2017 RACIAL EQUITY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

FACING RACE:

The 2017 Oregon Racial Equity Legislative Report

INTRODUCTION

During the 2017 legislative session, communities of color amplified the voices and values of Oregonians and worked collaboratively with legislators to pass solutions to address racial disparities and advance racial justice. Communities of color backed bills regarding education, health equity, criminal justice, health care and tenant protections intended to create a more fair and just state that affords equal opportunities for all people to thrive.

This advocacy work is imperative in order to support our vibrant communities of color as they grow and continue to make fundamental contributions to our state, despite Oregon's history of exclusion and discriminatory laws. Contrary to the mainstream narrative told from a white-centric perspective, people of color live, work, learn, and contribute throughout the state of Oregon, in both urban and rural settings.

This 2017 Racial Equity Legislative Report is the fourth in a series examining Oregon legislators' commitment to policy that most impacts people of color living across our state. The report has been used as a way to educate legislators and the general public about these policy issues, as well as a tool for advocacy that charts a path forward for racial equity. We included legislation in this report if it was explicit about addressing racial equity; reduced or removed systemic or institutional barriers that lead to inequitable outcomes; and protected against racial discrimination and violence. Communities of color, immigrants, and refugees identified and proactively worked on legislation they marked as priorities. This session, we saw great progress in health care, criminal justice, and education, as well as an unprecedented number of legislators of color. Both emerging and established advocates of color led these policy campaigns to success.

The Racial Equity Legislative Report reflects the partnership of eight nonpartisan, community-based organizations working to advance racial equity through legislative advocacy. This working group includes the Coalition of Communities of Color, Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), Unite Oregon, Causa, Basic Rights Oregon, Partnership for Safety and Justice, the Urban League of Portland, and Oregon Voice.

Thank you to the many people who advocated for legislation that promotes equity, including legislators, organizations, and community members. Lending your voice to these issues is essential to achieving our goal of creating an Oregon that truly serves all of its people.

2017 PRIORITY RACIAL EQUITY LEGISLATION

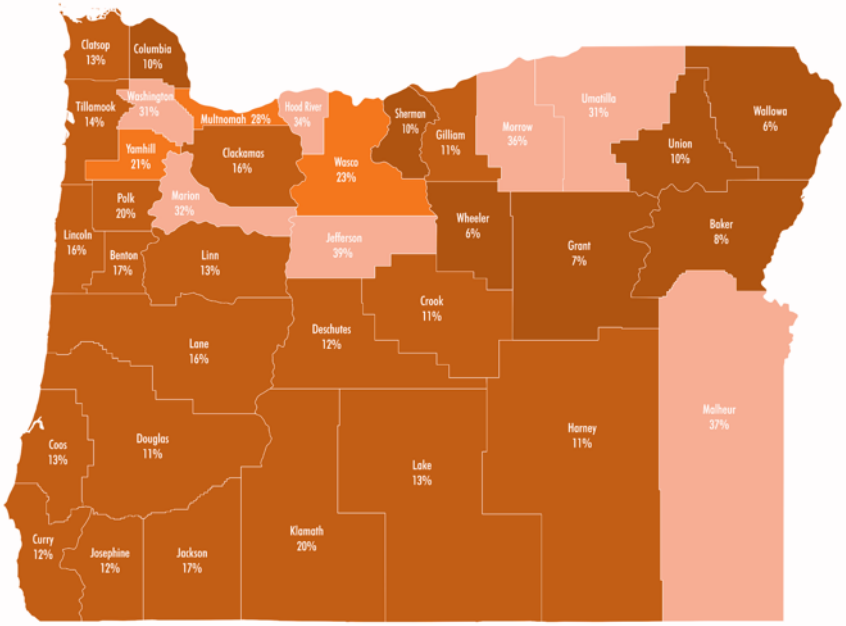
The Coalition worked to address the persistent and systemic racial and socioeconomic disparities across Oregon by supporting a series of bills aimed at advancing equity in health, education, the criminal justice system, and housing. Our approach is cross-cultural and draws on the lived experiences of Oregonians across the state who are driven to collective action to improve the lives of people of color.

When more Oregonians are healthier, better educated, and able to contribute to the state's economy, we are all better off. This following bills are significant, not only for their public policy advancements, but also – where applicable – for the resources state legislators allocated in order to put policies into action.

MAP OF OREGON

PERCENT OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR BY COUNTY

0-10% | 11-20% | 21-30% | 31-40%



Source: quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/41/41001.html

County Percentages are based on the 2010 U.S. Census

ADVOCACY STORIES | Oscar Guerra-Vera, End Profiling Legislative Campaign Field Director Unite Oregon

Oscar Guerra-Vera is the child of Mexican immigrant parents and a descendant of O'dami (Tepehuan) Indigenous peoples. Before their work at the justice-focused nonprofit, Unite Oregon, Oscar worked on behalf of Rockwood parents in the Centennial School District as a bilingual liaison. They previously worked for Big Brothers Big Sisters in Seattle facilitating programs for Latino, Native, and LGBTQ youth.

Oscar Guerra-Vera watched as a mother sat before Oregon lawmakers and expressed the fear she had of raising her black children in Oregon. As she shared her concerns, Guerra-Vera noticed one legislator who became visibly emotional.

The legislator "was visibly concerned for the family. Our communities' narratives have always been at the center of all mobilizing efforts. It was at the hearings we got to see how stories of police profiling also moved legislatures to see our humanity and create statewide solutions through this piece of legislation." Guerra-Vera said.

The mother's story was one of the dozens collected from across the state by the End Profiling Legislative Campaign to highlight the need for House Bill 2355.

"The amount of cross-cultural building that we've been able to do with such an intersectional bill - it's been paramount," they said. "We've been working with queer and many faith organizations, Black, brown and multi-ethnic community organizers, people with disabilities, low-income and houselessness organizers."

As part of the campaign's efforts, it worked to engage Oregonians across the state with the We Are Not Dangerous Tour, a series of listening sessions to convene people who have been profiled by law enforcement and talk about their experiences. Along the way, the campaign built a coalition of over 75 social justice organizations to join the statewide efforts.

While House Bill 2355 passed during the 2017 legislative session, the End Profiling Campaign's work took off in 2013, the same year that the Black Lives Matter movement was founded. The movement helped solidify the issue of excessive force by law enforcement. It was during the 2015 legislative session that the conversations of profiling by law enforcement became "the restorative justice conversation to have," said Guerra-Vera.

Guerra-Vera says they are proud of the collaborative work performed by Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum's task force – including their feedback which resulted in legislation to include data collection and annual review of this data, mandatory biased-policing training for law enforcement at every level, and a declassification of felonies of certain petty crimes.

"We at least have now arrived at a place where the state acknowledges it as an issue and the state wants to do something regarding holding profiling practices accountable to justice, they said.

"We've created spaces so we can resist together," Guerra-Vera said. "It's something we must continue to mobilize around so it's properly implemented and so our communities know they could report the now-illegal act."

2017 PRIORITY RACIAL EQUITY LEGISLATION

SUCCESSES

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

ENDING PROFILING: HB 2355

Communities are safer and more equitable when people don't have to live in fear of being profiled based on their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other protected identities. The consequences of profiling are stark: people of color are disproportionately represented in every stage of the criminal justice process and experience discrimination through profiling by law enforcement.

Oregon took an important step forward by joining more than 40 states to ban profiling by law enforcement. Stopping this harmful practice requires data collection, training, oversight, and equally important, systemic accountability measures. To that end, the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission will establish a system to record and capture data from officer-initiated stops to better understand and address police profiling. It is important to note that this bill was drafted with an intersectional lens in mind in order to address profiling based on race, gender identity, houseless status, religious affiliation, nationality, and language.

HEALTH CARE

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EQUITY: HB 3391

Equal access to comprehensive reproductive health care is essential to the health and wellbeing of all Oregonians. This bill addresses the needs of the tens of thousands of women in Oregon who lack access to affordable reproductive health services, of transgender and non-gender conforming Oregonians unable to access reproductive health services based on their gender markers, and of the thousands more Oregonians excluded from healthcare coverage because of their citizenship status. House Bill 3391, considered a major win for reproductive rights, makes Oregon the second state to require insurance companies to cover all abortions, after California. The bill also requires insurance companies to cover other reproductive health services at no cost to patients, in addition to contraception, postpartum care, and screenings for sexually transmitted infections and cancers of the reproductive system. All Oregonians will be able to access the full range of preventative reproductive health services without discrimination based on actual or perceived race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or disability.

EDUCATION

ETHNIC STUDIES: HB 2845

All of our histories and experiences deserve to be taught in Oregon's schools. When students see themselves reflected in their education through ethnic studies, they feel a deeper connection to what they are learning. Many of the histories and contributions of communities of color have historically been excluded from traditional curricula. Ethnic studies curricula result in positive academic and social outcomes for students, especially for those facing educational disparities. This bill directs the Oregon Department of Education to convene an advisory group to develop statewide ethnic studies standards for adoption into existing statewide social studies standards. The bill requires adoption of standards and annual reporting and has been years in the making by advocates, particularly students, who came to the the State Capitol to lobby for the curriculum. The bill is intersectional, meaning it not only focuses on ethnic minorities but also social minorities, such as the LGBTQ community. This effort was achieved by the collaboration of more than 100 organizations including LGBTQ and feminist organizations.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: HB 2864

When colleges and universities are inclusive and reflective of Oregon's communities, every student is better prepared to succeed. Culturally and linguistically diverse students are facing disparities in their learning experiences that can be addressed by institutionalizing cultural competency in higher education. As student bodies diversify at colleges and universities, House Bill 2864 will lead to a more inclusive education. The bill requires public institutions of higher education to provide ongoing cultural competency development opportunities, create standards for cultural competency, and provide biannual reports on progress to their boards. That work is essential so that higher education institutions are better equipped to respond respectfully and effectively to people from all races, ethnic backgrounds, languages, socioeconomic statuses, sexual orientations, gender identities, and veteran statuses.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

HOUSING

TENANT PROTECTIONS: HB 2004

Everyone should have a safe and stable place to call home. Yet communities of color have been devastated by Oregon's long history of discrimination in housing, and they continue to be harmed by dramatic rent increases and evictions without cause. Rising rents and no-cause evictions have led to homelessness and displacement of communities of color. While Oregon faces a housing crisis in all corners of the state, the Legislature failed to provide more protections for renters. House Bill 2004 would have ended no-cause evictions, which are often used to discriminate against people of color, and repealed the statewide prohibition on local ordinances to stabilize rents. The bill passed in the House but was stripped in a Senate committee and never made it to a vote on the Senate floor. Soaring rents are pushing tenants from their homes, which particularly affects people of color and working families.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

LEGISLATOR	HB 2355 End Profiling	HB 2845 Ethnic Studies	HB 2864 Cultural Competency	HB 3391 Reproductive Health Equity	HB 2004 Tenant Protections
Alonso Leon (D - Woodburn)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Barker (D - Aloha)	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓
Barnhart (D - Eugene)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Barreto (R - Cove)	✗	✗	✗	EXCUSED	✗
Bentz (R - Ontario)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Boone (D - Cannon Beach)	EXCUSED	EXCUSED	YES	EXCUSED	EXCUSED
Buehler (R - Bend)	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Bynum (D - Clackamas)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clem - (D - Salem)	✓	EXCUSED	✓	✓	EXCUSED
Doherty (D - Tigard)	✓	EXCUSED *	✓	✓	✓
Esquivel (R - Medford)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Evans (D - Monmouth)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fahey (D - Eugene)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gomberg (D - Central Coast)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gorsek (D - Troutdale)	✓	✓	✓*	✓	✓*
Greenlick (D - Portland)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hack (R - Salem)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Hayden (R - Roseburg)	✗	EXCUSED	✗	EXCUSED	✗
Heard (R - Roseburg)	✗	EXCUSED	✓	✗	✗
Helm (D - Washington County)	✓	EXCUSED	✓	✓	✓
Hernandez (D - Portland)	✓	✓*	✓	✓	✓*
Holvey (D - Eugene)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Huffman (R - The Dalles)	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Johnson (R - Hood River)	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Kennemer (R - Oregon City)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Keny-Guyer (D - Portland)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kotek (D - Portland)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lewis (R - Silverton)	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
Lininger (D - Lake Oswego)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lively (D - Springfield)	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Malstrom (D - Beaverton)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Marsh (D - Ashland)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
McKeown (D - Coos Bay)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
McLain (D - Hillsboro)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
McLane (R- Powell Butte)	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Meek (D - Clackamas County)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nathanson (D - Eugene)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nearman (R - Independence)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Noble (R - McMinnville)	✗	✗	✓	EXCUSED	✗
Nosse (D - Portland)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Olson (R - Albany)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Parrish (R - West Linn)	✗	✓*	✗	✗	✗
Piluso (D - Gresham)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*
Post (R - Keizer)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Power (D - Milwaukie)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*
Rayfield (D - Corvallis)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reardon (D - Happy Valley)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reschke (R - Klamath Falls)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Sanchez (D - Portland)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key: ✓ = *support of racial equity* ✗ = *vote against racial equity* * = *denotes chief sponsor of bill* — = *Denotes did not make to floor for final vote*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

LEGISLATOR	HB 2355 End Profiling	HB 2845 Ethnic Studies	HB 2864 Cultural Competency	HB 3391 Reproductive Health Equity	HB 2004 Tenant Protections
G. Smith (R - Heppner)	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Smith Warner (D - Portland)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
D. Smith (R - Port Orford)	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
Sollman (D - Hillsboro)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sprenger (R - Scio)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Stark (R - Grants Pass)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Vial (R - Scholls)	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Whisnant (R - Sunriver)	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Williamson (D - Portland)	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓
Wilson (R - Grants Pass)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Witt (D - Clatskanie)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗

SENATE

LEGISLATOR	HB 2355 End Profiling	HB 2845 Ethnic Studies	HB 2864 Cultural Competency	HB 3391 Reproductive Health Equity	HB 2004 Tenant Protections
Baertschiger (R - Grants Pass)	✗	✓	✓	✗	—
Beyer (D - Springfield)	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
Boquist (R - Dallas)	✗	✓	*EXCUSED*	✗	—
Burdick (D - Portland)	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
Courtney (D - Salem)	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
DeBoer (R - Ashland)	✓	✓	✓	✗	—
Dembrow (D - Portland)	✓	✓	✓	✓	—*
Devlin (D - Tualatin)	✓	✓	✓	✓*	—
Ferrioli (R - John Day)	✗	✓	✓	✗	—
Frederick (D - Portland)	✓	✓*	✓	✓	—
Gelser (D - Corvallis)	✓	✓	✓	✓	—*
Girod (R - Stayton)	✗	✓	✓	✗	—
Hansell (R - Athena)	✓	✓	✓	✗	—
Hass (D - Beaverton)	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
Johnson (D - Scappoose)	✗	✓	✓	✓	—
Knopp (R - Bend)	*EXCUSED*	*EXCUSED*	✓	✗	—
Kruse (R - Roseburg)	✗	✓	✓	✗	—
Linthicum (R - Klamath Falls)	✗	✗	✗	✗	—
Manning (D - Eugene)	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
Monnes Anderson (D - Gresham)	✓	✓	✓	✓*	—*
Monroe (D - Portland)	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
Olsen (R - Canby)	✗	✓	✓	✗	—
Prozanski (D - Eugene)	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
Riley (D - Hillsboro)	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
Roblan (D - Coos Bay)	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
Steiner Hayward (D - Beaverton)	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
Taylor (D - Milwaukie)	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
Thatcher (R - Keizer)	✗	*EXCUSED*	✓	✗	—
Thomsen (R - Hood River)	✓	✓	✓	✗	—
Winters (R - Salem)	✓	*EXCUSED*	✓	✗	—

Key: ✓ *= support of racial equity* ✗ *= vote against racial equity* * *= denotes chief sponsor of bill* — *= Denotes did not make to floor for final vote*

LOOKING FORWARD

The partnership of organizations publishing the Racial Equity Legislative Report envision an Oregon where all the people who call this state home have the ability to thrive.

According to the U.S. Census, people of color account for 58.5 percent of the population growth in Oregon between 2005 and 2016. All communities of color are growing in Oregon, and almost 1 in 4 people who live in Oregon (both rural and urban) in 2016 are people of color. According to data available for certain communities in the U.S. Census, Asian communities, in particular, are growing at the fastest rate followed by Black, Latino and Native American communities. The Latino population is the largest share of communities of color in Oregon. In our schools, more than one-third of K-12 students are students of color. And, in 31 of Oregon's school districts, the percentage of students of color ranges from 40 to 83 percent.

As the population diversifies, so do its needs and the solutions required to address them. Our collective vision looking forward is grounded in the historical reality that starting from the Native American communities, people of color have always lived in Oregon despite several systemic policies and practices designed to establish a "white utopia" in the state. The state population is diversifying partly due to immigration, and as that happens, our needs and solutions must expand as well to achieve prosperity for all of our communities.

In 2017 there was significant progress toward a Legislature that better represents Oregon's people. After the 2016 election, the total number of legislators of color doubled, demonstrating the growing political power of communities of color. In 2015, the Legislature had only four legislators of color, making it 96 percent white – the same figure as in 1990. In 2017, a record eight state legislators identified as people of color, and in 2018, a ninth will join their ranks. Despite these substantial gains, this still falls short of representing Oregon's overall demographics, let alone the number of young people of color and the projected growth of communities of color.

As communities of color continue to grow in both rural and urban parts of Oregon, this demographic shift gives everyone from policymakers to community-based organizers opportunities to work toward a more equitable state.

The Racial Equity Legislative Report partner organizations focus on working to increase representation in the Legislature and other leadership roles across the state, voting participation, civic engagement, and organizing. In addition, these organizations will continue to amplify the voices of communities of color while increasing engagement with legislators.

Policy solutions and decision making must be rooted in the communities where they will be implemented and led by community members. As legislators mull policy decisions, it is important that they cultivate authentic relationships and have a pipeline to communities to understand their needs, challenges, and successes.

With increased representation in the legislature by people of color, it is important to continue the momentum and conversation about why equity-focused policy matters and benefits the entire state.

We believe that Oregon is stronger when everyone has opportunities. This is our call to action for policymakers to work with us to create a more equitable Oregon for tomorrow, and for our future generations who will inherit our failures and our successes. It has taken hundreds of years to implement and embed systemic racism into the fabric of our society, and we know from history that breaking down these systems won't happen overnight. But we must continue to work with a sense of urgency, and with one another, because our work to advance racial justice today means a brighter and stronger tomorrow for the place we call home.

ADVOCACY STORIES

Lamar Wise, Executive Director
Oregon Student Association

Lamar Wise is the Executive Director of the Oregon Student Association, an advocacy organization that represents students from ten member community colleges and universities in Oregon. He got his start in politics when he was elected president of his fourth-grade class. In college, he went on to serve as the University of Oregon's representative on the state's Higher Education Coordinating Commission. At the Oregon Student Association, he previously served as its legislative director before taking on his new role.

While more than 15,000 Oregon college and university students weighed in on their priorities for the 2017 legislative session, Lamar Wise often heard the same refrain when explaining them to Oregon legislators.

"We'd often go up against, 'Oh, is this a problem?' Wise, recalled some legislators saying. Lawmakers also told him that OSA's equity-focused priorities, which included cultural competency in higher education and legislation to support ethnic studies, were divisive.

"We thought it was necessary for our communities to survive or be able to function within the system," Wise said. "At times we would get a lot of pushback."

OSA's extensive survey of members statewide lets Wise know that the demographics of college students are changing, and that legislators must be willing to listen and respond to their needs, particularly when it comes to equity.

"They really need to understand the impacts that policy has on communities of color because if they're not careful, it does end up having lasting effects on whole communities," Wise said.

Wise says one of the most significant changes in the State Capitol is having a more diverse legislative body as more legislators of color now serve in the Oregon House and Senate. Their presence has meant a shift in the conversations Wise and his organization have with lawmakers.

"Different organizations and communities of color have been able to do some awesome advocacy because we don't have to devise a whole legislative campaign strategy on why our issues are important," Wise said. "When we're able to have champions who look like us who are able to understand the issues, our stories go further into the rooms where tough decisions are being made."

ADVOCACY STORIES

Rep. Tawna Sanchez
Oregon House of Representatives

Rep. Tawna Sanchez, (D-Portland), is the second Native American to serve in the Oregon Legislature. She is Shoshone-Bannock, Ute, and Carrizo. Here she reflects on her work in the 2017 legislative session, her efforts to advocate for communities of color, and how glaring inequities drive her to develop policies that help improve the lives of all people who call our state home.

Following her first legislative session, Rep. Tawna Sanchez was struck by both the amazing experience serving in the House of Representatives and the "amazing level of inequity" – intentional inequity in some instances, she said. Some examples from the session include legislation that proposed making English the official language of Oregon and a bill that would make abortions illegal.

"You just sort of recognize there is this whole force on the other end that just wants to go back to the 1940s or 1950s," Rep. Sanchez said.

She said Oregon's brand of racism is unlike other places in the country where it is overt.

"In Oregon we're good at not overtly being oppressive," she said. "The reality is that the time we're in right now has allowed for greater transparency of those things. Our current administration, during the presidential election, was very overt. It's just more in your face now. It's important people recognize that piece."

Calling out inequities and taking action are at the core of Rep. Sanchez's commitment to social justice. She came up in the American Indian Movement, a Civil Rights movement that began in the late 1960s that focused on the inequities of indigenous people in the United States.

"Coming from that perspective, you think about how can you make this better? How do you shift minds and move in that direction?" she said.

One of the wins of the legislative session was Senate Bill 13, which directs the Oregon Department of Education to develop a curriculum about the Native American experience in the state.

"The fact that it happened is amazing," she said, adding its intent to elevate Native and indigenous voices. "We're still here and you do have to recognize us."

She shifts her attention to young people and her hope for their future. During the session, she met with Coquille Indian Tribe youth where she talked to them about the possibilities of working at the Capitol.

"They have a great opportunity right now, and plan their life out a little better," she said.

As a legislator, Rep. Sanchez is giving opportunities to other young Native American youth, including one young person who served as her legislative assistant during the session. She wants young people to see themselves in these roles. Her long-range goal is that efforts such as these will help change the makeup of the legislature to more accurately reflect the demographics of the state.

As for her legislative assistant, he has his eyes set on a big job. His goal: to be the first Native American President of the United States.

OUR COMMITMENT TO TRANSPARENCY AND ENGAGEMENT

Our goal is to encourage legislators to meaningfully engage earlier and more often with communities of color. By identifying and developing policy solutions that will end persistent racial disparities we can create better opportunities and outcomes for all, especially as our state becomes more racially diverse.

If you have any questions, or would like more information on legislation nominated for the report, please contact Jenny Lee, Advocacy Director for the Coalition of Communities of Color at Jenny@coalitioncommunitiescolor.org or (503) 200-5722 ext. 556.

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