



December 10, 2018

The Honorable Barbara Lee
Co-Chair-Designate
Democratic Steering and Policy Committee
United States House of Representatives
2267 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Considering Top and Key Mid-Level Staff Diversity of Members' Offices in Making Committee Appointments

Dear Representative Lee:

As one of the leaders of the group that will nominate Members to Chair particular committees and assign Members to serve on particular committees, you have an immediate opportunity to emphasize the importance of top staff diversity in Congress.

We ask that you make the diversity of a Member's staff a factor in deciding whether to assign a Member to serve on a particular committee, and whether to nominate a Member to Chair a particular committee. To do this, we urge you to assess the diversity of Members' top staff (e.g., chief of staff, legislative director, and communications director) and key mid-level staff that are in "feeder" positions for top positions (e.g., deputy chief of staff, deputy legislative director, deputy communications director, district director, legislative assistant, counsel, policy advisor, press secretary, and administrative director).

If the Member was a Ranking Member of a committee in the 115th Congress, we also ask you to factor in the diversity of the Ranking Member's committee staff who are in the positions of staff director, deputy staff director, chief clerk, deputy chief clerk, policy director, communications director, deputy communications director, general counsel, deputy general counsel, counsel, senior policy advisor, policy advisor, budget director, and professional staff member.

As you know, the Joint Center's September 2018 report, [*Racial Diversity Among U.S. Top House Staff*](#), revealed various details about the diversity of staffs as of June 1, 2018, including:

- Although people of color accounted for 43 percent of Democratic registered voters, they only account for 24.7 percent of Democratic House top staff.
- Much of the House Democrats' top staff diversity comes from Congressional Black Caucus Members. Although the average White Democratic House Member represents a district that is over 37.4 percent people of color, people of color make up less than 8 percent of the staff who work for White Democratic Members in the positions of chief of staff, legislative



- director, and communications director. African Americans hold only 2.1 percent of these positions.
- White Republican House Members have 10 chiefs of staff of color, while White Democratic House Members have only 6 chiefs of color.
- House Democrats have no Latino/as or Asian American/Pacific Islanders who serve as full committee staff directors or as leadership office chiefs of staff, policy directors, or communications directors.

In the new Congress, senior and key mid-level staffers will help develop legislation, manage offices, hire employees, and work with elected Members to respond during times of crisis. These staffers will have significant influence in providing oversight of hundreds of administrative agencies that employ over three million civilian and military workers and a multi-trillion-dollar budget and appropriations process that affects every American.

Our data show that the lack of diversity among congressional staff is not only concerning, but widespread. Although numbers vary between state delegations, political parties, and Members, improvements can be made chamber-wide.

Using diversity data in committee assignment decision-making will have lasting effects chamber-wide. As a leader of the most racially diverse incoming House majority in American history, you are uniquely positioned to ensure that our most democratic branch of government is truly representative of our nation.

We urge you to take action and make diversity among top and key mid-level staff both **a priority and a reality**.

We look forward to working with you.

Regards,

Spencer Overton
President
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies