Ask Her Anything Mentors - Spring 2024

Raumesh Akbari
(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Democrat
Currently serving as: Tennessee State Senator, District 29; Senate Minority Leader
Well-versed in: Collaboration | Communication | Bipartisan civility

Minority Leader Raumesh Akbari was elected to the Tennessee State Senate in fall of 2018 after serving three terms in the State House of Representatives. A graduate of Washington University and the Saint Louis University School of Law, Leader Akbari serves as Vice-President of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators; Vice-President of the National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women; and formerly served as chair of the Tennessee Black Caucus of State Legislators.

Leader Akbari serves as a member of the Commerce Committee, Ethics Committee, and Second-Vice Chair of the Education Committee in the Tennessee Senate. Two of Leader Akbari’s greatest honors were speaking at the 2016 Democratic National Convention and again at the 2020 Democratic National Convention as one of the “rising star” keynote speakers. Leader Raumesh Akbari is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and The Links, Inc. As a proud Memphian, she hopes to continue representing its people with dignity and purpose.

Marie Alvarado-Gil
(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Democrat
Currently serving as: California State Senator, District 4
Well-versed in: Challenges faced by women leaders | Accountability | Adversity

California State Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil was elected in 2022 and represents the counties of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Inyo, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Stanislaus and Tuolumne as an independent leader in the legislature.

Senator Alvarado-Gil is the Chair of the Senate Human Services Committee and serves on several committees including: Agriculture, Business & Professionals, Government Organization, Insurance, Military & Veterans, and is the Senate liaison to the California Department of Education’s Advisory Commission on Special Education. In addition, she is the vice-chair of the Rural Caucus and active in the Problem Solvers Caucus; both common-sense coalitions for bipartisan and bicameral policymaking.
Marie is a native Californian whose fondest memories of her childhood were spent in the classroom and summers visiting with her extended family in Mexico. Growing up on farmland in the Bay Area, she played in rows of apricot and cherry tree orchards behind her childhood home before learning to shuck corn and grind masa at her grandmother’s tortilla factory in Jalisco as a teenager. Marie was the first female to go to college in her family. She attended UC Davis to study Animal Science before pivoting from her education to raise three amazing children as a single parent in rural northern California. While building a promising career in both the public and nonprofit sectors, Marie returned to college mid-career earning both a Bachelor and Master Degree in Public Administration with emphasis in Health Services Administration from the University of San Francisco.

Marie has a professional background in charter school growth and administration, community organizing and advocacy, and coalition building. She has dedicated her life to public service leadership while balancing the demands of a growing family and an executive career. Policy issues that she has led in the Senate include resource equity for rural communities, wildfire relief for homeowners insurance and protections of farms and water rights across the central valley. The Senator’s tough stance on crime and fiscally conservative voice of the supermajority has earned her the title of The Western Blue Dog.

Marie lives in Amador County among the forested mountains of the Sierra Foothills. She and her husband Cesar are owners and principals at STUDIS Partners, an education consulting firm that represents charter schools and other public school institutions throughout the United States and Central America.

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**Lorena Austin**

(she/they)

**Political Affiliation:** Democrat

**Currently serving as:** Arizona State House Representative, District 9

**Well-versed in:** Community building | Student government | Grassroots field organizing

Lorena Austin is a 5th generation Arizonan whose lifelong love for advocacy and leadership has been rooted in Mesa for almost a century. For over twenty years, Austin’s grandparents owned and operated Albert’s Market in Mesa, which served all residents including minorities residing in segregated neighborhoods. They were well known in Mesa for serving on community boards that advocated for equity and inclusion. Her father went on to become a small business owner and civil rights attorney, known for building relationships and creating community organizations. Lorena currently works alongside her father in hopes of continuing the advancement of communities in Mesa.

While Austin’s father’s family has deep roots within Mesa, Lorena spent part of her childhood living with her mother in central California. There, Austin’s family experienced financial hardship that resulted in living in Section 8 housing for a period of time while her mother returned to school to complete her degree in Social Work. Lorena’s family worked hard to ensure Lorena and her siblings were taken care of to the best of their abilities. This desire to work comes from both sides of her family as both her
father's and mother's family include farm workers. It is this strong work ethic to get things done for her community that drives Lorena today.

Austin proudly graduated from Mesa Community College (“MCC”) as an honor student and student body president. She went on to graduate from the School of Transborder Studies at Arizona State University with a degree in Chicano/a Latino/a Studies, where she focused on U.S. & Mexican Regional Immigration Policy and Economy and obtained a certificate in Cross-Sector Leadership. Austin graduated Summa Cum Laude and was awarded the prestigious Dean's Medal for her academic and co-curricular achievements at Arizona State University ("ASU"). While at ASU, Lorena was chosen as a Congressman Ed Pastor Spirit of Service Scholar, a Next Generation Service Corps Member, and PULSE Scholar. She also received the Chicano/Latino Faculty & Staff Association Roberto L. Pastor Student Leader Award and the Congressman Ed Pastor Civic Leadership Medallion.

Austin has experience working in the public, private and non-profit sectors. She worked with Verizon’s Innovative Learning Program, which brought advanced technology and curriculum to Title 1 schools across the country. As a project manager at the Maricopa County Community College District (“MCCCD”), she designed the Maricopa Student Senate developed to enhance the voice of students from each of the ten individual colleges and placed a student on the MCCCD Governing Board for the first time in the District’s history. She also served as an Advisor for Anytown Arizona Leadership Camp.

As a Mesa native, Austin has been a steadfast supporter of her community as evidenced by her local volunteer activities with the United Food Bank in Mesa and her intense involvement in COVID-19 support to Indigenous communities located in the Navajo Nation. She currently serves as a Student Government Advisor at her beloved alma mater, Mesa Community College, where she serves as a model of advocacy for her students.

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**Xouhoa Bowen**  
(she/her)  
**Political Affiliation:** Democrat  
**Currently serving as:** San Leandro, CA City Council Member, District 5  
**Well-versed in:** Collaboration and consensus building | Community-organizing | Campaigning

Xouhoa is a social impact leader, San Leandro City Council Member, wife, and mother to three young kids with a mission to empower others and advocate for women, children, and families. Xouhoa is the first Asian woman elected to the San Leandro City Council and the first Laotian person to serve on a City Council in California. She sits on the City’s Finance Committee and also serves on the Alameda County Transit Commission. In her professional capacity, Xouhoa Bowen is a nonprofit founder and social sector executive. She previously served in the Peace Corps in Kyrgyzstan as a teacher and community development specialist focusing on education and gender equality. In 2016, she founded Community Impact LAB, a grassroots organization that focuses on achieving gender equality, advancing the rights of women and mothers, and empowering communities to make social and environmental impact. CIL was recognized as the 2022 18th Assembly District Equity Champions of the Year by
Assemblymember Mia Bonta. She also co-founded San Leandro Women Entrepreneurs, a community group focused on supporting women business owners.

Xouhoa was selected to join the Community Equity Committee for the City of San Leandro to help develop policy recommendations for consideration by the City’s Equity Work Group and the San Leandro City Council to create equitable communities, organizational development and restorative business and investment strategies. She was also appointed to the Library-Historical Commission and served on the San Leandro Unified School District’s Citizen’s Bond Oversight Committee, the San Leandro Education Foundation Board, the Washington Elementary School PTA and PTO, and the Measure N Steering Committee to raise funds for San Leandro schools.

She was awarded the 2017 San Leandro Mayor’s Award of Excellence for her commitment to the community and the 2021 Spirit of the Community Award by the San Leandro Chamber of Commerce for her work to combat anti-Asian hate and provide critical resources to families during the Covid-19 pandemic. Xouhoa has a B.A. in Psychology and International Affairs from Marquette University, an MBA in Project Management from Norwich University, and a Certificate of Completion in Social Sector Leadership from UC Berkeley’s Haas School of Business.

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Dr. Carrie Buck
(she/her)

**Political Affiliation:** Republican  
**Currently serving as:** Nevada State Senator, District 5; Assistant Minority Leader  
**Well-versed in:** Education | Organizational Leadership | Climate and Culture | Communication

With over 29 years in the field of education, Dr. Carrie Ann Buck served in the role of classroom teacher, English Language Learner Specialist, Assistant Principal, Principal, Executive Director, and President. She worked in the Clark County School District and Pinecrest Academy of Nevada. She holds a Masters’ degree in Administration and Supervision and a Doctorate degree in Organizational Leadership and has attended the Public Education Foundation Executive Leadership Academy, USC Urban Superintendent Academy, as well as earned a school finance certificate from Georgetown McCourt School of Public Policy.

As the Principal of C.T. Sewell from 2006 to 2014, Dr. Buck’s leadership efforts resulted in an increase in student achievement from 35% proficient to 83% in reading and 36% to 90% in math. Sewell was designated a National Model School, High Achieving School, and a National Title I Distinguished School. In 2008, she won the prestigious Milken award for her work in education.

In 2014, as Executive Director of Pinecrest Academy of Nevada, she increased enrollment and student achievement from one struggling school with 700 students and a 3-star state rating to 5 campuses with all 5-star ratings, serving nearly 6000 students, growing the system to one of the top charter school networks in the state.

In 2019, Dr. Buck became the President of the Pinecrest Foundation, creating innovative programs, building partnerships for dual enrollment and workforce development for students, observing and recruiting student teachers for Pinecrest classrooms, and mentoring new or struggling principals. She
developed a four week financial literacy class for students across the nation, a hockey themed Teacher’s Knight Out incentive program, and a Master Teacher recognition program to highlight and retain teachers in classrooms culminating in a Master Teacher gala at the end of the school year. Dr. Buck also teaches in the Doctoral program at Touro University and was elected as a Senator to the Nevada State Legislature in November of 2020.

Her husband, Eric, is Deputy Chief in the Henderson Police Department. Her oldest son, Collen, is a Green Beret/Army Ranger serving in the United States Army at Ft. Lewis McChord. Her second son, Colbie, is in the Army Reserves, and works in information technology for an electric car company in Mississippi. Their youngest two boys, Branson and Barrett attend Pinecrest Academy of Nevada. She has two grandchildren, Quinn (5) and Heath (3).

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Barbara Buffaloe

(she/her)

Political Affiliation: Democrat

Currently serving as: Columbia, MO Mayor

Well-versed in: Collaboration | Authenticity | Communication

Barbara Buffaloe is the Mayor of Columbia, MO, the fourth largest city in Missouri. She serves on the Board of Directors for the Missouri Innovation Center, and as an ex-officio member on the Board of Directors for REDI and the Columbia Chamber of Commerce.

Mayor Buffaloe is Chair of the Environment Committee of the US Conference of Mayors and was part of a delegation representing US Mayors at COP28 in December 2023. Mayor Buffaloe is part of the 7th cohort of Mayors for the Bloomberg Harvard Civic Leadership - a yearlong program providing executive education and management training to advance leadership, strengthen city halls, and deliver results for communities.

Before being elected Mayor of Columbia, she served as Columbia’s first Sustainability Manager. Mayor Buffaloe coordinated the development of Columbia’s Climate Action & Adaptation Plan that lays out a vision and strategies to address risks posed by climate change and contributes to international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

She has presented on the topics of climate action at numerous conferences, including the US Department of Energy’s Better Buildings Summit, the Midwest Climate Collective’s Climate Summit, and the Advancing Renewables in the Midwest conference. Mayor Buffaloe also serves as advisor to the Board of Directors for the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) and is a member of the Columbia Rotary Club. Mayor Buffaloe holds a BS in Environmental Design and a MS in Environment & Behavior from the University of Missouri. She has been a LEED Accredited Professional since 2004. Mayor Buffaloe and her husband Luke live near downtown Columbia and are raising their two children, Eleanor and Benjamin, to be good stewards of their community.

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Kathleen Cross

(she/her)

**Political Affiliation:** Democrat  
**Currently serving as:** Glendale, CA Unified School Board Member - Area C  
**Well-versed in:** Collaboration | Communication | Approach

Together with parents, teachers, and students, my family has built a community in Glendale that we love. I am a trained social worker who specialized in working with foster youth before life events led me to have to pivot to working as Director of Operations for a small business in order to have the flexibility to be here as a single parent for my three children.

I ran for School Board because I know that I could be the voice that refocuses our direction back to the nuts and bolts of running a great school district by supporting our teachers, staff, and parents so that our kids have the best possible experience in every classroom.

I spent my formative years in North Seattle. My father worked full-time while also volunteering as treasurer on many local boards. My mother worked as a neonatal physical therapist and was a constant volunteer in our schools and president of the PTA. Together with their community and the support from our school district, they were able to research programs that would offer me the structure and education I needed. I want this level of support for every child in GUSD.

When I realized that the school board position for my trustee area was up for election, I knew I had to take action. I needed to stand up and use the experiences that have shaped me, built my strength, and developed my perspective to give back to the community what was so freely offered to me many years ago.

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Stefanie Dalton

(she/her)

**Political Affiliation:** Other  
**Currently serving as:** Red Bank, TN Vice Mayor  
**Well-versed in:** Canvassing | Community engagement | Social media/information-sharing

Stefanie Dalton has lived in the Chattanooga area since 2007 but found her forever home in 2010 in Red Bank, an enclave city of around 12,000 residents. She graduated from East Tennessee State University with a Bachelor’s in English and minor in Psychology and in 2014, she received her Master’s of Science in Social Work and a certificate in Gerontology from the University of Tennessee. She has been a Licensed Master Social Worker for 10 years and in that time, she worked in public mental healthcare and private healthcare before transitioning to part-time work so she could stay at home with her son. Stefanie was elected to the City of Red Bank Board of Commissioners in 2020 and has served as Vice Mayor since that time.

In 2022, she was elected by fellow municipal leaders across the region to serve as the District 3 Director with the Tennessee Municipal League. She is a dedicated community volunteer, a 2023 Leadership
Hamilton County Schools cohort graduate, Board member with the Red Bank Community Food Pantry and the Red Bank/Signal Mountain Chattanooga Chamber Council, tireless advocate for human rights, is married to her darling husband, and is mama to one very precious and sassy 8-year-old.

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**Jenny Di Grappa**  
(she/her)  
**Political Affiliation:** No Affiliation  
**Currently running for:** Anchorage, AK Mayor  
**Well-versed in:** Media (website, social media, logo design, campaign materials) | Advertising | Running as an Independent

I served as Chief of Philanthropy and Community Relations at the Food Bank of Alaska for the past 5 years, and am now in the role of Director of Marketing and Communications as I run for Mayor of Anchorage, Alaska. I received my master's degree in public administration and bachelor's degree in environmental science. I was a founding member of the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce Young Professional Group in 2014 and served on their first board of directors. I am a Honorary Commander on our local military base and also serve on the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness Advisory Council, ASD School Business Partnership board, Better Business Bureau Northwest + Pacific Advisory Committee, and as Alaska Ski for Women Assistant Director. I was named as one of Alaska’s Top 40 Under 40 in 2021 and a finalist for the Alaska Young Professional of the Year in 2023. Outside of work and volunteering, you can find me fishing, hiking, cooking, or traveling.

My current election will end on April 2, 2024. If I am unsuccessful, I intend to run either for my local assembly in 2025 or for my state legislature in 2026.

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**Lisa Feret**  
(she/her)  
**Political Affiliation:** Democrat  
**Currently serving as:** Arvada, CO City Council Member, At-Large  
**Well-versed in:** Bi-partisanship | Nonpartisan races | Fundraising | Messaging

Lisa has been working for and with the community since she was a child - from local food banks to international humanitarian work. She believes that everyone has a role in the betterment of the collective community, for her that role is through creating logical and effective policy.

Her passion for helping others lead her to join the military, where she served as Military Police in the Air Force. She then became a social worker and deployed often with Team Rubicon, an Emergency and Disaster Response organization.

When floods ravaged Colorado in 2013, Lisa deployed to help the communities recover. Witnessing firsthand the immense destruction and pain, she has dedicated her efforts to promoting climate resilient
Lisa’s dedication extends beyond the borders of Colorado. Lisa has deployed to various regions around the world delivering medical supplies to the front lines, assisting in evacuation and medical care of refugees, including Ukraine, Greece, and Nepal. Locally, she helped run a refugee shelter in Denver for Venezuelan migrants and staged multiple clothing collection drives.

Lisa graduated from Colorado State University, where she worked as a Veterans Transition Counselor. Building on this experience, Lisa took on the role of an Intensive Case Manager, helping older adults receive proper healthcare services and housing. Lisa pivoted towards policies after seeing systemic barriers as a case manager so she went back to school to get her master’s degree at Boston College. During her time there, she worked in the Mayor’s Housing Innovation Office, where she helped tackle the ongoing housing crisis.

Presently, Lisa works for the state of Colorado, focusing on Medicaid Policy and long-term housing. This role allows her to have a direct impact on individuals who rely on this vital program for their healthcare needs. In addition to this work, she was elected to Arvada City Council in 2021. Her dedication to serving others and finding innovative solutions has made her a true advocate for smart change in Colorado. Moreover, her ability to understand complex issues and implement practical solutions makes her an invaluable asset to the state legislator.

Currently, Lisa serves on numerous boards in her community to include: The Community Table, Foothills Regional Housing Corp, DRCOG, Housing Advisory Committee, Jefferson County Community Corrections Board, and Human Services Advisory Committee.

Lisa is married to her partner, Eli, who she met when they were both volunteering for a Veterans nonprofit. Eli served 12 years in the Army and graduated from West Point and University of Chicago. They adopted their 5 year old Lab, Diesel, after falling in love when they were fostering him. They recently welcomed their first child, Elizabeth Carmen, to the world in 2023. In Lisa’s off-time, she fosters dogs in her home, enjoys gardening, and tries to spoil her backyard chickens!

Jessica Fidalgo
(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Democrat
Currently serving as: PTO President, Chair of the Fairhaven Belonging Committee; Vice Chair of the Town Planning Board; Secretary of the North Fairhaven Improvement Association
Well-versed in: Networking | Communication with community | Staying grounded in your personal and professional balance | Multitasking

Jessica Fidalgo is a 38-year-old community leader, wife, and proud mother of three children. As Vice Chair of the Planning Board, Chair of the Belonging Committee, President of the Leroy L. Wood’s PTO, and Secretary of the North Fairhaven Improvement Association, she exemplifies her dedication to community service. Having previously served on the Economic Development Committee, Jessica is a
seasoned advocate for positive change. Her passion for community engagement, event organization, and advocacy for constituents drives her personal philosophy. Jessica is committed to advancing women’s leadership within her local community and beyond. Elected to the Planning Board, she actively engages in discussions on zoning bylaws, development, and land use, contributing to strategic planning initiatives to shape the community she calls home. With a background in various appointed positions, including roles in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), community building, and economic development, Jessica brings a wealth of experience to her civic engagements. Over the years, she has been actively involved in numerous civic groups within the community, further demonstrating her commitment to its growth and well-being.

Dr. Victoria Garcia Wilburn
(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Democrat
Currently serving as: Indiana House Assemblymember, District 32
Well-versed in: Collaboration | Communication | Community organizing

State Representative Dr. Victoria Garcia Wilburn was elected to the Indiana House of Representatives on Nov. 8, 2022.

Victoria is a member of the Family, Children and Human Affairs Committee as well as the Employment, Labor and Pensions Committee and the Judiciary Committee.

Raised in a working class, union family in the Chicago suburbs, Victoria was a first-generation student and has earned a degree in occupational therapy, as well as a doctorate in health science. She has served as a clinician, health researcher and public health advocate in her community.

Through her years of professional service, Victoria has gained valuable insight into issues of public safety and health. She is committed to advocating for equitable access to mental and behavioral services for all Hoosiers, including increasing resources for those affected by substance use disorder. Additionally, as a mother and educator, Victoria promotes investing in our state’s public schools and supports gun safety laws.

Victoria moved to Indiana in 2005 with her husband Christopher, who served as a police officer. They have three children together.
Lydia Glaize
(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Democrat
Currently serving as: Georgia General Assemblymember, District 67
Well-versed in: Best Practices to Build a Campaign from the Ground-up | Tactics for stakeholder engagement Strategy and Mapping | Leading Through Collaboration

Lydia Glaize, a former dedicated educator and esteemed community leader, is the House Representative for Georgia’s 67th House District. Representative Glaize's unwavering commitment to education, community outreach, and sustainable solutions has positioned her as an influential figure, particularly in youth, education, and seniors.

Representative Glaize, the Education Chair for the Fulton County Delegations and Education Chair of the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus, has had a significant and transformative influence on the educational landscape. Through active participation in pivotal bills and committees, she has championed initiatives to enhance public education, address mental health concerns, and promote economic development. Among her accomplishments are her contributions to HB 287, a bill aimed at improving education quality in Georgia, and HB 681, which takes significant strides toward tackling mental health challenges in schools.

In addition to her role as a representative, Lydia Glaize has made significant contributions as an elected official in the City of Fairburn. Her leadership in expanding voter access and securing much-needed repair services for veterans and seniors demonstrates her unwavering commitment to the community. Moreover, her dedication to workforce development and college career guidance has instrumentalized Georgia students through innovative programs such as entrepreneurship, military service, and apprenticeships.

As a true champion for her community, Lydia Glaize tirelessly works towards lasting change, ensuring that every resident of Georgia's 67th House District has the opportunity to thrive. With her visionary leadership, Representative Glaize will undoubtedly have a profound impact on the lives of countless Georgians.

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Jaime Greene
(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Republican
Currently serving as: Michigan State House Representative, District 65
Well-versed in: Networking | Collaboration | Fundraising

Jaime Greene is a proven freedom fighter and dedicated public servant. Her journey began at a young age when she fearlessly stood up for her beliefs, bringing a pro-life sign to a campaign rally and facing physical assault from Bill Clinton supporters. Undeterred, she continued to champion her convictions.
Jaime enlisted in the U.S. Navy as a cryptologist, responsible for securing military communications. Following her military service, she utilized her technical skills in various positions, including as a Network Administrator for a Christian school and church. Jaime married and settled in the City of Richmond, where she served as a volunteer on the Richmond Parks and Recreation Board and the Economic Development Commission. Additionally, she worked as a Veterans Counselor, aiding fellow veterans in their transition to civilian life.

Jaime’s dedication extended to supporting causes she believed in, including pro-life initiatives and medical freedom advocacy. She also served as the President of Kids In Kitchens, a local nonprofit promoting nutritious and affordable meal preparation for children. Jaime’s commitment to her community led her to the Richmond City Council, where she insured clean audits, balanced budgets, and funded essential infrastructure projects without raising taxes.

Jaime currently serves as the Minority Vice Chair of the House Committee on Education. She is also a member of the House Committee on Government Operations and the House Committee on Energy, Communications, and Technology.

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**Heather Hardinger**

*(she/her)*

**Political Affiliation:** Democrat  
**Currently serving as:** Springfield, MO City Councilor  
**Well-versed in:** Collaboration | Communication | Boundary-Setting

Heather Hardinger brings a wealth of experience and dedication to her role as CoxHealth’s first Diversity Leader, joining the organization in December 2021. In this capacity, Heather spearheads the Office of Patient Experience and leads the organization’s DEIB efforts. Charged with driving people-first and patient-focused initiatives, Heather is dedicated to cultivating a culture of belonging, advocating for diversity, and advancing equity and inclusive excellence throughout the health system to address community health needs in the Ozarks.

With a diverse background spanning the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, Heather has held pivotal roles in municipal and state government, education, and community affairs. Prior to her current position, Heather served as the workforce strategist for Taney County Partnership at the Branson/Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce. In this role, she specialized in implementing workforce development and talent attraction strategies, leading community efforts on diverse talent attraction and international recruitment, and facilitating global cultural competency and belonging initiatives. Before her tenure with TCP, Heather held roles in workforce development and communications with the City of Springfield, MO and worked in state government positions in her home state of Alaska.

Currently, Heather serves as a Councilwoman for the City of Springfield, MO, elected in 2021. She is the first woman of color to be elected to this role. Her commitment to public service extends beyond her council duties, as she previously served two terms on the City of Springfield’s Mayor’s Commission on Human Rights and Community Relations, where she chaired efforts to promote understanding and respect among all citizens and provide the community with information regarding human rights policy.
Heather's dedication to community involvement extends to her volunteer work on several local, regional, and global boards and committees. She was appointed by the governor of Missouri to the Census 2020 Complete Count Committee, serves on the board of Restore SGF, focusing on community and affordable housing initiatives, and served two terms as Board of Directors Vice Chair of Bread for the World, a D.C.-based organization dedicated to advocating for a world without hunger.

Heather holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in International/Multicultural Studies from Evangel University and a Master of Arts degree in Political Science with an emphasis on Public Policy.

Mellissa Heermann

(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Republican
Currently serving as: South Dakota State House Representative - District 7
Well-versed in: The art of listening | Servant leadership | Collaboration across the aisle | Pressures and decision making

It was instilled in me from an early age, that it is our responsibility to serve those around us and contribute to our communities in meaningful ways.

I have been purposeful in living out that value through volunteering in church, youth activities, Junior Achievement, the PTA and many other amazing local nonprofit organizations. I currently serve on the Brookings County Youth Mentoring Program Board and participate in many community discussions around youth. I have been a proud member of P.E.O. since 2013.

I developed a love and passion for policy work during college, while working for a Senator at the Capitol in Lincoln. I was able to see first hand how impactful this role could be when done right. This experience in policy work set me up to be successful in my role on the Brookings School Board.

I have had the wonderful opportunity to serve on the Lake Preston City Council and also briefly as Mayor of Lake Preston. This was such an amazing experience for me, and the people of Lake Preston were incredibly warm and welcoming to me during our time there.

Christine Hernandez

(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Democrat
Currently serving as: City of Westminster’s Parks and Recreation Commissioner; Orange County John Wayne Airport Arts Commissioner
Well-versed in: Running as a parent/pregnant | Win numbers | Networking and endorsements
Christine Hernandez is the Director of College Programs for IGNITE National, a national nonpartisan nonprofit that is building a movement of young women who are ready and eager to become the next generation of political leaders. Christine spent over a decade working in higher education supporting and empowering students to succeed and lead.

As an active parent and college educator, Christine felt compelled to run for the local high school board in 2020 and 2022. She currently serves as a commissioner to the City of Westminster’s Parks and Recreation Commission as well as the Orange County John Wayne Airport Arts Commission. She has been a Girl Scout troop leader and volunteer since 2020 and is proud to volunteer with other organizations like She Should Run and Running Start.

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Melody Kelley

(she/her)

Political Affiliation: Democrat

Currently serving as: Sandy Springs, GA City Council Member - District 2

Well-versed in: Relationship-building | Grass-roots engagement/organizing | Communication

Dr. Melody Kelley is an Assistant Professor of Chemistry at Georgia State University’s Perimeter College. She also holds a position in Georgia State University’s Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Online Education as a STEM Faculty Associate.

Dr. Kelley has served on the Sandy Springs Charter Middle School and North Springs High School PTO boards and is currently a board member for the Sandy Springs Education Force, a local non-profit that provides a variety of co-curricular programming for public schools in Sandy Springs.

Prior to being elected to office in 2021, Dr. Kelley was a member of the Leadership Council for Sandy Springs Together, a local organization that promotes education around affordable housing access. In 2020, Dr. Kelley was appointed to the Sandy Springs Charter Review Commission by GA State Representative, Josh McLaurin. Additionally, Dr. Kelley is a graduate of both the Sandy Springs Police Department’s Citizens Police Academy and the Leadership Sandy Springs program.

A native of Detroit, MI, Dr. Kelley holds degrees in chemistry from Wayne State University and The University of Alabama.
Makeda Lewis
(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Democrat
Currently serving as: New Rochelle, NY School Board Member
Well-versed in: Social Media/Marketing | Debates/Public Speaking | Political Challenges

Leadership Fueled by Data, Collaboration, and Experience.

Makeda Lewis, a lifelong resident of New Rochelle, has a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing the public education system in her community. Having attended elementary, middle, and high school in New Rochelle, Makeda is passionate about promoting excellence in education for all students.

With a master’s degree in Higher & Postsecondary Education Administration from Teachers College, Columbia University, Makeda has dedicated her career to supporting students and families and implementing data-driven solutions for school leaders. Her experience working within a large school system has equipped her with the skills and knowledge to navigate bureaucracy and drive meaningful change.

Makeda’s guiding principle is to promote excellence and opportunity for all students by setting high standards and collaborating with stakeholders across the education system. She cares deeply about the well-being of every member of the school community, from students and families to administrators, custodians, librarians, and cafeteria staff.

Makeda is excited to give back to the community that shaped her and to serve on the Board of Education, where she can leverage her expertise to create a better future for all New Rochelle students.

Amber Liermann
(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Republican
Currently serving as: Maricopa, AZ Vice Mayor
Well-versed in: Collaboration | Communication/Presenting | Campaign tips

Amber Liermann was born in Los Angeles, CA, but has been a resident in Arizona since 1997. She moved to Maricopa in 2004 to accept a position as a school counselor at Maricopa Unified School District. Amber immediately got involved in her community by volunteering with the Maricopa High School Booster Club, Women’s Hope Center and served on the Board for Be Awesome Youth Coalition.

Amber has her Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology and her Masters Degree in Counseling. She believes strong families equal a strong community and wants her efforts and decisions to promote strengthening families in Maricopa who move here to pursue hopes, dreams and build a safe, prosperous life. She has a passion to support our Veteran Community and serves on the Board for Maricopa Veteran Care.
Amber comes from a military family, where her great grandfather, grandfather, father and two brothers are Veterans. In her spare time she enjoys camping, riding her Harley and meeting new people. She hopes to continue to play a vital role in the community she calls her home.

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**Dolores Lozano**

(she/her)  
**Political Affiliation:** Democrat  
**Currently serving as:** Harris County Justice of the Peace in Precinct 2, Place 2  
**Well-versed in:** Fundraising | Unconventional Candidate | Communication/Endorsements

Judge Dolores Lozano made history as the first woman to be elected as Harris County Justice of the Peace in Precinct 2, Place 2 on November 8, 2022. Precinct 2 encompasses significant regions of the Greater Houston Metro area, including the City of Houston, City of South Houston, Galena Park, Jacinto City, Pasadena, Pearland, Friendswood, Webster, Clear Lake, and League City.

Born and raised in Southeast Houston, Judge Lozano shattered barriers as the first in her family to attend college, earning her bachelor’s degree from Baylor University. Her commitment to community development, public affairs, and public relations has made a profound impact throughout her career, particularly in championing the voices of youth to drive positive change across the State of Texas.

Judge Lozano currently presides over a wide range of cases as Justice of the Peace in Precinct 2 Place 2, including evictions, small claims, traffic violations, and truancy matters. Her dedication to advancing justice, dignity, and peace for all is unwavering.

In addition to her public service, Judge Lozano shares her life with her husband and best friend, Kory, along with their two beloved dogs. She is deeply rooted in her community, serving on the Garden Villas Civic Club’s Board of Directors and actively engaging in various initiatives, including her involvement in the Junior League of Houston and the KIPP Texas Board of Directors.

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**Caity Maple**

(she/her)  
**Political Affiliation:** Democrat  
**Currently serving as:** Sacramento, CA Vice Mayor  
**Well-versed in:** Policy | Communications | Strategy

Caity Maple is a small business owner and Sacramento City Councilmember representing District 5, which includes the South Sacramento communities of Oak Park, City Farms, Carleton Tract, Hollywood Park, Brentwood, Golf Course Terrace, Woodbine, Pollack Ranch, Parkway, and Valley Hi. She has spent
her career fighting to bring neighborhood voices to the forefront and advocating for policies that uplift all — not just some.

Councilmember Maple left home at 16 and worked three jobs in order to finish high school and put herself through college. After several years at community college, she transferred to U.C. Davis and earned a B.A. in Psychology. Her first job after college was with the Chief Clerk’s Office for the California State Assembly, where she first saw the impact of public service and learned how legislative action can impact the day-to-day lives of California residents. With this experience, she went on to become a policy expert at California Forward, where she advocated for efficient, effective, and accessible government.

With that experience, Councilmember Maple went on to work in governmental relations and advocate for safe access to legal cannabis, ending animal testing of cosmetic products, and ultimately, serve as Vice President of Government Affairs for Perfect Union, a Sacramento-based cannabis company that was one of the first in the nation to unionize. That work allowed her to travel the state, getting to know local communities and learning from leaders across California’s diverse regions to build regulatory systems, bridge gaps in their local funding mechanisms, and ensure safe access to tested products.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Councilmember Maple co-founded the nonprofit SAC SOUP (Solidarity of Unhoused People), which provides mutual aid to unhoused residents and distributes food, sanitation supplies, and survival gear to those who need it the most. She helped to raise more than $25,000 in donations and grants to help Sacramento’s most vulnerable, including funding from the City, the Sacramento Region Community Foundation, and the CEO of GoFundMe.

During her professional career, Councilmember Maple has served in numerous community leadership and appointed positions, including serving as a Vice President of the Oak Park Neighborhood Association, being appointed by Governor Jerry Brown to the 52nd Agricultural District, and serving as a founding board member to the organizations WomenUp and the U.C. Davis Capitol Alumni Group. She is also a contributor to the local interest and policy blog Sacramentoity.org.

Councilmember Maple resides in Oak Park with her partner, Sam, and their dog, Mina. In her spare time, she loves taking long walks in Sacramento’s beautiful park system, going to Sacramento Kings games (#LightTheBeam), and taking care of her menagerie of plants.

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**Hailey Morton Levinson**

(she/her)

**Political Affiliation:** Democrat  
**Currently serving as:** Jackson, WY Mayor  
**Well-versed in:** Networking | Public speaking | Campaigning

Raised in Jackson, WY Hailey Morton Levinson, graduated from Jackson Hole High School in 2004. She attended Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service graduating with a Bachelor’s of Science in 2008. Hailey moved back to Jackson in 2010 and was first elected to the Town Council in 2012. Since then she has been elected to a second term on the Town Council in 2016 and as Mayor in 2020.
Hailey demonstrates the ability to actively listen, collaborate with individuals and groups, and seek solutions to challenges facing her community. She serves on the Wyoming Association of Municipalities (WAM) Board and is active with National League of Cities. Hailey is a champion for community housing, early childhood education and care, and making sure all families feel supported. Hailey runs Inn on the Creek, a small bed and breakfast, with her family and she and her husband are raising their three children in her hometown.

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**Kristy Pagan**

(she/her)

**Political Affiliation:** Democrat  
**Previously served as:** Michigan State Representative, District 21  
**Well-versed in:** Fundraising | Running as a mom of young kids | Creative voter outreach strategies

For the past 14 years, Kristy Pagan has worked to elect Democratic candidates up and down the ballot. In 2014, Kristy ran and won a competitive seat to the Michigan House of Representatives where she served Western Wayne County for six years before being term-limited. While in the Michigan legislature, Kristy championed policy efforts on reproductive health care, environmental protections, pay equity and public education. On the campaign side, Kristy helped deliver the largest number of Democratic electoral victories to the State House in over a decade as the Campaign Chair for Michigan House Democrats during the 2018 election cycle. She recently ran her own political consulting firm focused on making it easier for progressives candidates to run for office. Today, Kristy serves as the political director for Vote Mama which helps Democratic moms run for office—and win. She lives in Michigan with her husband and twin toddlers.

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**Elise Partin**

(she/her)

**Political Affiliation:** Independent  
**Currently serving as:** Cayce, SC Mayor  
**Well-versed in:** Communication | Resilience | Grassroots movements

The first woman elected to the office of Mayor in her city, Elise Partin has led a city government for more than a decade and a half and carries celebrity status as an impactful, nonpartisan servant-leader who builds consensus, activates innovations, and accomplishes the unimaginable. On faculty at the Buckley School of Public Speaking and in her work as an Executive Coach, Elise empowers clients with tangible skills to support their leadership growth, increase their opportunities for success and hone their communication skills in every setting. She is a regular on regional lists of influential and powerful leaders who make a difference. She is passionate about helping others find their voice and goal setting, particularly as a woman in leadership. She has accomplished remarkable improvements for Cayce, S.C. — an up-and-coming small city adjacent to a state capital — fundamentally transforming her city’s livability, making it a low-cost high-quality place to live, work and play.
Victoria Pelletier
(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Democrat
Currently serving as: Portland, ME City Councilor
Well-versed in: Running for office w/ no prior experience or training | Community engagement | Public speaking

Victoria Pelletier is the National Partnerships Manager at RepresentWomen, and is based in Portland, Maine. She is currently serving her first term as a Portland City Councilor, and is the second Black woman in her city’s history that has been elected to this seat. She specializes in racial equity, community engagement and advocacy, and pushes for intersectionality in all levels of government. Prior to joining RepresentWomen, Victoria worked at Portland Empowered, amplifying the voices of racial and ethnic minorities as they influenced policy change within Portland Public Schools.

Victoria also worked as a racial equity project manager for a local government agency, where she collaborated with over 30 Maine cities and towns and helped to foster social change within their municipalities. Victoria is passionate about dismantling structures of oppression and leading her community towards authentic policy change. When she’s not working on RepresentWomen partnerships, you can find her listening to Renaissance and pursuing all aspects of Black joy.

Courtney Peters-Manning
(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Democrat
Currently serving as: Hopewell, NJ Mayor
Well-versed in: Starting from scratch | Building relationships

Courtney was first elected to the Township Committee in 2019 and served as Deputy Mayor in 2021 and 2023 and as Mayor in 2022. She currently serves as the liaison to the Police Department and Fire District/Emergency Services, the Deer Management Committee, and the Senior Advisory Board.

Professionally, Courtney’s background is as an environmental lawyer, and she currently is the Director of Finance and General Counsel at the Cambridge School in Pennington, a school her parents founded in 2001 to help children with learning differences. She earned her bachelor’s degree from Brown University and her law degree from the University of Chicago. She and her husband Tomas Manning, a native of Dublin, Ireland, have two teenaged boys—Seamus and Conor.
Evin Phoenix

(she/her)

Political Affiliation: Democrat

Previously served as: Strategic advisor to 30+ candidates for LA City Council, School Board, and Congress, and served on a Presidential primary campaign. Field Organizer, Deputy Regional Field Organizer, Field Director, Campaign Manager, and National Field Director.

Well-versed in: Field/data and all things voters | Public speaking | Volunteer recruitment

I'm a progressive strategist with 15 years experience leading initiatives for change. After creating an intersectional feminist community of over 700 members focused on social justice and wellness, I focused my career on helping diverse progressives run for office and win.

With a track record of leading teams to electoral victories, and championing my incredible candidates, this is not just a job for me. Mentoring and hyping up my candidates in my calling. I do it pro bono when I can, such as for LA City Council candidate Jillian Burgos, a long-shot candidate with an amazing platform who just clinched the second spot in her runoff.

I know I'm exactly where I need to be, and walking in my purpose, when a candidate calls me looking for both practical and emotional support. I'm passionate about being a cheerleader for candidates who are new to running, because it's so often the people who least want to seek power who deserve to wield it. That's what makes me so excited to help - it really is out of a sense of loyalty and love to them as individuals, because they are immensely good people who I trust to have power and lead us in the right direction.

Laurie Pohutsky

(she/her)

Political Affiliation: Democrat

Currently serving as: Michigan State House Representative, District 17; Speaker Pro Tempore

Well-versed in: Communication | Collaboration | Media interaction

Laurie Pohutsky grew up in Redford, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit. She graduated from Michigan State University with a Bachelor of Science in microbiology. Prior to running for public office, she worked primarily in the fields of toxicology and health care. In November of 2018, she was elected to the Michigan House of Representatives. She has served on the Committees on Health Policy, Natural Resources and the Environment, and Government Operations and on the Michigan Task Force on Forensic Science. Presently, Pohutsky chairs the House Committee on Natural Resources, Environment, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation. She has served as the Chair of the Progressive Women’s Caucus since 2021 and the Speaker Pro Tempore of the Michigan House since 2023. Pohutsky was the first out LGBTQ woman elected to the Michigan Legislature and is the co-chair of the LGBTQ Legislative Caucus.

Laurie has been an advocate for reproductive rights, championing the repeal of Michigan’s criminal abortion ban and sponsoring legislation to expand access to abortion care. She has been recognized twice by Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan with the Mary Brown Legislator of the Year Award.
Pohutsky also sponsored legislation to reduce carbon emissions and transition Michigan to a 100% clean energy state by 2040. Laurie is a member of her local Democratic and Rotary Clubs. She lives in Livonia with her husband Nathan.

Dr. Pamela Queen
(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Democrat
Currently serving as: Maryland House of Delegates, District 14
Well-versed in: Collaboration | Data-driven policy making | Engaging community advocates

Delegate Pamela Queen is a Montgomery County resident who serves on the House Economic Matters Committee and chairs the Banking, Consumer Protection, and Commercial Law Subcommittee in which she helps to shape business-related policy. She champions impactful legislation that expands economic opportunities and levels-the-playing field for all residents, improves work-life balance, keeps communities safe, and provides needed services to vulnerable communities.

She is also a college professor of finance at Morgan State University, an Historically Black College and University (HBCU) where she incorporates her professional experience into class assignments to engage students. She serves as faculty advisor for Morgan’s Black Girls Vote Chapter in which she mentors the next generation of female public servants. She attributes her professional, political, and personal success to the analytical training and problem-solving techniques that she gained from achieving a B.S., two M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in STEM majors. She is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP) with executive financial management experience.

She volunteers and trains community groups on financial best practices. She is an active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, the National Council of Negro Women, and the Link’s Incorporated which are organizations that advocate for progressive legislation.

Genesis Ramos
(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Democrat/Working Families Party
Currently serving as: Orange County, NY Legislator, District 6
Well-versed in: Progressive politics in a conservative governing body | Co-Governance (building capacity with, and governing alongside partners, special interest groups, etc.) | Community Engagement

Genesis Ramos is a proud daughter of Honduran immigrants and the first woman of color to be elected to the Orange County Legislature in New York State. At 29, she made history with this achievement and is currently also the youngest Legislator in the Legislature. Genesis has extensive experience in the nonprofit sector, particularly in health equity initiatives. She was the Founding Executive Director of the
Desmond Center for Community Engagement & Wellness at Mount Saint Mary College. The center provides access to health and wellness programming and services to the community.

Genesis has also served on municipal and nonprofit boards and currently serves on the Economic Development Advisory Committee for the City of Newburgh, New York. She graduated Summa Cum Laude from Marist College with a Master’s degree in Public Administration. Besides being a County Legislator, she is the Special Advisor to the Vice President of Programs at PolicyLink, a national Think Tank dedicated to public policy and research advancing equity for all. In her role, she supports and strategizes for the national PolicyLink program portfolio. As a result, she is aware of the national pulse of issues impacting communities across the country and brings that expertise into her governance at the local level.

Sangeetha Rayapati

(she/her)

Political Affiliation: Democrat

Currently serving as: Moline, IL Mayor

Well-versed in: Strategic planning or strategy overall | Community engagement | Governing vs. campaigning

Sangeetha Rayapati has deep family ties to the Midwest and has lived in Moline for nearly two decades. Before serving as Mayor she served in elected office as President and Vice-President of the Moline-Coal Valley School Board. She is a 5th ward resident and proudly sends her children to Moline Public Schools.

Mayor Rayapati believes in championing our people, places and spaces through visionary leadership, strength in economic development, and consistent support of amenities for our residents. Responsible governance of our processes and resources are also her top priorities so that our community can prosper.

Mayor Rayapati has volunteered time in musical and community organizations around education and leadership. She has served on the Board of Arrowhead Ranch and has been a Girl Scout troop leader as well as volunteered in her children’s classrooms. She is a 2020 recipient of the YWCA’s Race against Racism Award and is a 2020 graduate of the Illinois Women’s Institute for Leadership Training Academy.

Mayor Rayapati’s professional career began as a registered nurse (RN) on a specialty unit at a nursing home in Minneapolis after graduating from Valparaiso University with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and a Bachelor of Music. She continued to pursue her teaching and musical interests in graduate degrees in music from the University of Minnesota, and began her college teaching career in 2001 at Augustana College, Rock Island, IL, where she continues to teach. Her scholarly interests revolve around aging and singing, and music health and wellness and she advises and teaches course in a Pre-Music Therapy program and an Aging Studies Experiential Minor.

With her husband of 23 years, Mayor Rayapati is raising her three daughters and enjoys watching them explore the worlds of athletics and music. Her mother and father moved to Moline over ten years ago.
and now all members of her extended family call Illinois home. In her free time she enjoys travel, her husband’s cooking, entertaining, and the arts.

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**Ruwa Romman**
(she/her)

**Political Affiliation:** Democrat  
**Currently serving as:** Georgia State House Representative, District 97  
**Well-versed in:** Stakeholder engagement | Communication | Team building

Ruwa Romman is the Representative of Georgia State House District 97. She is an organizer, policy analyst, and management specialist who works to empower communities to become more civically engaged. Ruwa has leveraged her platform through her work organizing with Asian American Advocacy Fund, co-founding the Georgia Volunteer Hub, and organizing with the Georgia Muslim Voter Project. Ruwa holds a Bachelor of Arts in Politics from Oglethorpe University, and a Masters in Public Policy from Georgetown University. Ruwa worked for a professional services management company developing improved strategies to deal with major policy issues at the local, state, and federal level.

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**Brianna Titone**
(she/her)

**Political Affiliation:** Democrat  
**Currently serving as:** Colorado General Assembly Representative, District 27  
**Well-versed in:** Creating trust in your community | Staying true to your values while also appealing to a variety of ideas | Being scrappy and getting things done with scarce resources

Representative Titone was elected in 2018 to represent House District 27 and is currently serving her third term in office. She proudly serves as the Chair of the Joint Technology Committee, and as a member of the Energy and Environment, and Agriculture, Water, & Natural Resources committees. She was elected as Co-Chair of the House Majority Caucus and Co-Chair of the Colorado Democratic LGBTQ+ Caucus. She is the first openly transgender legislator in the Colorado General Assembly and the first transgender person in the nation to earn a peer-elected leadership position.

Representative Titone utilizes her background in geochemistry, software development, and LGBTQ+ advocacy to successfully legislate an agenda committed to safety, health, prosperity and equity in Colorado. This term, she was a prime sponsor of SB23-188 Protections for accessing reproductive health care to protect and advance reproductive healthcare in Colorado. Representative Titone has led on several first in the nation laws including the Right to Repair for motorized wheelchairs and agricultural equipment as well as the most environmentally friendly hydrogen production bills in the nation.
Christina Vera
(she/her)
**Political Affiliation:** Democrat
**Currently serving as:** Columbus, OH School Board President
**Well-versed in:** Collaboration | Communication | Grassroot organizing

Christina Vera is serving her first term as a member and President of the Columbus Board of Education, having been elected in 2021. For the past 13 years her professional experience is rooted in non-profit management and small business development. As the Co-Founder and Director of Operations of Femergy®, and a social entrepreneur, Mrs. Vera leads and develops teams through innovative strategy and effective communication to influence positive change and build organizational capacity. Christina has expertise in organizational leadership and multi-project management.

Ms. Vera also enjoys her time as the co-host of True Print for Life podcast. She currently serves as Advisory Council Member at Otterbein University (WLN), and has previously served on the Gateways for Growth Steering Committee on behalf of Welcoming City. In addition, Ms. Vera was formally a Trustee for Ohio School Board Association. She also formally served as the Student Achievement Liaison for the Ohio School Board Association and the Bilingual Education Task Force Liaison, Council of Great City Schools. Christina is also an Executive Committee Member of FCDP. Christina resides in the Columbus area with her husband Kent, and children Maritza, Julianna, and Adrian.

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Julie von Haefen
(she/her)
**Political Affiliation:** Democrat
**Currently serving as:** North Carolina State House Representative, District 36
**Well-versed in:** Communication | Running for office in a competitive district/position | Organizing/field

Julie von Haefen has represented the 36th District in the North Carolina House of Representatives since January 1, 2019. She serves on the Appropriations, Appropriations- General Government, Education K-12, Local Government, and Military/Veterans Affairs committees in the House.

Rep. von Haefen was a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) leader at the school, county and state level and is a fierce advocate for North Carolina’s public schools. Rep. von Haefen served as the President of the Wake County PTA Council from 2017-2018 and served on the Board of Directors for five years. She also served on the North Carolina PTA Board of Directors from 2017-2019 and was the State Advocacy Chair and Federal Legisaltive Chair for NCPTA.

Rep. von Haefen is still a proud member of the PTA at the schools her children attend in Wake County, and she also works as a substitute teacher with Wake County Public Schools.

Rep. von Haefen received her bachelor’s degree from Ohio University and her law degree from Case Western Reserve University. She practiced law for over 10 years in a variety of areas including criminal law, medical malpractice defense, municipal law and education law. Rep. von Haefen is licensed to practice law in Ohio, Arizona and California. She lives in Apex, North Carolina with her husband Roger and three children.
Katie Walters
(she/her)
Political Affiliation: N/A
Currently serving as: Kitsap County, WA Commissioner - District 3
Well-versed in: Collaboration | Team building | Communication | Grit

Commissioner Katie Walters, representing Central Kitsap, was elected to the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners in November 2022.

Commissioner Walters worked in non-profits and education for over 30 years. She most recently served as the executive director of the Leadership Kitsap Foundation, an organization dedicated to educating and preparing our community’s leaders to serve. She taught many years at Olympic College as an adjunct professor and continues to serve on the college’s Organizational Leadership and Resource Management Advisory Committee. She helped open the Bainbridge Island Museum of Art in 2013 and served as the museum's marketing and community relations director.

Commissioner Walters has extensive community and board experience including serving as president of the Central Kitsap Montessori Parents Association and with the Kitsap Soap Box Derby Association, Boy Scouts of America (she’s a proud mom of three Eagle Scouts), and Central Kitsap School District and Klahowya Secondary School advisory committees. She was appointed to the Kitsap County Arts Board and served as president of the Kitsap Regional Library Board of Trustees. She is also a Bremerton Rotarian.

Commissioner Walters has lived in Kitsap County, with her husband David, since 1991. She was born in Spokane and raised in Helena, Montana. She attended Gonzaga University where she received her bachelor of arts degree in public relations with a concentration in political science in 1989. She went on to earn a master's degree in communications from Washington State University in 1990 and later a certificate in museum studies from the University of Washington in 2012.

Commissioner Walters looks forward to using her professional experience and community connections to bring our community together to meet the many challenges facing Kitsap. She will ensure a county government that is accountable and accessible.

Christina Waters
(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Independent
Currently serving as: Oak Park, IL Village Clerk
Well-versed in: Community engagement | Collaboration | Partnership
Christina Waters was elected Village Clerk in April of 2021. Prior to beginning her four-year term on May 3, 2021, Christina was Deputy Village Clerk. Christina has years of local municipality experience, and her dedication to serving her community dates to when she was a teenager. While working at the Park District of Oak Park, she earned a bachelor’s degree in Business Management from Robert Morris University, and worked her way up to Facility Scheduling and Parks Coordinator, working with individuals and local organizations, including the Cook County Clerk’s Office during elections, to provide space to meet their needs. She also oversaw the team of facility attendants who worked throughout the community at the seven community centers, three outdoor sport courts and the seasonal Rehm Park Trains.

Today, she remains involved on the Park District Citizens Committee. Christina joined Village staff in 2017 as the Executive Secretary in Development Customer Services, where she worked with the Parking, Planning, Neighborhood Services, Permits & Business Licensing divisions. She also worked closely with the Aging in Place Commission, Chamber of Commerce and local business districts associations. After a year and a half, she was promoted to the Human Resources Coordinator. In June 2019, she graduated from the Community Works Leadership Lab through the Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation. Born and raised in Oak Park, she attended Longfellow Elementary and Oak Park and River Forest High School.

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Laura Williams

(she/her)

Political Affiliation: Republican

Currently serving as: Kansas State House, District 30

Well-versed in: Bipartisanship | Being a mom in office | Childcare

Laura Williams serves in the Kansas House of Representatives, representing her childhood city, Lenexa, Kansas. She serves on Energy, Commerce, Financial Institution & Pensions Committees and the Joint Committee on Fiduciary Financial Institutions Oversight.

With a degree from the University of Kansas, Laura dove headfirst into the world of business as an independent contractor developing marketing strategies for small to medium-sized businesses. But that was just the beginning of her entrepreneurial journey. In 2017, she co-founded a Creative Agency with her husband that continues to thrive today. She continued to innovate and co-founded a company designing products with international fair trade factories.

Now serving her first term in office, Laura is using her experience and passion for entrepreneurship to drive legislative priorities that remove barriers for business owners, spur job creation, and lower the cost of living for Kansas families.
Chasity Wells-Armstrong
(she/her)
Political Affiliation: Democrat
Previously served as: Kankakee, IL City Council Member, Ward 5; Mayor
Well-versed in: Overcoming Imposter Syndrome | Leveraging unique attributes as a candidate | Networking

I served as the first African American woman elected as a city council member for Ward 5 in the city of Kankakee, IL. After serving two years of a four year term, I ran for mayor and was elected as the first African American and only the second woman in the city’s history.

Extensive background as a leader in government as a municipal executive, senior staff member for two Members of Congress, and Chief Operating Officer.

Certified Life Coach, Licensed Social Worker (LSW), and Certified Alcohol Drug Counselor (CADC) for over two decades. Seasoned facilitator, moderator, and advocate, championing issues such as women's empowerment, leadership development, mental health, violence prevention, education, and climate resilience.