MEET OUR EXPERTS
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’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.
Jessica Fulton is the Vice President of Policy. 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 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. Jessica is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Jessica is a frequent guest on NPR and has appeared on MSNBC and The Hill. Her work has also been featured in The New York Times and TIME Magazine.

Jessica’s most recent publications include “Exploring Challenges for Small-Business Owners Across Race” and “Improving the Earned Income Tax Credit for Black Workers Without Children.” For more publications, click here.
Dr. LaShonda Brenson is the Senior Researcher. Prior to her current role, she served as the Senior Fellow of diversity and inclusion at the Joint Center.

Prior to her current role, she served as a Civil Rights Analyst at the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. At the Commission, LaShonda 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.

LaShonda 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.

LaShonda’s work has been featured in Essence, The Grio, Roll Call, Politico, ABC News, CNN.com, and The New York Times, among others. Dr. Brenson has appeared on MSNBC and has contributed to The Hill and The Washington Informer.

LaShonda’s most recent publications include “Racial Diversity Among U.S. Senate State Directors” and “Recent U.S. House Compensation and Diversity Survey Shows African Americans and Latina/os are Underrepresented Among Senior Roles.” For more publications, click here.
Dr. Alex Camardelle is the Director of the Workforce Policy Program, which centers Black workers in policy debates concerning the future of work, workforce development, and access to good jobs.

Prior to joining the Joint Center, Alex 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. He is also part of Georgia State University’s 40 under 40 alumni class.

Alex holds a bachelor’s degree 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 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.

Alex has contributed to The Hill and his work has been featured in The New York Times, Bloomberg, Washington Post, and NPR Marketplace. He has also appeared on the Black News Channel.

Alex’s most recent publications include “Principles to Support Black Workers in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act” and “Biden Budget Would Make Key Workforce Investments For Black Communities.”
Brian Kennedy II is a Senior Policy Analyst for the Workforce Policy Program.

Prior to joining the Joint Center, Brian served as a Policy Advisor in the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Recovery Programs where he supported the administration of American Rescue Plan funds to states and local governments. Previously, Brian worked as a consultant with Frontline Solutions, a Black-owned and led consulting firm supporting non-profits and philanthropic organizations. Brian has also worked as a Senior Policy Analyst with the North Carolina Budget and Tax Center, focusing on living wages and social safety net programs.

Brian earned bachelor’s degrees in History and Political Science from North Carolina Central University and a master’s degree in Public Policy from the Heller School at Brandeis University. Brian is also the co-host of “At The Intersection,” a Durham-based podcast about policy, culture, and identity.
Justin Nalley is a Senior Policy Analyst for the Workforce Policy Program.

Justin brings his experience advocating for access to equitable resources for Black communities to produce timely policy research and data analysis, which centers Black workers in workforce development, post-secondary access, and access to quality jobs.

Before joining the Joint Center, Justin served as the Senior Public Policy Analyst for the American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland. In this role, Justin researched, lobbied, and conducted state fiscal analysis to shape policy for Black youth and families in public education, juvenile justice reform, and voting rights. Justin was also instrumental in the formation and recognition of the first union at the ACLU of Maryland and held the role of shop steward, leading contract negotiations. He also worked at Baltimore City Public Schools as an analyst, ensuring the large urban district received accurate state revenue to support their students.

Justin is a member of the National Forum for Black Public Administrators and the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management. Justin attended the University of Maryland Eastern Shore before earning his Bachelor of Business Administration from Temple University and Master of Public Administration from West Chester University.