

November 13, 2024

Senator _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Returning U.S. Senator _____:

Welcome to the 119th Congress!

This is a time of great staff transition, and as you prepare to fill openings in your office, we ask you to prioritize racial diversity in your hiring, particularly among your personal office top staff (e.g., chief of staff, legislative director, and communications director) and “pathway” staff (e.g., deputy chiefs of staff, senior advisers, legislative assistants, counsels, and press secretaries/deputy communications directors).

If you will hold a committee or subcommittee leadership position, we also ask that you prioritize diversity in filling any openings for staff director, deputy staff director, chief clerk, deputy chief clerk, policy director, communications director, deputy communications director, general counsel, deputy general counsel, counsel, senior policy advisor, policy advisor, budget director, and professional staff member.

Hiring a team that reflects the diversity in your state would help you to more effectively serve your constituents. Having a more diverse team has been [shown](#) to increase creativity and innovation, which are important skills for congressional staffers.

Since 2015, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies has analyzed and disseminated information on the state of diversity among congressional staff. The Joint Center’s October 2023 report on diversity among senior staff in the U.S. Senate covered in [The Hill](#), demonstrates that people of color account for 41.1 percent of the U.S. population, but only 15.8 percent of top Senate personal office staff in Washington, DC offices. Further, a June 2024 Joint Center report, [Pathway Staff Diversity in Senate Personal Offices](#), covered in [Politico](#) and [Reuters](#), revealed that while people of color account for 41.1 percent of the U.S. population, they account for only 21.4 percent of pathway staff of color in the personal offices of U.S. senators.

You have an opportunity to start to change these statistics over the next few months as you hire top staff and pathway staff for your offices. This is especially true for new Senate Committee Chairs and Ranking Members building their committee staff. The Joint Center is tracking and sharing the hiring patterns for all top staff in congressional offices [here](#).

We urge you to immediately take the following steps in preparation for building a staff to support you in the 119th Congress:

1. ***Adopt a Diversity Plan:*** Develop a written office diversity and inclusion plan that includes staff retention and development strategies, data collection, and analysis procedures. A [study](#) found that organizations that shared their diversity data with stakeholders allowed

them to increase accountability and transparency around issues of diversity. Similarly, the U.S. Congress can share data about their staff diversity to increase accountability and transparency with the American people. Of course, Title VII prohibits basing employment decisions on race or other protected characteristics. Expanding recruitment to diversify the candidate pool and removing barriers to apply are examples of measures that employers can take to diversify staff that bring more candidates into consideration and are lawful.

2. ***Support the Establishment of a Bipartisan Senate Diversity and Inclusion Office to Improve Staff Diversity:*** The U.S. Senate should establish a bipartisan Senate Diversity Office that helps Senate offices recruit, hire, train, develop, and retain a diverse workforce, and collects and discloses disaggregated demographic data of all staff.

1. ***Work With the Tri-Caucus Staff Associations:*** In recruiting talent, work with the [Congressional Asian Pacific American Staff Association \(CAPASA\)](#), [Congressional Black Associates \(CBA\)](#), [Congressional Hispanic Staff Association \(CHSA\)](#), and [Senate Black Legislative Staff Caucus \(SBLSC\)](#), which maintain databases of strong diverse talent.

2. ***Engage the Tri-Caucus Nonprofit Organizations:*** The [Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute \(CHCI\)](#), [Congressional Black Caucus Foundation \(CBCF\)](#), [Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies \(APAICS\)](#), and other organizations similarly focused on diversity in government are great resources for member offices. Recruiting and/or accepting interns and fellows from their programs, meeting with and speaking to their program participants, and supporting their missions by participating in their events will increase your office's visibility among diverse talent and continue to build the pipeline of diverse staff.

In the new Congress, top and pathway staffers will significantly influence decisions affecting our nation. This includes developing and building support for legislation, providing oversight of hundreds of administrative agencies that employ over three million civilian and military workers, and overseeing a multi-trillion-dollar budget and appropriations process.

Ensuring racial diversity among your top and pathway staff would enhance the deliberation, innovation, legitimacy, and outcomes of your office and the U.S. Senate.

You have an opportunity to show that the experiences and skills of all Americans are vital to your work.

We look forward to working with you.

Regards,

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies & partners (will be listed alphabetically)

American Governance Institute
Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS)
Black Economic Alliance

Black Futures Lab
Black to the Future Action Fund
Black Voters Matter Fund
Black Women's Congressional Alliance
Black Women's Health Imperative
CenterLink: The Community of LGBTQ Centers
Coalition on Human Needs
Color Of Change
Congressional Black Caucus Foundation
Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI)
D&P Creative Strategies
Democracy Fund Voice
Diversity in Government Relations Coalition
EdTrust
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities
Equal Justice Society
Equality California
Impact Fund
Inclusive America
Issue One
Japanese American Citizens League
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
MANA, A National Latina Organization
NAACP
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF)
National Action Network
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)
National Asian Pacific American Families Allied for Substance Awareness and Harm Reduction
National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders (NALCAB)
National Association of Securities Professionals
National Bankers Association
National Black Justice Collective
National Black Worker Center
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (National CAPACD)
National Employment Law Project
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
NCAPA (National Council of Asian Pacific Americans)
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
POPVOX Foundation
Race Forward
Reflections DEI
Representative Democracy
Rulon & White Governance Strategies

Senate Black Legislative Staff Caucus (SBLSC)
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Springfield Food Policy Council
State and Federal Communications, Inc.
State Innovation Exchange (SiX)
TESOL International Association
The Almond Group
The Arc of the United States
The Madison Group, LLC
The National Institute For Lobbying & Ethics
The Sikh Coalition
Third Way
U.S. Black Chambers, Inc.
UnidosUS
Union for Reform Judaism
Washington Government Relations Group
Women of Reform Judaism
Working IDEAL