THE BLACK WOMAN’S GUIDE TO THE 2018 MIDTERM ELECTIONS

“I AM NO LONGER ACCEPTING THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE. I’M CHANGING THE THINGS I CANNOT ACCEPT.”

Dr. Angela Davis
INTRODUCTION

Like you, we woke up on November 10, 2016, truly terrified, and the past 18 months have been a hot mess. Electing Donald Trump president of the United States confirmed (and exacerbated!) our worst fears. The U.S. is capable of electing a racist and sexist to the nation’s highest office. And for Black women, who already have it bad, it’s only going to get worse unless we get educated, get organized, and fight back.

Here are the facts.

Even though:

- 66% of Black women work full time
- We are the fastest-growing segment of entrepreneurs in the U.S.
- We vote at higher rates than other demographics
- We are outpacing other demographics in the attainment of bachelor’s degrees
Black women:

- Make only 63 cents for every dollar a White man makes
- Have median wealth of $200
- Are still significantly underrepresented at all levels of government and in the highest ranks of leadership in corporate America

**There is no other way to say this. We call bullshit.**

Improving our outcomes on myriad issues requires a full-court press. The good news? We’re ready.

At BlackHer, we’re committed to helping Black women (like you!) advance their personal, economic, and political power by getting educated, getting organized, and aggressively advocating for progressive change.

We wrote this guide to the 2018 midterms to inspire you to:

- Get and stay politically engaged
- Help you master these critical elections
- Elect more of our own whenever possible to make sure our officials reflect us
- Advance our issues at the local, state, and federal levels

Because, as they say, “unless you are at the table, you may be somebody else’s lunch!”
We know you are busy, so we tried to make the guide short, useful, and clear. Please let us know what we missed and how else we can help.

Here’s to owning our political power in 2018 and beyond.

In love and solidarity,

Jocelyn and Angela

This guide was generously informed by Jeremie Greer, Vice President of Policy and Research for Prosperity Now.
BlackHer is an online platform for and about Black women. We are advancing our personal, economic, and political power by raising our voices and taking action so that every Black woman can achieve her dreams.

Subscribe to get our FREE Weekly Roundup! And follow us on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the 2018 midterms?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So what and who cares?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When and where do they take place?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is running? Key Black women and races to watch!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get involved! Follow the 3 Vs!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary of terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“UNTIL WE ACHIEVE FULL REPRESENTATION, WE ARE FALLING SHORT OF THE IDEALS OF OUR COUNTRY.”

Kamala Harris
WHAT ARE THE 2018 MIDTERMS?
The U.S. midterms are elections that take place halfway between each four-year presidential term. They are the time for U.S. citizens to elect all the members of the House of Representatives and some senators and governors. In addition, since most states sync their elections with the federal election cycle, the midterms are also an opportunity to elect myriad local positions of power, including mayors, city council and school board members, and state representatives. Finally, midterms are the time when “we the people” get to vote on ballot measures or direct policies that help or hinder our lives. Ballot measures can cover a wide variety of issues, including raising the minimum wage, approving the use of marijuana, and taxes.

"EVEN WITH MY OWN HEARTBREAK, WHEN I DEMAND JUSTICE, IT’S NEVER JUST FOR ERIC GARNER. IT’S FOR MY DAUGHTER, IT’S FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS."

Erica Garner
SO WHAT AND WHO CARES?
Many folks (including us!) have paid scant attention to midterm races until now. That’s a big mistake, especially in 2018. Here’s why:

First, you’ve heard that all politics is local, and it’s true. While presidential and congressional races receive much more hype, your state representatives may actually have a bigger influence on your life. For example, if they have the votes, state legislatures can enact laws to allow teachers to bring guns to school. State politicians can also protect or strip our civil rights. North Carolina’s highly contentious transgender bathroom law was just one (terrifying) example of the power of states to curtail human rights.

Second, every ten years, most state legislatures have the power to redistrict, to draw new boundaries for congressional and state districts. Guess what? The 2020 census is coming up, and many of the state legislators and governors we elect this fall will be the folks in power when it comes time to divvy up the districts. They will determine the composition of Democrats and Republicans that can vote in each congressional and state legislative district.

In 2010, after the last census count, we and millions of our Democratic brothers and sisters were asleep at the wheel when the conservative arm of the Republican Party took gerrymandering to a whole new level. We’ve been paying the price ever since. Backed by dark money and cash from big corporations and wealthy individuals, the GOP redrew congressional districts to maximize outcomes for
their party. The end result? Since 2010, Democrats have lost over 1,000 seats in Congress, state legislatures, and governorships.

In fact, according to a new report from the Brennan Center for Justice, “Democrats [that’s us!] are going to have to win the popular vote by a historically large margin—an estimated 11 percent—to overcome Republican-drawn districts that were designed to keep them [aka us!] out. Winning by such a large margin is something no party has done in decades.”

We know. This is a mouthful. We’re just coming to understand the gravity of our situation too. Here’s a recap:

1. The U.S. will hold the next census in 2020.
2. The census will determine how many seats each district gets or loses.
3. Many of the state politicians elected this fall will be in office in 2020.
4. They will have the power to use census data to redraw congressional and state level maps.
5. These maps will stay in place for 10 years, until the next census in 2030.

Hopefully, it’s obvious that we can’t give this power to the Republicans, lest they continue to blunt our power and silence us by gerrymandering districts. We must do all we can to participate in state elections in order to ensure that
right-wing legislators are not in place to wield this powerful mapmaking tool.

Third, in case it wasn’t already obvious, Black women are an important progressive voting bloc. We put Doug Jones from Alabama in the Senate. If we come out en masse and stand hand in hand with our Brown and White progressive sisters and brothers, we can do it again in other races.

“Explosive population growth of people of color in America over the past fifty years has laid the foundation for a New American Majority consisting of progressive people of color (23 percent of all eligible voters) and progressive whites (28 percent of all eligible voters). These two groups make up 51 percent of all eligible voters in America right now, and that majority is growing larger every day.”

—Steve Phillips, Brown Is the New White: How the Demographic Revolution Has Created a New American Majority

Fourth, and perhaps most important, we need to propel our sisters (and thereby, ourselves) to success! According to “The Chisholm Effect: Black Women in American Politics 2018,” a new report issued by Higher Heights Leadership Fund and the Center for American Women and Politics, and Rutgers Eagleton Institute for Politics, only 38 Black women have served in Congress in the past 50 years. And, as of
February 2018, even though we are 7.3% of the population (24 million strong!), Black women are only 3.6% of all members of Congress and 3.7% of all state legislators. (Thumbs down.)

If we assume that who represents us matters and that having more Black women in positions of power will help advance Black women’s concerns, then we’ve got to do more to ensure that our sisters are leading in our cities, states, and nation.

The good news is that more Black women than ever are running for office in 2018! Let’s do all we can to put more Black women in office to increase our political representation and ensure that we have allies on the inside who will protect and advance our interests.

“It’s about being present, and people knowing you will speak out against injustices. That alone will sometimes limit the number of injustices that happen.”

Andrea Jenkins
WHERE AND WHEN DO THEY TAKE PLACE?
Mark your calendar! The 2018 midterms will be held on November 6, 2018.

But don’t go back to work; you’ve got lots to do before that.

Before we get to the November elections, we have to pay close attention to primaries which vary by state and are usually held from May through June.

WHAT’S A PRIMARY? GLAD YOU ASKED!

Primaries are earlier elections where each party chooses the candidate who will be their representative on the November ballot. For example, Stacey Abrams, Democratic candidate for governor of Georgia, can’t officially “compete” for governor until she wins her Democratic primary against her opponent. Only then can she head into fall as the Democratic Party’s pick for governor of Georgia.

The main point is, you can’t get to the “finals” (2018 midterms) until you win the semifinals (2018 primaries). So, it’s very important to vote in your primary to ensure that your candidate goes all the way!

Side note: Twelve states hold caucuses instead of primaries to determine who goes on the midterm ballot. Caucuses are also run by the parties. To participate, you have to head
down to your precinct to vote in person.

To make it super easy for you, we downloaded this chart from *The New York Times*. See below to find the date of your state primary.

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“I RAN BECAUSE SOMEBODY HAD TO DO IT FIRST.”

Shirley Chisholm
WHO IS RUNNING?

KEY BLACK WOMEN AND RACES TO WATCH!
There are more Black women running for local, state, and federal elections than ever before! As mentioned above, this is just one great reason to participate in the 2018 midterms.

Black Women in Politics has developed a database to help you find sisters running up and down the ballot in your state. And we’ve got our eye on a few key federal races (see below). To find other candidates of color and progressives running for office, be sure to check out The Collective PAC and Our Revolution. With 435 seats in the House of Representatives, a third of the Senate, 36 governorships, and many state legislature seats up for grabs, there’s a lot at stake!

BLACKHER CANDIDATES TO WATCH

Stacey Abrams for governor of Georgia
Learn more about her platform.

Connie Johnson for governor of Oklahoma
Learn more about her platform.

Ayanna Pressley for Congress (MA-7)
Learn more about her platform.

Lauren Underwood for Congress (IL-14)
Learn more about her platform.
Lucy McBath for Congress (GA-6)
Learn more about her platform.

Stephany Rose Spaulding for Congress (CO-5)
Learn more about her platform.

Tamara Harris for Congress (NJ-11)
Learn more about her platform.

Tanzie Youngblood for Congress (NJ-2)
Learn more about her platform.

Pam Keith for Congress (FL-18)
Learn more about her platform.

Kudos to these amazing Black women for stepping up!

Don’t get us wrong. We support the brothers too. We’re particularly proud of and keeping an eye on the following Black male candidates for governor.

Andrew Gillum for governor of Florida
Learn more about his platform.

Ben Jealous for governor of Maryland
Learn more about his platform.

Setti Warren for governor of Massachusetts
Learn more about his platform.

www.blackher.us
“PEOPLE WHO HAVE REAL POWER—WEALTH, JOB SECURITY, INFLUENCE—DON’T ATTEND ‘EMPOWERMENT’ SEMINARS. POWER IS NOT ATTAINED FROM BOOKS AND SEMINARS. POWER IS CONFERRED BY SOCIAL SYSTEMS.”

Dr. Brittney Cooper
OUR ISSUES
Getting the right politicians into (and the wrong politicians out of) office is a critical first step, but it’s not the end game. Ultimately, we have to push for policy reforms and legislation that improve outcomes for ourselves, our families, our communities, and the nation.

In addition to securing greater representation for Black women (see our candidates above), BlackHer is focused on advancing economic justice. That means supporting policies that (a) put more money in our pockets and (b) help us build wealth.

Here’s why:

- Our families depend on our wages.
- The median income for Black women is ONLY $34,000 annually. (See first chart below.)
- And for every $1 white men make, we ONLY make 63 cents! (See second chart below.)
- Median wealth for single Black women is $200! (See third chart below.)
Median Annual Earnings, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2015

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

UNEQUAL PAY FOR WOMEN IN 2018

For every $1 white men make...

Asian Women 87¢
Women Overall 79¢
White Women 80¢
Moms Overall 71¢
Black Women 63¢
Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander Women 59¢
Native American Women 57¢
Latina Women 54¢

#EqualPayDay
MomsRising.org
MamásConPoder.org

*Disaggregate AAPI data, and some ethnic groups make only 51¢ for every dollar.

MEDIAN WEALTH FOR SINGLE MEN AND SINGLE WOMEN BY RACE/ETHNICITY, AGES 18-64


www.blackher.us

25
Below are just three policies or issues that we want our candidates to advance. Download “The Road to Zero Wealth: How the Racial Wealth Divide Is Hollowing Out America’s Middle Class” to access a comprehensive policy platform to help Black women build wealth.

RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE

While income is not the same thing as wealth, they are obviously connected because it’s hard to save if you have an insubstantial paycheck. Many legislators get this, and there has been a great deal of momentum around the passage of minimum wage laws at the state and local levels. In fact, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, “eighteen states began the new year with higher minimum wages. Eight states (Alaska, Florida, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, Ohio, and South Dakota) automatically increased their rates based on the cost of living, while ten states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Michigan, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington) increased their rates due to previously approved legislation or ballot initiatives.”

Economic justice advocates are working hard to advance a $15/hour minimum wage that increases with inflation over time (based on the Consumer Price Index). New York City, Seattle, Los Angeles, and San Francisco have passed $15/hour minimum wage ordinances. Learn more about how you can get involved in the Fight for $15 campaign.
While there is very little action at the federal level to increase the minimum wage, the Democratic leadership has introduced a bill that would increase the minimum wage to $15/hour. At this point, it is largely a messaging bill with few avenues for passage. If the Democrats take over the Senate and House in 2018, it will likely be a bill they pass early in the next Congress. (This is another reason for us to get our vote on in 2018!)

INSTITUTE UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

Universal basic income (UBI), defined as “a regular payment from the government to each and every adult, regardless of income,” is an idea that is gaining steam, especially in tech circles where advances in artificial intelligence and automation portend significant job losses for millions of Americans. The Roosevelt Institute has put forth a policy idea of guaranteeing an income of at least $1,000 per month for all Americans. In their study, they found that this would accelerate economic growth by 12%. Mark Zuckerberg is also a big proponent of UBI. What would it mean for Black women to know that they would have a $1,000 cushion every month? For the fastest-growing group of entrepreneurs in the nation, it could be a game changer!
ADVANCE PROGRESSIVE TAX REFORM

Benjamin Franklin said, “but in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.” He could have added, “and we hate to talk about them both.” But being in constant conversation about how we spend our communal “kitty” is a must because tax spending has an enormous impact on wealth equality (or lack thereof) for people of color! For example, in 2017, the federal government spent $677 billion to enhance the wealth and assets of American taxpayers. This is by far the largest federal investment in the income and wealth of American households. Unfortunately, the benefits of tax spending are incredibly unequal. The top 1% of taxpayers receive more than the bottom 80% of taxpayers combined. To give additional perspective, according to “Billionaire Bonanza: The Forbes 400 and the Rest of Us,” by the Institute for Policy Studies, the 400 richest US citizens control about as much wealth as all of the nation’s 42 million African Americans.
And, unfortunately, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will make things worse. (See graphic below from “Running in Place: Why the Racial Wealth Divide Keeps Black and Latino Families From Achieving Economic Security” by Prosperity Now.)

Building wealth for ourselves and our families seems daunting, but let’s not give up hope. With sustained pressure and the engagement of millions of us, we can effect change. By enhancing progressive policies such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, the Child Tax Credit, higher education tax credits, and tax credits for low-income homeowners and renters, we can significantly enhance the wealth and financial capability of working families—and have a direct impact on Black women’s wealth-building opportunities.
Let’s get laser-focused on building wealth and prosperity for ourselves, our families, and our communities. Our children can’t wait.

To learn more about policies that can help Black women and address our concerns in other areas, like gaining access to quality education, affordable healthcare, and affordable childcare, and reforming the criminal justice system, download “The Status of Black Women in the United States” by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research.
GET INVOLVED!

FOLLOW THE 3 VS!
“FREEDOM IS NEVER REALLY WON. YOU EARN IT AND WIN IT IN EVERY GENERATION.”

Coretta Scott King
VOTE

We can’t say it loud enough or often enough. The most important way you can make change in 2018 is to V.O.T.E. HeadCount is one resource that makes it easy to verify your voter registration and confirm your polling place.

Not registered to vote yet? Don’t wait. Go to Vote.org and register now.

*Pro Tip 1:* If you moved recently and changed neighborhoods, counties, or states, your polling place may have changed. Go to HeadCount to verify your registration and confirm your polling place.

*Pro Tip 2:* Don’t leave your house without the right credentials. Read up on what your state requires you to have to vote—e.g., government ID, driver’s license, state ID, or birth certificate.

VOLUNTEER

In addition to voting, there are plenty of ways to get involved in the midterm elections. Consider helping to get out the vote by canvassing or driving friends, family, and neighbors to the polls. You can also reach out to your campaign of choice and volunteer to send out mailings and phone bank. Go to DCCC (Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee) and fill out their form. They can get you hooked up with volunteer opportunities near you!
Running for office ain’t cheap! And you won’t be surprised to learn that Black women running for office have a harder time raising money than others.

In general, challengers to incumbents face a steep climb to electoral success. In fact, according to “Gender, Race, and Fundraising Inequality: What We Can Learn from 2016” by The Arena:

“For every $2 a White woman incumbent candidate was able to raise for a U.S. House race in the last election cycle, Latinx and African American women incumbents were only able to raise $1.12. Race and ethnicity data on candidates who are challengers or vying for open seats is more difficult to come by, but where the data does exist, it suggests fundraising disparities are relatively consistent with that of incumbents. When looking at the challengers for whom we have race and ethnicity data and who made it to the general election, the average total donation is $989,930.”

See also chart below.
Supporting candidates financially is critical. And it’s not hard to do. Just follow the steps below!

1. Choose a candidate to support.
2. Visit the campaign website and learn about the issues.
3. Invite your friends to lunch.
4. Invite the candidate to address your group.
5. Ask for donations.
6. Rinse and repeat!

Finally, be sure to check out BlackPAC and The Collective PAC. They are backbone organizations that provide comprehensive support for Black women (and men) running for office. If you can, you should support them too!
"I’M A STRONG BLACK WOMAN AND I CANNOT BE INTIMIDATED. I CANNOT BE UNDERMINED."

Maxine Waters
CONCLUSION

If you take nothing else from this ebook, remember this—YOU ARE POWERFUL! And your voice matters more now than ever before.

Amidst all the madness in the U.S., this is still a great time to be a Black woman.

We are 24 million strong and have spending power nearing $1.5 trillion by 2020 and we are unapologetically owning our power.

As Stefanie Brown James, co-founder of The Collective PAC reminded us in a recent BlackHer interview,

“We are living in the best season of Blackness. This is the best time in Black History to be Black. We are emboldened. We’re acknowledging the beauty in ourselves and each other. People aren’t hiding. That in and of itself is an act of resistance. I am hoping that translates into building power for our people.”
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Midterms** are the general elections held near the midpoint of a president’s four-year term of office.

**Primary elections** are held by each party prior to the midterm to nominate their candidate for the general election.

**A caucus** is a local gathering where voters openly decide which candidate to support.

**Redistricting** is the process of dividing or organizing an area into new political districts.

**Gerrymandering** is redistricting (see above) to establish a political advantage for a particular party. Watch [this video](#) for a great explanation. And check out the map of Pennsylvania’s 7th Congressional District. It was redrawn by Republicans after the 2010 census.

**Wealth** is what you own minus what you owe.

Source: Daily Koz “[Join our tour of the worst Republican gerrymanders, starting with Pennsylvania’s 7th District!](#)” 2016
RESOURCES FOR YOU

Black Women and the Wage Gap
National Partnership for Women and Families

The Status of Black Women in the United States
Institute for Women’s Policy Research and National Domestic Workers Alliance

The Chisholm Effect: Black Women in American Politics
Higher Heights Leadership Fund

Brown Is the New White: How the Demographic Revolution Has Created a New American Majority
Steve Phillips

The Road to Zero Wealth: How the Racial Wealth Divide Is Hollowing Out America’s Middle Class
Prosperity Now

Time for a Power Shift: The State of Black Women in the U.S. and Key States, 2018
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation

Running in Place: Why the Racial Wealth Divide Keeps Black and Latino Families from Achieving Economic Security
Prosperity Now
Gender, Race, and Fundraising Inequality: What We Can Learn from 2016
The Arena

The Wealth Gap for Women of Color
Center for Global Policy Solutions

African-American Women: Our Science, Her Magic
Nielsen

Extreme Gerrymandering and the 2018 Midterm
Brennan Center for Justice

Billionaire Bonanza: The Forbes 400 and the Rest of Us
Institute for Policy Studies

Women and Wealth: Insights for Grantmakers
Mariko Chang / Asset Funders Network

KEY ORGANIZATIONS

The Arena

BlackPAC

Center for Global Policy Solutions

The Collective PAC

Democracy in Color
Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee

HeadCount

Higher Heights

Insight Center for Community Economic Development

Institute for Women’s Policy Research

The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation

National Domestic Workers Alliance

National Partnership for Women and Families

Inequality.org

Institute for Policy Studies

Prosperity Now

Vote.org