



Black Women IN AMERICAN POLITICS 2025

Forward

A decade ago, the Black Women in American Politics report began documenting what many of us already knew in our bones, that Black women have long been at the heart of American democracy, organizing, voting, leading, even when our political institutions failed to reflect our power.

Today, we write this foreword not only as readers of this report, but as a reflection of its findings. We stand in a moment shaped by the tireless labor, fierce advocacy, and unshakable vision of Black women who demanded and built something better, not just for ourselves, but for our communities and for this country.

Over the past ten years, the data tells a powerful story: Black women have made it to the executive branch and the Supreme Court. We have nearly doubled our presence in Congress, broken records in state legislatures, and expanded our leadership in cities and states across the nation. We've shattered many "firsts," and in doing so, created new blueprints for what is possible.

The 2024 presidential campaign of Vice President Kamala Harris stands as a testament to how far we've come as she stood on the shoulders of the trailblazing leadership of Shirley Chisholm, who first dared to seek the presidency more than 50 years ago. That legacy of courage continues to shape our collective path forward.

This year also marks the first time in history that two Black women serve together in the United States Senate. That milestone is not a coincidence; it's a culmination. It's the result of investments made, barriers challenged, and generations of Black women who refused to be sidelined.

But this is not just a story of celebration. As this report makes clear, Black women remain underrepresented at every level of government, especially in the highest offices. In our nation's 249-year history, a Black woman has never served as governor of a state or as president of the United States. That reality is a stark reminder that our work is not done.

That's why this report matters. It doesn't just catalog the wins; it lays out the work ahead. It reminds us that representation isn't symbolic. It's structural. It's policy-shaping. It's democracy-strengthening. And it requires all of us, from the halls of Congress to local organizing meetings to keep building together.

Thank you to the researchers, advocates, and visionaries behind this report. And to every Black woman still waiting to see herself fully reflected in power, we are well on our way.

Let's keep rising.

Senator Angela Alsobrooks

Maryland

Senator Lisa Blunt Rochester

Delaware

About

Higher Heights Leadership Fund

The Higher Heights Leadership Fund equips Black women to amplify their individual and collective political engagement, power, and leadership capacity to improve the lives of Black people and strengthen American democracy.

[Learn more at \[www.HigherHeightsLeadershipFund.org\]\(http://www.HigherHeightsLeadershipFund.org\)](http://www.HigherHeightsLeadershipFund.org)

The Center for American Women and Politics

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 women's political participation in the United States. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about the role of women in American politics, enhance women's influence in public life, and expand the diversity of women in politics and government.

CAWP's education and outreach programs translate research findings into action, addressing women's underrepresentation in political leadership with effective, intersectional, and imaginative programs serving a variety of audiences. As the world has watched Americans considering female candidates for the nation's highest offices, CAWP's five decades of analyzing and interpreting women's participation in American politics have provided a foundation and context for the discussion.

[Learn more at \[www.cawp.rutgers.edu\]\(http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu\)](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu)



Introduction

For the past decade, the Black Women in American Politics Report has tracked, analyzed, and celebrated the growing presence and power of Black women in the political arena. This decade of reporting has spotlighted both the steady acceleration of Black women's elected leadership and the persistent underrepresentation they face at every level of government. While the political landscape has shifted, one truth remains clear: Black women continue to lead, mobilize, and shape our democracy, even when the system is slow to reflect their full political power.

The 2024 election cycle marked another historic milestone: for the first time in U.S. history, a Black woman ran at the top of a major-party presidential ticket.

Over 107 days, Kamala Harris (D) led a national campaign that not only faced heightened scrutiny but also served as a powerful symbol of Black women's political strength, resilience, and influence.

While Black women did not break records for officeholding at the congressional or statewide executive level as a result of the 2024 election, Black women did reach a new high in state legislatures in 2025. At the same time, Black women made a significant stride in federal representation — we elected two Black women to the U.S. Senate simultaneously for the first time in history.

These victories mark critical progress in expanding Black women's leadership in Congress. We also achieved other significant gains in 2024:

- Black women reached a record high in state legislative representation in 2025, signaling progress in down-ballot representation.
- In the 2024 general election, 63% of Black women congressional nominees won their contests — outpacing the win rates of women candidates (48.9%) and men candidates (53.3%) across race/ethnicity. Among non-incumbents, Black women congressional nominees won at higher rates (19%) than both women (13.2%) and men (17.5%) candidates overall.
- Black women also made gains in executive municipal leadership in 2024: Cherelle Parker (D) was elected mayor of Philadelphia, PA — one of the largest cities in the country — and Sharon Tucker (D) was appointed mayor of Fort Wayne, IN. In 2025, Barbara Lee (D) was elected mayor of Oakland, CA.

This year's report continues our legacy of highlighting both milestones and missed opportunities, underscoring the critical importance of sustained investment in the political leadership of Black women. As we look ahead, we remain committed to lifting up the stories, strategies, and solutions that will help close the representation gap and ensure that Black women are not just leading movements — but also holding office in every corner of this nation.

Black Women in the Federal Executive

As a result of the 2020 election, Black women were represented in the second most powerful office of the federal executive branch.

On January 20, 2021, Kamala Harris became the first woman, the first Black person, and the first South Asian person to serve as vice president of the United States. Less than four years later, Harris became the first Black woman and first South Asian person to be a major-party presidential nominee. Harris's journey has unfolded alongside the evolution of this very report over the past decade. This series has followed her rise from California attorney general – coming after her tenure as San Francisco district attorney – to U.S. senator and vice president, and now to presidential nominee. This trajectory is not just a personal narrative; it is a case study in the acceleration of Black women's elected leadership.

In 2018, then-Senator Harris wrote a foreword to our report that celebrated the "Chisholm Effect", which spawned generations of Black women determined to and successful at breaking political glass ceilings." Shirley Chisholm (D) was the first

Black woman elected to Congress in 1968 as well as the first Black woman to seek a major party's nomination for U.S. President in 1972. If Chisholm laid the blueprint, then Kamala Harris is the realization of the momentum that is reshaping what's possible for Black women in American politics, spurring her own "Kamala Effect." In her foreword, Harris went on to reflect on that legacy, and on the inspiration she has drawn from leaders like Chisholm. That inspiration has come full circle, with current leaders like Senator Angela Alsobrooks (D) citing Harris as a catalyst for her own journey. Their stories, and Harris' historic candidacy, offer a roadmap for the path forward and underscore why this report exists: to document the rise, recognize the barriers, and champion the future of Black women in leadership.

On July 21, 2024, President Joe Biden withdrew from the 2024 presidential election and immediately endorsed Vice President Harris to become the Democratic nominee. She formally accepted the party's nomination at the Democratic National Convention on August 22, 2024, cementing her place in history.

This was sixty years to the day after Fannie Lou Hamer gave her testimony before the Credentials Committee at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, outlining the violence she endured and extreme lengths she had to take in order to register to vote in Mississippi as a Black woman.

In the first 24 hours of her campaign, Harris raised \$81 million — more than any previous presidential candidate had raised in a single day.¹ Democratic voters' enthusiasm nearly doubled after her entrance into the race.²



The critical role of Black women voters and organizers in mobilizing support for Vice President Harris was immediately obvious. The night she entered the race, Black women organized a four hour Zoom call in support of Harris that attracted an audience of at least 44,000.³ While this type of grassroots political organizing by Black women was not new – Black women have for decades been at the forefront of voter mobilization efforts – never before was there an opportunity so ripe to elect a Black woman to the Oval Office. This mobilization continued throughout Harris' relatively short presidential campaign with debate watch parties, rallies, and fundraisers organized by Black women's organizations and Black women political leaders.

¹ Brett Samuels, "Harris breaks 24-hour fundraising record after Biden drops out," *The Hill*, July 22, 2024, <https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/4786610-harris-breaks-fundraising-record/>. (accessed May 22, 2025).

² Sara Dorn, "Democratic Enthusiasm Nearly Doubles After Harris Enters Race, Poll Finds," *Forbes*, August 14, 2024, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/saradorn/2024/08/14/democratic-enthusiasm-nearly-doubles-after-harris-enters-race-poll-finds/>. (accessed May 22, 2025).

³ Jennifer Gerson and Errin Haines, "Four hours, 44,000 Black women and one Zoom call," *The 19th*, July 23, 2024, <https://19thnews.org/2024/07/win-with-black-women-zoom-call-harris-organizers/>. (accessed May 22, 2025).

On Election Day, Black women voted for Harris at a rate higher than any other group, with about nine in ten Black women casting their ballots for what would be the first woman president of the United States.⁴

While they backed former President Biden at similar rates four years earlier, Black women voters in 2024 were also the most likely to report that electing the first woman president was an important factor to their vote.⁴ Just under two-thirds of Black women turned out to vote in the 2024 presidential election — the third highest rate of any race-gender group.

Harris, however, was not immune to the intense scrutiny that many Black women candidates face in political campaigns. She confronted deeply entrenched gender, racial, and intersectional stereotypes about her likeability, her deservedness of the nomination, and her ability to do the job. More specifically, her opponent, and those who backed him, leveraged existing biases to characterize her as unintelligent, unqualified, radical, and dangerous despite her extensive record of political leadership at the local, state, and national level. Harris also faced an electorate which was deeply dissatisfied with the status quo under a Democratic presidential administration of which she was a part.

Despite enthusiasm, fundraising, and success in the sole debate held prior to Election Day, Harris won 48.4% of the popular vote and 226 Electoral College votes, too few to secure the presidency.

Even in her defeat, Harris made history for Black women at the presidential level, buoyed by the Black women voters, donors, and organizers who backed her campaign.

As of July 2025, there are no Black women in federal executive office or in the presidential Cabinet. No Black women have held Cabinet or Cabinet-level appointments in either of President Donald Trump's administrations.



Five black women were appointed during President Joe Biden's term in office, which is the highest number of black women to serve in cabinet or cabinet level positions during any single presidential term.

⁴ Humera Lodhi, Shelly Cheng, Parker Kaufmann, Pablo Barria Urenda and EJ Fox, "AP VoteCast: How America voted in 2024," *The Associated Press*, <https://apnews.com/projects/election-results-2024/votecast/>. (accessed May 22, 2025).

Black Women as Congressional Candidates and Officeholders

Since our first report on the status of Black women in U.S. politics in 2014, the number of Black women in Congress has nearly doubled, growing from 15 to 29 of voting members.⁵ When including non-voting delegates, the number has grown from 17 to 31. This growth is almost exclusively made up of Democratic lawmakers.

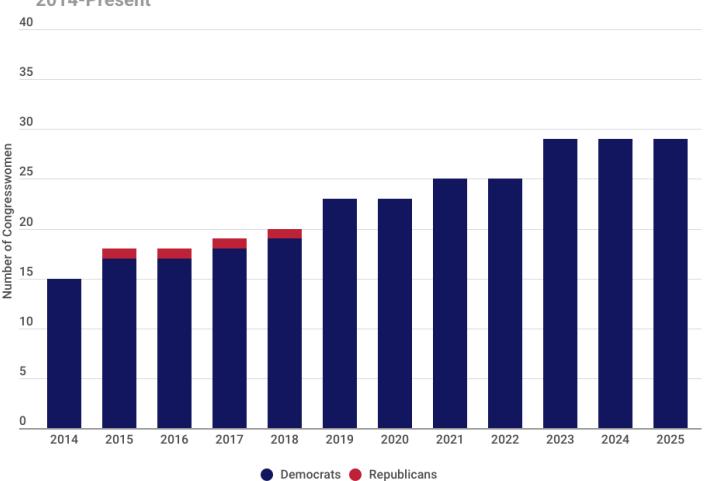
There has only been one Black Republican woman in Congress: U.S. Representative Mia Love from Utah, who served from 2015 to 2019. The rate of growth for Black women's representation in Congress has been steady over the past decade, with an increase of at least one Black woman member in each cycle between 2014 and 2022 and no decline between 2023 and 2025.

More specifically, Black women have marked multiple congressional milestones since 2014. During this period, the first Black women were elected to the U.S. Congress from 11 states (Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah, Virginia, Washington). This includes U.S. Representative Ilhan Omar (D-MN), who also became one of the first Muslim women in Congress. Four of the five Black women that have ever served in the U.S. Senate entered office since 2014, with two Black women senators serving simultaneously for the first time in 2025.

In 2018 and 2022, a record high number (5) of new Black women were elected to the U.S. House simultaneously. Additionally, the average age of Black women officeholders has gone down during this period — representing a new generation of Black women's congressional leadership. The average age at entry for current Black women congresswomen is 49.6, down from 53.8 at the end of 2014. The number of Black women representatives in majority-white districts has also gone up since 2014, disrupting false perceptions that Black women are less electable outside of majority-minority districts. Just one Black woman

in the U.S. House, Joyce Beatty (D-OH), represented a majority-white district at the end of 2014 — there are nine across eight states (Connecticut, Illinois, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington) in the current Congress.

Black Women in Congress
2014-Present



Data do not include non-voting delegates Donna M. Christensen (D-VI, 1997-2014), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC, 1991-present), and Stacey E. Plaskett (D-VI, 2015-present). Counts reflect end-of-year number of officeholders except for the 119th count, which reflects officeholders as of July 2025.

While Black women did not meet or exceed any candidate records last year, the 2024 election cycle still yielded notable results that contributed to the progress made for Black women in Congress over the past decade.

⁵ Throughout this report, all counts and proportions of U.S. House and congressional members include only voting members, with non-voting members discussed separately.

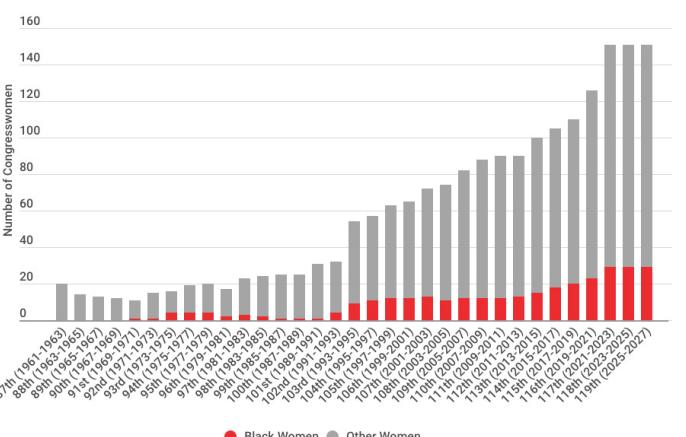


Black Women in the 119th Congress

- 29 (29D) Black women currently serve as voting members of Congress. Two (2D) serve in the U.S. Senate, and 27 (27D) serve in the U.S. House.⁶ This number falls just below the record high for Black women's representation as voting members of the U.S. Congress (30), as well as in the U.S. House specifically (29). Black women's representation in the U.S. Senate is at a record high (2). In addition, 2 (2D) Black women serve as non-voting delegates representing Washington D.C. and the U.S. Virgin Islands in the U.S. House. All Black congresswomen are Democrats.
- Black women are 5.4% of all members of Congress, 11.3% of all Democrats in Congress, 19.2% of all women in Congress, and 45.3% of Black members of Congress.
 - They are 6.2% of all members of the House, 21.6% of all women in the House, 45.8% of Black members of the House, and 12.7% of Democrats in the House.
 - They are 2% of all members of the Senate, 7.7% of all women in the Senate, 40% of Black members of the Senate, and 4.4% of Democrats in the Senate.⁷

Black Women in Congress

1961-Present



Data do not include non-voting delegates Donna M. Christensen (D-VI, 1997-2014), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC, 1991-present), and Stacey E. Plaskett (D-VI, 2015-present). Counts reflect end-of-session number of officeholders except for the 119th count, which reflects officeholders as of July 2025.

⁶ Representative Marilyn Strickland (D-WA) identifies as multiracial, both Black and Korean-American.

⁷ Total number of Black members of Congress from the U.S. House Office of the Historian and Office of the Clerk. Available: <https://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/BAIC/Historical-Data/Black-American-Representatives-and-Senators-by-Congress/>. Non-voting delegates are not included in these counts.

Paths to Office

- Of the 29 Black women currently serving as voting members of Congress, 23 (79.3%) previously served in state legislative and/or local elective offices, 16 (55.2%) previously served in state legislatures, and at least 11 (37.9%) held county or local elective offices before serving in Congress. Four current Black congresswomen previously served in both state legislative and local elective offices: Representatives Alma Adams (D-NC), Valerie Foushee (D-NC), Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D-CA), and Frederica Wilson (D-FL).
- Senator Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE) is the only Black woman who has ever served in both the House and the Senate.
- Only one of the three Black women elected to the U.S. House for the first time in 2024 – Representative Janelle Bynum (D-OR) – ascended from a state legislative position. Bynum was elected to the Oregon House of Representatives in 2016, where she served until entering Congress. Representative LaMonica McIver (D-NJ) – who won an off-cycle special election to the U.S. House in September 2024 – served as speaker of the Newark City Council immediately prior to taking her House seat. The third, Lateefah Simon (D-CA), was elected to serve on the Bay Area Rapid Transport (BART) Board of Directors in 2016 and served until 2024.
- At least 6 (20.7%) current Black congresswomen previously served as professional staff to elected officials, including statewide executive, state legislative, and congressional officeholders.
- The average age at which Black women have entered Congress has declined in recent years. Among all Black women who have entered Congress since 2018, the average age of entry is 46 years old. In contrast, the average age at entry for all Black women who entered prior to 2018 (both current and former officeholders) is 52 years old.
- Neither current non-voting U.S. Delegates Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) or Stacey E. Plaskett (D-VI) held elective office before entering Congress. Delegate Holmes Norton, who was elected to the U.S. House at age 53, became the first woman appointed as chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 1977 and had an extensive career in law and nonprofit advocacy prior to her congressional tenure. Delegate Plaskett, who was elected to the U.S. House at age 48, practiced law in state and federal roles prior to entering Congress, including acting as counsel at the U.S. House and Department of Justice.

Institutional Leadership

- In the 119th Congress, Black women hold just over 22% of House Democratic leadership positions, including co-chair of the Democratic Policy and Communication Committee (Lauren Underwood [D-IL]), co-chair of the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee (Robin Kelly [D-IL]), and chief deputy whips (Terri Sewell [D-AL] and Marilyn Strickland [D-WA]). Of these positions, just one – Democratic Policy and Communication Committee co-chair (Underwood) – is elected by members of the House Democratic Caucus. Underwood is just the second Black woman to be elected to Democratic leadership by the full caucus; Shirley Chisholm was elected Democratic Caucus secretary in 1977. All other posts are appointed by Democratic leadership.
- U.S. Representative Maxine Waters (D-CA) is currently the only Black woman serving as ranking member of one of the 20 standing committees in the U.S. House. She has served as the lead Democrat on the Financial Services Committee since 2013.
- Black women are 21 of 108 (19.4%) Democratic ranking members on U.S. House subcommittees in the 119th Congress.⁸

⁸ This includes the subcommittee leadership of one of two Black women delegates, Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC).

Black Women as Congressional Candidates in Election 2024

U.S. House

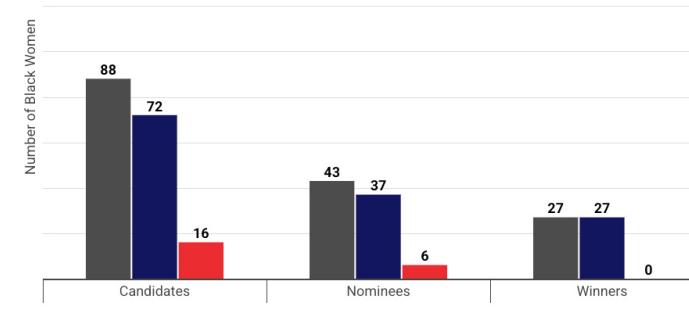
- 88 (72D, 16R) Black women ran for the U.S. House in 2024, representing 18.8% of all women House candidates and 5% of all House candidates (women and men) in 2024.

- This falls short of the record high 134 (105D, 29R) Black women who were U.S. House candidates in election 2022.
- Black women were 23.9% of Democratic women candidates and 9% of all Democratic candidates for the U.S. House in 2024. They were 9.6% of Republican women candidates and just 1.7% of all Republicans who ran for the U.S. House in 2024.

- 43 (37D, 6R) Black women won nominations for the U.S. House in 2024, representing 16.6% of all women nominees and 5.1% of all nominees (women and men) who made it to the general election for House seats in 2024.
- This falls short of the record high 61 (48D, 13R) Black women who were U.S. House nominees in election 2020.

- Black women were 19.4% of Democratic women nominees and 8.9% of all Democratic nominees for the U.S. House in 2024. They were 8.8% of Republican women House nominees and just 1.4% of all Republican House nominees in 2024.
- Of the 43 Black women nominees, 62.8% won their general elections. This win rate was higher than win rates for women candidates (48.3%) and men candidates (53.8%) across race/ethnicity.

Black Women Candidates, Nominees, and Winners
U.S. House, 2024



Counts include only major-party candidates and do not include candidates for non-voting positions in the U.S. House. Does not include Erica Lee Carter (D-TX), who won a special election to complete the unexpired term of her mother, the late Representative Sheila Jackson Lee.

- 27 Black women – all Democrats – won full terms for U.S. House seats in the 2024 election, including two non-incumbents and a congresswoman that won election to a full term after winning a special election in September 2024.⁹ In addition, both Black women incumbent U.S. Delegates were re-elected.

Black women were 21.6% of all women House winners and 6.2% of all House winners (women and men) in election 2024. They were 28.7% of Democratic women and 12.6% of all Democrats who won House seats in 2024 but 0% of Republican winners.

⁹ This does not include Erica Lee Carter (D-TX), who won a special election to complete the unexpired term of her mother, the late Representative Sheila Jackson Lee. She served from November 12, 2024 to January 3, 2025.

The new Black women members of the U.S. House are:



Janelle Bynum (D, OR-05)

beat an incumbent congresswoman to become the first Black member of Congress from Oregon. Prior to serving in Congress, Bynum served as a member of the Oregon House of Representatives from 2017 to 2025.



LaMonica McIver (D, NJ-10)

filled an open seat to succeed the late Representative Donald Payne Jr. (D). Prior to serving in Congress, McIver was president of the Municipal Council of Newark, NJ. Along with U.S. Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman (D), McIver is one of two Black women to represent New Jersey in Congress.



Lateefah Simon (D, CA-12)

replaced longtime California congresswoman Barbara Lee (D) in the U.S. House after she chose to run for the U.S. Senate. Prior to serving in Congress, Simon was an advocate and organizer. She served on the Board of Trustees for California State University and on the Bay Area Rapid Transportation Board.



Erica Lee Carter (D, TX-18)

was elected to complete the remainder of longtime U.S. Representative Sheila Jackson Lee's term in the 118th Congress. Carter, Lee's daughter, did not seek a full term in the 119th Congress.

U.S. Senate

- 11 (10D, 1R) Black women ran for the U.S. Senate in 2024, representing 22% of all women Senate candidates and 5.1% of all Senate candidates (women and men) in 2024.
 - This falls short of the record high 22 (16D, 6R) Black women who were U.S. Senate candidates in election 2022.
 - Black women were 34.5% of Democratic women candidates and 11.5% of all Democratic candidates for the U.S. Senate in 2024. They were 4.8% of Republican women candidates and just 0.8% of all Republicans who ran for the U.S. Senate in 2024.
- There were three Black women nominees, all Democrats, for the U.S. Senate in 2024. This falls short of the record four (4D) Black women who were U.S. Senate nominees in election 2022.
- Two Black women won full terms for U.S. Senate seats in 2024.

The new Black women members of the U.S. Senate are:



Angela Alsobrooks (D-MD)

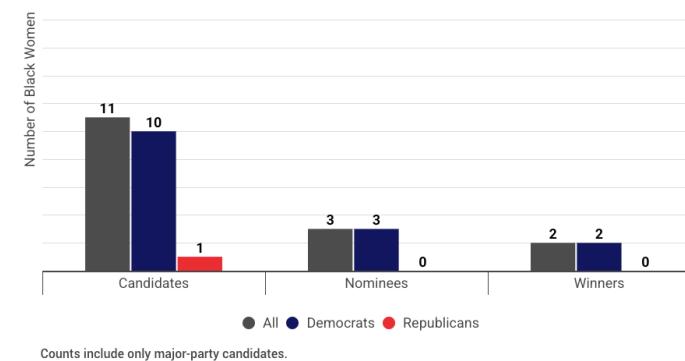
won an open seat to become the first Black person to represent Maryland in the U.S. Senate. Prior to serving in Congress, Alsobrooks served as a state's attorney (2011-2018) and executive of Prince George's County, Maryland (2018-2024).



Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE)

won an open seat to become the first Black person and the first woman to represent Delaware in the U.S. Senate. Prior to serving in the Senate, she was the first Black person and the first woman to represent Delaware in the U.S. House, serving from 2017 to 2025.

Black Women Candidates, Nominees, and Winners
U.S. Senate, 2024



This marks the first time that two Black women are serving simultaneously in the U.S. Senate.

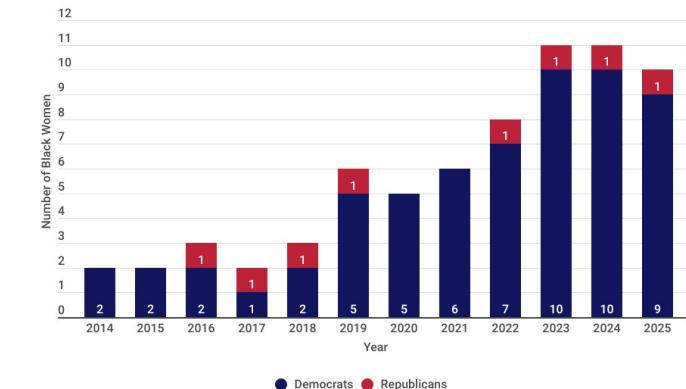
Black Women as Statewide Elective Executive Candidates and Officeholders

Black women continue to be underrepresented in 310 statewide elective executive positions nationwide. Thirty-four states have never elected a Black woman as a statewide executive and there still has never been a Black woman governor. In election 2024, no new Black women were elected at this level, though there were significantly fewer offices up for election than in 2022. However, a look back across the last decade shows slow but steady progress for Black women in statewide elective executive offices.

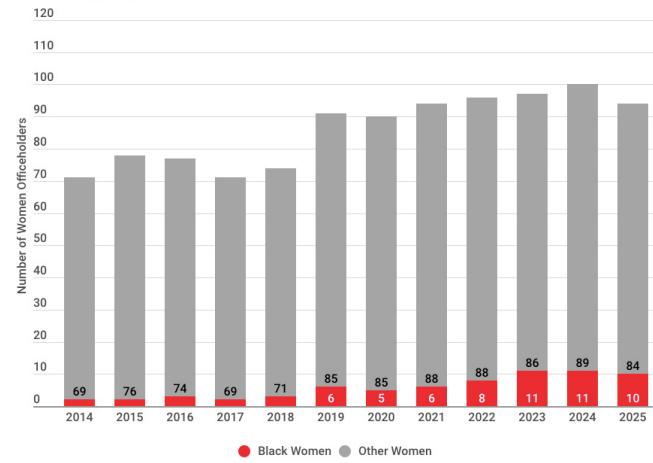
Since 2014, the number of Black women in statewide elective executive office has quintupled,

growing from two in 2014 to ten in 2025. Of the 16 states where Black women have held statewide elective executive office to date, eight (Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Virginia) elected or appointed their first Black women to this level of office in just the last decade. Over half (60%) of the Black women who have ever served in statewide elective executive office were elected or appointed in the last ten years. As with the congressional level, this growth for Black women has occurred almost exclusively among Democratic officeholders.

Black Women in Statewide Elective Executive Office
2014-2025



Black Women in Statewide Elective Executive Office
2014-2025





Black Women in Statewide Elective Executive Office in 2025

- Ten (9D, 1R) Black women currently serve in statewide elective executive office; including 4 (3D, 1R) lieutenant governors, 2 (2D) attorneys general, 2 (2D) secretaries of state, 1 (1D) auditor, and 1 (1D) controller.¹⁰ This falls short of a record high for Black women in statewide elective executive office (11) first set in December 2023.
- Together, these women represent 10.6% (10 of 94) of all women statewide elective executive officials and 3.2% (10 of 310) of all statewide elective executive officials in the United States.
 - Of the 10 Black women currently holding statewide elective executive offices, four are the first Black woman to serve in an office elected statewide, including U.S. Senate, in their state, and nine are the first Black woman to serve in their specific office.
- Just 25 (20D, 5R) Black women have ever held statewide elective executive offices in 17 states.
 - Of these 25 Black women, 16 have been the first Black woman to serve in any office elected statewide (including U.S. Senate) in their states, and all but two of 25 have been the first Black woman to serve in their specific offices.

No Black woman has ever been elected as governor.

Black Women Who Have Ever Held Statewide Elective Executive Office

Name	State	Office	Party	Dates of Service
Velvalea "Vel" Phillips	WI	Secretary of State	D	1979-1983
Pamela Carter	IN	Attorney General	D	1993-1997
Vikki Buckley	CO	Secretary of State	R	1995-1999
Denise Nappier	CT	Treasurer	D	1999-2019
Karen Freeman-Wilson	IN	Attorney General	D	2000-2001
Jennette Bradley	OH	Lieutenant Governor	R	2003-2005
Jennette Bradley	OH	Treasurer	R	2005-2007
Velda Jones Potter	DE	Treasurer	D	2009-2011
Sandra D. Kennedy	AZ	Corporation Commissioner	D	2009-2013; 2019-2023
Jennifer Carroll	FL	Lieutenant Governor	R	2011-2013
Kamala Harris	CA	Attorney General	D	2011-2017
Jenean Hampton	KY	Lieutenant Governor	R	2015-2019
Sheila Oliver	NJ	Lieutenant Governor	D	2018-2023
Carolyn Stanford Taylor	WI	Sup. of Public Instruction	D	2019-2021
Juliana Stratton	IL	Lieutenant Governor	D	2019-Present
Letitia "Tish" James	NY	Attorney General	D	2019-Present
Natalie Braswell	CT	Comptroller	D	2021-2023
Shirley Weber	CA	Secretary of State	D	2021-Present
Sabina Matos	RI	Lieutenant Governor	D	2021-Present
Winsome Sears	VA	Lieutenant Governor	R	2022-Present
Jessica Holmes	NC	Auditor	D	2023-2024
Andrea Campbell	MA	Attorney General	D	2023-Present
Lydia York	DE	Auditor	D	2023-Present
Malia Cohen	CA	Controller	D	2023-Present
Stephanie Thomas	CT	Secretary of State	D	2023-Present
Tahesha Way	NJ	Lieutenant Governor		2023-Present

¹⁰ Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos (D-RI) identifies as Afro-Latina.

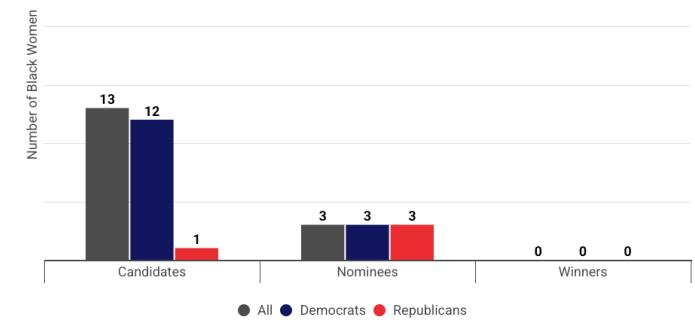
Paths to Office

- Of the 10 Black women currently serving in statewide elective executive positions, all but one have previously served in state legislative and/or county or local elective office; four (40%) previously served in state legislatures, and five (50%) held county or local elective offices before holding their current office. Shirley Weber (D-CA) is the only current Black woman statewide elective executive to have previously served in both state legislative and local elective offices.
- No new Black woman statewide elective executives were elected as a result of election 2024. However, Tahesha Way (D-NJ) was appointed to replace the late Sheila Oliver (D-NJ) as the lieutenant governor of New Jersey in September 2023. Before serving as lieutenant governor, Way was appointed secretary of state of New Jersey – an unelected position she still holds – and served as an elected county commissioner.

Black Women as Candidates for Statewide Elective Executive Office in 2024

- 13 (12D, 1R) Black women were candidates for statewide elective executive offices in 2024, representing 14.9% of all women candidates and 3.9% of all candidates (men and women) who ran at this level of office in 2024.
 - This falls short of the record high 59 (50D, 8R, 1NP) Black women who were statewide executive candidates in election 2022. In 2020, when there was a comparable number of statewide executive offices up for election, there were 11 (9D, 2R) Black women candidates.
- Three (3D) Black women, all Democrats, won nominations for statewide elective executive offices in 2024, representing 6.7% of all women nominees and 2.1% of all nominees (men and women) who made it to the general election at this level of office in 2024.
 - This falls short of the record high 31 (27D, 4R) Black women who were statewide executive nominees in election 2022. In 2020, when there was a comparable number of statewide executive offices up for election, there were 5 (4D, 1R) Black women nominees.
 - Black women were 11.1% of Democratic women nominees and 4.3% of all Democratic nominees for statewide elective executive offices in 2024.
- No Black women won statewide elective executive office in election 2024.

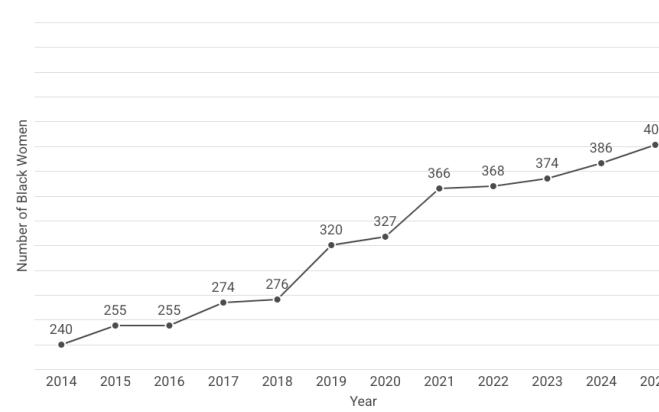
Black Women Candidates, Nominees, and Winners
Statewide Elective Executive Offices, 2024



Black Women as State Legislative Candidates and Officeholders

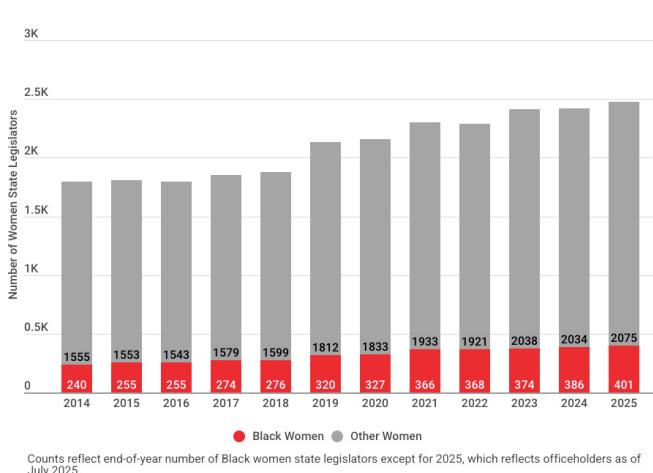
Since our first report in 2014, the number of Black women state legislators has risen from 240 to 401, a 67.1% increase in just over a decade. Similar to other levels of office, this growth is almost solely among Democrats. The number of Black Democratic women state legislators has risen from 236 in 2014 to 392 in 2025 while the number of Black Republican women state legislators has risen from 4 to 7.

Black Women in State Legislatures
2014-2025



Black women reached a record high in state legislative representation in 2025. But there remain significant opportunities for growth in Black women's state legislative representation, as well as better matching between Black women's proportion of state legislatures and their proportion of state

Black Women in State Legislatures
2014-2025



populations. Black women's representation at this level of office has implications for state-level policymaking and for building a larger pool of potential candidates for higher offices.

Black Women in State Legislatures in 2025

- As of July 2025, 401 (392D, 7R, 1NP, 1Ind) Black women serve as state legislators nationwide, including 306 (300D, 5R, 1Ind) Black women members of state houses and 95 (92D, 2R, 1Ind) Black women members of state senates. This is one short of the record high.
- Black women are 5.4% of all state legislators and 16.2% of all women state legislators nationwide. They are 5.7% of members of state houses and 16.3% of women in state houses; 4.8% of state senators and 15.8% of women state senators. Black women are 12.2% of all Democratic state legislators and 0.2% of all Republican state legislators in the U.S.
- Within the past decade, Black women have increased their representation as a percentage of all legislators from 3.5% in 2015 to 5.4% in 2025. In the same period, Black women have become a larger proportion of all women state legislators; they were 14.1% of women state legislators in 2015 and are 16.2% of all women state legislators in 2025.

State Legislative Leadership

- 20 (19D, 1R) Black women hold state legislative leadership posts (including senate president, senate president pro tem, speaker, speaker pro tem, majority leader, minority leader) as of June 2025. Of them, 6 (5D, 1R) Black women lead their legislative chamber.¹¹ In 2014, 10 (10D) Black women held state legislative leadership posts, with none leading their legislative chamber.
- Just 10 (9D, 1R) Black women have ever held the top leadership position of a state legislative chamber.

¹¹ State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D-NY) currently serves as both senate majority leader and senate president pro-tempre.

¹² This count includes states where the percentage of women in the state legislature is at least one percentage point lower than the percentage of women in the state population.

Black Women who have led State Legislative Chambers

State	Position	Name	Party	Years in Leadership
CA	Speaker of the House	House	D	2008-2010
NJ	Speaker of the House	House	D	2010-2014
MD	Speaker of the House	House	D	2019-Present
NY	Senate President Pro Tempore	Senate	D	2019-Present
VA	Senate President Pro Tempore	Senate	D	2020-Present
ME	Speaker of the House	House	D	2022-2024
PA	Speaker of the House	House	D	2023-Present
NV	Senate President Pro Tempore	Senate	D	2023-2025
DE	Speaker of the House	House	D	2025-Present
MN	Speaker of the House	House	R	2025-Present

Representation by State

- The top five states for Black women's state legislative representation are: Maryland (18.6%), Georgia (17.4%), Delaware (16.1%), Virginia (13.6%), and New York (11.3%). Maryland and Georgia are also among the top five states for Black women's representation in the population. In addition, Black women are the top legislative leaders in the Delaware House, Maryland House, Minnesota House, New York Senate, Pennsylvania House, and Virginia Senate.
- As of July 2025, no Black women serve in legislatures in five states: Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Based on available data, no Black woman has ever served in the South Dakota Legislature.
- When comparing Black women as a percentage of all state legislators to the percentage of Black women in the state's population:
 - 21 state legislatures fall short of equal representation of Black women in the population and in the legislature.¹² The starker disparities in representation are evident in Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina, where the gap between legislative and population representation is nearly ten percentage points or more. All of these state legislatures have Republican majorities in both chambers, demonstrating the influence of party control on Black women's representation.
 - The state legislative representation of Black women nearly matches (+/-1%) Black women's percentage of the state population in 20 states.
 - Finally, Black women's representation in the state legislature exceeds their representation in the population in nine states, with Black women faring particularly well – as related to representation in the state's population – in Washington and Nevada.

Black women are 50% or more of women state legislators in two states: Alabama and Georgia. In both states, Black women are over 25% of all women in the state population. Despite this high level of representation, all Black women state legislators in these states serve in the minority party.

**Black Women in State Legislatures
2025**

State	Number of Black Women Legislators	Number of Women Legislators	Number of State Legislators	Black Women as Percent of All Women State Legislators	Black Women as Percent of All State Legislators	Black Women as Percent of State Population
AK	2	26	60	7.7%	3.3%	2.5%
AL	13	25	140	52.0%	9.3%	14.8%
AR	5	28	135	17.9%	3.7%	8.7%
AZ	2	43	90	4.7%	2.2%	3.4%
CA	8	58	120	13.8%	6.7%	3.9%
CO	5	53	100	9.4%	5.0%	2.9%
CT	5	66	187	7.6%	2.7%	7.7%
DE	10	22	62	45.5%	16.1%	13.8%
FL	16	68	160	23.5%	10.0%	9.8%
GA	41	81	236	50.6%	17.4%	18.9%
HI	0	31	76	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%
IA	2	42	150	4.8%	1.3%	2.7%
ID	0	28	105	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
IL	14	78	177	17.9%	7.9%	8.3%
IN	8	40	150	20.0%	5.3%	6.2%
KS	5	54	165	9.3%	3.0%	3.8%
KY	3	41	138	7.3%	2.2%	5.1%
LA	11	35	144	31.4%	7.6%	17.6%
MA	5	61	200	8.2%	2.5%	5.8%
MD	35	77	188	45.5%	18.6%	17.9%
ME	5	79	186	6.3%	2.7%	1.3%
MI	12	58	148	20.7%	8.1%	8.2%
MN	9	74	201	12.2%	4.5%	4.6%
MO	17	57	197	29.8%	8.6%	6.9%
MS	10	26	174	38.5%	5.7%	20.5%
MT	0	50	150	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
NC	17	51	170	33.3%	10.0%	12.9%
ND	0	36	141	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%
NE	1	14	49	7.1%	2.0%	3.3%
NH	2	153	424	1.3%	0.5%	1.3%
NJ	11	40	120	27.5%	9.2%	8.9%
NM	2	61	112	3.3%	1.8%	1.7%
NV	6	39	63	15.4%	9.5%	6.6%
NY	24	73	213	32.9%	11.3%	10.2%
OH	10	46	132	21.7%	7.6%	7.9%
OK	5	36	149	13.9%	3.4%	5.0%
OR	1	42	90	2.4%	1.1%	1.7%
PA	10	82	253	12.2%	4.0%	7.2%
RI	3	48	113	6.3%	2.7%	5.6%
SC	9	23	170	39.1%	5.3%	15.0%
SD	0	39	105	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%
TN	5	23	132	21.7%	3.8%	9.6%
TX	13	61	181	21.3%	7.2%	7.8%
UT	1	32	104	3.1%	1.0%	1.1%
VA	19	49	140	38.8%	13.6%	11.4%
VT	2	77	180	2.6%	1.1%	1.1%
WA	10	66	147	15.2%	6.8%	3.1%
WI	5	44	132	11.4%	3.8%	4.0%
WV	1	16	134	6.3%	0.7%	2.3%
WY	1	24	93	4.2%	1.1%	0.9%
Totals	401	2476	7386	16.2%	5.4%	7.8%

Data as of July 2025

2024 Election Results

- The number of Black women state legislators rose by 13 between Election Day 2024 and January 2025, with Black women rising from 5.2% to 5.4% of all state legislators.
- Despite the relative stasis in Black women's representation from 2024 to 2025, 60 (53D, 3R, 1NP) non-incumbent Black women took state legislative office at the start of 2025.

■ Black Women as Mayoral Candidates and Officeholders

Just one Black woman served as mayor of one of the top 100 most populous cities in the United States when we released our first report on the status of Black women in American politics in June 2014. Black women now hold the top executive post in eight of the 100 most populous cities, matching their proportion of the U.S. population.

Since 2014, 18 Black women have served as big-city mayors, including the first Black women mayors of Baton Rouge, LA; Boston, MA; Charlotte, NC; Chicago, IL; Durham, NC; Fort Wayne, IN; Los Angeles, CA; New Orleans, LA; North Las Vegas, NV; Oakland, CA; Philadelphia, PA; San Antonio, TX; San Francisco, CA; St. Louis, MO; and Toledo, OH. These 18 represent more than two-thirds of all Black women that have served as big-city mayors (26). Five of the current big-city Black women mayors have taken office in just the past five years.

While Black women's executive representation remains low at the statewide level, the success for Black women executives in major U.S. cities is important in re-imagining executive political leadership across all levels.

Black Women Mayors in 2025

- Eight Black women currently serve as mayors of the top 100 most populous cities in the U.S.: Karen Bass (Los Angeles, CA), Muriel Bowser (Washington, DC), LaToya Cantrell (New Orleans, LA), Pamela Goynes-Brown (North Las Vegas, NV), Barbara Lee (Oakland, CA), Vi Alexander Lyles (Charlotte, NC), Cherelle Parker (Philadelphia, PA), and Sharon Tucker (Fort Wayne, IN).
- Black women make up 8% of the mayors of the top 100 most populous cities and 21.6% of women mayors of the top 100 most populous cities.

Black Women as Mayoral Candidates in 2024 and 2025

- Three new Black women became mayors in the nation's 100 largest cities (by population) in 2024 and 2025 in Philadelphia, PA, Fort Wayne, IN and Oakland, CA.

The new Black women mayors are:



Cherelle Parker (D)

became the first woman mayor of the city of Philadelphia, PA on January 1, 2024. Before becoming mayor, Parker served over six years on the Philadelphia City Council and ten years in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.



Sharon Tucker (D)

became the first Black person and only the second woman to serve as mayor of Fort Wayne, IN after being appointed on April 23, 2024 to serve the remainder of the previous mayor's term. Prior to becoming mayor, Tucker served on the Fort Wayne City Council (2020-2024) and the Allen County Council (2015-2020).



Barbara Lee (D)

became the first Black woman mayor to serve as mayor of Oakland, CA after winning a special election held on April 15, 2025. She previously served in the U.S. House of Representatives (1998-2025), California Senate (1996-1998), and California Assembly (1990-1996).

Black women may also increase their numbers among big city mayors as a result of elections in 2025. Black women have already announced candidacies in mayoral contests in major cities such as Cleveland, Detroit, and New Orleans.

Looking Ahead

Black women have made notable progress in U.S. politics in the decade since we began documenting the status of Black women in U.S. politics. This report details that progress, including gains made and milestones achieved in both 2024 and early 2025.

The next 18 months offer some additional opportunities for growth in Black women's political representation. In Virginia, Lieutenant Governor Winsome Earle-Sears (R) is the Republican nominee in the state's 2025 gubernatorial election. If successful, she would be the first Black woman governor in the U.S. and the first woman governor of Virginia. Black women are also running in several big city mayoral contests in 2025. In 2026, in addition to congressional seats, there will be over 200 statewide offices up for election, providing opportunities for Black women to increase their representation at that level.

As we anticipate these elections, we will continue our work to ensure that Black women's political power reflects their presence and power in American society.

Our organizations and others like ours will continue our efforts to:

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

To learn more and to join in these efforts, visit

www.cawp.rutgers.edu or www.higherheightsleadershipfund.org



Black Women IN AMERICAN POLITICS 2025

A DECADE OF IMPACT

2014-2025

Black Women Make History as Big-City Mayors

More than two-thirds of all Black women who have served as mayors in major cities have done so since 2014. Black women have been elected for the first time in cities including Baton Rouge, Chicago, Charlotte (NC), Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and San Francisco – breaking new ground in local leadership.

2018

Letitia James Becomes New York Attorney General

James became the first Black woman to hold statewide elective office in New York and has since led high-profile investigations of the NRA and Donald Trump.

2018

Stacey Abrams Runs for Governor and Fights for Voting Rights

Abrams ran a history-making campaign to become the first woman governor of Georgia and first Black woman governor nationwide. After her gubernatorial campaign, she continued state and national efforts to promote voter registration and fight voter suppression.



2018-2024

Black Women Mark Congressional Firsts and Highs

2021

Kamala Harris Becomes Vice President of the United States

Harris became the first Black woman, first South Asian person, and first woman Vice President, serving as a transformative symbol of representation and power.



Karen Bass Elected Mayor of Los Angeles

Bass became the first Black woman to lead the second-largest city in the U.S. – and holds one of the most influential mayoral positions nationwide.

Ketanji Brown Jackson Appointed to Supreme Court

Jackson became the first Black woman Justice to the U.S. Supreme Court, marking a historic shift in the Court's 230-year history.

Kamala Harris Becomes the first Black Woman Major-Party Presidential Nominee



2025

Black Women in U.S. Senate Doubles

Two Black women – Senators Angela Alsobrooks and Lisa Blunt Rochester – serve simultaneously in the U.S. Senate for the first time in U.S. history.

