



## Higher Heights and the Center for American Women and Politics Release 2019 Status Update for Black Women in American Politics

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**WASHINGTON (Dec. 11, 2019)** –Today, [Higher Heights Leadership Fund](#) and the [Center for American Women and Politics \(CAWP\) at Rutgers University–New Brunswick](#) released [Black Women in American Politics 2019](#).

Released annually, this report outlines the status of Black women in American politics in the fall of 2019, one year ahead of the 2020 elections. Drawing from the lessons of the 2018 elections, the report highlights the successes of a new class of women officeholders across all levels of elected offices and illuminates how Black women shared in those successes while also contributing significantly as voters to overall gains for Democratic candidates. For example:

- A record number of Black women currently serve in Congress, after a record number of women won nominations for the U.S. House in the 2018 election.
- Between 2018 and 2019, Black women saw the largest gain in representation at the state legislative level since 1994. In 2019, a record number of Black women serve in state legislative office.

The data demonstrate that, even with the gains Black women made in 2018 and 2019, there is more work to do to ensure that Black women’s representation in elected office reflects their presence in American society. More specifically:

- Black women made important and historic gains in the 2018 election, but the resulting changes in their political representation remain incremental. Despite being 7.6% of the U.S. population, Black women are less than 5% of officeholders elected to statewide executive offices, Congress, and state legislatures.

- While the number of Black women in statewide elected executive office doubled between 2018 and 2019 (from three to six), Black women remain severely underrepresented as officeholders at the statewide executive level, holding just 1.9% of these positions as of November 2019. Just 15 Black women have ever held statewide elected executive offices, and no Black woman has ever been elected governor despite the first-ever major party nomination of a Black woman for governor in election 2018.

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. These data illuminate that opportunity, in addition to raising questions about what motivates Black women to run and what conditions facilitate or hinder their success. In an election year where offices will be contested at all levels, evaluating the current status and experiences of Black women in American politics is key to promoting progress.

“Black women are a powerful force in the American political system, and their political power is growing and being increasingly recognized for the force it is, said Glynda C. Carr, President and CEO of Higher Heights. “The road to the White House and the road to 2020 will be powered by Black women — both as candidates and voters — and will provide another opportunity for Black women to close the gap between their representation in the population and their power in elected office.”

“The 2018 election proved that Black women are electable, and not only among majority-minority electorates,” said Kelly Dittmar, CAWP scholar and the update’s author. “Both on the campaign trail and at the ballot box, Black women have challenged perceptions of who can or should lead. Our organizations are committed to raising awareness about Black women’s political power so that this work can continue.”

The report was launched at the National Press Club in Washington, DC with a robust discussion of national political experts, including: **Glynda C. Carr**, *Co-Founder, President and CEO of Higher Heights*; **Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge** (OH-11); **Karen Finney**, *Political Strategist and CNN political commentator*; **Kelly Dittmar**, *Assistant Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University–Camden and Scholar at the Center for American Women and Politics at the Eagleton Institute of Politics*; **Judith Browne Dianis**, *Executive Director, National Office Advancement Project*; **Melanie Roussell Newman**, *Senior Vice President of Communications and Culture, Planned Parenthood Federation of America and Planned Parenthood Action Fund*; **L. Joy Williams**, *Political Strategist and President of the Brooklyn NAACP*; **Joycelyn Frye**, *Senior Fellow, Center For American Progress*; **Adrienne Shropshire**, *Executive Director, BlackPAC*; and **Karine Jean Pierre**, *Senior Advisor and National Spokeswoman, MoveOn*. View full video of this discussion on the [Higher Heights Facebook page](#).

**About Higher Heights Leadership Fund:**

*Headquartered in New York, NY, Higher Heights Leadership Fund, a 501(c)(3) organization, along with its sister organization Higher Heights for America, a national 501(c)(4) organization, is investing in a long-term strategy to analyze, expand, and support a Black women's leadership pipeline at all levels and strengthen their civic participation beyond just Election Day. For additional information please visit, [higherheightsleadershipfund.org](https://higherheightsleadershipfund.org).*

**About 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 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 [cawp.rutgers.edu](https://cawp.rutgers.edu)*

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