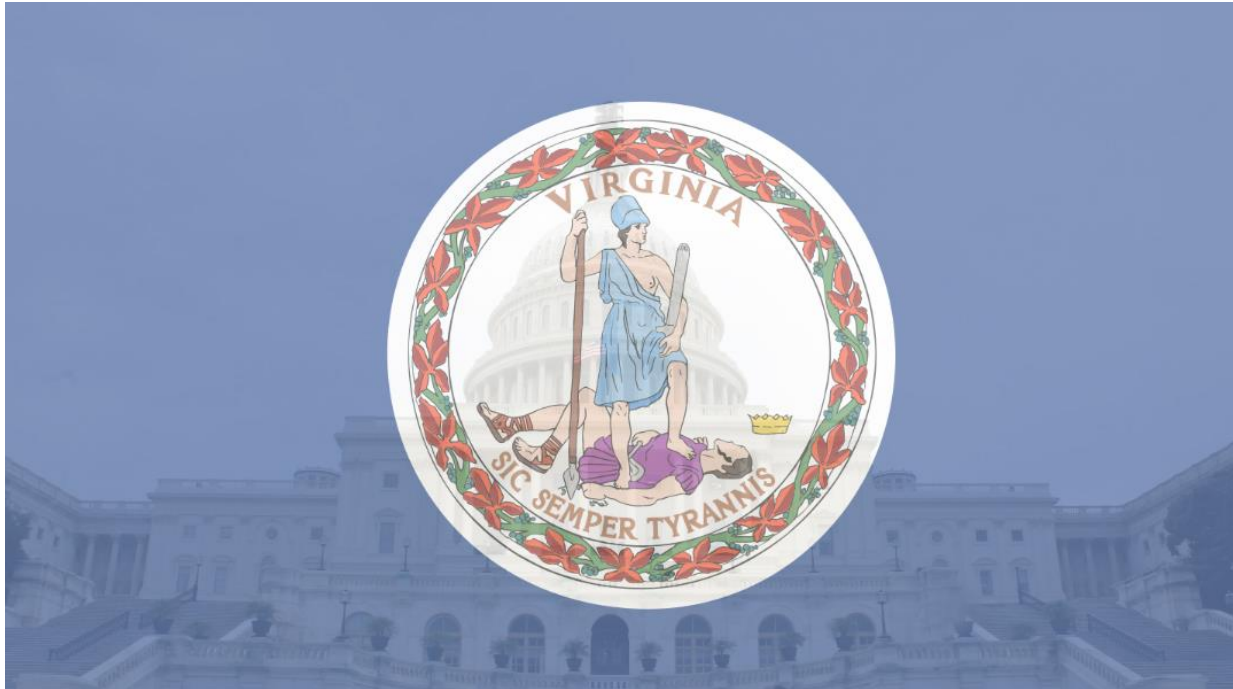




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RACIAL DIVERSITY AMONG TOP STAFF OF THE VIRGINIA CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

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Executive Summary

This report examines the racial diversity among the 38 top staffers of the U.S. House and U.S. Senate Members who represent Virginia. 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 Virginia’s population (36.7 percent), but they account for less than 14 percent of the top staffers who work for the U.S. House and U.S. Senate Members who represent Virginia.
- African Americans accounted for 37 percent of the Democratic Party’s voters in Virginia in 2016, but they only account for 22 percent of the top staffers who work for Virginia’s Democratic U.S. House Members.
- None of the six top staff who work for Virginia’s two Democratic U.S. Senators—Mark Warner and Tim Kaine—are people of color.
- Mid-level staff positions are important “feeder” positions for top staff positions. Of Senator Warner’s mid-level staff, 13 percent are African American. None of Senator Kaine’s 13 mid-level staffers are African American.
- Latina/os and Asian American/Pacific Islanders collectively accounted for 11 percent of the Democratic Party’s voters in Virginia in 2016 but none of the 18 top staffers who work for Virginia’s Democratic U.S. House Members.
- People of color accounted for 8 percent of the Republican Party’s voters in Virginia in 2016 and 5 percent of the top staffers who work for the Commonwealth’s Republican congressional delegation.
- Of the 13 elected Members of the Virginia delegation, just four have at least one top staffer of color. Most Virginians of color (52.3 percent) live in a district represented by a U.S. House Member without any top staffers of color. No White Virginians live in a district without a White top staffer.
- Just over 42 percent of top staff who work for the Virginia congressional delegation are women.

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

Race	Percentage of Virginia Population	Percentage of Top U.S. House & Senate Staff	Number of Top U.S. House & Senate Staff
White	63.1	86.8	33
African American	18.9	13.2	5
Latina/o	8.7	0	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	6.1	0	0
Native American	0.2	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	2.8	0	0
TOTAL	99.8	100	38

Note: 0.2 percent of Virginia'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 Virginia.

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 Virginia 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 36.7 percent of Virginia’s population,² only 5 out of 38 (13.2 percent) of the Virginia congressional delegation’s top staff are people 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 office personal 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 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 Virginia 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 Virginia. This is a structural challenge for the entire Virginia 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 (only one mid-level staffer from Virginia was on that list). In the U.S. House, the authors took additional steps, which are outlined in the Joint Center’s September 2018 report *Diversity Among Top U.S. House Staff*.³

After this entire process, the researchers lacked racial information for 1 of the 38 top and mid-level staffers in Virginia (2.6 percent). For the purposes of calculating racial diversity, this report classifies this staffer as White.

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 Virginia congressional Members in Washington, D.C. personal offices (chief of staff, legislative director, and communications director) and full committees (staff director).

Two Members of the Virginia congressional delegation oversee staff directors of full committees due to their leadership roles. Congressman Bob Goodlatte is Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, and Congressman Bobby Scott is Ranking Member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce. Senator Mark Warner is Vice Chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, but the committee is bipartisan and he does not oversee a minority staff director.

Of the 38 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 Virginia, five are people of color (13.2 percent). This is significantly less than the 36.7 percent of Virginia’s population who identify as people of color.

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

Race	Chief of Staff	Legislative Director	Communications Director	Staff Director
White	12	10	10	1
African American	1	2	1	1
Latina/o	0	0	0	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0
Native American	0	0	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	13	12	11	2

House vs. Senate Top Staff Diversity

The lack of diversity among top congressional staff is a problem in both Virginia and across the nation. In Virginia, people of color make up 36.7 percent of the population, 15.6 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, 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 Virginia U.S. House Top Staff and Virginia U.S. Senate Top Staff (in percentages)

Race	Virginia Population	Virginia U.S. House Top Staff	Virginia U.S. Senate Top Staff
White	63.1	84.4	100
African American	18.9	15.6	0
Latina/o	8.7	0	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	6.1	0	0
Native American	0.2	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	2.8	0	0
TOTAL	99.8	100	100

Note: 0.2 percent of Virginia'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 38 top staff in the Virginia congressional delegation in June 2018, 20 work for Republicans, and one of these is a person of color. Of the 18 top staff who work for Democrats, four are people of color.

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

Race	Republican	Democratic
White	19	14
African American	1	4
Latina/o	0	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	0	0
Native American	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	0	0
TOTAL	20	18

African Americans made up 37 percent of the total Democratic Party turnout in Virginia in 2016, but accounted for only 22 percent of the top staffers who work for Virginia’s Democratic U.S. House Members. None of the 6 top staff who work for Virginia’s two Democratic U.S. Senators—Mark Warner and Tim Kaine—are African American.

Latina/os and Asian American/Pacific Islanders accounted for 11 percent of the total Democratic Party turnout in Virginia in 2016, but accounted for none of the top staffers who work for Virginia’s Democratic U.S. House or U.S. Senate Members.

People of color accounted for 8 percent of the Republican Party’s voters in Virginia in 2016, and 5 percent of the top staffers who work for the Commonwealth’s Republican congressional delegation.

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

Race	% of Total Republican Party Turnout in Virginia in 2016	% of Virginia Republican U.S. House & Senate Top Staff	% of Total Democratic Party Turnout in Virginia in 2016	% of Virginia Democratic U.S. House & Senate Top Staff
White	91	95	52	77.8
African American	6	5	37	22.2
Latina/o	1	0	6	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	1	0	5	0
Native American	0	0	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	99	100	100	100

Note: Percentage of Party Turnout in Virginia 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 Republican Members in Virginia to disregard racial diversity or believe it is impossible to find top staff of color, especially considering how closely contested many districts are. 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.⁵

Racial Diversity Among Top Staff

Table 6 details the racial demographics of the area represented by each Member of the Virginia delegation and the top staff who work for each Member. Only four of Virginia’s 13 Members have at least one top staffer of color, even though these four Members represent a minority of Virginians of color.⁶ Most Virginians of color (52.3 percent) live in a district represented by a U.S. House Member without any top staffers of color. No White Virginians live in a district without a White top staffer. Of the 114 U.S. House Members nationwide who have no top staff of color and represent districts with populations of over 33 percent of color, three come from Virginia.

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

Member	District	% Non-White Residents	% Non-White Top Staff
Rep. B. Scott-D	VA-3	68.2%	50%
Rep. Connolly-D	VA-11	54.1%	0%
Rep. Beyer-D	VA-8	48.5%	33%
Rep. McEachin-D	VA-4	41.60%	67%
Rep. Taylor-R	VA-2	38.7%	33%
Rep. Comstock-R	VA-10	38.3%	0%
Sen. Kaine-D	Statewide	36.7%	0%
Sen. Warner-D	Statewide	36.7%	0%
Rep. Wittman-R	VA-1	33.7%	0%
Rep. Brat-R	VA-7	29.3%	0%
Rep. Garrett-R	VA-5	26.8%	0%
Rep. Goodlatte-R	VA-6	20.4%	0%
Rep. Griffith-R	VA-9	10.8%	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 Tim Kaine and Mark Warner. Senator Kaine oversees mid-level staff in his personal office and as Ranking Member of Readiness and Management Support Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Senator Warner oversees mid-level staff in his personal office and as Vice Chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. In addition, Senator Warner oversees mid-level staff as Ranking Member of the Securities, Insurance, and Investment Subcommittee of the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee.

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 Kaine or Senator Warner 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 Virginia U.S. Senate Mid-Level Staff (in raw numbers and percentages)

Race	Sen. Kaine Raw Number	Sen. Kaine Percentage	Sen. Warner Raw Number	Sen. Warner Percentage
White	10	76.9	9	60
African American	0	0	2	13.3
Latina/o	1	7.7	4	26.7
Asian American/Pacific Islander	2	15.4	0	0
Native American	0	0	0	0
Bi/Multiracial	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	13	100	15	100

Gender Among Top Staff

Of the 38 top staffers who work for Members from Virginia, 16 are women. Thirteen are White and three are African American. Among top staff that are men, twenty are White and two are African American.

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

Race	Women	Men
White	36.4	63.6
African American	60	40

Table 9: Percentage of Top Staff of U.S. House and Senate Members from Virginia Who Are Women

Virginia Members	Women Top Staffers
U.S. House & Senate Combined	42.1
U.S. House Only	37.5
U.S. Senate Only	66.7
Republicans	35
Democrats	50

Recommendations

No single solution to the lack of racial diversity among top staff of Virginia’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.⁷
- **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 Virginia, 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 Virginia. 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 Virginia 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 Virginia 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 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.

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

⁷ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. "EEO Reports / Surveys." <http://www.eeoc.gov/employers/reporting.cfm>

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