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**By the Numbers: Black Women in the 117th Congress**

*Higher Heights and the Center for American Women in Politics Release Report on the Historic Number of Black Women Set to Serve in the 117th Congress*

**NEW YORK (January 3, 2021)** — Today, [Higher Heights Leadership Fund](#) (Higher Heights) and the [Center for American Women in Politics](#) (CAWP) released the [“By the Numbers: Black Women in the 117th Congress”](#) snapshot and analysis of the historic number of Black women who have been elected to serve in the United States 117th Congress (January 3, 2021-January 3, 2023).

The 26 Black women officeholders who will serve at the start of the 117th Congress include Senator Kamala Harris (CA), who will ascend to the vice presidency on January 20th, and three non-incumbent members. Cori Bush (MO-01) is the first Black woman and first woman of color in Congress from Missouri, Marilyn Strickland (WA-10) is the first Black woman in Congress from Washington, and Nikema Williams (GA-05) replaces civil rights icon John Lewis in the U.S. House. In addition, two Black women will serve as non-voting delegates in the U.S. House. The previous high for Black women voting members of Congress was 23, the number who served in the 116th Congress (2019-2021). These numbers are likely to change in coming months. As of January 3, 2021, at least one Black congresswoman – Marcia Fudge (D-OH) – has been tapped by the new administration to serve in the Cabinet.

The analysis shows that even with the record-breaking number of Black women in the new U.S. Congress, Black women continue to be underrepresented overall, and especially as U.S. Senate candidates and officeholders. Findings include:

- Despite an increase in Republican Black women candidates and nominees, Black women's representation in Congress remains entirely Democratic. Each of the 26 Black women who will be serving as voting members in the 117th Congress are Democrats, making up 9.7% of all Democrats in Congress.
- As of January 3, 2021, these 26 Black women will constitute only 4.9% of all members in Congress, despite being 7.6% of the U.S. population. The 25 Black women representatives in the U.S. House will be 5.7% of all U.S. Representatives.
- With Kamala Harris' departure from Congress, Black women will have no remaining representation in the Senate. The 25 remaining Black women electeds will all be serving the House of Representatives.
- Since 1968, the year marking Shirley Chisholm's election as the first Black woman to the U.S. Congress, 47 Black women have served in Congress, including two Black women who have served in the U.S. Senate and 45 Black women (44 Democrats, 1 Republican) who have served in the U.S. House of Representatives.

"While we are encouraged by this historic level of Black women serving in the new United States Congress, this analysis underscores the work that we have ahead of us," said **Glynda Carr, President and CEO of Higher Heights**. "We are eager to continue supporting the 25 Black women who will represent us through their roles in the House after January 20th, and with zero Black women in the Senate, we must work hard to ensure that we will never again have Black women without representation in the highest offices of our country and we invest in a strategy to elect Black women in the Senate."

As seen in past election cycles, Black women are underrepresented across the candidates and elected individuals for higher office. Without vocal advocates on behalf of the issues that disproportionately affect their communities, Black women will remain marginalized in policy decisions that affect their livelihoods and well-being.

"Black women's voices – inclusive of the full diversity among Black women – are essential in the policy debates and deliberation that occur in our nation's top legislative body," said **Kelly Dittmar, Director of Research at CAWP**. "Each point of progress is cause for celebration, but also for reflection on the sites where those voices remain underrepresented or missing completely."

With the historic election of Kamala Harris as the country's next Vice President, Higher Heights and the Center for American Women in Politics remain committed to advocating for the increased representation of Black women in Congress so that our nation's highest offices adequately reflect the diversity of the American people.

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### **About Higher Heights:**

Higher Heights Leadership Fund (Higher Heights) is a 501(c)(3) organization investing in a long-term strategy to analyze, expand and support Black women's leadership. It is the only national organization exclusively dedicated to harnessing Black women's political power and expanding Black women's elected representation and voting participation. For additional information please visit <https://www.higherheightsleadershipfund.org/>

### **About the Center for American Women in 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 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. For additional information, please visit <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/>.