



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NALEO Educational Fund, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Launches National Initiative to Increase Staff Diversity on the Hill

Staff Up Congress, a nonpartisan coalition effort, will tackle systemic underrepresentation of minorities in congressional staff positions

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In response to chronic underrepresentation in top Congressional staff jobs, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund and the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies last week launched Staff Up Congress, a national initiative for a representative congressional workforce. The nonpartisan initiative kicked off with U.S. Representatives Barbara Lee (D, CA-13) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R, FL-27) at a networking event for prospective congressional staffers at the Majority Group Townhouse on Wednesday, November 1.

At a time when Congress is more diverse than ever, senior staff members serving these lawmakers' workforces remain overwhelmingly white. Staff Up Congress will address this under representation by recruiting, training, and placing talented people of color in staff positions in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate. The initiative will be led jointly by NALEO Educational Fund, an organization with more than 35 years of experience increasing Latino participation in the political process, and the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a public policy organization that supports elected officials and policy experts who serve communities of color.

"Americans benefit when qualified individuals from a variety of backgrounds are able to use their skills and talents to work on behalf of Congress and the American people," stated **Arturo Vargas, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund executive director**. "Unfortunately, the congressional workforce still has a long way to go before it fully reflects the diversity and talents of this great nation. That is why I am proud to join forces with the Joint Center, through our Staff Up Congress initiative, to address the underrepresentation of qualified Latinos and people of color by recruiting, training, and placing those talented individuals in staff positions on the Hill."

"Staff Up Congress, our partnership with the NALEO Educational Fund, is the next meaningful step toward ensuring that Congress is truly representative of the many



diverse communities in America,” said **Spencer Overton, President of Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies**. “Capitol Hill staffers have a unique ability to craft policy that impacts us all, and Staff Up Congress will work to ensure that people of color have an equal opportunity to fill these roles.”

A 2015 comprehensive report by Joint Center on the Hill’s workforce found that only 7.1 percent of top Senate staffers were people of color, despite people of color making up over 36 percent of the U.S. population. The two organizations will work together to grow the pool of candidates for senior positions; develop candidates’ skills and networks; build a sustainable pipeline of candidates from the entry level to Chief of Staff; and urge hiring managers to actively consider, recruit, and hire in an inclusive manner.

“I’m so glad to see NALEO work diligently to help promote diversity in the halls of Congress through the Staff Up initiative,” said **U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen**. “As the first Hispanic woman in Congress, I know that different life experiences bring valuable perspectives to the table when we make the policies that impact our nation. From Chief of Staff to Staff Assistant roles, unique voices in our legislative process are crucial to helping ensure that our laws reflect our country’s values.”

Staff Up Congress is being funded through a grant by Democracy Fund, a bipartisan foundation which invests in organizations working to ensure that our political system is able to withstand new challenges and deliver on its promise to the American people.

Those interested in participating in the initiative and learning more, can visit <http://staffupcongress.com>.

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About NALEO Educational Fund

NALEO Educational Fund is the nation's leading non-profit, non-partisan organization that facilitates full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.

About the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies is a non-partisan, non-profit public policy organization that supports elected officials and policy experts who serve communities of color across the country.