

# JOINT CENTER FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STUDIES



- *The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies was founded in 1970 in the wake of the Voting Rights Act. With lead support from the Ford Foundation, the nonpartisan, nonprofit Joint Center seeks to augment the voice and resources of emerging black leaders and elected officials.*
- *The Joint Center is the only freestanding think tank focusing primarily on the concerns of African Americans and communities of color:*
- *The Joint Center continues to uphold its mission to improve the socioeconomic and health status of these communities through high quality research and recommendations on national public policy debates.*
- *The Joint Center contributes to a wider understanding of the role of black civic and political participation in making America a better place and creating a more hopeful future for all of its citizens.*

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**“...LEADING THE WAY FOR A MORE PROMISING AMERICA FOR ALL PEOPLE—RELENTLESSLY EXPLORING POLICY OPTIONS AND INSPIRING ACTION AT ALL LEVELS OF SOCIETY—IS A CHARGE THE JOINT CENTER MUST AND WILL KEEP.”**

**—Ralph B. Everett, President and CEO, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies**

## History and Value

- With the Joint Center working to translate hard-won voting rights into political empowerment, the number of black elected officials nationwide has grown from less than 1,500 in 1970 to more than 10,000 in 2008.
- Since its inception, the Joint Center has provided political and civic leaders with a reliable foundation of information, technical assistance and networking activities—not only helping expand black political participation—but also helping black leaders to author the national agenda.
- The Joint Center is widely known as the country’s most reliable source of information on the black electorate and on black elected officials. In recent years, it has conducted more than 25 opinion polls to capture the views of black voters on a wide range of issues.
- Current Joint Center initiatives include its Health Policy Institute, the Commission to Engage African Americans on Climate Change and two Institutes that will soon be launched—the Media and Technology Institute and the Civic Engagement and Governance Institute.

## **New Approaches, Core Values: A Strategic Vision for the Future**

The Joint Center has worked to ensure equal access to opportunity and create lasting social and economic gains for African Americans by promoting and expanding black political participation. By means of policy relevant research and analysis the Center has strengthened its support and outreach to an ever-growing number of black elected officials, at all levels of government.

These elected officials have helped eliminate egregious vestiges of segregation and inequality in the United States, thereby securing dramatic improvements in the individual life circumstances of many African Americans. Nevertheless, far too many still face racial discrimination and other roadblocks to realizing the American Dream. Members of low-income communities of color continue to confront the serious problems of unemployment and economic insecurity, crime ridden neighborhoods, health disparities, and seriously under-funded schools.

At a time when the challenges spurred by globalization are growing in complexity for all Americans, especially disadvantaged or vulnerable communities, the Joint Center is strategically reorganizing into core Institutes. Building on the success of the Health Policy Institute, there will be centers of excellence in not one, but four key policy areas.



### **The Joint Center Health Policy Institute**

HPI was launched six years ago to play a leadership role in reframing policy debates on health and refocusing attention on dangerous disparities. Our research and analysis is helping to generate new policy recommendations and provide solutions for longstanding health equity concerns. In an era of soaring health care costs, state budget constraints and an enormous national deficit, we need a renewed commitment to addressing existing health disparities. Focus areas include:

- Identifying and addressing the many determinants that can improve health outcomes;

- Increasing resources for prevention;
- Informing policy and practices aimed at reducing infant mortality and improving maternal and child health;
- Reducing risk factors and supporting healthy behaviors among children and youth;
- Improving mental health and reducing factors that promote violence;
- Optimizing health care access and quality; and
- Creating conditions for healthy aging.



### **The Joint Center Media and Technology Institute**

Through this Institute, the Joint Center will focus on the media and higher technology's evolving role in increasing political participation, economic advancement, and social well-being among African Americans. The Institute will work with a diverse community of experts, including scholars, industry representatives, public officials and consumers, to make contributions in cutting-edge research, publications, information portals, and policy debates on this important topic. Areas of focus will include:

- Improving access to information and technology;
- Identifying important "new media" issues: private ownership, concentrated media ownership and the impact of the quality of programming;
- Providing recommendations for reform in business practice and public policy to government and industry decision makers;
- Promoting awareness of media sources; and
- Assessing the effects of convergence on old and new media.



### **The Joint Center Civic Engagement and Governance Institute**

This Institute will strengthen the Joint Center's long-held tradition of energizing political participation and increasing public policy awareness. Research will

examine relevant developments in the public, private and non-profit sectors and their effects on African Americans and other people of color. Focus areas will include:

- Strengthening the National Policy Alliance and leadership skills of black elected officials;
- Building coalitions with other organizations that represent black public officials;
- Analyzing African American political participation and enforcement of voting rights statutes;
- Conducting polls of African Americans to determine public policy issues of significance;
- Supporting emerging leaders; and
- Maintaining a roster of all black elected officials.



## **The Joint Center Education Policy and Opportunity Institute**

Given that African Americans are more likely than others to suffer higher rates of poverty, unemployment, and enrollment in failing schools, this Institute will focus on education and workforce development. Cutting-edge research and analysis will help uncover new ways to advance greater equality in educational opportunities and workforce options. Priority will be given to developing creative proposals for improving schooling and job prospects for young African Americans. Critical issues include:

- Reforming education policy and economic opportunity for children and youth;
- Promoting asset-building;
- Examining the effects of any and all Social Security reform proposals on retirement security;
- Ensuring that workforce development is aimed at matching skill development to business needs;
- Fostering racial equity in regional development; and
- Increasing access to affordable housing.

## **A Force for Politics**

The Joint Center played an important role in creating a number of key organizations that represent black elected and appointed officials (see list below). Today, it serves as the convener of the National Policy Alliance (NPA), which coordinates discussions, joint policy initiatives and other activities among these respective groups.

Through regular plenary meetings and issue forums, the NPA brings to bear the collective influence of these organizations and their members across local, state and national levels. By uniting these groups and channeling their combined intellect and energies, the Joint Center's National Policy Alliance creates both an influential voice on matters of public policy and a force for change in our society.

- Blacks in Government
- Congressional Black Caucus
- Judicial Council of the National Bar Association
- National Association of Black County Officials
- National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials
- National Black Caucus of State Legislators
- National Black Caucus of School Board Members
- National Conference of Black Mayors
- World Conference of Mayors

## Organizational Structure

- 30 full time professional staff
- Resident and nonresident scholars
- 16 member Board of Governors
- Annual budget of \$7.7 million

## What We Do

- **Initiate Research**  
The Joint Center is a catalyst for research on topics of concern to African Americans and communities of color. Our approach includes identifying critical and emerging issues and developing research parameters, as well as collaborating with well-known scholars and experts in designing and conducting rigorous investigations, studies and reports.
- **Conduct Objective and Scholarly Analysis**  
Through data collection and statistical analysis of information gathered from a variety of sources, we facilitate extensive analysis of facts and issues through the lens of the African American community.
- **Guide Policy Development**  
The Joint Center ensures the views of African Americans and other people of color are considered in the public policy development process. We do this by providing elected and appointed officials direct access to our body of work on the racial and socioeconomic aspects of public policy, as well as to subject matter experts associated with the Joint Center.
- **Build Coalitions to Generate Policy Solutions**  
Recognizing that complex issues require the interest, understanding and commitment of our wider society, the Joint Center establishes a space where disparate interests can find common ground and move forward toward policy solutions. We create opportunities to convene meetings, frame discussions and recruit partners from within and beyond the African American community to meet this goal.
- **Promote Civic and Political Engagement**  
Initially founded to encourage African American political participation in the wake of passage of the Voting Rights Act, the Joint Center continues

to promote civic and political engagement—and support black leadership—as the primary route to greater equality and opportunity for people of color. With our extensive polling of African American voters, we are the nation’s key source of information on the black electorate and the elected and appointed officials who represent them at all levels of government.

- **Raise Visibility and Awareness**  
We publicize our research findings in relevant policy circles and among targeted audiences through our publications and our foundation partners, and with the general public through traditional and new media. The Joint Center’s magazine, FOCUS, provides up to date analysis and opinions to a diverse audience that includes all of the nation’s black elected officials.

**For more information go to [www.jointcenter.org](http://www.jointcenter.org)**

## Current Funders\*

AARP  
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