

Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Lack of Diversity in Hiring Plagues Senate on Both Sides of the Aisle

Only three senior-level Senate staff positions are held by African Americans

By **Lauren Victoria Burke** (NNPA Newswire Contributor)

Don Cravins, the National Urban League's senior vice president for policy, challenged members of the U.S. Senate, particularly the Senate's 46 Democrats, on the lack of minority hiring in their senior staff positions at a two-hour forum on Capitol Hill.

"Out of 300 senior-level positions in the Senate, only three are occupied by African Americans. What's most insulting

tive agenda controls the \$3.8 trillion dollar federal budget and provides oversight over federal employees – collectively 4.1 million people.

Republican Senator Tim Scott's Chief of Staff Jennifer DeCasper, the only Black Chief of Staff currently serving in the U.S. Senate, participated in the discussion. The only Black Legislative Director in the Senate, Clint Odom, who was recently hired by Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), was in the audience.

The National Urban League and the Joint

African American in any of the three senior staff positions.

New Democratic Senate Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), Tim Kaine (D-

Va.), Mark Warner (D-Va.), Ben Cardin (D-Md.), Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), currently have no Black senior staff members. Additionally, Sen. Van Hollen became the Chairman of the Demo-

cratic Senatorial Campaign Committee in November 2016 and hired no Black senior staff, even though the electorate is becoming increasingly Black and Brown.

"The numbers are

worst than they have ever been," Cravins railed. "We've been talking about this issue for decades."

The issue of Senate

See SENATE on page 10

“We are making it abundantly clear – the time is now”

to me is that only one of them works for a Democrat member – a party that goes out every election and relies on Black voters to elect them," said Cravins, a former Louisiana state senator; Cravins served as Chief of Staff for former-Senator Mary Landrieu for two years. "I'm not happy, today. I'm frustrated and embarrassed and I've had enough."

Cravins added: "The time for lip service is over. We won't stop pressing this issue."

About 250 people showed up for the open discussion on congressional hiring, specifically focused on the low numbers of Black and Latino staff in the U.S. Senate.

"We are making it abundantly clear – the time is now," said Don Bell, who added that Senator Schumer, who became the new Democratic Leader in the Senate when Sen. Harry Reid (D-Ariz.) retired, only has Black staff at non-senior staff levels.

The senior staff positions on Capitol Hill are Chief of Staff, Legislative Director and Communications Director.

"There are nearly 40 general counsels of color standing at the helm of Fortune 500 companies in America. Forty. And yet you'd be hard pressed to find one Black one in the Hart Senate Office Building," Cravins told the audience of staff, advocates and press. "It's an embarrassment. It's a travesty. Something has got to be done."

Will Searcy, the director of the Black Talent Initiative at the Joint Center for Political & Economic Studies, said that Senate staff dictates that the Senate's legisla-

Center for Political and Economic Studies have been specific to focus on Black and Latino hiring to senior staff positions in the Senate; Chief of Staff, Legislative Director and Communications Director. The reasons are obvious; Senior staffers hire junior staff, control the office budget and handle the most important issues in the office from policy priorities to communications.

The lack of minority hiring and promotion is particularly bad for Senate Democrats, many of whom owe their election victories to Black voters. No Senate Democrat from a state with over 20 percent African American population has an

“Everybody can be great, because anybody can serve...”

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



At Multnomah County, we celebrate the legacy of Dr. King by serving our citizens with equity and inclusion through our business and contracting processes.

We welcome and encourage the participation of state of Oregon Certified Firms in achieving greater outcomes for all

For more information, contact
Lee Fleming, Multnomah County Supplier Diversity Officer
lee.fleming@multco.us or 503.988.7540

Find opportunities at: www.multcopurch.org or <http://pdxprocurementsearch.com/>




“We may have all come on different ships, but we’re in the same boat now.”
- Martin Luther King Jr.



For more information, contact
Tiffani Penson,
Supplier Diversity Officer
tiffani.penson@portlandoregon.gov
503.823.7785

we are better TOGETHER

www.portlandoregon.gov