

BLACK WOMEN IN AMERICAN POLITICS: 2017 STATUS UPDATE



Few have characterized election 2016 as good for women. Whether because the first female nominee for president was defeated or because women saw little to no gain in representation across levels of office, the dominant gender narrative that emerged from last year's campaign was hardly positive. But there were some key wins for women of color overall – and Black women in particular. As the numbers below illustrate:

- ◆ Black women were 3 of the 14 non-incumbent women elected to the U.S. House or Senate in 2016.¹ Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA) became the second Black woman to ever serve in the U.S. Senate; Representative Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE) was the first woman elected to represent Delaware in Congress; and Representative Val Demings (D-FL) joined Florida's congressional delegation. Importantly, the two new Black women House members – both of whom won open seats – were elected in non-majority-minority districts, demonstrating opportunities for expanding the sites for Black women's legislative representation.
- ◆ Black women nominees for open congressional seats fared better than women overall in 2016; in fact, they have fared better than women overall in all but two election cycles since 2000.
- ◆ All of the net gain for women in state legislatures from 2016 (24.5%) to 2017 (24.9%) came from women of color, including a net increase among Black women state legislators from 257 (3.5%) to 271 (3.7%).
- ◆ Two Black women were elected as mayors in the 100 most populous cities in America; they are Catherine Pugh, who became the third consecutive Black woman mayor of Baltimore, MD, and Sharon Weston Broome, elected in Baton Rouge, LA.

But the data presented here also provide important reminders that:

- ◆ Black women remain severely underrepresented as both candidates and officeholders at the statewide executive level. Only four Black women were general election candidates for statewide elected executive office in the 2016 elections, and none were successful.
- ◆ Even where their numbers have increased, there is still vast opportunity for growth in the number of Black women running and winning at all levels of office, including outside of majority-minority districts.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, these data do not include non-voting delegates.

CURRENT NUMBERS

STATEWIDE ELECTED EXECUTIVE OFFICE

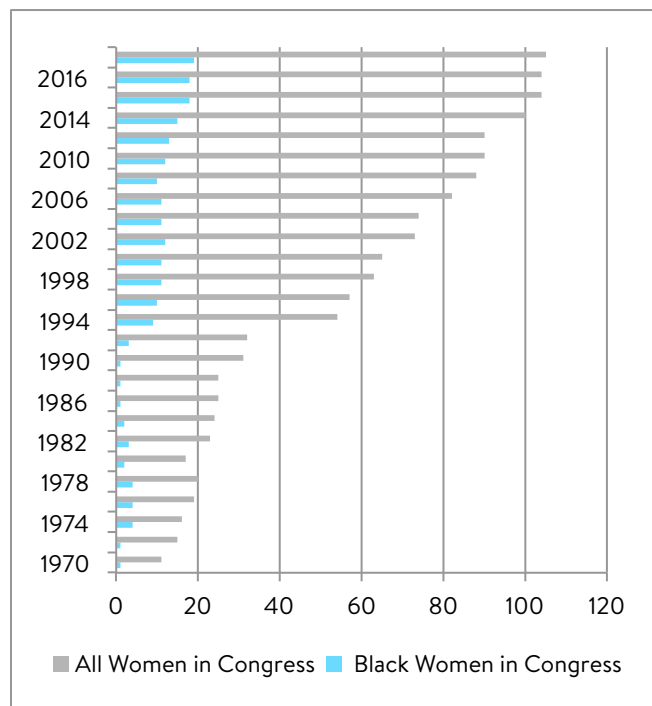
- ◆ 2 Black women currently serve in statewide elected executive office; Jenean Hampton (R) is the lieutenant governor of Kentucky and Denise Nappier (D) is the state treasurer of Connecticut. Together, these women represent 2.7% (2 of 75) of all women statewide elected executive officials and 0.6% (2 of 312) of all statewide elected executive officials in the United States.
- ◆ Just 11 Black women have ever held statewide elected executive offices in 10 states.
- ◆ No Black woman has ever been elected governor.

Black Women Who Have Ever Held Statewide Elected Executive Office

Name	State	Office	Years of Service
Velvlea "Vel" Phillips (D)	WI	Sec. of State	1979-1982
Pamela Carter (D)	IN	Atty. General	1993-1997
Vikki Buckley (R)	CO	Sec. of State	1995-1999
Denise Nappier (D)	CT	St. Treasurer	1999-Present
Karen Freeman-Wilson (D)	IN	Atty. General	2000-2001
Jennette Bradley (R)	OH	Lt. Governor	2003-2005
Jennette Bradley (R)	OH	St. Treasurer	2005-2007
Velda Jones Potter (D)	DE	St. Treasurer	2009-2011
Sandra D. Kennedy (D)	AZ	Corp. Comm.	2009-2013
Jennifer Carroll (R)	FL	Lt. Governor	2011-2013
Kamala Harris (D)	CA	Atty. General	2011-2017
Jenean Hampton (R)	KY	Lt. Governor	2011-Present

CONGRESS

Women in Congress, 1970-Present



- ◆ 19 Black women currently serve in Congress, including 18 Black women representatives and 1 Black woman senator.² In addition, 2 Black women serve as non-voting delegates. All but one representative – Mia Love (R-UT) – are Democrats. Love is the first Black Republican woman to ever serve in Congress.
- ◆ Black women are 3.6% of all members of Congress, 7.9% of all Democrats in Congress, 18.1% of all women in Congress, and 38% of Black members of Congress. They are 4.1% of all members of the House, 21.4% of all women in the House, and 38.3% of Black members of the House; 1% of all members of the Senate, 4.8% of all

² Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA) identifies as multi-racial, both African American and Asian American.

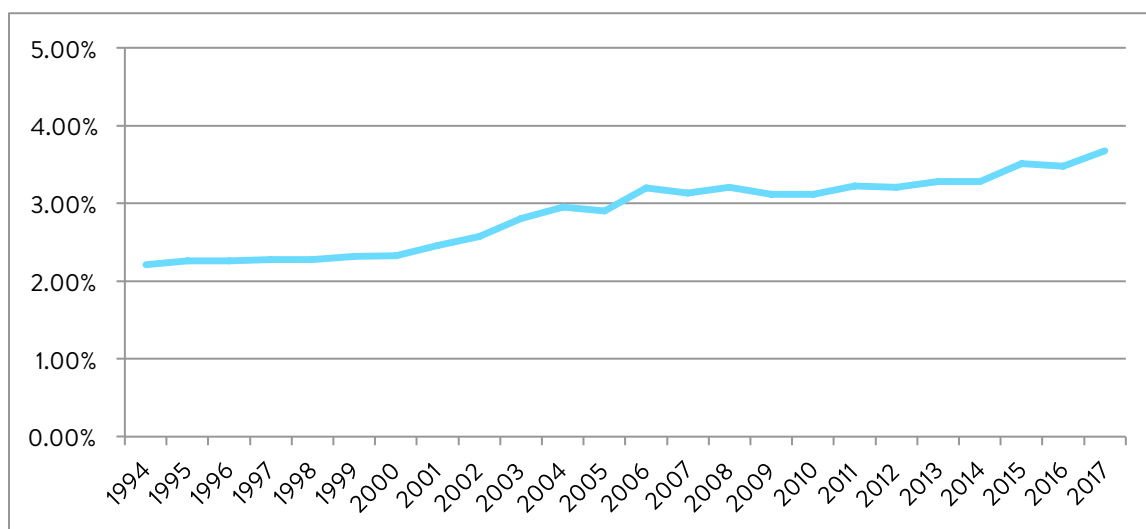
women in the Senate, and 33.3% of Black members of the Senate; and 9.3% of Democrats in the House and 2.2% of Democrats in the Senate.³

- ◆ Since Shirley Chisholm (D-NY) became the first Black woman elected to Congress in 1968, 38 Black women have served in Congress from 16 states; 36 (35D, 1R) Black women have served in the House and 2 (2D) Black women have served in the Senate.

STATE LEGISLATURES

- ◆ As of June 23, 2017, 271 Black women serve as state legislators nationwide, including 202 Black women members of state houses and 69 Black women members of state senates.
- ◆ Black women are 3.7% of all state legislators and 14.7% of all women state legislators nationwide. They are 3.7% of members of state houses and 14.4% of women in state houses; 3.5% of state senators and 15.6% of women state senators; and 8.5% of all Democratic state legislators in the U.S.
- ◆ Within the past two decades, Black women have increased their representation as a percentage of all legislators from 2.3% in 1998 to 3.7% today. In the same period, Black women have become a larger proportion of all women state legislators; they were 10.3% of women state legislators in 1998 and are 14.7% of all women state legislators today.

Black Women as a Percentage of all State Legislators, 1994-Present



³ These data do not include non-voting delegates.

MAYORS

- ◆ Four Black women currently serve as mayors of the 100 most populous cities in the U.S.:



**MURIEL
BOWSER**

Washington, DC



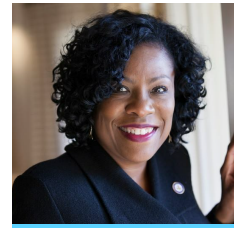
**CATHERINE
PUGH**

Baltimore, MD



**PAULA
HICKS-HUDSON**

Toledo, OH



**SHARON
WESTON BROOME**

Baton Rouge, LA

- ◆ 10 black women have been elected mayor in the 100 most populous cities since 2002, with 5 of those women serving simultaneously from January to June 2017.
- ◆ Before 2002, Lottie Shackelford was the first Black woman to be elected mayor of one of the nation's 100 most populous cities, becoming mayor of Little Rock, AR in 1987.

Black Women in State Legislatures, 2017

State	Number of Black Women	Number of Women	Number of Legislators	Percent of Women in State Legislatures	Percent of All State Legislatures
AK	0	18	60	0.0%	0.0%
AL	13	21	140	61.9%	9.3%
AR	4	25	135	16.0%	3.0%
AZ	0	35	90	0.0%	0.0%
CA	3	26	120	11.5%	2.5%
CO	5	39	100	12.8%	5.0%
CT	4	52	187	7.7%	2.1%
DE	2	13	62	15.4%	3.2%
FL	9	41	160	22.0%	5.6%
GA	31	62	236	50.0%	13.1%
HI	0	21	76	0.0%	0.0%
IA	3	34	150	8.8%	2.0%
ID	1	32	105	3.1%	1.0%
IL	15	63	177	23.8%	8.5%
IN	4	29	150	13.8%	2.7%
KS	4	46	165	8.7%	2.4%
KY	1	23	138	4.3%	0.7%
LA	8	22	144	36.4%	5.6%
MA	2	52	200	3.8%	1.0%
MD	20	60	188	33.3%	10.6%
ME	1	64	186	1.6%	0.5%
MI	6	35	148	17.1%	4.1%
MN	3	65	201	4.6%	1.5%
MO	6	43	197	14.0%	3.0%
MS	13	24	174	54.2%	7.5%
MT	0	43	150	0.0%	0.0%
NC	13	43	170	30.2%	7.6%
ND	0	26	141	0.0%	0.0%
NE	0	13	49	0.0%	0.0%
NH	2	123	424	1.6%	0.5%
NJ	9	36	120	25.0%	7.5%
NM	2	34	112	5.9%	1.8%
NV	4	25	63	16.0%	6.3%
NY	19	59	213	32.2%	8.9%
OH	10	30	132	33.3%	7.6%
OK	2	19	149	10.5%	1.3%
OR	2	30	90	6.7%	2.2%
PA	8	47	253	17.0%	3.2%
RI	2	34	113	5.9%	1.8%
SC	7	23	170	30.4%	4.1%
SD	0	21	105	0.0%	0.0%
TN	7	22	132	31.8%	5.3%
TX	9	37	181	24.3%	5.0%
UT	1	20	104	5.0%	1.0%
VA	11	27	140	40.7%	7.9%
VT	1	71	180	1.4%	0.6%
WA	1	53	147	1.9%	0.7%
WI	2	31	132	6.5%	1.5%
WV	1	18	134	5.6%	0.7%
WY	0	10	90	0.0%	0.0%
Total	271	1840	7383	14.7%	3.7%

2016 ELECTION

STATEWIDE ELECTED EXECUTIVE OFFICE

- ◆ Black women were four of 42 (9.5%) women general election candidates for statewide elected executive offices in election 2016. None were successful.⁴
- ◆ They included three Democratic nominees (Linda Coleman – NC lieutenant governor; Mary Ann Claytor – West Virginia state auditor; and Robin Smith – Missouri secretary of state) and one non-partisan candidate for Washington superintendent of public instruction (Erin Jones). Jones and Coleman were challengers, and Claytor and Smith ran for open seats.

Black Women Candidates for Statewide Elected Executive Office, 2000-2016

Year	Total Candidates	Lost Primary	Lost General	Won General
2000	3	1	2	0
2002	7	4	1	2
2003	1	0	1	0
2005	1	1	0	0
2006	10	6	3	1
2008	2	1		1
2010	13	4	6	3
2012	4	2	2	0
2014	26	13	11	2
2016	4	0	4	0

CONGRESS

- ◆ 28 (24D, 4R) Black women were general election nominees for House and Senate offices in 2016; 19 (18D, 1R) won, including all 16 incumbents and all 3 open seat nominees. No Black women running as challengers were successful.⁵
- ◆ Black women were 28 of 182 (15.4%) women major party nominees for Congress in election 2016. They were 27 of 167 (16.2%) women nominees for the U.S. House and 1 of 15 (6.7%) women nominees for the U.S. Senate.

Black Women Congressional Win Rates, 2000-2016

	All Candidates	Open	Challenger
2000	47.8%	0.0%	0
2002	68.8%	50.0%	0
2004	60.0%	40.0%	0
2006	63.2%	50.0%	0
2008	75.0%	100.0%	0
2010	72.2%	60.0%	0
2012	61.9%	50.0%	0
2014	58.1%	66.7%	0
2016	67.9%	100.0%	0

All Women Congressional Win Rates, 2000-2016

	All Candidates	Open	Challenger
2000	50.0%	35.3%	7.1%
2002	47.4%	33.3%	1.9%
2004	47.0%	31.8%	1.5%
2006	53.1%	42.1%	6.9%
2008	56.8%	54.6%	12.1%
2010	51.3%	35.3%	13.1%
2012	48.6%	55.9%	6.5%
2014	50.3%	50.0%	2.7%
2016	48.9%	45.5%	4.8%

** Candidates for non-voting delegate are not included in these calculations.

⁴ Third party candidates not included.

⁵ These numbers do not include two incumbents who ran for U.S. Delegate and won from D.C. and the Virgin Islands.

- ◆ Black women were 3 of the 14 non-incumbent women elected to the U.S. House or Senate in 2016. Winners included: Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA), the second Black woman to serve in the U.S. Senate; Representative Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE), the first woman to represent Delaware in Congress; and Representative Val Demings (D-FL).
- ◆ 15 of 27 (55.6%) Black women House nominees in 2016 were competing in majority-minority districts. Eleven of 18 (61.1%) Black women House winners on Election Day now represent majority-minority districts. Importantly, the two new Black women House members – both of whom won open seats – were elected in non-majority-minority districts.
- ◆ While Black women candidates have not fared well as challengers in congressional elections since 2000, their win rates have been higher, on average, than those for women congressional nominees overall. More specifically, Black women nominees for open congressional seats have fared better than women overall in all but two election cycles since 2000.

STATE LEGISLATURE

- ◆ 43 non-incumbent Black women, all Democrats, won state legislative seats in election 2016, including 37 state house and 6 state senate candidates. Of the 43 non-incumbent Black women winners of state legislative seats in 2016, 39 won open seats and four defeated incumbents.
- ◆ Black women were 10.9% of all women non-incumbent winners and 18.2% of all Democratic women non-incumbent winners of state legislative seats in 2016.

Black Women Non-Incumbent Winners of State Legislative Seats, 2016					
	Democrats	Republicans	Total	House	Senate
Open	39	0	39	34	5
Challenger	4	0	4	3	1
Total	43	0	43	37	6

MAYORS

- ◆ In 2016, Black women were elected mayor in two of America's 100 most populous cities. Catherine Pugh (D) was elected mayor of Baltimore, MD, becoming the third consecutive Black woman to serve as Baltimore's mayor. Sharon Weston Broome (D) was elected mayor of Baton Rouge, LA, in December 2016. She was sworn in on January 2, 2017.

LOOKING AHEAD

These data demonstrate that, even with the gains Black women saw at some levels of office in 2016, there is more work to do to ensure that Black women's representation in elected office reflects their presence in American society. That work includes, but is not limited to:

- ◆ Harnessing the energy of Black women engaged in advocacy, community engagement, and public leadership to demand and support Black women candidates for elected office.
- ◆ Expanding the sites for recruitment and support of Black women candidates to non-majority-minority districts at the state and federal level, U.S. Senate seats, and statewide elected executive offices .
- ◆ Addressing barriers that impede Black women's entry or success in political institutions, whether they be party gatekeepers, disparities in financial resources, or constrained ideals of what it looks like to be a candidate or officeholder.

Organizations like Higher Heights and the Center for American Women and Politics will continue our work to identify challenges confronting Black women in politics, create environments for Black women to successfully navigate (and disrupt) U.S. political institutions, and foster the support infrastructure necessary to translate Black women's political engagement and resilience into formal political representation.

ABOUT HIGHER HEIGHTS

Higher Heights is the only organization dedicated solely to harnessing Black women's political power and leadership potential to overcome barriers to political participation and increase Black women's participation in civic processes. Higher Heights Leadership Fund, a 501(c)(3), is investing in a long-term strategy to expand and support Black women's leadership pipeline at all levels and strengthen their civic participation beyond just Election Day. **Learn more at www.HigherHeightsLeadershipFund.org**

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN WOMEN AND POLITICS (CAWP)

The Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is nationally recognized as the leading source of scholarly research and current data about American women's political participation. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about women's participation in politics and government and to enhance women's influence and leadership in public life. CAWP's education and outreach programs translate research findings into action, addressing women's under-representation in political leadership with effective, imaginative programs serving a variety of audiences. As the world has watched Americans considering female candidates for the nation's highest offices, CAWP's over four decades of analyzing and interpreting women's participation in American politics have provided a foundation and context for the discussion. **Learn more at www.cawp.rutgers.edu**