



July 19, 2018

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

NALEO Contact: Amanda Bosquez ([abosquez@naleo.org](mailto:abosquez@naleo.org), 361-548-6989)

Joint Center Contact: Don Bell ([don@jointcenter.org](mailto:don@jointcenter.org))

## **STAFF UP CONGRESS LAUNCHES PROFESSIONAL TRAINING ACADEMIES TO INCREASE STAFF DIVERSITY ON THE HILL**

*The Staff Up Congress Legislative Academy, first of three professional development tracks to be offered, will tackle dismal diversity rates in senior Hill staff by helping junior staff members of color become legislative directors*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – With fewer than 10 percent of senior Senate staff positions belonging to people of color, Staff Up Congress – a national initiative by NALEO Educational Fund and the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies to build a representative congressional workforce – today launched a professional training academy to prepare talented people of color for senior staff positions.

The Staff Up Congress Legislative Academy, one of three professional development tracks to be offered by the initiative, will be led by bipartisan current and former Senate and House staff to train a cohort of current and former junior legislative staffers through a four-session program covering the skills and knowledge aspiring legislative directors in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate need.

“Our democracy is stronger when our institutions are staffed with qualified individuals who reflect the diversity of communities our government represents,” said **Arturo Vargas, CEO of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund**. “After months of working to identify the specific obstacles faced by Latinos and other people of diverse ethnic backgrounds trying to move up the ranks in Congress, Staff Up Congress’ professional training academies will provide them with the additional skills we know all candidates need to be competitive for senior roles.”

“We know there is immense talent in communities of color that is not being fully utilized to serve the American people in Congress,” said **Spencer Overton, President of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies**. “The Staff Up Congress Legislative Academy will help ensure we increase the current dismal diversity rates at the top levels of congressional staff leadership, which will promote better policy-making.”

Staff Up Congress was launched in November 2017 in response to chronic underrepresentation of people of color in top congressional staff jobs. A 2015 comprehensive report by the 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. Staff Up Congress is working to grow the pool of candidates of color 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.

The Staff Up Congress Legislative Academy, which began accepting applications today through August 3, 2018, will bring together bipartisan current and former Senate and House staff to train aspiring legislative directors. The four-session legislative academy will cover processes and best practices on various topics, including: managing the appropriations process; understanding communications and media; operating in the committee framework; and working across the aisle.

Participants will be announced on August 28, 2018, and the academy will run from September 7 to September 28, 2018. Participants who complete all four sessions will be given a certificate of completion of the program.

In addition to the Legislative Academy, Staff Up Congress will launch a Communications Academy and Senior Management Academy to prepare current and former junior staffers for senior jobs as communications directors and chiefs of staff, respectively.

Those interested in participating in the Legislative Academy or learning more about Staff Up Congress, can visit <http://staffupcongress.com>.

###

#### **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.*