

# REPORT: None of the 28 Top Staffers in House and Senate are People of Color

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WASHINGTON – The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies has released six detailed reports on the troubling lack of racial diversity among the 167 top staff in the Washington, D.C. offices of six congressional delegations – Delaware, Maryland, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Virginia.

Of the 12 U.S. Senators in the six states, none had an African American top staffer despite representing significant Black populations.

In fact, the reports note that the only top staffer of color for any of the senators was a Latino top staffer for Mississippi GOP Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith.

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The lack of diversity in Tennessee was even more glaring with none of the 28 top staffers working for the U.S. House and U.S. Senate Members being people of color despite people of color making up 25 percent of the state’s population, The Joint Center noted in a news release.

“These numbers are alarming but there is no better time than right now to change the trajectory of diversity among top staff and mid-level staff,” said Spencer Overton, President of the Joint Center.

“In the coming months, hundreds of new staffers will be hired by new Members, new Chairs of U.S. House committees and other Members,” Overton said.

“The 116th Congress will be the most diverse in the nation’s history and it’s imperative that the diversity among senior and mid-level staff reflect the diversity of America,” said Don Bell, the

director of the Black Talent Initiative at the Joint Center.

“Any individual seeking to hold a leadership position in the 116th Congress must be committed to taking immediate and decisive action that ensures that Congress is truly representative of the people it serves,” Bell said.

Other key statistics from the reports include:

- In Tennessee, Representative Steve Cohen (TN-9) has no top staff of color but represents a district that is 75.7 percent people of color and, in 2016, African Americans accounted for 82 percent of Democratic turnout in his district.
  - Across the country, only five other Members of Congress who lack top staff of color represent districts with higher numbers of residents of color.
  - Just over 28 percent of the Tennessee delegation’s top staffers are women.
- In Pennsylvania, less than 10 percent of the top staffers are people of color even though 23 percent of the state’s population are people of color.
  - Of the 18 elected Members of the Pennsylvania delegation, just three have at least one top staffer of color.
- In Maryland, people of color make up almost half of the state’s population but less than 25 percent of the top staff of House and Senate members.
  - African Americans accounted for 47 percent of the Democratic Party’s voters in Maryland in 2016, but they account for less than 15 percent of the top staffers who work for the Democratic Members of the Maryland delegation.
  - None the nine top staffers who work for Senator Ben Cardin, Senator Chris Van Hollen, or House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer are



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- In Mississippi, only 18.7 percent of top staff are people of color despite making up 42.5 percent of the state’s population.
  - While African Americans make up over 37 percent of Mississippi’s population, none of six top staffers and only 11 percent of the mid-level staffers who work for the U.S. Senators from Mississippi are Black.
  - African Americans accounted for 13 percent of the Republican Party’s voters in Mississippi in 2016 but accounted for none of the 14 top staffers who work for Republican Members of the state’s congressional delegation.
  - 57.4 percent of African Americans in Mississippi live in a district represented by a U.S. House Member and two U.S. Senators without any Black top staffers.
- In Delaware, people of color account for over a third of Delaware’s population (36.4 percent), but just 20 percent of the top staffers.
  - African Americans accounted for

a third of the Democratic Party’s voters in Delaware in 2016, but they account for none of the seven top staffers and only three of the 40 mid-level staffers who work for Delaware’s two Democratic U.S. Senators—Tom Carper and Chris Coons.

- In Virginia, less than 15 percent of the top staffers are people of color even though 36.7 percent of the state’s population are people of color.
  - Of the 13 elected Members of the Virginia delegation, just four have at least one top staffer of color.
  - African Americans accounted for 37 percent of the Democratic Party’s voters in Virginia in 2016, but they accounted for none of the top staff of Virginia’s two Democratic U.S. Senators, 13 percent of Senator Warner’s mid-level staffers, and none of Senator Kaine’s mid-level staffers.

The reports examined the racial diversity of staff directors of full committees as well as personal office chiefs of staff, legislative directors, and communications directors.

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