



JOINT CENTER
FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STUDIES



**RACIAL DIVERSITY AMONG TOP STAFF OF THE
MARYLAND CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION**

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Introduction.....	4
Personal, Full Committee & Leadership Office Diversity.....	7
House vs. Senate Top Staff Diversity.....	9
Political Party Diversity.....	10
Racial Diversity Among Top Staff.....	12
The Pipeline: Racial Diversity Among Mid-Level Senate Staff.....	13
Gender Among Top Staff.....	15
Recommendations.....	16
About the Authors.....	18
Acknowledgments.....	19

Executive Summary

This report examines the racial diversity among the 29 top staffers of the U.S. House and U.S. Senate Members who represent Maryland. 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; staff directors assigned to full committees; and chiefs of staff, policy directors, and communications directors in the top four leadership offices of each political party in each chamber. The data reflect employment on June 1, 2018. Key findings show:

- People of color account for almost half of Maryland’s population (47.2 percent), but they account for less than 25 percent of the top staffers who work for the U.S. Senate and U.S. House Members who represent Maryland.
- African Americans accounted for 47 percent of the Democratic Party’s voters in Maryland in 2016, but they account for less than 15 percent of the top staffers who work for the Democratic Members of the Maryland delegation.
- In 2016, African Americans made up 66 percent of the Democratic Party’s voters in the district represented by Democratic Congressman Steny Hoyer and 53 percent of the Democratic Party’s voters in the district represented by Democratic Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger. None of the six top staff positions in the offices of these two Members are held by African Americans.
- None of the six top staffers who work for Maryland’s two Democratic Senators—Ben Cardin and Chris Van Hollen—are people of color.
- Mid-level staff positions are important “feeder” positions for top staff positions. Of the 28 mid-level staffers in U.S. Senate offices that represent Maryland, 10 are people of color (35.7 percent). Half of Senator Van Hollen’s mid-level staff are people of color, compared with 25 percent of Senator Cardin’s mid-level staff.
- African Americans account for less than 13 percent of Senator Cardin’s mid-level staff and less than 17 percent of Senator Van Hollen’s mid-level staff.
- People of color made up 11 percent of the Republican Party’s voters in Maryland in 2016, but they account for none of the Republican top staffers.
- Almost 52 percent of the Maryland delegation’s top staffers are women. Of women top staff, 20 percent are people of color.

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

Race	Percentage of Maryland Population	Percentage of Top U.S. House & Senate Staff	Number of Top U.S. House & Senate Staff
White	52.5	75.9	22
African American	29.2	13.8	4
Latina/o	9.2	0	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	6.0	10.3	3
Native American	0.2	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	2.6	0	0
TOTAL	99.7	100	29

Note: 0.3 percent of Maryland'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 Maryland.

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 Greater diversity among top staff would also facilitate diversity in other sectors in Maryland 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 47.2 percent of Maryland’s population,² they account for only 24.1 percent of the top staff of the Maryland congressional delegation.

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. Also, each political party in each chamber has leadership offices led by a Member (e.g., Speaker of the House, Democratic Leader, Democratic Whip), and key positions in these offices include chief of staff, policy director, and communications 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. Like the Joint Center’s report on Diversity Among Top U.S. House Staff, this report also focuses on three key leadership office positions: chief of staff, policy 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 they 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 advocacy organizations. 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 Maryland than state staff. In addition, top staff in Washington, D.C. often engage more directly with other congressional offices 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 7 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 title is 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 Maryland. This is a structural challenge for the entire Maryland delegation and the institution of 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 September 2018 Joint Center report *Diversity Among Top U.S. House Staff*.³

After this entire process, the researchers lacked racial information for 3 of the 57 top and mid-level staffers in Maryland (about 5 percent). For the purposes of calculating racial diversity, this report classifies these 3 staffers as White.

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

Personal, Full Committee & Leadership Office Diversity

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

One Member of the Maryland congressional delegation has a party leadership office with a chief of staff, policy director, and communications director. Congressman Steny Hoyer serves as Democratic Whip, the number two leadership role for Democrats in the House. Congressman Hoyer does not have a chief of staff, legislative director, or communications director in his personal office. Table 2 groups Congressman Hoyer’s leadership office chief of staff and communications director with the personal office chiefs of staff and communications directors of other Members of the Maryland delegation. Table 2 groups Congressman Hoyer’s leadership office policy director with the personal office legislative directors of other Members of the Maryland delegation.

Two Members of the Maryland congressional delegation have staff directors of full committees due to their leadership roles on committees. Congressman Elijah Cummings is Ranking Member of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, and Senator Ben Cardin is Ranking Member of the Senate Small Business & Entrepreneurship Committee.

Of the 29 staffers who serve as full committee staff directors, as top staffers in a party leadership office, and personal office chiefs of staff, legislative directors, and communications directors for the U.S. House and U.S. Senate Members representing Maryland, seven are people of color (24.1 percent). Although this percentage is higher than many other states, it is significantly less than the 47.2 percent of Maryland’s population who identify as people of color.

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

Race	Chief of Staff	Legislative Director	Communications Director	Staff Director
White	7	5	8	2
African American	2	1	1	0
Latina/o	0	0	0	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	0	2	1	0
Native American	0	0	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	9	8	10	2

House vs. Senate Top Staff Diversity

In both Maryland and nationwide, Black top staff in the U.S. House make up about half of their percentage of the overall population, and Black top staff are largely absent in the U.S. Senate. In Maryland, African Americans make up 29.2 percent of the population, 17.4 percent of the top U.S. House staff, and none of the top U.S. Senate staff. The Joint Center’s 2015 Senate and 2018 House reports found that nationwide, African Americans accounted for 12.3 percent of the population, 6.6 percent of the top U.S. House staff, and 0.9 percent of top U.S. Senate staff.⁴

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

Race	Maryland Population	Maryland U.S. House Top Staff	Maryland U.S. Senate Top Staff
White	52.5	69.6	100
African American	29.2	17.4	0
Latina/o	9.2	0	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	6.0	13	0
Native American	0.2	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	2.6	0	0
TOTAL	99.7	100	100

Note: 0.3 percent of Maryland's population is listed as “some other race alone” according to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Political Party Diversity

Of the 27 top staff in the Maryland Democratic congressional delegation, 20 top staffers are White, four are African American, and three are Asian American/Pacific Islander. The two top staffers for Maryland’s sole Republican Member are both White.

Table 4: Racial Representation of U.S. House and U.S. Senate Top Staff Representing Maryland by Political Party (in raw numbers)

Race	Republican	Democratic
White	2	20
African American	0	4
Latina/o	0	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	0	3
Native American	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	0	0
TOTAL	2	27

African Americans were the largest Democratic voting bloc in Maryland in 2016, making up 47 percent of the Democratic electorate.⁵ However, African Americans make up less than 15 percent of the top staff of the entire Maryland congressional delegation, and none (zero percent) of the six top staffers of U.S. Senators Van Hollen and Cardin.

African Americans also made up 66 percent of the 2016 Democratic turnout in the district represented by Congressman Steny Hoyer (D MD-5) and 53 percent of the 2016 Democratic turnout in the district represented by Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D MD-2). None of the 6 top staff positions in the offices of these two Members are held by African Americans. Congressmen Brown (D MD-4), Cummings (D MD-7), and Raskin (D MD-8) are the only Members of the ten-Member Maryland congressional delegation with at least one Black top staffer. These three Members account for 100 percent of the state’s Black top staff, even though collectively they represent only 51.2 percent of the state’s Black population.

Table 5: Racial Representation of Top U.S. House and U.S. Senate Staff Compared with Maryland Party 2016 Turnout (in percentages)

Race	% of Total Republican Party Turnout in Maryland in 2016	% of Maryland Republican U.S. House & Senate Top Staff	% of Total Democratic Party Turnout in Maryland in 2016	% of Maryland Democratic U.S. House & Senate Top Staff
White	89	100	46	74.1
African American	7	0	47	14.8
Latina/o	2	0	4	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	2	0	3	11.1
Native American	0	0	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

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

The heavy reliance of Democrats on Black votes may be a compelling reason to enhance top staff diversity among Democratic Members, but voting performance should not be an excuse for Maryland Republicans to disregard racial diversity or believe it is impossible to find top staff of color. The Joint Center’s 2015 report found that Republican U.S. Senators nationwide had more Black top staff than did Democratic U.S. Senators. In the U.S. House, White Republican Members have more chiefs of staff of color than do White Democrats, and Speaker Paul Ryan has a Black chief of staff of his leadership office.⁶

Racial Diversity Among Top Staff

Table 6 details the racial demographics of the area represented by each Member of the Maryland delegation and the top staff who work for each Member. Of the 114 U.S. House Members nationwide who have no top staff of color nationwide but represent a district with a population that is at least one-third people of color, two come from Maryland.⁷ Nine of 10 Members were elected by constituencies that are at least 39.9 percent people of color.

Table 6: Comparison of Top Staff to Population Represented by Member

Member	District	% Non-White Residents	% Non-White Top Staff
Rep. A. Brown-D	MD-4	73.6%	67%
Rep. Cummings-D	MD-7	67.2%	67%
Rep. Hoyer	MD-5	54.0%	0%
Rep. Ruppertsberger-D	MD-2	49.3%	33%
Sen.Cardin-D	Statewide	47.2%	0%
Sen. Van Hollen-D	Statewide	47.2%	0%
Rep. Delaney-D	MD-6	40.9%	33%
Rep. Sarbanes-D	MD-3	40.2%	0%
Rep. Raskin-D	MD-8	39.9%	33%
Rep. Harris-R	MD-1	20.0%	0%

The Pipeline: Racial Diversity Among Mid-Level Senate Staff

The diversity of mid-level “feeder” staff positions provides 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 7 reflect the racial diversity of staff in significant mid-level administrative, policy, and communications positions who work for U.S. Senators Ben Cardin and Chris Van Hollen. Senator Cardin oversees mid-level staff in his personal office and as Ranking Member of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee. Senator Van Hollen oversees mid-level staff in his personal office and has no committee or subcommittee staff.

Resource constraints limited the analysis of “feeder” positions to the two U.S. Senators, but future Joint Center research may include an analysis of feeder positions in the U.S. House.

For the purposes of Table 7, “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 Cardin or Senator Van Hollen 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.

Table 7: The Pipeline: Racial Representation of Maryland U.S. Senate Mid-Level Staff (in raw numbers and percentages)

Race	Sen. Cardin Raw Number	Sen. Cardin Percentage	Sen. Van Hollen Raw Number	Sen. Van Hollen Percentage
White	12	75	6	50
African American	2	12.5	2	16.7
Latina/o	0	0	2	16.7
Asian American/Pacific Islander	2	12.5	1	8.3
Native American	0	0	1	8.3
Bi/Multiracial	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	16	100	12	100

Gender Among Top Staff

Of the 29 top staffers who work for Members from Maryland, 15 are women. Twelve are White, two are African American, and one is Asian American/Pacific Islander. Among top staff that are men, ten are White, two are African American, and two are Asian American/Pacific Islander.

Table 8: Gender Breakdown among Top Staff of Maryland Congressional Delegation by Race (in percentages)

Race	Women	Men
White	54.5	45.5
African American	50	50
Asian American/ Pacific Islander	33	67

Table 9: Percentage and Raw Number of Top Staff of U.S. House and Senate Members from Maryland Who Are Women (percentages)

Maryland Members	Women Top Staffers
U.S. House & Senate Combined	51.7
U.S. House Only	47.8
U.S. Senate Only	66.7
Republicans	0
Democrats	55.6

Recommendations

No single solution to the lack of racial diversity among top staff of Maryland’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 an office interview at least one candidate of color for each vacant senior position.
- **Recruit diverse interns from Maryland, 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 Maryland. 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.

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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 Maryland U.S. House top staff data in this report comes from the Joint Center's *Diversity Among Top U.S. House Staff* report, and the Joint Center subsequently researched the Maryland 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 Maryland was provided by [BlueLabs](#), an analytics and technology company.

⁶ 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.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 American Community Survey Estimates for 115th Congress. <https://www.census.gov/mycd/>

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

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