

# The 2022 Future of Black Communities Summit

## Overview

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The **Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies**, America's Black think tank, provides compelling and actionable policy solutions to eradicate persistent and evolving barriers to the full freedom of Black people in America. Founded in 1970 to support newly-elected Black officials who were moving from civil rights activism into governance, we evolved to become the trusted forum for leading experts and scholars to participate in major public policy debates and promote ideas that advance Black communities. We use evidence-based research, analysis, convenings, and strategic communications to support Black communities and a network of allies.

We ground our work in high-quality research to foster the creation of public policies that explicitly incorporate principles of racial equity. This work takes three primary forms: scholarship, convenings, and community connections.

## The 2022 Summit

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The 2022 Future of Black Communities Summit is a one-day event dedicated to exploring the current challenges facing Black communities and proposing solutions for the future. The Joint Center has planned a day of dynamic and compelling conversations among some of our country's most noted non-profit, government, philanthropic, business, and academic leaders. The summit will include keynote speeches, fireside chats, and panel discussions on economic and other policy priorities in Black communities, ensuring states equitably deploy federal infrastructure resources in the Black Rural South, diversity among congressional staff and agency appointees, and corporate and philanthropic progress in fulfilling their racial equity commitments.



# The 2022 Future of Black Communities Summit

October 14, 2022  
**AGENDA**

**8–9 A.M. Registration & Breakfast**

**9–9:30 A.M. Welcome & Introductions**

**9:30 A.M.–12:00 P.M. Plenaries**

**Fireside Chat: 9:30–10 A.M.**

**Kristin Johnson**, Commissioner, U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission (Funding Black founders and Black investors in crypto)

**Fireside Chat: 10:05–10:35 A.M.**

**Alan Davidson**, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information and Administrator, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (Broadband deployment in the Black Rural South)

**Fireside Chat: 10:40–11 A.M.**

**Charlotte Burrows**, Chair, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (AI & discrimination in hiring and employment)

**Panel: 11:15 A.M. – 12 P.M.**

**Technology Policy Priorities for Black Communities**

**12–1:15 P.M. Networking Luncheon**

**Luncheon Speakers**

**Keynote Speaker: 12:25–12:40 P.M.**

**Reta Jo Lewis**, President and Chair of the Board of Directors, Export-Import Bank of the United States

**Fireside Chat: 12:45–1:10 P.M.**

**Don Graves**, Deputy Secretary, Commerce, U.S. Department of Commerce

**1:30–2:30 P.M. Breakout Session #1** (50-minute concurrent sessions)

Panel: **Economic Policy Priorities for Black Communities** (Room 1)

Panel: **Corporate Investments in Racial Equity** (Room 3)

**3–4 P.M. Breakout Session #2** (50-minute concurrent sessions)

Panel: **Prioritizing the Black Rural South** (Room 1)

Panel: **Philanthropic Investments in Racial Equity** (Room 2)

Panel: **Advancing Black Agency** (Room 3)

**4–5 P.M. Networking Reception**

Sponsored by  **Business Roundtable**

## Fireside Chats

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### 9:30 - 10 A.M.

**Kristin Johnson**, Commissioner, U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission (Funding Black founders and Black investors in crypto)

- **Moderator: Spencer Overton**, President, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

### 10:05 - 10:35 A.M.

**Alan Davidson**, Assistant Secretary, Commerce for Communications and Information, and Administrator, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (Broadband deployment in the Black Rural South)

- **Moderator: Joe Shepherd Miller**, Founder, President, Chief Executive Officer, and Founding Board Chair of the Washington Center for Technology Policy Inclusion (WashingTech)

### 10:40 - 11:10 A.M.

**Charlotte Burrows**, Chair, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (AI & discrimination in hiring and employment)

- **Moderator: April Ryan**, White House Correspondent and Washington, D.C. Bureau Chief, TheGrio

## Panels and Networking Luncheon

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### Technology Policy Priorities for Black Communities

#### 11:15 A.M. - 12 P.M.

*How do we ensure technology policies serve Black communities?*

Black communities confront an emerging set of tech policy issues, such as discriminatory ad targeting, online disinformation and hate that prompts real life harms such as voter suppression and violence, the misuse of data in employment and lending, and lack of access to broadband. This panel will explore potential tech policy solutions.

*Opening Remarks – Geoffrey Starks, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission*

#### **Panelists:**

**Chanelle Hardy**, Head of Civil Rights, Google

**Yvette Badu-Nimako**, Vice President, Policy/Civil Rights, National Urban League

**Steve Newell**, Assistant Director, Innovation and Equity, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy

**Damon Hewitt**, President and Executive Director, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

- **Moderator: Patrick Lucas Austin**, Editor, IT Brew

## Corporate Investments in Racial Equity

**1:30 - 2:30 P.M.**

*Which companies are fulfilling their commitments to racial equity?*

Many corporations made specific commitments to advance racial justice following the murder of George Floyd in 2020. Was this commitment a moment or a movement? Which companies have made significant progress, and which have fallen short? How can allies within companies help move their institutions toward fulfilling commitments and effectively investing in Black communities?

### **Panelists:**

**Tia Hodges**, President and CEO, MetLife Foundation

**Monique Baptiste**, Vice President of Global Philanthropy, Chase

**Cadene Russell Brooks**, Counsel, WilmerHale

**Jonay Foster Holkins**, Senior Director, Policy, Business Roundtable

**Fabrice Coles**, Senior Manager of Global Public Policy, PayPal

- **Moderator: Gail Coles Johnson**, VP and Chief Human Resources Officer, Executive Leadership Council

## Economic Policy Priorities for Black Communities

**1:30 - 2:30 P.M.**

*How do we ensure economic policies serve Black communities?*

As our economy recovers from the pandemic and grapples with inflation, Black communities face economic crises on various fronts — including a persistent lack of access to good jobs and workforce training; resources to grow businesses and wealth; and equitable tax policy. This panel will explore potential economic policy solutions.

### **Panelists:**

**Natalie Madeira Cofield**, Former Assistant Administrator, U.S. Small Business Administration

**Angela Hanks**, Chair of Programs, Dēmos

**Dr. Seft Hunter**, Director, Black Led Organizing and Power Building, Community Change

**Dr. Alex Camardelle**, Director, Workforce Policy, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

- **Moderator: Jessica Fulton**, Vice President, Policy, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

## Philanthropic Investments in Racial Equity

**3 - 4 P.M.**

*Which foundations are fulfilling their commitments to racial equity?*

Many foundations made specific commitments to advance racial justice following the murder of George Floyd in 2020. Was this commitment a moment or a movement? Which foundations have made significant progress, and which have fallen short? How can allies within foundations help move their institutions toward fulfilling commitments and effectively investing in Black communities?

### **Panelists:**

**Dr. Avenel Joseph**, Vice President, Policy, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

**Leslie Boissiere**, Vice President, External Affairs, Annie E. Casey Foundation

**Tahira Christmon**, Vice President, External Affairs, Association of Black Foundation Executives

- **Moderator: Kenneth Jones**, Senior Vice President and COO, MacArthur Foundation

## Prioritizing Black Rural South

3-4 P.M.

*How do we ensure Southern state governments fairly deploy federal infrastructure funding?*

Black communities in the rural South face higher poverty rates, lower employment levels and wages, and less economic growth than most other regions of the U.S. Black households in the Black Rural South are also among America's most unserved by broadband. As federal infrastructure investments – including broadband infrastructure – are deployed, how do we ensure that state governments do not overlook the needs of the Black Rural South?

### Panelists:

**Clint Odom**, Vice President for Strategic Alliances and External Affairs, T-Mobile

**Dr. Corey Wiggins**, Federal Co-Chair, Delta Regional Authority

**Robert Branson**, President and CEO, Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council

**Dr. Dominique Harrison**, Director, Racial Equity Design and Data Initiative, Citi Ventures Studio

**Oleta Garrett Fitzgerald**, Board Chair, Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative

- **Moderator: Spencer Overton**, President, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

## Advancing Black Agency

3-4 P.M.

*How can we improve racial diversity among top congressional staffers and presidential appointees?*

For decades, companies and foundations have invested in important internship and fellowship programs that open doors to entry-level government positions for diverse college students and early-career policy professionals. Unfortunately, more needs to be done to ensure young staffers of color have opportunities for advancement, as people of color are woefully underrepresented among top congressional staff and in many presidential appointee positions. This lack of representation among top spots adversely affects communities of color in government decision-making, and limits later opportunities for people of color in Senate-confirmed government positions, the private sector, philanthropy, and the non-profit sector. This panel will highlight recent advances and continuing challenges for Black representation among presidential appointees and congressional staff, as well as explore best practices to achieve better outcomes.

### Panelists:

**Dr. Sessa Joi Moon**, Director, House Office of Diversity Initiative

**David Strickland**, Vice President, Global Regulatory Affairs and Transportation Technology Policy, General Motors

**Gautam Raghavan**, Director, White House Presidential Personnel

**Mike Lynch**, Chief of Staff, Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY), and Staff Director, Senate Democratic Policy and Communications Committee

**Dr. LaShonda Brenson**, Senior Researcher, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

- **Moderator: Elliot Williams**, Principal, The Raben Group

## Networking Luncheon

### Luncheon Speakers

**Keynote Speaker: Reta Jo Lewis**, President and Chair of the Board of Directors, Export-Import Bank of the United States

**Fireside Chat: Don Graves**, Deputy Secretary, Commerce, U.S. Department of Commerce

**Summit Emcee: Paul N.D. Thornell**, Principal, Mehlman Castagnetti Rosen & Thomas and Chair, Joint Center Board of Governors

## Fireside Chat (Bios)



**Kristin N. Johnson**  
Commissioner  
Commodity Futures Trading  
Commission

Commissioner **Kristin N. Johnson** was sworn in as a CFTC Commissioner on March 30, 2022, after being nominated by President Joseph Biden in September 2021, and unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate. Commissioner Johnson is a nationally recognized expert on financial markets risk management law and policy with specialization in the regulation of complex financial products including the origination, distribution, and secondary market trading, clearing, and settlement of securities and derivatives. She is an internationally recognized expert on financial markets regulation and corporate governance, compliance, and risk management. Her recent work examines the implications of emerging innovative technologies including distributed digital ledger technologies that enable the creation of digital assets and intermediaries and artificial intelligence technologies that target commercial and consumer financial transactions, transfers, and assessments.

In April of 2021, she testified at a hearing before the United States House of Representatives Financial Services Committee Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Financial Institutions entitled Banking Innovation or Regulatory Evasion? Exploring Trends in Financial Institution Charters. The single-panel hearing discussed policy considerations with respect to banking charters and explored disintermediation in legacy financial markets such as banking and the provision of clearing and custody services. In July of 2019, she testified before the United States House of Representatives Financial Services Committee Task Force on Financial Technology and the Task Force on Artificial Intelligence entitled Examining the Use of Alternative Data exploring the implications of integrating artificial intelligence in financial technology (fintech) platforms.

Prior to joining the Commission, she held endowed professorships at Emory University and Tulane University Law Schools and visiting professorships at prestigious law schools around the nation. She taught courses in the regulation of securities and derivatives markets, financial institutions, including courses on fintech, the development of blockchain technologies and artificial intelligence, as well as corporations and ethical leadership. She is an elected member of the American Law Institute, an American Bar Foundation Fellow, and Chair of the Securities Regulation Section and the Executive Committee of the Business Associations and Financial Institutions and Consumer Financial Services Sections of the Association of American Law Schools.

Prior to entering the academy, Commissioner Johnson served as Vice President and Assistant General Counsel in the Treasury Services Division of one of the largest financial institutions in the world supporting private funds cash management services, a corporate associate at Simpson, Thacher, and Bartlett LLP's New York and London offices where she represented issuers and underwriters in domestic and international debt and equity offerings, lenders and borrowers in banking and credit matters, and private equity firms and publicly-traded companies in mergers and acquisitions. Before attending law school, Commissioner Johnson served as an analyst in the Asset Management Division of a storied financial institution. She clerked for a federal judge who previously served on the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey.

Commissioner Johnson has a B.S. with honors from Georgetown University Edmund Walsh School of Foreign Service and a J.D. from The University of Michigan Law School where she served as a senior editor on the Michigan Law Review and received the Clara Belfield and Henry Bates International Research Fellowship.



**Charlotte A. Burrows**  
Commissioner

Equal Employment Opportunity  
Commission (EEOC)

**Charlotte A. Burrows** was designated by President Biden as Chair of the EEOC on Jan. 20, 2021. She was initially nominated to serve as a Commissioner of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 2014 and then re-nominated in 2019. The U.S. Senate unanimously confirmed her to a second term ending in 2023.

Chair Burrows has advocated for strong civil rights protections and robust cooperation between the Commission, employers, and employees to advance equal opportunity in the workplace. She seeks to enhance the Commission’s enforcement of all laws within its jurisdiction, focusing in particular on initiatives to combat harassment, foster pay equity, and advance diversity and inclusion. While at the Commission, she has worked to increase the agency’s outreach to Native Americans, vulnerable immigrant and migrant communities, and other traditionally underserved populations. In addition, Chair Burrows is particularly interested in the impact of technology and big data on civil rights and employee privacy.

Prior to her appointment to the EEOC, Chair Burrows served as Associate Deputy Attorney General at the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), where she worked on a broad range of civil and criminal matters, including employment litigation, voting rights, combatting racial profiling, and implementing the Violence Against Women Act, among others.

Chair Burrows previously served as General Counsel for Civil and Constitutional Rights to Senator Edward M. Kennedy on the Senate Judiciary Committee and later on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. During her time on Capitol Hill, she worked on a variety of legislative initiatives, including the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008.

Before working on the Hill, Chair Burrows held several roles in the Civil Rights Division’s Employment Litigation Section at DOJ, including Deputy Chief of the Section. There, she represented the United States in all phases of civil litigation, including trial, to enforce Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Earlier in her career, she served as a judicial clerk on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit and was an associate at Debevoise & Plimpton, LLP.

Chair Burrows received an A.B. from Princeton University and a J.D. from Yale Law School.



**Alan Davidson**  
Assistant Secretary of Commerce

Communications and Information  
and National Telecommunications  
and Information Administration  
Administrator

**Alan Davidson** is an Internet policy expert with over 20 years of experience as an executive, public interest advocate, technologist, and attorney. He was most recently a Senior Advisor at the Mozilla Foundation, a global nonprofit that promotes openness, innovation, and participation on the Internet. He was previously Mozilla’s Vice President of Global Policy, Trust and Security, where he led public policy and privacy teams promoting an open Internet and a healthy web. Alan served in the Obama-Biden Administration as the first Director of Digital Economy at the U.S. Department of Commerce. He started Google’s public policy office in Washington, D.C., leading government relations and policy in North and South America for seven years until 2012.

Alan has been a long-time leader in the Internet nonprofit community, serving as Director of New America’s Open Technology Institute where he worked to promote equitable broadband access and adoption. As Associate Director of the Center for Democracy and Technology, Alan was an advocate for civil liberties and human rights online in some of the earliest Internet policy debates. Alan currently resides with his family in Chevy Chase, Maryland. He is a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Yale Law School and is a member of the District of Columbia Bar.

## Fireside Chats (Moderator's Bios)



**April Ryan**  
White House Correspondent  
TheGrio

White House Correspondent **April Ryan** has a unique vantage point as the only black female reporter covering urban issues from the White House – a position she has held for 25 years, since the Clinton era. Her position as a White House Correspondent has afforded her unusual insight into the racial sensitivities, issues, and attendant political struggles of our nation's past presidents.

April can be seen on CNN. She is also the Washington DC Bureau Chief on TheGrio. She has been featured in Essence, Vogue, Cosmopolitan and Elle magazines – to name a few. April Ryan has served on the board of the prestigious White House Correspondents Association. She is one of only three African Americans in the Association's over 100-year history to serve on its board. She is also an esteemed member of the National Press Club. In 2015, Ms. Ryan was nominated for an NAACP Image Award (Outstanding Literary Work - Debut Author) for her first book. 2016 National Council of Negro Women, Mary McCloud Bethune Trailblazer.

In 2019 April Ryan became an honorary member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated and was recognized as the 2019 Freedom of the Press Award Winner by the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. April was nominated in 2021 with the NAACP Image Award for Social Justice Impact. April is a Baltimore native and Morgan State University graduate, and she gives back to this community by serving as a mentor to aspiring journalists and assisting with developing “up and coming” broadcasters. April considers her greatest life's work raising her two daughters, Ryan and Grace – who are phenomenal young women.

April Ryan is the author of the award-winning book, *The Presidency in Black and White*, and *At Mama's Knee: Mothers and Race in Black and White* (December 2016), where she looks at race relations through the lessons and wisdom that mothers have given their children. Her latest book is *Under Fire: Reporting from the Front Lines of the Trump White House*.



**Joseph Shepherd Miller, Esq.**  
Founder, President, CEO

Washington Center for Technology  
Policy Inclusion (WashingTech)

**Joseph Shepherd Miller, Esq.**, Founder, President & CEO of the Washington Center for Technology Policy Inclusion (WashingTech), is a passionate, DC Metro-based social entrepreneur who is on a mission to diversify the technology public policy sector by making insider jargon accessible to everyone. As an award-winning advocate with a comprehensive career spanning broadcasting, economic development, civil rights, and communications public policy, Joe combines a rare mix of skills to advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion in public policy, privacy, and information integrity. Since 2015, he has written, produced, and hosted Tech Policy Leaders – the first and longest-running podcast focused exclusively on technology public policy.

He is an active member of the Federal Communications Bar Association (FCBA) for which he co-chairs the Emerging Tech Committee. Previously, he served as Senior Policy Counsel of the Media & Technology Institute at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. He lives in Northern Virginia with his wife and two beautiful daughters.





**Spencer Overton**  
President

Joint Center for Political and  
Economic Studies

**Spencer Overton** is the President of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, which was founded in 1970 and is America's Black think tank. He is also a tenured Professor of Law at George Washington University in Washington, DC.

Spencer is the author of the book [Stealing Democracy: The New Politics of Voter Suppression](#) (W.W. Norton) and [several academic articles](#) and popular commentaries on voting rights, race, and public policy, including [State Power to Regulate Social Media Companies to Prevent Voter Suppression](#), 53 U.C. Davis Law Review 1793 (2020).

Spencer's work as a commissioner on the Carter-Baker Election Commission laid the groundwork for [modern arguments against unnecessary voting restrictions that reduce turnout by legitimate voters](#). His work on the Commission on Presidential Nomination Timing and Scheduling resulted in [Iowa restoring voting rights to over 80,000 returning citizens](#). He was also a part of a group of commissioners that worked to successfully move more diverse states like South Carolina and Nevada to the beginning of the modern Democratic presidential primary process. He has testified several times before Congress on voting rights, election administration, and election disinformation.

Spencer chaired the 2008 Obama campaign's Government Reform Policy Committee, and led the 2008 Obama transition team's Election Assistance Commission agency review group. During the Obama Administration he served as Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Office of Legal Policy (the "think tank" of the Department of Justice). In that position, he partnered with White House officials to lead the Administration's policy efforts on democracy issues, including conceptualizing and/or implementing policies related to the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act, the National Voter Registration Act, and the Voting Rights Act.

Spencer has also served on the boards of Dēmos, the American Constitution Society, and Common Cause. He has practiced law at the firm Debevoise & Plimpton, clerked for U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Damon J. Keith, and graduated with honors from both Hampton University and Harvard Law School.

## Luncheon Speakers (Bios)



**Reta Jo Lewis**  
Chair of the Board of  
Directors

Export-Import Bank of the  
United States (EXIM)

On February 9, 2022, the U.S. Senate confirmed **Reta Jo Lewis** as EXIM's President and Chair of Board of Directors. Chair Lewis was sworn in by Vice President of the United States Kamala Harris on February 16, 2022. Ms. Lewis is a senior executive with over 25 years of leadership experience in international affairs, legal, public policy, business and regulatory affairs, and subnational diplomacy.

Ms. Lewis was most recently a Senior Fellow and Director of Congressional Affairs at the German Marshall Fund of the United States. At GMF, Ms. Lewis led and oversaw initiatives, programs, and bipartisan exchanges for members of the U.S. Congress and their European counterparts, focusing on leadership development and subnational diplomacy efforts.

Prior to her time at GMF, she served as the first-ever Special Representative for Global Intergovernmental Affairs under Secretary Hillary Clinton at the U.S. Department of State during the Obama-Biden Administration. As Special Representative, Lewis was the chief diplomat in charge of the international efforts to build and support strategic relationships between the federal government, state and local leaders, and their foreign counterparts. In 2013, she was awarded the Secretary's Distinguished Service Award.

Ms. Lewis was the first Black woman to serve as an Officer at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, working as Vice President and Counselor to the President. She led the Chamber's initiatives focused on fostering strategic alliances between small businesses, especially women- and minority-owned businesses, entrepreneurs, and executives. She is a Life Member of the Council on Foreign Relations and Member of the Board of the Leadership Council for Women in National Security.

Ms. Lewis received a J.D. from Emory University School of Law, an M.S.A.J. from American University, and a B.A. from the University of Georgia. She is a native of Statesboro, Georgia.



**Don Graves**  
Deputy Secretary,  
Commerce

U.S. Department of Commerce

**Don Graves** is the 19th Deputy Secretary of Commerce.

Graves brings decades of experience in the private sector, government, and nonprofits to the Department of Commerce. Most recently, he served as Counselor to President Joe Biden during the 2020 presidential campaign. Prior to that, Graves served as Executive Vice President and Head of Corporate Responsibility and Community Relations at KeyBank. In this role, Graves led KeyBank's corporate responsibility team, including the bank's \$16.5 billion National Community Benefits Plan, the bank's sustainability work, stakeholder engagement, and outreach, and oversaw the KeyBank Foundation and the First Niagara Foundation.

During the Obama-Biden Administration, Graves served as Counselor and Domestic and Economic Policy Director for then-Vice President Biden. He was previously appointed by President Barack Obama as Executive Director of the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness and led the federal government's efforts in the economic recovery of the city of Detroit. Graves also served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Small Business, Community Development, and Housing Policy at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, where he oversaw the CDFI Fund, the \$4 billion Small Business Lending Fund, and the \$1.5 billion State Small Business Credit Initiative. He was also the U.S. Federal Representative to the G7 Task Force on Social Impact Investment.

He has served on the Board of Directors of the MetroHealth Foundation, the FDIC's Advisory Committee on Economic Inclusion, the Board of Trustees of the Community Reinvestment Fund, the Policy Advisory Board of the Biden Institute at the University of Delaware, the Board of Visitors of the Cuyahoga Community College, the Advisory Board of the Commission on Economic Inclusion, and as Co-Chair of Cleveland Rising.

Graves has a rich family history connected to the Commerce Department. His four-times great grandparents built a successful horse and buggy taxi business in Washington that once stood at the site of the Department's headquarters. Their son went on to own a premier hotel just blocks away and become one of our nation's first Black patent-holders through the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Graves holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and History from Williams College and a Juris Doctor from the Georgetown University Law Center, where he received the Dean's Award. He is a fellow of the National Association of Public Administration. Graves is married and has two children.



**Paul N.D. Thornell**  
Principal

JMehlman Castagnetti Rosen  
and Thomas

**Paul Thornell** brings over 20 years of experience serving in leadership roles in non-profit organizations, the White House, Capitol Hill, presidential campaigns, and the private sector. His work in policy, politics, regulatory, and advocacy arenas has provided him with a distinct variety of perspectives and shows a record of demonstrated results in government, philanthropic, and corporate sectors.

In government, Thornell served at the White House as Deputy Director of Legislative Affairs for Vice President Al Gore, where he was a senior liaison for Vice President Gore with members of Congress, promoting the Clinton/Gore administration's policies and directing the vice president's activities and communication with U.S. Senators and Representatives. He worked in the U.S. Senate on the leadership staff of former Sen. Democratic Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) as the leadership's chief liaison to education, children's, social service, civil rights, religious organizations, governors, and mayors. He also worked in the state office of former U.S. Sen. Harris Wofford (D-PA).

In the non-profit sector, Thornell served as Senior Vice President of Public Policy and Field Leadership at United Way of America (now United Way Worldwide), the nation's largest charity. In this role, Thornell developed and advocated on behalf of United Way's public policy agenda before Congress and the administration; led the organization's relationship management work with the nearly 1,400 local United Ways; and oversaw United Way of America's work in disaster preparedness and response.

Thornell is currently a principal at Mehlman Castagnetti Rosen & Thomas. He has previous experience working in the multi-client world as Managing Director for Public Affairs in Hill and Knowlton's Washington, D.C. office managing a variety of clients, for whom he provided strategic counsel, directed government relations, and developed strategies on media relations and third-party engagement. Thornell has also worked at Citigroup on a range of policy and regulatory issues such as capital markets and corporate governance.

In addition to his formal professional roles, Thornell has served as an informal advisor to Senate and House Democratic leaders and committee chairs in an effort to increase diversity among senior-level staff on Capitol Hill. Frequently speaking before top Senate and House staff, convening discussion sessions on the topic with corporate executives and other thought leaders, and consulting with Senators and House members, Thornell has demonstrated his commitment to creating a more diverse Capitol Hill. He has also played a leading role in ensuring diversity in appointments to key executive branch and independent agency leadership positions. Further, Thornell has volunteered on presidential, Senate, and House campaigns in Pennsylvania, Missouri, Colorado, and Massachusetts.

## Panelists' (Bios)

# Technology Policy Priorities for Black Communities

*How do we ensure technology policies serve Black communities?*

Black communities confront an emerging set of tech policy issues, such as discriminatory ad targeting, online disinformation and hate that prompts real life harms such as voter suppression and violence, the misuse of data in employment and lending, and lack of access to broadband. This panel will explore potential tech policy solutions.



**Geoffrey Starks**  
Commissioner

Federal Communications  
Commission

Commissioner **Geoffrey Starks** believes that communications technology has the potential to be one of the most powerful forces on Earth for promoting equality and opportunity. To unlock that potential, however, all Americans must have access. From combatting internet inequality to advocating for diversity in employment, entrepreneurship, and media ownership, Commissioner Starks fights for policies designed to ensure that modern communications technology empowers every American.

Because high-quality broadband is essential to participating in our economy and society, Commissioner Starks has been a champion for the millions of Americans who lack access to or cannot afford a home internet connection. As a native Kansan, he understands the communications needs of rural America. He has consistently advocated for broadband deployment that helps rural communities tap into economic and educational opportunities that may not be close to home, which both encourages young people to stay and attracts new residents and employers.

Bringing a wealth of enforcement experience to the Commission, Commissioner Starks advocates for consumer protection and accountability, particularly in managing the Universal Service Fund. Before he was appointed Commissioner, Starks helped lead the FCC's Enforcement Bureau, handling a wide variety of complex investigations. At the Department of Justice, he served as a senior advisor to the Deputy Attorney General on a variety of domestic and international law enforcement matters and received the Attorney General's Award for Exceptional Service—the highest honor award a DOJ employee can receive.

Commissioner Starks is also a leader on national security policy, working to eliminate untrustworthy equipment from America's communications networks. His Find It, Fix It, Fund It initiative brought national attention to the urgent need to support small and rural companies as they work to make their networks more secure. With regard to personal data security, while Commissioner Starks fully supports the promise of advanced wireless service and other cutting-edge technologies—and works to ensure that all communities share in the benefits of these advancements—he also fully appreciates the potentially intrusive powers of some communications technologies and is vigilant to ensure against any uses of those powers that would promote illegal discrimination or compromise personal privacy.

Before he entered federal public service, Commissioner Starks practiced law at Williams & Connolly, clerked on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit, served as a legislative staffer in the Illinois State Senate, and worked as a financial analyst. Commissioner Starks graduated from Harvard College with high honors and Yale Law School. He lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife, Lauren, and their two children.



**Chanelle Hardy**  
Head of Civil Rights

Google

**Chanelle Hardy** is an attorney and public policy expert dedicated to advancing policies that promote economic growth, opportunity and justice. She is a member of the Public Policy team at Google, focusing on Strategic Outreach and External Partnerships. Most recently, she had the honor to serve as Chief of Staff to Federal Communications Commissioner Mignon Clyburn, the first woman to serve as Commission Chair and the only African American currently on the dais. Before that she led the Washington Bureau of the National Urban League - the nation's oldest civil rights and urban advocacy organization; was Counsel and Chief of Staff to former US Congressman Artur Davis; and served as an FTC staff attorney, Fellow and Counsel at Consumers Union, and fifth grade teacher. She is a member of the boards of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies and the Black Women's Health Imperative.



**Yvette Badu-Nimako**  
Vice President, Policy/  
Civil Rights

National Urban League

**Yvette Badu-Nimako** is an attorney and lecturer with extensive experience working to advance civil rights and equity in both the public and private sectors through Legal Analysis, Policy Strategy, Oversight and Investigations, and Program Implementation. She currently serves as the Vice President of Policy at the National Urban League where she leads the policy team and provides expertise on civil rights, social justice, economic empowerment, and technology issues on behalf of the organization. She is also a Lecturer for the University of Texas System, where she teaches policymaking and analysis to undergraduate honors and graduate students.

Yvette has served as the Head of U.S. Policy at Match Group, an international tech company; as Senior Counsel on the House Committee on Oversight and Reform and Legislative Director for the late U.S. Congressman and Oversight Committee Chair Elijah E. Cummings; as a Counsel & Congressional Liaison for the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau; as an Attorney Advisor in the Obama Administration at the U.S. Department of Justice, representing the Civil Rights Division before Congress; and as Judiciary Counsel for U.S. Congressman Hakeem Jeffries.

Yvette received her undergraduate degree in Government and English from Georgetown University and her law degree from Georgetown University Law Center.



**Steve Newell**  
Assistant Director, Innovation  
and Equity

White House Office of Science and  
Technology Policy



**Damon Hewitt**  
President and  
Executive Director

Lawyers' Committee for Civil  
Rights Under Law

**Damon Hewitt**, a long-time civil rights lawyer, social justice strategist, philanthropist, manager and coalition-builder, currently serves as the President and Executive Director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

Prior to joining the Lawyers' Committee, Hewitt served as inaugural executive director of the Executives' Alliance for Boys and Men of Color. He previously served as Senior Advisor at the Open Society Foundations where he coordinated funding efforts responding to the uprising in Ferguson, Missouri. Before entering philanthropy, Hewitt worked for over a decade as an attorney at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund where he was lead counsel on litigation and policy matters and supervised teams of lawyers and non-lawyers. He led pioneering efforts addressing the School to Prison Pipeline and coordinated litigation and advocacy efforts following Hurricane Katrina. Hewitt also served as Executive Director of the New York State Task Force on Police-on-Police Shootings, an entity analyzing police practices following the deaths of off-duty African American and Latino police officers who were shot by fellow officers after being mistaken for "criminal" suspects.

Hewitt is co-author of a book, *The School-to-Prison Pipeline: Structuring Legal Reform*, and has published numerous articles on racial justice, school discipline policy and progressive education reform. He holds a B.A. in Political Science from Louisiana State University and a J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania Law School.



**Patrick Lucas Austin**  
Editor  
IT Brew

**Patrick Lucas Austin** is the founding editor of Morning Brew's IT and cybersecurity-focused newsletter IT Brew. Previously, Patrick has written for outlets like Consumer Reports, Ars Technica, Gizmodo, and The Wirecutter. Most recently, Patrick was the technology columnist for TIME Magazine, where he covered businesses, consumer technology, and their effect on our daily lives.



## Panelists' (Bios)

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# Corporate Investments in Racial Equity

*Which companies are fulfilling their commitments to racial equity?*

Many corporations made specific commitments to advance racial justice following the murder of George Floyd in 2020. Was this commitment a moment or a movement?

Which companies have made significant progress, and which have fallen short? How can allies within companies help move their institutions toward fulfilling commitments and effectively investing in Black communities?



**Tia Hodges**  
President and CEO  
MetLife Foundation

**Tia Hodges** has dedicated nearly 20 years to creating and implementing strategies that drive systemic change at the intersection of philanthropy, non-profit, and social impact sectors to improve social and economic progress in communities across the U.S. This work has been fulfilled through her roles at the Citi Foundation where she led the strategy and investments of the Youth Economic Opportunity portfolio in the U.S. In this role, she was responsible to lead the strategic composition and investments of the portfolio with a focus on workforce, social innovation, mentoring, and financial education.

Tia also spent many years at high impact non-profit organizations including Feeding America of Eastern Wisconsin supporting the organization's mission to eradicate hunger and the national non-profit organization KaBOOM! where she worked directly with Mayors and civic leaders from more than 200 cities and towns in the U.S. to ensure children and families had equitable access to healthy and vibrant communities.

Tia was selected as a Fellow for the Council on Foundations Leadership Program, the 92y Belfer Center for Innovation & Impact Women inPower, and Johns Hopkins University Leadership Program for Minority Managers.

Tia is an Adjunct Professor at New York University School of Professional Studies and serves on the board of Living Cities, MetLife Foundation Korea, and MetLife Foundation Mexico.

Tia earned an BA from Loyola University of Chicago and MBA from The Johns Hopkins Carey Business School.



**Monique Baptiste**  
Vice President, Global  
Philanthropy  
JPMorgan Chase & Co.

**Monique Baptiste** joined JPMorgan Chase & Co. in early 2019 as Vice President of Global Philanthropy. As part of this work, Monique supports JPMC's \$350 million global investment in education and workforce training systems to promote economic opportunity and reduce inequities in labor market outcomes from groups that have historically faced significant barriers to accessing opportunity. This includes leading JPMC's nationwide investment in community colleges and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and working collaboratively with Human Resources to build new employee learning partnerships to respond to the Future of Work and promote diverse hiring pipelines such as JPMC's second chance hiring opportunities for individuals with criminal backgrounds.

With a background in urban policy and economics, Monique has worked in the field of workforce development for over a decade. Prior to joining JPMorgan Chase, Monique served as Vice President of Programs at the Newark Alliance and Director of the Greater Newark Workforce Funders Collaborative, where she was responsible for connecting private philanthropy to innovative workforce development initiatives targeting low-income workers. In 2008, Monique ran one of the largest workforce readiness and training organizations in New Jersey, serving more than 500 low-income residents annually from throughout northern New Jersey, including a nationally affiliated YouthBuild program serving opportunity youth.

Monique's service to urban communities also extends deeply into economic development. In 2004, Monique served as the Deputy Director of the Community Economic Development Division of La Casa De Don Pedro—a comprehensive nonprofit in Newark, NJ, and has also served as a consultant to a number of local governments and public school districts to assist with securing resources to complete both human services and infrastructure projects to improve quality of life for communities. Monique is a graduate of Rutgers University, where she studied economics and political science as an undergraduate and masters level public policy at the Edward J. Bloustein School.



**Cadene Russell Brooks**  
Counsel  
WilmerHale

**Cadene Russell Brooks** is Counsel at WilmerHale where she represents clients in internal and government investigations, complex litigation, and white-collar defense matters. She focuses her practice on the False Claims Act and Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, as well as financial fraud, government contracting fraud and anti-discrimination matters involving the US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation and inspector general offices. In addition, she counsels multinational companies in developing regulatory compliance programs and has conducted sensitive internal reviews into a variety of matters. Ms. Brooks is a member of WilmerHale's Diversity Committee and was recently named Young Lawyer of the Year by the Bar Association of the District of Columbia. Ms. Brooks is currently on secondment as Legal Counsel at Google.

Prior to joining WilmerHale, Ms. Brooks served as a law clerk to the Honorable Carl E. Stewart, Chief Judge of the US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. While a student at Howard University School of Law, she served as a law clerk in the Homicide Section of the US Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia and as a judicial extern to the Honorable Emmet G. Sullivan of the US District Court for the District of Columbia. As a student attorney in Howard's Civil Rights Clinic, Ms. Brooks represented clients in Title VII employment discrimination and fair housing discrimination cases. She previously worked as a summer associate in the litigation and international trade practices of another prominent Washington DC law firm.



**Jonay Foster Holkins**  
Senior Director, Policy  
Business Roundtable

**Jonay Foster Holkins** is Senior Director of Policy for the Business Roundtable. In this role, she oversees the Roundtable's racial equity and justice policy agenda.

Before joining the Business Roundtable, Ms. Holkins was Counsel for Congressman David N. Cicilline, where she managed the Congressman's Judiciary Committee portfolio, including civil rights, criminal justice reform, election security, immigration, intellectual property, police reform, privacy, and technology. She advanced the Congressman's legislative priorities by drafting and analyzing legislation, building strategic alliances, and preparing the Congressman for hearings and other public appearances. Ms. Holkins was also responsible for analyzing legislation and providing policy recommendations on issues related to health care and financial services.

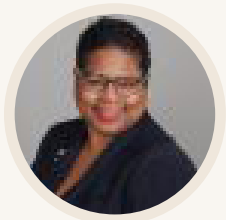
Prior to moving to Capitol Hill, Ms. Holkins was a senior litigation associate at Feldesman Tucker Leifer Fidell LLP, where she advised and represented community health centers and other federal grantees across the country on a range of issues involving constitutional and administrative law, immigration, internal investigations, the False Claims Act, Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Federal Tort Claims Act.

Ms. Holkins graduated from Johns Hopkins University with a Bachelor of Arts in Public Health Studies, and received her J.D. from the University of Arizona. During law school, she interned in White House Counsel's Office and was an associate in the Presidential Personnel Office for President Barack Obama. She also served as a fellow with the Committee on Education and the Workforce and interned with the Office of General Counsel at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. After law school, she served a two-year term as a judicial law clerk in the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona. She resides in Washington, D.C with her husband, Patrick, and dog, Jackson.



**Fabrice Coles**  
Senior Manager, Global  
Public Policy  
PayPal

**Fabrice Coles** is a Senior Manager, Global Public Policy, at PayPal. He is an attorney and a former senior Capitol Hill staffer who is committed to sustainable financial inclusion at scale. Prior to his current role, Fabrice spent a decade working in and with the United States Congress. Most recently he was a VP for Government Affairs at the Bank Policy Institute. Prior to that, he served as the Executive Director of the Congressional Black Caucus and as an economic policy advisor in both the House and Senate. Fabrice has also served at the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund. He holds a J.D. from the Howard University School of Law, an LLM in Securities and Financial Regulation from Georgetown University Law Center and an MBA from the NYU Stern School of Business.



**Gail Coles Johnson**  
VP and Chief Human  
Resources Officer  
Executive Leadership Council

**Gail Coles Johnson** is the Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer of The Executive Leadership Council. She is responsible for developing and executing human resources strategy in support of The ELC's business plan and overall strategic direction, specifically in the areas of succession planning, talent management, change management, organizational and performance management, training and development, and compensation. She provides strategic leadership by articulating HR needs and plans to ELC leadership and leads the HR function, including managing HR staff and external HR resources.

Before joining The ELC, Ms. Coles Johnson was Assistant Vice President of Human Resources at AT&T. She spent more than 30 years at AT&T in progressive executive capacities, leading a team of HR professionals to deliver company-wide talent and HR initiatives. This included working one-on-one with executive team members and direct reports of the chairman, on a host of high-impact improvement initiatives.

Through her persistent and engaging coaching style, Ms. Coles Johnson made an indelible impact on AT&T's global workforce and corporate model. She was invited to serve as a public influencer, driving workforce attraction and retention in the workplace. Her mentoring programs and strategic planning workshops for clients were award-winning (as recognized by Diversity Inc.). She has also been a keynote speaker and panelist, addressing diversity, equity and inclusion, leadership development and talent acquisition.

Ms. Coles Johnson has a Bachelor of Science from Virginia Commonwealth University and completed Executive Education programs at Harvard Business School and Cornell University. Her executive influence and communications serve as a foundation to her success on multiple boards including the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, the National Black MBA, the Virginia Commonwealth University Alumni Board, Links Foundation Board, Jack and Jill Foundation Board, Kappa Alpha Psi Foundation Board and NIH Advisory Council. She is a past member of the Bowie State University School of Business Advisory Board.

## Panelists' (Bios)

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# Economic Policy Priorities for Black Communities

*How do we ensure economic policies serve Black communities?*

As our economy recovers from the pandemic and grapples with inflation, Black communities face economic crises on various fronts — including a persistent lack of access to good jobs and workforce training; resources to grow businesses and wealth; and equitable tax policy. This panel will explore potential economic policy solutions.



**Natalie Madeira Cofield**  
Former Assistant Administrator  
U.S. Small Business  
Administration

An award-winning entrepreneur, philanthropist, political appointee, and economic activist, **Natalie Madeira Cofield** has provided some of the nation's most prominent CEOs of billion-dollar organizations, executives of global brands, senior advisors to the White House, mayors of leading national cities, and community activists and leaders with inspiration, insight, and advisement.

As a presidentially-appointed Assistant Administrator of the Small Business Administration, she advised on the deployment of \$1.2 trillion in funding and was directly responsible for supporting the deployment of more than \$200 million in funding to eco-systems and entrepreneurs throughout the country during the greatest economic crisis in modern history.

Most recently, Cofield serves as a Presidential Appointee within the Biden-Harris Administration where she served as the head of the leading the Office of Women's Business Ownership at the U.S. Small Business Administration where she was responsible for managing a grant-making budget of \$70 million and funding the largest expansion of the Women's Business Center network in the history of SBA.

She was named a Champion of Small Business by the Association of Enterprising Opportunity and was selected among 137 cover-story business leaders and entrepreneurs from across the nation for her response to COVID-19 where she graced Entrepreneur Magazine's July/August 2020 edition cover. She has also been named one of the 100 Most Powerful Washingtonians by the Washington Business Journal.

From Google to the National League of Cities, Natalie's speeches, courses, and advisory services have helped to shape programs and efforts of some of the most regarded global brands, and educational and government institutions.

A sought-after expert, Natalie's work has been featured on and by Inc, Time, CNN, NYTimes, Fast Company, Forbes, Entrepreneur, BusinessInsider, Black Enterprise, Essence, and EBONY, among others.

Once inspired by reading the business plans of her mother when she was 11, Natalie is the founder and former CEO of Walker's Legacy, a digital platform to empower women through entrepreneurship, and its adjoined nonprofit arm, the Walker's Legacy Foundation, which was established to empower income limited women through financial literacy and economic security. In this role, Cofield established a \$25,000 funded scholarship for enterprising women at her alma mater, Howard University.

In 2019, Cofield was named the inaugural Entrepreneur-in-Residence for the District of Columbia leading Mayor Muriel Bowser's 2022 Creates Program providing entrepreneurship advice to creative economy businesses within the District of Columbia.

An honors tech graduate from Howard University (*where she was mentored by CIOs of two of America's leading Fortune 500 companies*) Natalie leveraged her coding experience to build a career centered on empowering businesses, entrepreneurs, women, and underrepresented communities.

An avid traveler, Cofield has visited more than 47 countries and counting.



**Angela Hanks**  
Chair of Programs  
Dēmos

**Angela Hanks** is Chief of Programs at Dēmos, where she works with the Legal Strategies, Movement Building, and Policy & Research teams to build and advance towards achieving a just, inclusive, multiracial economy and democracy. Prior to joining Dēmos, Angela served in the Biden-Harris Administration as Acting Assistant Secretary of the Employment and Training Administration in the U.S. Department of Labor, where she worked to advance worker-centered policies that lead to quality jobs for all workers, particularly those who are marginalized. Her work has been cited in various publications including the New York Times, Washington Post, and The Atlantic and was previously a regular contributor to Forbes.com.

Angela brings with her deep experience in advancing progressive policies in the nonprofit and government sectors. Prior to joining the Administration, Angela was Deputy Executive Director at the Groundwork Collaborative, where she worked to advance an equitable, people-centered vision for the economy. She has also held roles at think tanks and policy organizations where she has written extensively about how to make the labor market more inclusive of marginalized workers.

Angela began her career on Capitol Hill as a legislative assistant to the Honorable Elijah E. Cummings, and later became a counsel on the House Oversight and Government Reform committee.

Angela earned her bachelor's degree in political science from George Washington University and her law degree from the University of Maryland School of Law.



**Dr. Seft Hunter**  
Director  
Black Led Organizing and Power  
Building, Community Change

**Dr. Seft Hunter** is the Director of Black Led Organizing and Power Building. In this role, Seft leads Community Change's work to build black organizing infrastructure, challenge and eradicate historically oppressive racialized structures, and build black political power to change the material conditions on the ground in communities of color across the country.

Seft joined Community Change in July 2019, bringing over 18 years of diverse professional experience that spans service in the U.S. Air Force, working as a university professor and researcher, and as a movement leader fighting to improve the lives of people of color in Missouri and Kansas. He previously served as Executive Director of the Kansas and Missouri-based Communities Creating Opportunity (CCO)- a 40-year-old faith-based organizing group working to advance a racial and economic justice strategy. In this role, Seft led his organization's multi-state campaign to protect communities of color from the exploitative practices of predatory lenders. Seft also successfully led his organization's effort to align public health and community organizing, including a multi-state research study to map the impact of persistent racial poverty and differences in life expectancy between Black and white communities in Kansas and Missouri communities.



**Dr. Alex Camardelle**  
Director, Workforce Policy  
Joint Center for Political and  
Economic Studies

**Dr. Alex Camardelle** is the director of Workforce Policy at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, where he leads a program that centers Black workers in policy debates concerning the future of work, workforce development, and access to good jobs.

Prior to joining the Joint Center, Dr. Camardelle served as the senior policy analyst for Economic Mobility at the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute where his research and advocacy supported policy reforms shaping workforce development, worker justice, and access to core safety net programs for individuals and families with low incomes. He also worked at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, where he was responsible for strengthening economic opportunity through research, grantmaking, and partnerships.

Dr. Camardelle serves on the board of directors for the National Skills Coalition, an organization that advocates to remove barriers to high-quality training and employment services through policy change. He also serves on the board of directors for Foreverfamily, Inc., a national nonprofit dedicated to supporting youth with incarcerated parents. The Georgia Center for Nonprofits recognized Alex as one of its 2017 30 Under 30, a distinction for professionals who are making a powerful impact in Atlanta by exhibiting outstanding leadership, innovation, and commitment to their community work. He is also part of Georgia State University's 40 under 40 alumni class.

Dr. Camardelle holds a BA in political science from the University of Alabama. He is also a graduate of Georgia State University, where he earned his Master's of Public Administration degree in policy analysis and evaluation, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in educational policy studies. Alex's scholarship focuses on race, workforce development, and political economy. He is also a proud member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated.



**Jessica Fulton**  
Vice President, Policy  
Joint Center for Political and  
Economic Studies

**Jessica Fulton** is the vice president of Policy at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. An expert on issues at the intersection of race and economic policy, Jessica's work focuses on identifying and promoting policies to advance the socioeconomic status of the Black community. In her current role, she oversees the Joint Center's research and policy team and leads the Economic Policy Program.

Before joining the Joint Center, she served as external relations director at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, where she worked with scholars to advance policymaker understanding of the connection between economic inequality and economic growth. She has also held local research and advocacy positions at the DC Fiscal Policy Institute and the Chicago Urban League.

Jessica is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She serves on the Board of The Black Swan Academy, an organization focused on increasing civic engagement among Black youth, and the Advisory Board of the Sadie Collective, which strives to increase the representation of Black women in economics. Jessica earned a bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Chicago and a master's degree in Economic Policy Analysis from the Kellstadt Graduate School of Business at DePaul University.



Panelists' (Bios)

# Philanthropic Investments in Racial Equity

*Which foundations are fulfilling their commitments to racial equity?*

Many foundations made specific commitments to advance racial justice following the murder of George Floyd in 2020. Was this commitment a moment or a movement? Which foundations have made significant progress, and which have fallen short? How can allies within foundations help move their institutions toward fulfilling commitments and effectively investing in Black communities?



**Dr. Avenel Joseph**  
Vice President

Robert Wood Johnson  
Foundation

**Dr. Avenel Joseph** joined the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) in early 2020 as the vice president for Policy. She brings a wealth of government, management, and political expertise to leading the Foundation's Policy office and heading its Washington presence; serves as a key member of the Foundation's senior leadership team; and guides, motivates, and inspires RWJF's commitment to its policy and government engagement work to help build a Culture of Health, one that enables everyone in America to live longer, healthier lives.

Previously, Joseph served for more than 10 years shaping public policy in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate. She began her career on Capitol Hill in 2009 in the U.S. House of Representatives where she worked in both a personal office and on the Natural Resources Committee focusing on the intersection of health and the environment. In July 2013 she moved to the Senate as the chief health advisor for Senator Edward J. Markey, managing a comprehensive health care portfolio before transitioning to become his director of Policy and Oversight, where she oversaw and coordinated strategic planning and operations for the legislative team.

Joseph received her Ph.D. in Cell and Molecular Biology at Emory University; graduated with an MS in Developmental Toxicology from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; and earned her BS in Animal Sciences from the Pennsylvania State University.



**Leslie Boissiere**  
Vice President,  
External Affairs

Annie E. Casey Foundation

As vice president of external affairs, **Leslie Boissiere** oversees the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT effort, as well as the areas of policy reform and advocacy, strategic communications, leadership development, equity and inclusion, organizational effectiveness and national partnerships.

From 2015 to 2017, Boissiere served as a senior fellow at the Foundation. In that role, she coordinated the efforts of Casey's external affairs team and led the development of emerging strategies focused on youth and young adults and on improving the well-being of children in the South and Southwest.

Upon joining the Foundation in 2013, she served as chief operating officer for the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, a \$7 million initiative supported by the Casey Foundation. During this campaign, Boissiere directly managed all efforts related to communications, finance and operations, performance management and investor relations.

Boissiere's career path includes more than 15 years of results-driven executive experience in both the public and private sectors. Prior to joining the Foundation, Boissiere worked as a vice president for AARP, the nation's largest nonpartisan nonprofit devoted to serving adults aged 50 and older. In this role, she set the strategic direction for programs and offerings related to the financial security of AARP members.

Boissiere has also served as executive director for the White House Council for Community Solutions, where she led efforts to develop cross-sector, community-based strategies to address the needs of disconnected youth.

She holds a master's degree in business administration from the Stanford University Graduate School of Business and a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of New Orleans.



**Tahira Christmon**  
Vice President  
of External Affairs  
Association of Black  
Foundation Executives

**Tahira Christmon** is the Vice President of Programs at ABFE- A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities. Charged with advancing ABFE’s mission and brand, she leads the organization’s business development and communications priorities. Before joining ABFE, Tahira was the director of membership for the Council on Foundations. There, she was instrumental in the design and strategic direction of all membership and engagement initiatives. She also led in the development of the organization’s new strategy, implemented the Council’s new membership model, and relaunched their online peer-to-peer platform. Prior to the joining the Council, Tahira served in various membership, communications, and cause marketing roles at Goodwill Industries International and was a television news reporter in the Washington DC Metro area.

Tahira serves on the board of Maryland Humanities and when she’s not working she is running around with her two active young sons, finding moments of quiet escape with husband, or digging into a podcast or audiobook.



**Kenneth Jones**  
Senior Vice President  
and COO  
MacArthur Foundation

**Kenneth Jones** is the Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for the MacArthur Foundation. He is responsible for all aspects of the finance, accounting, tax, audit, administrative services and facilities functions for the MacArthur Foundation. In addition, Ken implements and evaluates the MacArthur Foundation’s financial objectives and performance to support MacArthur’s priorities and programs.

Prior to joining the MacArthur Foundation, Ken was the Vice President and Chief Financial Officer for the Annie E. Casey Foundation. In this role, he oversaw the Finance, Grants Management, Business Technology and Facilities & Operations functions as well as the disaster recovery & relief process for the Foundation. He traveled extensively in African and Southeast Asia as CFO for Danya International, a public health and education organization and Jhpiego, a nonprofit international health affiliate of Johns Hopkins University. He also previously held corporate finance positions at Ford Motor Company, Pfizer Corporation, and the Prudential.

Ken received his MBA from the MIT Sloan School of Management, a master’s degree in economics from the University at Buffalo and a bachelor’s degree from Boston University.

Ken serves on the boards of the Council of Foundations, ABFE, the Center for Disaster Philanthropy, the National Prevention Science Coalition, the Mission Investors Exchange, the Thurgood Marshall Academy, Think of Us, the Public Justice Center, the Southern Education Foundation, the Center for Urban Families, the Steve Fund and Lutheran World Relief. He is a Who’s Who Black Baltimore recipient, Arthur Vining Davis Fellow for the Aspen Ideas Festival, Presidential Scholar at Concordia College – New York, Smart CEO Magazine Executive Management Award recipient as well as a DCA Live Star CFO awardee. Ken was in the 2nd Cohort of the Council of Foundations’ Career Pathways Program.

## Panelists' (Bios)

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# Prioritizing Black Rural South

*How do we ensure Southern state governments fairly deploy federal infrastructure funding?*

Black communities in the rural South face higher poverty rates, lower employment levels and wages, and less economic growth than most other regions of the U.S. Black households in the Black Rural South are also among America's most unserved by broadband. As federal infrastructure investments – including broadband infrastructure – are deployed, how do we ensure that state governments do not overlook the needs of the Black Rural South?



**Clint Odom**  
Vice President,  
Strategic Alliances and  
External Affairs  
T-Mobile

**Clint Odom** serves as the Vice President of Strategic Alliances and External Affairs for T-Mobile, where he is responsible for shaping and advancing the company's public policy agenda. He leads the team responsible for increasing visibility and awareness of the brand among external partners in the community and NGOs to further shared policy issues, including 5G deployment, internet governance, privacy, and broadband adoption.

In his previous role with the National Urban League, he served as the Senior Vice President for Policy & Advocacy and Executive Director of the Washington Bureau. In this role, he managed the relationship between the League and members of Congress, the White House, and federal agencies.

Before joining the National Urban League, Clint served for a decade in the United States Senate as legislative director for then Senator Kamala D. Harris of California, Democratic General Counsel of the Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation, and General Counsel to Senator Bill Nelson of Florida.

Prior to then he served as a Vice President of Public Policy with Verizon Communications Inc. and Verizon New Jersey as well as a senior advisor at the Federal Communications Commission for Ambassador William E. Kennard and Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel.

Clint also practiced law at the firm Dow, Lohnes & Albertson (now Cooley LLP). He served as law clerk to the Honorable Henry T. Wingate of the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of Mississippi and is a graduate of Louisiana State University and the University of Pennsylvania Law School.



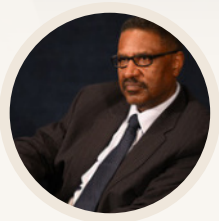
**Dr. Corey Wiggins**  
Federal Co-Chairman  
Delta Regional Authority

**Dr. Corey Wiggins** was confirmed unanimously by the U.S. Senate on March 10, 2022 to serve as Delta Regional Authority Federal Co-Chairman. Nominated by President Biden on December 15, 2021, Wiggins became the fifth DRA Federal Co-Chairman to serve in the position.

A native of Hazlehurst, Mississippi, Chairman Wiggins most recently served as the Executive Director of the Mississippi State Conference NAACP. Previously, he served as Senior Vice President of Policy at Hope Enterprise Corporation and Hope Credit Union. He also served as Executive Director of the Mississippi Economic Policy Center and as Director of the Hope Policy Institute, where he focused on strengthening communities, building assets, and improving lives in economically distressed parts of the MidSouth.

In addition, Wiggins served as a Barbara Jordan Health Policy Fellow in the United States Senate and as a policy analyst for the Mississippi Legislature Joint Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER) Committee. Wiggins also held the rank of Visiting Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Management at Jackson State University.

Chairman Wiggins completed his undergraduate studies with a B.S. in Biology from Alcorn State University. He received a M.S. in Public Health with an emphasis in Health Policy and a Ph.D. in Health Promotion and Health Education from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Additionally, he has a certificate of nonprofit leadership from Boston College and has furthered his training through fellowships with the Kaiser Family Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).



**Robert E. Branson, Esq.**  
President and CEO

Multicultural Media, Telecom  
and Internet Council (MMTC)

**Robert E. Branson, Esq.** is the President and CEO of the Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC), a non-partisan, national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving equal opportunity and civil rights in the mass media, telecom and broadband industries, and closing the digital divide.

Prior to joining MMTC, Branson served as Of Counsel at Empire Consulting Group a strategic business and public policy firm serving leading technology, wireless, broadcast and other industry clients. He brings his unique perspective as someone who has worked inside and outside government and who understands the challenges ahead in the diverse world we are creating in corporate America.

In his corporate career, most recently, he was an Associate General Counsel with Verizon Communications. In that position, he had various responsibilities, including the 5G rollout in the Washington, DC area, privacy regulations, and relationship building with leaders in the federal and state governments. He also coordinated with trade associations and internally with other legal, public policy and business groups.

He has been the General Counsel of the Association of Local Television Stations, Chief Legal Counsel of Post-Newsweek Stations and an Assistant General Counsel at the National Association of Broadcasters. He also has worked at the Federal Communications Commission as a Senior Legal Advisor to a Commissioner.

Branson has served as President of the Federal Communications Bar Association where he has gotten to know many of the leaders at the FCC, NTIA, FTC and other federal agencies. He is a two-time recipient of the FCBA Distinguished Service Award. He has championed diversity and inclusion in the Bar and has lead several efforts to expand the pipeline my mentoring and working to assist the careers of numerous people in the industry and government. In part based on these efforts, he has been awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award from MMTC.

He has served on the Board of Trustees at Simmons University in Boston and was named an Honorary Trustee after his service. He was a member of the Boards of the Ridley Scholarship Fund at the University of Virginia and the Hayride to Help Others in Washington, DC.

Branson received his law degree from Harvard University and his undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia.



**Dr. Dominique Harrison**  
Director, Racial Equity Design  
and Data Initiative (REDDI)

Citi Ventures Innovation

**Dr. Dominique Harrison** is Director of Racial Equity Design and Data Initiative (REDDI) at Citi Ventures Innovation, where she is pioneering technology-led practices and solutions for reducing bias and promoting equity for people and communities of color. REDDI aims to leverage technology to address inequities in the product development cycle to advance racial equity and financial inclusion. Dr. Harrison works with a multi-disciplinary team across Citi to help close the racial wealth gap and increase economic mobility in the U.S.

Prior to Citi Ventures, Dr. Harrison was the Director of Technology Policy at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, where she built, scaled, and led the Center's Technology Policy Program on key tech policy issues affecting Black communities. She is the author of *Affordability & Availability: Expanding Broadband in the Black Rural South*, a report that details the potential for broadband to increase economic, educational, and health care opportunities in the Black Rural South.

Before joining the Joint Center, Dr. Harrison served as Project Director of the Aspen Digital Program at the Aspen Institute, where she conceived, developed, and led projects at the intersection of equity, technology, and public policy. While at the Institute, Dr. Harrison created the Diversity and Technology Action (D.A.T.A.) Initiative, a multi-pronged effort to rebuild the tech ecosystem to address the challenges of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Her leadership led to a cross-industry partnership that published the *Action to Catalyze Tech: A Paradigm Shift for DEI* report. Dr. Harrison has also worked at the United Nations Development Program Washington, D.C. office and Internews. Her previous academic appointments include faculty and instructor positions at Howard University, the University of Texas at Austin, and Trinity Washington University.

In addition to her work at Citi Ventures, Dominique serves as a member of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) Communications Equity and Diversity Council (CEDC) and chairs the Digital Empowerment and Inclusion Working Group. She is a member of the Program Committee of the Research Conference on Communications, Information, and Internet Policy (TPRC), the Rock Health Summit Innovation Council, and a community panelist for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA's) Transform to Open Science (TOPS) and Year of Open Science initiatives.

Dr. Harrison earned a B.S. in Advertising from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, an M.A. in Media Studies from the University of Texas at Austin, and a Ph.D. in Technology, Policy and Society from Howard University. Her scholarship focuses on race, multistakeholder governance, and communications policy, and has been featured on *NPR*, *CSPAN*, *NBC News*, *Roll Call*, and *The Hechinger Report*. Dominique is the proud child of Jamaican immigrants and can be found globetrotting at a moment's notice.



**Oleta Garrett Fitzgerald**  
Board Chair

Southern Rural Black  
Women's Initiative

**Oleta Garrett Fitzgerald** is Director of the Children's Defense Fund's Southern Regional Office (CDFSRO), and also serves as the Regional Administrator for the Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative for Economic & Social Justice (SRBWI). SRBWI operates in 77 counties across the Black Belts of Alabama, Southwest Georgia and Delta Mississippi increasing opportunities in rural economically distressed counties designated as "persistently poor" by USDA.

In 1970 she was employed by the Atlanta-based Southeastern Public Education Program of the American Friends Service Committee. In this position she participated in the Children's Defense Fund's Children Out of School in America, a national study of exclusion of children from public elementary and secondary schools; and monitored Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In 1976, she was hired as southern director for the Children's Foundation, which educated citizens and members of Congress about the need for expanded access to federal food programs.

In 1982 Ms. Fitzgerald became a project director for the Southern Regional Council working with rural electric power customers in 12 southern states to increase minority representation on rural electric cooperative boards. Moving back to her native Mississippi, she served as former Congressman Mike Espy's District Director from the beginning of his first term in 1987 until she joined the Clinton for President Campaign in 1992.

Before joining the Children's Defense Fund, Ms. Fitzgerald was appointed White House Liaison and Executive Assistant to then Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy by President Bill Clinton in January 1993. Shortly thereafter, she was named the Department's Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, where she worked with local, state and tribal governments; coordinated the Administration's long-term recovery of midwestern states affected by The Great Flood of 1993; was a member of USDA's executive review panel selecting rural Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities; and as member of the USDA Alternative Agricultural Research and Commercialization Center (AARC) Advisory Board.

Ms. Fitzgerald serves on the boards of the Mississippi Low Income Child Care Initiative; Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative For Economic and Social Justice, and NEA Foundation; advisory boards for the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center at Alcorn State University, Stennis Institute of Government at Mississippi State University, Excel by 5, Institute for Women's Policy Research, Rural Assembly, and is a member of the International Women's Forum.

Ms. Fitzgerald received the Bachelor of Science degree from Tougaloo College, Master of Arts in Rural Development from Antioch University Midwest with additional studies at the University of California at Davis; and honorary membership to Pi Alpha Alpha, the National Honor Society for Public Affairs & Administration from Mississippi State University. She contributed to the Covenant with Black America introduced by Tavis Smiley, and numerous news stories by the New York Times, Huffington Post, the BBC, The Guardian, National Public Radio, Commercial Appeal and NBC National and local affiliates as well as other broadcast and print media.





**Spencer Overton**  
President

Joint Center for Political and  
Economic Studies

**Spencer Overton** is the President of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, which was founded in 1970 and is America's Black think tank. He is also a tenured Professor of Law at George Washington University in Washington, DC.

Spencer is the author of the book [Stealing Democracy: The New Politics of Voter Suppression](#) (W.W. Norton) and [several academic articles](#) and popular commentaries on voting rights, race, and public policy, including [State Power to Regulate Social Media Companies to Prevent Voter Suppression](#), 53 U.C. Davis Law Review 1793 (2020).

Spencer's work as a commissioner on the Carter-Baker Election Commission laid the groundwork for [modern arguments against unnecessary voting restrictions that reduce turnout by legitimate voters](#). His work on the Commission on Presidential Nomination Timing and Scheduling resulted in [Iowa restoring voting rights to over 80,000 returning citizens](#). He was also a part of a group of commissioners that worked to successfully move more diverse states like South Carolina and Nevada to the beginning of the modern Democratic presidential primary process. He has testified several times before Congress on voting rights, election administration, and election disinformation.

Spencer chaired the 2008 Obama campaign's Government Reform Policy Committee, and led the 2008 Obama transition team's Election Assistance Commission agency review group. During the Obama Administration he served as Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Office of Legal Policy (the "think tank" of the Department of Justice). In that position, he partnered with White House officials to lead the Administration's policy efforts on democracy issues, including conceptualizing and/or implementing policies related to the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act, the National Voter Registration Act, and the Voting Rights Act.

Spencer has also served on the boards of Dēmos, the American Constitution Society, and Common Cause. He has practiced law at the firm Debevoise & Plimpton, clerked for U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Damon J. Keith, and graduated with honors from both Hampton University and Harvard Law School.

## Panelists' (Bios)

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# Advancing Black Agency

*How can we improve racial diversity among top congressional staffers and presidential appointees?*

For decades, companies and foundations have invested in important internship and fellowship programs that open doors to entry-level government positions for diverse college students and early-career policy professionals. Unfortunately, more needs to be done to ensure young staffers of color have opportunities for advancement, as people of color are woefully underrepresented among top congressional staff and in many presidential appointee positions. This lack of representation among top spots adversely affects communities of color in government decision-making, and limits later opportunities for people of color in Senate-confirmed government positions, the private sector, philanthropy, and the non-profit sector. This panel will highlight recent advances and continuing challenges for Black representation among presidential appointees and congressional staff, as well as explore best practices to achieve better outcomes.



**Dr. Seshia Joi Moon**  
Director, Office of Diversity  
and Inclusion

U.S. House of Representatives

**Dr. Seshia Joi Moon** is the Director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion with the U.S. House of Representatives. In this role, her coined philosophical stance is that “diversity is delegating differences and inclusivity is celebrating differences — but equity is elevating differences.”

Prior to her congressional appointment by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, her prior work experience included positions at the U.S. Department of Commerce within the Office of the Secretary and U.S. Patent and Trademark Office – and most recently served as the Director of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity at the National Institute of Standards and Technology. During her tenure, where she led the Race and Ethnicity Committee as part of the DOC Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Council, she received the Commerce Bronze Award for Superior Performance, Commerce Spirit Award, and Spotlight on Commerce for LGBT+ Pride Month.

She is a Senior Research Fellow with The Conference Board’s Engagement Institute where she examined the intersection of diversity, equity, and inclusion with employee engagement as part of the Employee Engagement and Experience Council. She is also a Senior Fellow of the Excellence in Government Fellowship Program with the Partnership for Public Service. In addition to completing executive educations with Harvard University and Cornell University, she holds a Ph.D. in Public Administration and Policy from Old Dominion University, where she examined the role of intersectionality on the talent mobility trends of women of color in the Federal Government. She also holds a M.S. from the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs and B.A. in African American Studies from Virginia Commonwealth University.

She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and also serves as a board member with the African American Federal Executive Association, Commonwealth of Virginia’s Criminal Justice Services Board, and St. Jude African American Engagement Council. She is also Executive Director of The JXN Project, which is a grantee of the Mellon Foundation’s “Monuments Project” and recipient of the American Association for State and Local History’s 2022 Leadership in History Award — and has been highlighted by PBS NewsHour, TIME, The Washington Post, The Boston Globe, and 2021 Pulitzer Prize Winner Richmond Times-Dispatch.

She hails from Richmond, VA and resides in Northern Virginia with her wife, Janice Pritchett, and cockapoo, Benji.



**Gautam Raghavan**  
Director

White House Presidential Personnel

**Gautam Raghavan** is a political advisor who currently serve as Assistant to the President & Director of Presidential Personnel in the Biden administration. Raghavan previously served as the associate director of the Office of Public Liaison in the Obama administration. Raghavan also served as Barack Obama's liaison to the LGBT community as well as the Asian American and Pacific Islander community from 2011-2014. Prior to this, he worked for the Department of Defense, the 2008 Obama Campaign, and the Democratic National Committee. Raghavan was born in India, raised in Seattle, and graduated from Stanford.



**Mike Lynch**  
Chief of Staff, Sen. Chuck  
Schumer (D-NY), and  
Staff Director

Senate Democratic Policy and  
Communications Committee



**David Strickland**  
Vice President, Global Regulatory  
Affairs and Transportation  
Technology Policy  
General Motors

**David Strickland** currently serves as Vice President for Global Regulatory Affairs and Transportation Technology Policy for General Motors (GM). He is responsible for GM's advocacy with regulatory agencies at the local, state, national and international levels, focusing on the company's transition to be the leading electric vehicle and automated vehicle manufacturer in the world.

Prior to joining GM, Mr. Strickland served as the Staff Director for the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation from 2019 - 2021. The Committee's policy and legislative jurisdiction includes Transportation Policy, Highway Safety, Aviation, Passenger and Freight Rail, Ports, Coast Guard, Communications, Internet Policy, Interstate Commerce, Marine Conservation, Fisheries, the Merchant Marine, Oceans, Weather, Atmospheric Activities, Product Safety, Pipelines, Science, Space, Technology Research, Standards and Measurement, and Sports. Agencies overseen by the Committee include the Department of Transportation, the Department of Commerce, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Transportation Safety Administration, the Federal Communications Commission, the Federal Trade Commission, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the National Transportation Safety Board, and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Before rejoining Senate Commerce, Mr. Strickland was a partner at Venable LLP, a large national law firm from 2014 - 2019. As part of the Regulatory Group, his practice focused on transportation policy, consumer protection, Internet privacy, data security, and legislative and government affairs.

Prior to joining Venable, Mr. Strickland served as the fourteenth Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) from 2010 - 2014. As the top automotive safety official in the United States, he was responsible for executing the agency's mission to reduce crash-related fatalities and injuries while insuring the highest standards of safety on the nation's roads. Mr. Strickland oversaw a broad range of vehicle safety and policymaking programs, including setting vehicle safety standards, investigating possible safety defects, and tracking safety-related recalls; annually distributing over \$600 million in highway safety grants to states and leading the behavioral safety program; and establishing and enforcing the regulations on fuel economy. His major accomplishments at NHTSA include overseeing the development of the first national fuel economy programs for both passenger vehicles and heavy-duty trucks in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency, and implementing the vehicle safety and highway safety grant mandates included in the 2012 Highway Reauthorization (MAP-21). He also issued the first ever ejection mitigation standards for passenger vehicles to help keep passengers from being partially or fully ejected from vehicles during a rollover crash; mandated lap and shoulder belts be installed on all new motorcoaches; launched the nation's largest connected vehicle (V2V) safety pilot program, and issued the first ever automated vehicle policy. In addition, Mr. Strickland brought national attention to child passenger safety issues and was a leader in the campaigns to fight impaired and distracted driving.

Prior to his appointment to NHTSA, Mr. Strickland spent eight years on the staff of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation as Democratic Senior Counsel. Through this position he served as lead counsel for the subcommittees overseeing the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), NHTSA, and the Department of Commerce.

Mr. Strickland graduated from Northwestern University with a B.S. in Communication Studies and Political Science and earned a J.D. from Harvard Law School. He lives in Alexandria, VA with his wife Robin and their son Declan.



**Dr. LaShonda Brenson**  
Senior Researcher

Joint Center for Political and  
Economic Studies

**Dr. LaShonda Brenson** is the senior researcher at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. Prior to her current role, she led the Joint Center's Hill Diversity Program as the senior fellow of diversity and inclusion at the Joint Center.

Prior to the Joint Center, Dr. Brenson served a civil rights analyst at the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. At the Commission, Dr. Brenson organized national briefings and wrote reports on municipal fines and fees and its impact on minority communities, minority voting rights, and women in prison. Previously, she was the research director at Project Vote, a national, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization founded on the belief that an organized, diverse electorate is the key to a better America.

Dr. Brenson earned her bachelor's degree in Mathematics and Political Science from the University of Rochester, and her Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. Using qualitative interviews with congressional staffers and quantitative methods, her dissertation research provides evidence that the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), as institutions, matter. One way she demonstrates the added value of the CBC and CHC is by illustrating that when caucus members serve as caucus leaders, they introduce more bills because of their additional staff capacity.



**Elliot Williams**  
Principal

The Raben Group

**Elliot Williams** is a principal in The Raben Group's Government Affairs Practice Group. With fifteen years of experience across all three branches of government, Elliot has worked with elected and appointed officials at the highest levels, and possesses a deep understanding of and contacts across the legislative and executive branches of government.

Elliot joined Raben after nearly eight years as a senior political appointee in the Obama administration. There he honed his skills in management, coalition building, implementing policy, advocating agency positions, and counseling senior leadership. He served as deputy assistant attorney general for legislative affairs at the Department of Justice, where he played significant roles in helping secure Senate confirmation for both Attorney General Loretta Lynch and Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates. Prior to Justice, he spent several years as assistant director for legislative affairs at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Elliot previously worked as judiciary counsel to Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer and started his career as a practicing attorney — first clerking for two federal judges, and then being accepted into the Attorney General's Honors Program, where he served as a trial attorney in the Justice Department's Criminal Division.

Elliot is a CNN Legal Analyst and a regular SiriusXM guest host. He is a frequent media commentator, having appeared on NPR nationally and regionally, and written for the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *CNN.com*, *HuffPost*, *The Hill*, and NBC News THINK. Elliot was recognized in 2015 as one of "D.C.'s Rising Stars" by the National Law Journal and sits on the board of the Constitutional Accountability Center. He earned a law degree and master's degree in journalism from Columbia University, and a bachelor's degree cum laude in art history from the University of Pennsylvania.

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