



December 10, 2018

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Leader Schumer:

Thank you for spearheading the Senate Democratic Diversity Initiative and making diversity a priority in the U.S. Senate.

As Senate Democratic Leader, you play a key role in the nomination and approval of Ranking Members and committee members to each of the standing committees of the United States Senate. These committees touch upon every aspect of American life and affect every American. We believe this is an opportunity to emphasize the importance of top staff diversity in Congress.

We ask that you make the diversity of a Senator's staff a factor as you work to ensure that all communities are represented by committees. To do this, we urge you to assess the diversity of a Senator's 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, state director, legislative assistant, counsel, policy advisor, press secretary, and administrative director).

If the Senator was a Ranking Member of a committee in the 115th Congress, we also ask you to factor in the diversity of the Senator'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 released a report on Senate top staff diversity in 2015, [*Racial Diversity Among Top Senate Staff*](#). The data revealed:

- People of color made up over 36 percent of the U.S. population, but only 7.1 percent of top Senate staffers.



- Top Democratic Senate staff members were much less diverse than the Democratic voting base.
- While those who self-identified as Democrats nationwide were 22 percent African-American and 13 percent Latino, top Democratic U.S. Senate staff as a group was 0.7 percent African-American and 2.0 percent Latino.
- There was no African American chief of staff, legislative director, or communications director in the Washington, DC personal office of any Democratic Senator.

Although recent statistics released by Senate Democrats have shown some improvement in the overall level of staff diversity, they have also illustrated that committee diversity has lagged significantly behind personal offices in many cases. Given the national scope of each committee's work, it is essential that committees reflect the diversity of the nation.

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.

Making diversity a factor in committee assignments can help change the face of congressional staff diversity and 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