



**States of**  
**INCLUSION**

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**New American Journeys  
to Elected Office**



*The* NEW AMERICAN  
LEADERS PROJECT

# **States of Inclusion:**

## **New American Journeys to Elected Office**

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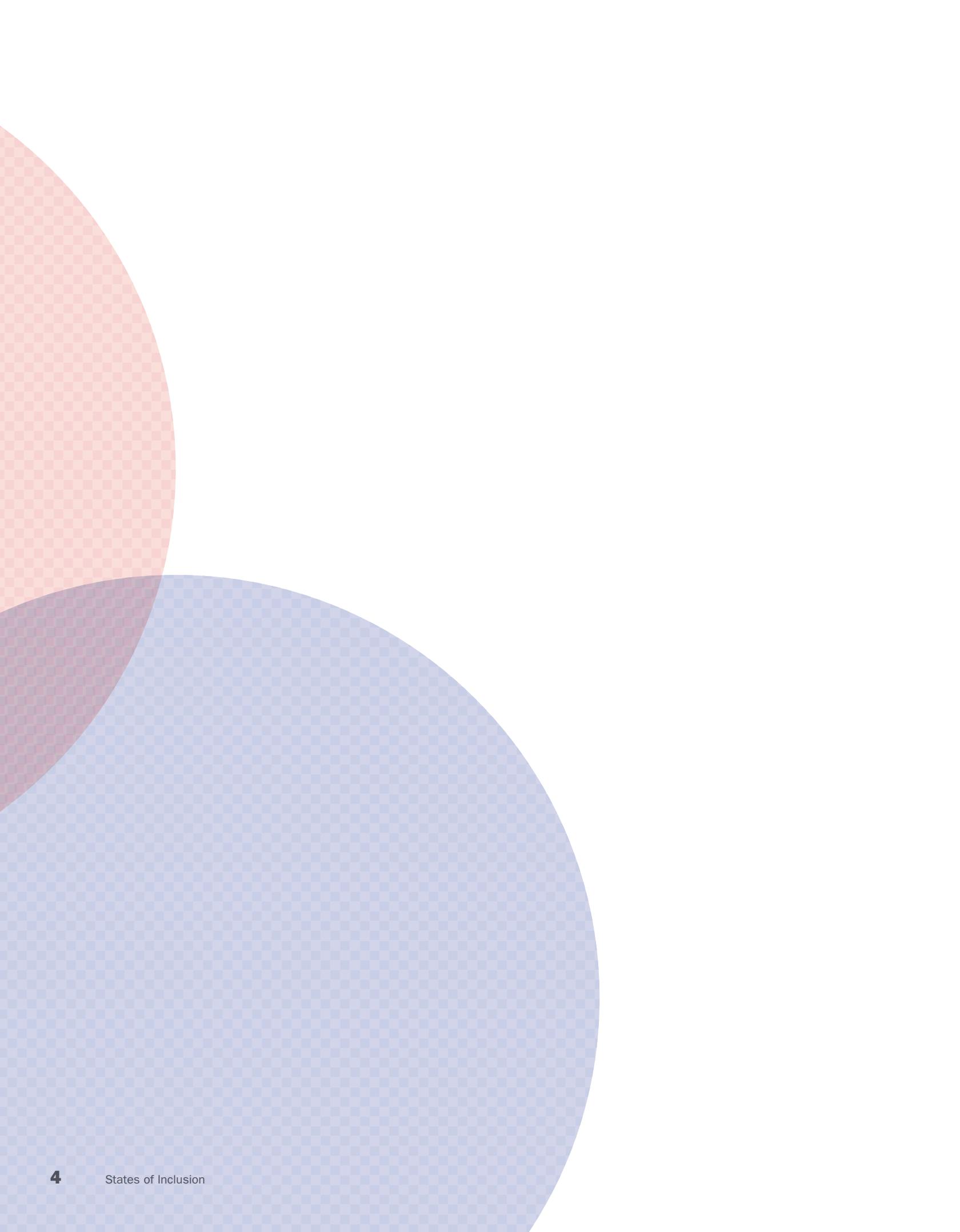
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## **ABOUT THE NEW AMERICAN LEADERS PROJECT**

The New American Leaders Project is leading a movement for inclusive democracy. We train first and second-generation New Americans for political leadership rooted in community ideals. We encourage innovative policymakers who promote immigrant integration and political system reform. Through research and dialogue, we offer solutions for an expanded electorate and more diverse leadership.

Our democracy is stronger when everyone is represented and everyone participates. By emboldening New Americans to run first for local positions in School Boards, City Councils and State Legislatures, we are also building a pipeline of leaders for federal positions. At the local, state and national level, we can work toward a progressive agenda that affirms immigrant integration as one aspect of a broader agenda for racial, gender and economic justice and civil rights.



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# Letter From the President

While all eyes are turned to the Presidential election, 2016 is also an important year for state and local races. Although people of color and women are underrepresented in Congress, the rates of representation are even more dismal at the local and state level. Fewer than 2% of the 500,000 state and local seats are held by Asian Americans and Latina/os.

For The New American Leaders Project, these offices are critical. For one, they represent an opportunity for first and second generation Americans to play a role where it matters most – in their local communities, close to their homes, schools, and workplaces. Secondly, while **immigration** policy is decided at the Congressional level, **immigrant** policy is determined at the local and state level. On school boards, city councils and state legislatures, policymakers determine how immigrant communities access education and healthcare, interact with law enforcement, and obtain licenses and support for their jobs and businesses.

State legislatures are particularly important because they have increasingly become the venue in which legislators respond to Congressional inaction on immigration reform. Underrepresentation of minorities, and particularly of Asian American and Latina/os, is explored in this report. We acknowledge that Arab Americans, Caribbean Americans and African immigrants have been and are increasingly holding state level office, but acquiring a statistically significant sample of legislators from these communities was not possible. We also acknowledge that African Americans and women remain underrepresented, and continue to face barriers in their campaigns. For the purposes of this report, we focused on the largest two immigrant communities in our country today—Asian Americans and Latinos.

The report tells positive and concerning stories—barriers to entry are high, but candidates are able to overcome them in order to win. In a report we released last year on representation in state legislatures, we found that no state has a legislature that accurately reflects its Asian American and Latino population. In this report, we begin to explore reasons for that underrepresentation. More importantly, as we share in our recommendations, investment, recruitment and reform are needed to narrow the representation gap.

Sayu Bhojwani  
President and Founder  
The New American Leaders Project

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# Executive Summary

**States of Inclusion: New American Journeys to Elected Office** reports the results of the American Leadership Survey, a study of state legislators conducted by The New American Leaders Project in 2015. The survey investigates the factors that shape low levels of Asian American and Latina/o representation in legislatures around the country. While non-Whites make up nearly 40 percent of the American public, state legislators who identify as African American, Asian American, Latina/o and Native American hold only 14 percent of all seats.

We collected responses from 544 elected officials from across the United States and found that while Asian Americans and Latina/os have a lot in common with legislators from other racial groups, they also face unique, and often hidden, obstacles to winning a seat at the legislative table. The most telling differences between racial groups are represented in four areas of the survey: legislators' personal backgrounds in their communities, the conditions surrounding their decisions to get on the ballot, their supporters and their challenges during campaigns. In addition to differences between Asian Americans and Latina/os and other racial groups, the survey also reveals gender differences in some of these areas.

## **Personal Backgrounds, Political Journeys**

Asian American and Latina/o legislators reported fairly similar occupational backgrounds as other groups of legislators, but two key aspects of their personal backgrounds were strikingly different. First, Asian Americans and Latina/os are much more likely than other survey respondents to report that they themselves are first generation immigrants, or that they are the children of immigrants. One quarter of all Asian American respondents, and 16.2 percent of Latina/o respondents said that they were not born in the United States. Second, Asian Americans and Latina/os reported that they were involved in organizations based in their communities—neighborhoods, schools, cultural and ethnic associations—much more frequently than other legislators. In terms of professional backgrounds, across racial groups, the occupations of most legislators who responded to our survey fell into one of five categories: lawyers, education professionals, small business owners, non-profit leaders and engineers. Asian Americans and Latina/os reported backgrounds in engineering and non-profit

leadership more frequently than other groups, and small business ownership less frequently.

## **Getting on the Ballot**

The American Leadership Survey shows that Asian American and Latina/o legislators tended to independently envision themselves as state legislators less frequently than other respondents. Asian Americans and Latina/os said that they “never thought of running until someone else suggested it” much more frequently than White respondents. Within each racial group, women said that they “never thought of running” more frequently than men. In addition to the many challenges that potential candidates face, Latinas also experience a deficit of outside support in comparison to others, including frequent reports of being discouraged by their political party more than any other group.

## **What it Takes to Win**

Once Asian American and Latina/o candidates officially throw their hats in the ring, community groups and unions play an outsized role in their success. The three types of organizations most frequently cited as supporters by all survey respondents were political parties, labor unions, and community-based organizations. There was little reported difference in campaign support from political parties across the racial groups in our survey, once individuals officially declared candidacy for the state legislature. However, there are marked racial differences in reporting support from labor unions and community groups. Asian Americans and Latina/os reported receiving support from labor unions far more frequently than Whites. For Asian Americans in particular, community-based organizations are also a frequent source of support.

## **Campaign Challenges**

When we asked state legislators to name the biggest challenges they faced during their first campaign for the state legislature, fundraising was by far the most common response. Close to two-thirds of Latina respondents report that fundraising was a key challenge—nearly twice as often as women from other racial groups, and significantly more often than all other men, including Latinos. The second most frequently named challenge is related to the logistics of the campaign itself. Campaign mechanics—filing required forms and fundraising reports, recruiting volunteers, and managing campaign staff were named as noticeable challenges for Asian American and Latino men, who cited them more frequently than other male respondents. Perhaps just as interestingly, Latinas and Asian American women rarely identified campaign mechanics as a challenge, and reported attending campaign trainings and workshops more often than others.

## **Recommended Practices to Build More Representative State Legislatures**

The findings of the American Leadership Survey point to three recommended practices to close the representation gap –recruitment, investment and reform. More explicit pipeline development and recruiting for specific seats must be targeted to Asian American and Latina/o community leaders and activists. Community-based organizations, unions and candidate training organizations must continue and expand their investment in developing the pipeline of new elected officials from the Asian American and Latina/o communities, and provide material support when they get on the ballot. Advocacy groups, funders and other stakeholders need to engage in new tactics to build a more inclusive democracy and support immigrant incorporation and immigration reform at multiple levels of government.

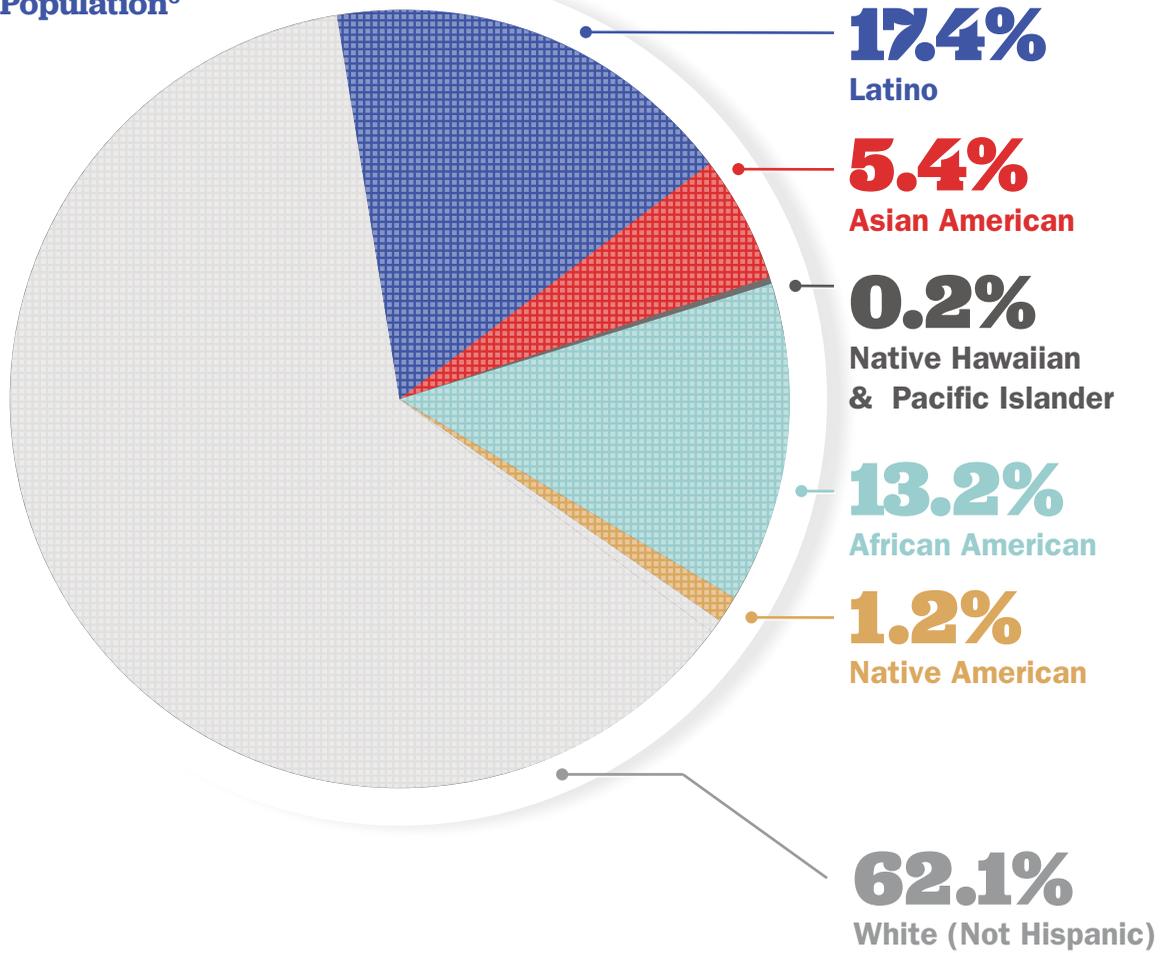
The representation gap in state legislatures can be narrowed through investment, recruitment and reform. Given their increasingly important roles as policy generators, states can be both more reflective of, and responsive to, the needs of a changing American public.

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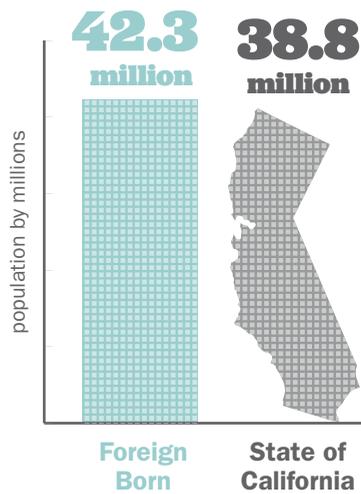
# Table of Contents

<b>Persistent (Under) Representation in American State Legislatures</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Personal Backgrounds, Political Journeys</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Getting on the Ballot</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>What it Takes to Win</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Campaign Challenges</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Works Cited</b>	<b>25</b>

**FIGURE 1:**  
**Demographics of U.S. Population<sup>6</sup>**



**FIGURE 2:**  
**Foreign Born Population in the U.S.**



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# Persistent (Under) Representation in American State Legislatures

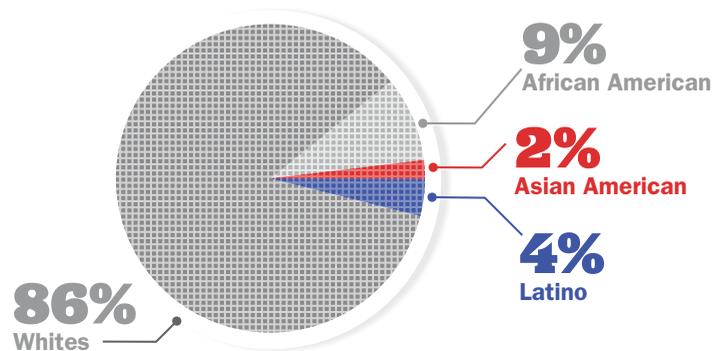
Even as the legislative branch of the federal government continues to be defined by partisan gridlock, American state-level legislatures are relative hotbeds of policy production. According to one estimate, state legislatures are six times more productive in terms of bill passage than Congress.<sup>1</sup> Immigration-related issues are a particularly stark illustration of this contrast in productivity. While immigration reform has repeatedly stalled in Washington, the National Conference of State Legislatures reports that all but four states passed at least one measure related to immigration in the first half of 2015 alone, including 153 laws and 238 resolutions.<sup>2</sup>

In light of these dynamics, the lopsided demographic composition of American state legislatures is troubling. While non-Whites make up nearly 40 percent of the American public,<sup>3</sup> state legislators who identify as African American, Asian American,<sup>4</sup> Latina/o and Native American hold only 14 percent of all seats. Gender disparity also persists: while women are a well-documented 51% of the electorate, women from all racial groups combined hold less than a quarter of all state legislative seats. Considerable evidence shows that elected members of underrepresented communities often vote and act differently in the formulation and adoption of public policies.<sup>5</sup> Thus, as the descriptive representation gap grows, a gap between the substantive interests of Americans and the policy products of their institutions may be growing as well.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 42.3 million Americans were born outside of the United States—more than the population of the state of California.<sup>6</sup> The two largest groups of first- and second-generation immigrants are Asian Americans and Latina/os, **but less than 6 percent of all state legislators come from these communities. Even as legislatures churn out bills directly related to immigration, the vast majority of representatives writing, debating and passing that legislation are White males.**<sup>7</sup>

**TABLE 1:**  
**Demographics of State Legislators January 2015**

Group Name	Number	% of All State Legislators
Democrats	3199	43
Republicans	4106	56
Other Party	72	1
Women	1791	24
Men	5597	76
African Americans	639	9
Asian Americans	125	2
Latina/os	296	4
Whites	6328	86



**TABLE 2:**  
**First and Second Generation Immigrants Among Survey Respondents, %**

	Asian Americans	Latina/os	Whites
All	45	43	6

In early 2015, The New American Leaders Project conducted a first-of-its-kind national survey of sitting state legislators, in order to better understand the extent of this deficit in representation and begin to shed light on possible causes and likely ramifications. The American Leadership Survey provides a lens into the aspects of legislators’ backgrounds and journeys to office that are often difficult to understand or quantify, but central to their decision to run and ability to win. We collected responses from 544 elected officials from across the United States who shared their journey to the state legislature with us (Table 3). We found that while Asian Americans and Latina/os have a lot in common with legislators from other racial groups, they also face unique, and often hidden, obstacles to winning a seat at the legislative table. Other groups who are also sorely underrepresented—African Americans, Arab Americans, Native Americans and members of immigrant communities from Caribbean and African countries, among others—may also encounter similar challenges, but we were not able to collect a large enough pool of responses from each of those groups to speak to their specific issues. Thus,

in the remainder of the report, we will discuss the ways in which Asian American and Latina/o experiences diverge from those reported by White legislators, who hold 86 percent of all state legislative seats in the United States. (For more details on the sample makeup and data collection, please refer to Methodology.) We found the most telling differences between racial groups in four areas of the survey: legislators’ personal backgrounds in their communities, the conditions surrounding their decisions to get on the ballot, their supporters and their challenges during campaigns.

**TABLE 3:**

**Demographics of American Leadership Survey Respondents<sup>8</sup>**

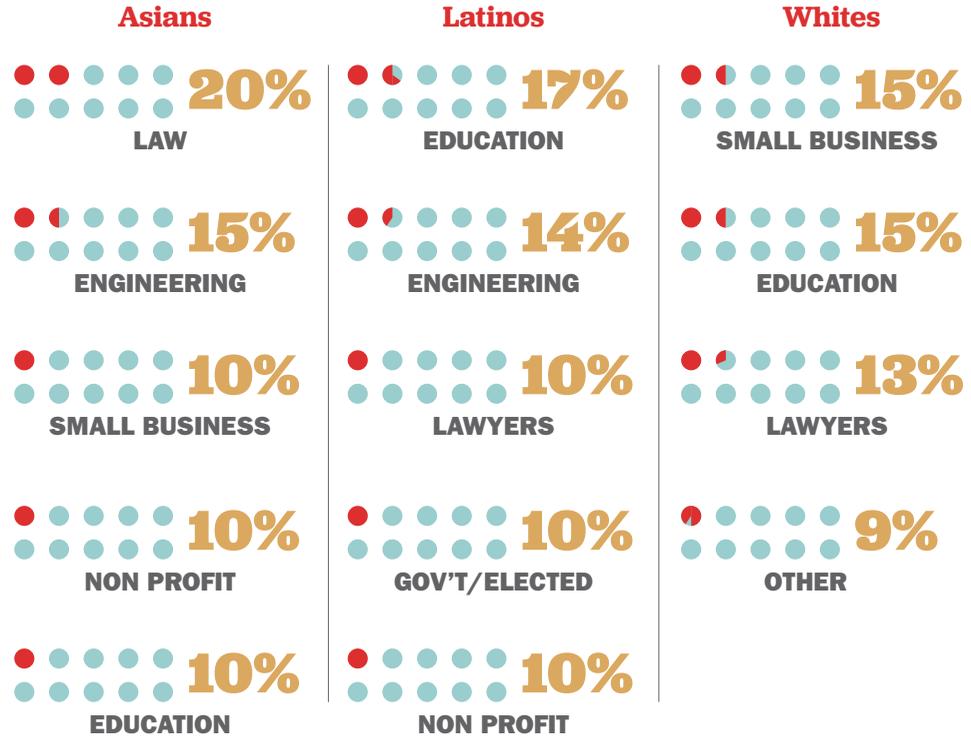
Group Name	Number	% of All Respondents
Democrats	332	62
Republicans	194	36
Other Party	10	2
Women	181	33
Men	363	67
African Americans	33	6
Asian Americans	40	7
Latina/os	70	13
Whites	394	72

## 1. Personal Backgrounds, Political Journeys

In many respects, Asian American and Latina/o state legislators are very similar to others serving in state legislatures—they are active in organizations outside of work, and care deeply about policy issues and representing their communities. We learned in the American Leadership Survey that there are important differences as well. As mentioned earlier, while immigration is an active issue in nearly every state legislature in the country, the policies enacted appear to touch on the lives of some legislators much more than others. Asian American and Latina/o respondents were far more likely than others to report that either they or their parents were born outside of the United States. One quarter of all Asian American respondents, and 16.2 percent of Latina/o respondents said that they were not born in the United States. While all legislators are involved in decisions regarding education, infrastructure and taxes, those decisions may have differential effects on the growing communities of first and second-generation immigrants in the United States. Asian American and Latina/o legislators serve all residents in their districts, but may also be able to bring a perspective to the table that recognizes how certain policy dimensions impact immigrant-based communities.

In terms of professional backgrounds, across racial groups, the occupations of most legislators who responded to our survey fell into one of five categories: lawyers, education professionals, small business owners, non-profit leaders and

**Employment  
by Industry**



engineers. Asian Americans and Latina/os reported backgrounds in engineering and non-profit leadership more frequently than other groups, and small business ownership less frequently. There were no statistically significant differences in the percentage of Asian Americans and Latina/os who reported previously holding elected office before becoming a state legislator.

Like other respondents, Asian Americans and Latina/os were quite active in organizations outside of home and work before they ran for the state legislature for the first time. However, there are distinctions in the types of organizations in which they spent their time. Asian Americans and Latina/os reported that they were involved in organizations based in their communities—neighborhoods, schools, cultural and ethnic associations—much more frequently than other legislators (Table 3). In terms of being active in political organizations, there is no significant difference in the frequency of participation in the political parties themselves, but Asian Americans reported being active in other, non-party types of political organizations less often than other legislators.

**TABLE 4:**

**Participation  
in cultural or ethnic,  
community-based, or  
school orgs,  
%**

	Asian Americans	Latina/os	Whites
All	40	36	28

**TABLE 5:**  
**Participation in Political Parties and Non-Party Political Organizations, %**

	Political Party			Non-Party Political Organizations		
	Asian Americans	Latina/os	Whites	Asian Americans	Latina/os	Whites
All	18	23	18	25	34	34

Among our respondents, Asian Americans and Latina/os are more likely than others to have an immigrant background, report being active in community-based organizations, and come from a variety of occupational backgrounds (including the law and education). Given the similarities in professional backgrounds, previous office holding and political activities, it may appear that the differences are subtle, and may not carry much weight on their own. However, as the remainder of the report shows, the legislators’ personal and organizational connections to their communities appear to have a particular degree of importance in Asian American and Latina/o electoral success down the road.

## 2. Getting on the Ballot

The moment when a voter walks into a polling booth and checks off the candidate of his or her choosing is, in many ways, the final step of a long and complicated process. The list of people that voters see on the ballot is shaped by many factors, including individual ambition, the composition of the district population, and availability of an open seat in the election. Given the current demographic makeup of state legislatures, another important element may be whether members of some demographic groups “see” themselves as elected officials, or view electoral politics as a viable venue for service to their community.

The American Leadership Survey shows that **Asian Americans and Latina/os tend to envision themselves as state legislators less frequently than other respondents.** We asked survey participants to describe who influenced their decision to run for state legislature, and whether they thought of themselves holding that office before someone else suggested it.<sup>9</sup> Asian Americans and Latina/os said that they “never thought of running until someone else suggested it” much more frequently than White respondents. Within each racial group, women said that they “never thought of running” more frequently than men.

**TABLE 6:**  
**“I never thought of running until someone else suggested it.” %**

	Asian Americans	Latina/os	Whites
All	50	34	24
Women <sup>10</sup>	73	40	39
Men	41	32	19

For Asian American legislators in particular, having another person who envisions them as a potential candidate, and introduces that idea, appears centrally important. Survey data alone cannot say why this may be the case; there may be

many potential reasons related to the incorporation and participation of Asian Americans in the political system more broadly. However, the differences between Asian Americans and other respondents strongly suggest that **active recruitment plays a decisive role for Asian Americans who enter state legislative races and win.**

The gender pattern noted above is reversed among legislators who said that they had “already thought of running when someone else suggested it (Table 6).” This group of respondents saw themselves as potential state legislators, and then had that vision externally validated. Latino men, in particular, frequently describe their decision to run in this way, and are twice as likely as Asian American men to have considered running before being asked. **Asian Americans report independently considering running and having someone else suggest they run much less frequently than all other groups.**

**TABLE 7:**

**“I had already thought of running for office when someone else suggested it.”**

**%**

	Asian Americans	Latina/os	Whites
All	22	43	32
Women	18	30	27
Men	24	48	35

Among the Latina/o respondents who considered running for state legislature on their own, we find a gender gap in receiving encouragement to run (Table 7). Half of the Latinas who thought of running on their own said that it was entirely their own idea; no one else was pushing or asking them to run. Less than a third of Latino men said that that was the case. Instead, among those Latino respondents who reported that they thought of running on their own, nearly three-quarters said they were encouraged. Thus, while Latino men only reported thinking of running on their own slightly more than Latinas (60 percent of Latina respondents vs. 68 percent of Latino respondents), they also have the idea of candidacy externally validated much more frequently. This gender gap suggests that while Latinas and Latinos may see themselves as state legislators and candidates at a similar rate, Latina women who think about serving are asked and encouraged to run much less.

**TABLE 8:**

**Encouragement to run among Latina/os who said they thought of it on their own,**

**%**

	Latinas	Latinos
<i>“It was entirely my own idea to run.”</i>	50	27
<i>“I had already thought of running for office when someone else suggested it.”</i>	50	72

The gender gap in encouragement among Latina/os takes on even greater significance when we look at the opposite face of recruiting—discouragement. Political parties have traditionally held a central role in shaping the ballot for American elections, in part by encouraging certain people to enter races and dissuading others. This role may be shifting, especially in the case of emerging communities with fewer historical ties to the parties such as Asian Americans and Latina/os.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, being discouraged by a party leader may send a signal to a potential candidate that she is less likely to have access to certain resources during the campaign—fundraising networks, experienced campaign staff, and assistance with building name recognition from well-established incumbents, among others.

Among most groups of respondents, reports that the political party discouraged their candidacies are rare. However, **Latina respondents said that they were discouraged from running by someone in their political party to a striking degree—nearly 1 in 3.** This result, combined with the gender gap in encouragement, paints a picture of the decision to run for state legislature among Latinas that is distinct from other groups, including Latino men.

**TABLE 9:**  
**“Discouraged by:  
 My Political Party”**  
**%**

	Asian Americans	Latina/os	Whites
All	3	16	7
Women	0	30	7
Men	3	10	7

In addition to the many challenges that potential candidates face, Latinas experience a deficit of outside support in comparison to others, before they even put their names on the ballot. As discussed earlier, in terms of prior office holding and previous political activities, Latinas have similar qualifications before running for the state legislature to other groups of candidates. In fact, there is evidence in other studies of female elected officials of color that, by these measures, they tend to be more qualified than other officeholders.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, it is worth remembering that these results have been generated by talking to election *winners*. This survey cannot speak to the rates of discouragement among similarly situated individuals who chose not to get on the ballot, or who ran and lost. In that light, these may be conservative estimates of the disparities in encouragement and diversion away from candidacy. What we can see from this data is **that despite discouragement from running by members of their party, and a relative vacuum of supportive voices when they think about becoming candidates, some Latinas do still get on the ballot and win.**

### 3. What It Takes to Win

Once Asian American and Latina/o candidates officially throw their hats in the ring, community groups and unions play an outsize role in their success. The three types of organizations most frequently cited as supporters by survey respondents were political parties, labor unions, and community-based organizations. There was little reported difference in campaign support from political parties across the racial groups in our survey, once individuals had become candidates for the state legislature. However, there are marked racial differences in reporting support from labor unions and community groups (Table 11). Asian Americans and Latina/os reported receiving support from labor unions far more frequently than Whites. This general result holds even when comparing only Democrats from each racial group. The role of unions in the political fortunes of Latina/os and Asian Americans more generally is beyond the scope of this study, but this illustration of how often unions are a part of their winning campaigns for state legislature suggests that they play a direct role in increasing the descriptive representation of both communities.

TABLE 10:

“Which ...organizations supported your first campaign for the state legislature?”

%

Supported By...	Asian Americans	Latina/os	Whites
Political Party	45	60	53
Labor Union	60	69	33
Community Group	51	34	28

For Asian Americans in particular, community-based organizations are a frequent source of support. This is especially true among Asian American women—63 percent reported having support from community-based organizations. These results echo the higher reported levels of involvement in ethnic and cultural associations, schools and other community related organizations discussed earlier. In traditional analyses of American politics, community-based organizations are rarely considered pivotal electoral players. This result suggests that for candidates who identify with some immigrant communities, that notion may need to be revised.

An additional point worth emphasizing in this set of results is that labor unions and community-based organizations play a supportive role in the campaigns of Latina/o and Asian American state legislative candidates who *ultimately win* their elections. Unions and community organizations’ continued support may be pivotal to maintaining the current levels of representation that Latina/o and Asian American communities have in state legislatures. These organizations may also be best positioned to help candidates from immigrant communities overcome their biggest challenges during campaigns.

## 4. Campaign Challenges

When we asked state legislators to name the biggest challenges they faced during their first campaign for the state legislature, fundraising was by far the most common response. Asking for contributions, establishing networks of donors, and strategically garnering endorsements that include financial support can be especially challenging in a first campaign for elected office. Even a move from a local or municipal office to a larger state legislative or state senate seat often requires renewed effort to expand candidates' previous fundraising capacity. Thus, it is hardly surprising that over a third of most groups of respondents said that fundraising was a top challenge during their first race for the state legislature.

**TABLE 11:**

**Fundraising cited as one of the top three challenges during the campaign,**

	Asian Americans	Latina/os	Whites
All	40	48	38
Women	36	62	34
Men	41	43	40

**%**

Latina legislators are clear outliers on this question. **Close to two-thirds of Latina respondents report that fundraising was a key challenge—nearly twice as often as women from other racial groups, and significantly more often than all other men, including Latinos.** Past research on female candidates' fundraising generally indicates that women tend to raise as much or more than equally situated men,<sup>13</sup> but that the funds may come from a more numerous array of sources,<sup>14</sup> or have different “bang for the buck” across gender and party.<sup>15</sup> One way to interpret the previous research is that women are able to raise as much as men, but it requires more or different work. This may be especially true for Latinas.

Assume, for a moment, that all candidates across racial and gender groups are, on average, equally skilled in soliciting and obtaining contributions. From the perspective of candidate “quality” this seems a likely situation—there is no significant difference in the percent of Latinas in this survey who held previous office prior to running, and as a group, they are generally supported by as many different types of organizations as other candidates. Given that assumption, a simplified way to conceptualize fundraising is that it comes down to how many people a candidate can ask, and how much money each of those people give. As a group, Latina state legislators say they were active in party activities before running as much as or more often than others, and they tend to have the support of labor unions. However, they also report being involved in political organizations outside of the party less often, and Latina/os of both genders report involvement with a professional association much less than other racial groups. Thus, while Latinas may have access to particular organizations and networks, they might not encompass the same caliber of individual donors that are included in other political/personal networks. All networks and organizations are not necessarily equally able to generate individual contributions, and it may be that the donor

networks that Latinas more typically have access to as candidates are distinct from others.

The second most frequently named challenge is related to the logistics of the campaign itself. Campaign mechanics — filing required forms and fundraising reports, recruiting volunteers, and managing campaign staff were named as noticeable challenges for Asian American and Latino men, who cited them more frequently than other male respondents. Perhaps just as interestingly, Latinas and Asian American women rarely identified campaign mechanics as a challenge.

**TABLE 12:**  
**Campaign Mechanics Cited as Top 3 Challenge, %**

	Asian Americans	Latina/os	Whites
All	22	21	19
Women	9	5	21
Men	28	28	18

These results may suggest that Asian American and Latino men enter races for the state legislature with less campaign experience, either working for themselves or in support of other candidates. Another possibility is that they have levels of experience similar to other groups of candidates, but are more comfortable saying on a survey that they were challenged by the day-to-day tasks of running a state legislative campaign. Similarly, it may be the case that Latinas and Asian American women are disproportionately less willing to say that campaign mechanics were a significant challenge, or they may have had more experience with electoral campaigns for other candidates or themselves.

On a perhaps related vein, Asian American and Latina women also report more often than other groups that they attended a candidate training or workshop before running for the state legislature. Thus, Asian American and Latina women’s responses may also be a reflection of current trainings’ potential to influence positive outcomes for participants. Further research is necessary to determine the exact story behind these divergent responses, but **the gender and racial differences indicate that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be the most effective strategy for preparing potential candidates from diverse backgrounds to run for office.**

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# Recommended Practices to Build More Representative State Legislatures

The findings of the American Leadership Survey point to three recommended practices to close the representation gap.

**RECRUIT:** More explicit pipeline development and recruiting for specific seats must be targeted to Asian American and Latina/o community leaders and activists.

**CULTIVATE community leaders.**

The likelihood that members of the Asian American and Latina/o communities identify with or are active in the traditional political parties is fairly low.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the American Leadership Survey shows that leaders from these communities are more likely to be active in the halls of local community organizations and school associations, instead of at the local party office. Recruiting and outreach networks must include these types of organizations, especially in areas where immigrant-based organizations do not typically focus their activities on electoral politics.

**ASK New Americans to run.**

Many legislators from the Asian American and Latina/o community did not imagine themselves as elected officials before they were asked to run, or did not hear much encouragement while they were considering whether they wanted to take the risk of putting their name on the ballot. Individuals and organizations interested in increasing the representation of members of these communities must place an emphasis on openly discussing the possibility of public service and working to expand the pool of people who are able to imagine themselves in office, even if there are few or no others from their community currently in the legislature. Leaders of community-based organizations and unions can make a significant difference in this regard by developing strategic efforts to increase the political capacity of rank and file members.

**INVEST:** Community-based organizations, unions and candidate training organizations must continue and expand their investment in developing the pipeline of new elected officials from the Asian American and Latina/o communities, and provide material support when they get on the ballot.

**TRAIN potential candidates in the nuts and bolts of running effective campaigns.**

Asian American and Latina women report attending candidate trainings more often than other groups, and also report that campaign mechanics are a significant challenge far less. Trainings may give women the capacity to run their campaigns effectively, minimizing the learning curve, and freeing up more time and mental energy to deal with other challenges particular to their candidacy. More generally, candidate trainings and workshops create opportunities to “see the candidate in the mirror” and demystify some of the experiences of being a candidate for political newcomers.

**SUPPORT candidates with expertise, volunteers and fundraising.**

Unions and community organizations are crucial support networks for immigrant community candidates, and must continue to be a resource that future candidates can count on for hands-on campaign support and fundraising. On balance, both of the most frequently cited challenges facing Latina/o and Asian American state legislators during their first campaigns—fundraising and campaign mechanics—encompass issues that labor and community-based organizations are uniquely suited to address. These types of institutions have been an essential component of the electoral success of Latina/o and Asian American state legislators who are already in office. In order to increase the representation of these communities, this support must continue and expand beyond its current levels.

**REFORM:** Advocacy groups, funders and other stakeholders need to engage in new tactics to build a more inclusive democracy and support immigrant incorporation and immigration reform at multiple levels of government.

**CHANGE the perception of public office as a profession for the elite.**

Creating a stronger sense that public service is an effective and achievable venue for supporting Asian American and Latina/o communities can increase the number of candidates who see the potential to run and win. Emphasizing that Asian American and Latina/o community leaders *already have* the talent and experience they need to run, and that concerns about balancing personal, professional and political commitments are not insurmountable barriers, can help make public office seem more attainable.

**FOCUS on state legislatures as venues for policy change and pipeline development.**

Along with other progressive movements such as advocates for LGBTQ, reproductive, and voting rights, immigrant advocates have been organizing at the state level for decades. However, as comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level remains highly uncertain, immigrant advocates must redouble their efforts and target state legislatures. Whether or not immigration reform passes in Congress in the near future, legislatures are actively shaping the contours of immigrant incorporation in the states. Moreover, the makeup of state legislatures will not only impact legislation affecting immigrants today; it will also shape the candidate pipeline for Congress tomorrow.

The representation gap in state legislatures can be narrowed through investment, recruitment and reform. Given their increasingly important roles as policy generators, states can be both more reflective of, and responsive to, the needs of a changing American public.

## **Appendix A: Methodology Statement**

The lopsided nature of race and gender representation in American state legislatures currently presents several formidable challenges for survey data collection. Over 85 percent of all state legislators are White, and less than a quarter are women, including 35 Asian American women and Latinas.<sup>17</sup> To ensure that the resulting data included a reasonable number of observations of Asian American and Latina/o women and men, the American Leadership Survey (ALS) was fielded from January through May 2015 with three sampling frames: first, all sitting state legislators (N=7388); second, all Asian American and Latino state legislators (N=421); and third, a systematic sample stratified by legislative chamber, of legislators from all other racial groups (N=1231) in proportion to the number of Asian Americans and Latinos in that chamber. For each Asian American and Latino member of a legislative chamber, we randomly selected one Republican and one Democratic member within that chamber to include in the stratified sample. The stratified sample included legislators from every state except: Alabama, Iowa, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Carolina, and South Dakota.

All legislators received several email invitations to take an online survey administered via Qualtrics. Paper surveys were also mailed to members of the stratified sample and all Asian American and Latino legislators. A telephone survey research firm, Braun and Associates, also placed calls to Asian American and Latino legislators. The survey was funded in large part by a grant from the New York Community Trust, and substantial support was also provided by the Institute for Governmental Studies at the University of California-Berkeley. Lists of legislators provided by the National Council on State Legislatures, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, The Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, and the Asian Pacific American Almanac served as the starting point for our outreach.

The overall response rate for the survey was 7.3 percent, with much higher response rates—32 percent and 24 percent respectively—among Asian Americans and Latinos. The response rate among women overall was ten percent. While the overall response rate is lower than similar studies with more broad sampling frames, these response rates represent engagement with a substantial proportion of all of the Asian Americans and Latinos serving in state legislatures in 2015.

The margin of error for the survey population overall is +/- 5 percentage points, but this varies considerably by racial and gender groups. Because the racial populations of interest in this study are likely not randomly distributed, the analyses contained in this report are limited to descriptions of patterns among each racial and gender group.

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## Notes

- 1 “States Six Times More Productive Than Congress,” *Congressional Quarterly Roll Call*, January 27, 2015, <http://cqrollcall.com/statetrackers/states-six-times-more-productive-than-congress/>.
- 2 “2015 Report on State Immigration Laws (January-June),” (National Conference of State Legislatures, August 4, 2015).
- 3 U S Census Bureau, “Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060,” February 4, 2015, 1–13.
- 4 For the remainder of this report, the term “Asian Americans” is a shortened reference to and inclusive of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.
- 5 Beth Reingold and Adrienne R Smith, “Welfare Policymaking and Intersections of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in U.S. State Legislatures,” *American Journal of Political Science* 56, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 131–47; Kathleen A Bratton, Kerry L Haynie, and Beth Reingold, “Agenda Setting and African American Women in State Legislatures,” *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 28, no. 3 (August 29, 2006): 71–96, doi:10.1300/J501v28n03\_04.
- 6 U.S. Census Bureau, “Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060.” The percentages of the U.S. Population reported here show U.S. Census projections of those who select one race alone, and who select Hispanic as an ethnic category, as it was labeled in the 2010 Census. 2.5 percent of Americans indicated that they were more than one race, and due to the configuration of race and ethnicity categories on the 2010 Census, population estimates do not total to 100 percent.
- 7 “REPRESENT 2020: Toward a Better Vision for Democracy,” (New American Leaders Project, October 6, 2014).
- 8 Seven legislators who identify as Native American also responded to the survey.
- 9 The American Leadership Survey built on a set of questions originally used by Moncrief, Squire and Jewell, 2001 and Carroll and Sanbonmatsu, 2013, that asks legislators to describe how they made the decision to run for office; Gary F Moncrief, Pevehill Squire, and Malcolm Edwin Jewell, *Who Runs for the Legislature?*, 2001; Susan J Carroll and Kira Sanbonmatsu, *More Women Can Run*, (Oxford University Press, 2013).
- 10 The differences in selecting “I never thought about running...” between women across racial groups, and between women and men overall, are statistically significant at  $p \leq .05$ .
- 11 Janelle Wong, *Democracy's Promise*, (University of Michigan Press, 2008).
- 12 Lisa García Bedolla, Katherine Tate, and Janelle Wong, “Indelible Effects: the Impact of Women of Color in the U.S.,” in *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. S. Thomas and C. Wilcox, 2005.
- 13 Barbara C. Burrell, *Gender in Campaigns for the U.S. House of Representatives*, (University of Michigan Press, 2014).
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- 16 J. Wong et al., *Asian American Political Participation: Emerging Constituents and Their Political Identities*, 2011; Zoltan L. Hajnal and Taeku Lee, *Why Americans Don't Join the Party*, (Princeton University Press, 2011).
- 17 According to the National Council of State Legislators, there are also 69 members of the National Caucus of Native American State Legislators in 2015.





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