ensure robust diversity among legislative assistants, counsel, press secretaries, and other mid-level positions. Provide regular feedback and opportunities for growth. A diverse mid-level staff increases the probability of diverse top staff in the future.

- **Consult with colleagues who have diverse staffs and with staff associations of color** for ideas on recruitment and retention. Many congressional staff associations of color already have informal partnerships with offices and hiring managers in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate. Formalize these relationships and create an integrated database of candidates for staff positions.
- **Obtain unconscious bias training** for the Member, the chief of staff, and all managerial staff involved in recruitment, hiring, evaluation, and retention.

About the Authors

Karra W. McCray is a recent Master's graduate of Howard University. She earned a Political Science degree with concentrations in Black Politics and American Government. Her research interests include the study of the use of crime as an electoral weapon among candidates and the study of voter disenfranchisement among Black voters. Karra has also worked as a Legislative Aide for the South Carolina House of Representatives. She received her undergraduate degree in Political Science and English from the University of South Carolina.

Don Bell is the Director of the Black Talent Initiative at the Joint Center. Prior to this position, Don worked as a legal fellow to Senator Chris Murphy, judiciary staffer to Senator Richard Blumenthal, and associate counsel and then counsel to the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Don also served as President of the Senate Black Legislative Staff Caucus (SBLSC). During his term, he conducted a groundbreaking census of Black Senate staffers that inspired a movement toward greater diversity and inclusion in policy making on Capitol Hill. Don received his B.A. and law degree from the University of Connecticut.

Spencer Overton is the President of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. Spencer is also a tenured Professor of Law at George Washington University, and he has written a book and several other publications on race and equity. Spencer led several projects on the 2008 Obama presidential campaign and transition team, and during the Administration he served as Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General of Legal Policy at the Department of Justice. He clerked for U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Damon J. Keith of the Sixth Circuit, and graduated with honors from both Hampton University and Harvard Law School. Spencer's fourth great-grandfather Abraham Doras Shadd, a Delaware native, was a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad in Wilmington and would later become the first Black person to hold public office in Canada.

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¹ Page, Scott E. 2008. *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Levine, Sheen S., Evan P. Apfelbaum, Mark Bernard, Valerie L. Bartelt, Edward J. Zajac, and David Stark. 2014. "Ethnic Diversity Deflates Price Bubbles." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 111(52):18524-29.

² U.S. Census Bureau. n.d. "ACS 2012-2016 Five Year Estimates" https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_16_5YR_DP05&src=pt

³ Scott, Elsie L., Karra W. McCray, Donald Bell, and Spencer Overton. 2018. *Diversity Among Top U.S. House Staff*. Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (see methodology on pages 7-10). The Delaware U.S. House top staff data in this report come from the Joint Center's *Diversity Among Top U.S. House Staff* report, and the Joint Center subsequently researched the Delaware U.S. Senate top and mid-level staff using a similar methodology tailored to the unique characteristics of the U.S. Senate.

⁴ Scott, Elsie L., Karra W. McCray, Donald Bell, and Spencer Overton. 2018. *Diversity Among Top U.S. House Staff*. Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies; Jones, James R. 2015. *Diversity Among Top Senate Staff*. Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

⁵ Percentage of party turnout data in Delaware in 2016 was provided by [BlueLabs](#), an analytics and technology company.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 American Community Survey Estimates for 115th Congress. <https://www.census.gov/mycd/>

⁷ Senate Democratic Diversity Initiative. "Diversity Among U.S. Senate Democratic Staff on June 30th, 2018." <https://www.democrats.senate.gov/about-senate-dems/diversity-initiative/democratic-staff-survey-results>

⁸ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. "EEO Reports / Surveys." <http://www.eeoc.gov/employers/reporting.cfm>

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Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies
info@jointcenter.org
www.jointcenter.org
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