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# OPINION

## Lasting Effects of Shirley Chisholm's Legacy

Black women taking aim at the status quo



BY KELLY DITTMAR AND  
GLYNDA CARR

Fifty years ago, Shirley Chisholm campaigned successfully to become the first black woman in Congress. Four years later, she became the first woman of color and the first African American to win delegate votes at a major party presidential convention. Throughout her presidential campaign, she attracted voters to the "Chisholm Trail" with her motto and reputation of being "unbought and unbossed."

But Chisholm's trailblazing didn't end with her presidential defeat. She served in Congress for another decade and left a

legacy with lasting effects to this day.

The 2018 elections will mark another stop on the Chisholm Trail, where black women are poised to build on Chisholm's legacy of leadership, determination, and desire to disrupt the status quo. Amidst reports of the "surge" of women running in 2018 are lack women candidates at every level, including some with the potential to make history. Perhaps most notably, 2018 could see the election of the first black woman governor in the United States.

The potential to harness and expand black women's political power is not limited to candidates this year. Black women voted at the highest rates of any race and gender group in both the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections, and again in the 2017 special U.S. Senate election in Alabama. If that race is any guide, black women voters appear mobilized to turn out in high numbers again in 2018.

But before we can measure progress for black women in election 2018, we need to take

stock of black women's current political power. That's why the Center for American Women and Politics and the Higher Heights Leadership Fund teamed up again to release "The Chisholm Effect: Black Women in American Politics 2018."

The report outlines the status of black women in American politics today. Despite being 7.3 percent of the U.S. population, black women are less than 5 percent of officeholders elected to statewide executive offices, Congress, and state legislatures. Black women are 5 of the mayors in the nation's top 100 most populous cities.

Since Chisholm served as the sole black woman in Congress, 38 black women have served in Congress from 16 states, including 2 black women senators. Over the same half-century, 12 black women have been elected to statewide executive office. These numbers are small when considered within the 50-year context, but the pace of advancement in recent years marks momentum to

build upon.

Ten of the 12 black women who have served in statewide elected executive office have held office in the past two decades. In 1990, just one Black woman served in Congress; 18 years later, that number is up to 19. In just the last 5 years, 8 black women have been elected mayor in the 100 most populous cities in the U.S. And just this year, Sheila Oliver became the first Democratic black woman lieutenant governor nationwide.

This momentum will only continue - and increase - with work. Black women are doing the work every day to engage their communities in the political process, to make their own voices heard, and to take their seats at the tables of governance. Organizations like Higher Heights are working to amplify those voices and hold political leaders accountable for inclusion. And, with Higher Heights, the Center for American Women and Politics is continuing to conduct research and programs that both identify and

tackle barriers to black women's political progress.

But the work doesn't stop with us. Recognizing the imperative of black women's political inclusion is a responsibility we all share. When Chisholm was campaigning amidst war, social unrest, and crises of leadership, she argued, "At present, our country needs women's idealism and determination, perhaps more in politics than anywhere else."

Those words ring especially true today, as our country confronts significant challenges at home and abroad. In this moment, the opportunities for meeting this demand while increasing black women's political power, especially in elected office are great. And we've got some guidance on how to do it in 2018: Follow the Chisholm Trail.

*Kelly Dittmar is an assistant professor of political science and a Center for American Women and Politics scholar; and Glynda Carr is co-founder of Higher Heights for America.*

## Workers See Minimal Impact in Take Home Pay

The tax scam starts to sink in

BY JOSH HOXIE

It's no fun being scammed.

I distinctly remember looking for my first big city apartment and finding an ad



that looked perfect. Beautiful picture, cheap rent, great location. It sounded too good to be true and, sadly, it was.

Just send a check in the mail, and don't forget to send over your Social Security number, they said. We'll mail you a key.

Fortunately, I didn't take the bait. I've also managed to dodge the countless "Nigerian royalty" looking to make me rich via e-mail, and the endless robo-calls about lowering my

utility bills.

Not everyone is so lucky. If there's one constant of scams, it's that given enough opportunities, they'll get somebody to give up the goods.

Today, that somebody is the United States.

As their W-2s arrive in the mail, U.S. workers are starting to see the minimal impact of the new tax changes passed by Congress late last year. While the budget-busting package was a boon for millionaires, it means next to nothing for ordinary people.

Still, there's a massive public relations campaign being waged right now by Republican donors backing the Trump tax cuts. Make the rich richer, they say, and we'll all benefit.

And while you're at it, they've got some swampland

in Florida for sale.

The Koch Brothers alone will spend \$20 million on ads selling the tax bill. This is a drop in the bucket compared to the \$1.4 billion they stand to gain every year in tax breaks. It's also a tiny fraction of their overall campaign spending on the 2018 midterms elections, which is projected to reach \$400 million.

The Kochs have their work cut out for them. A new poll from Politico shows most workers report seeing no increase in their take home pay after the new tax laws took effect.

This is important.

The whole premise behind adding \$1.5 trillion to the debt, giving massive handouts to the ultra-wealthy, and giving a tax break to the nation's most profitable corporations was that working folks would also get a

bit of cash.

Turns out, they're not seeing that money. But the PR push is having an impact.

While majority of the American people never supported the bill, most polls have shown an uptick in support since December. The most recent poll — from GBA Strategies — found that 44 percent of voters oppose the law, compared to just 40 percent who support it.

The GBA study had another interesting finding: Voters are incredibly susceptible to messaging on this issue. That's why the GOP donor class is spending unprecedented sums on ads.

The tax law is also getting a boost from corporations' public relations departments, who are making splashy announcements about bonuses for their workers.

Many of those bonuses, it turns out, are being doled out to garner political support for the tax bill, not for the benefit of the business or as a thank you to workers. They're also supposed to distract the public from the massive onslaught of layoffs that came in the wake of the tax cuts — from Walmart to Coca-Cola to Comcast and many more.

The Trump tax cuts are a scam, benefiting the wealthy at the expense of everyone else. If you happened to find yourself caught up in the scam, don't blame yourself. The sales pitch was mighty impressive.

But also, don't get scammed twice.

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