

THE  
POWER  
OF THE

# SISTER VOTE



## 2017 Post-Election Preliminary Report

### *“Impact of the Black Women’s Vote & Leadership in the 2017 Election Cycle”*

Released by



A signature program of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation

**Ronald Walters Leadership & Public Policy Center, Howard University**

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**#PoweroftheSisterVote**

**#Followblackwomen**

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## OVERVIEW

Political pundits are once again reporting that the women's vote is what brought democrats historic victories in the 2017 Election in states like Virginia and New Jersey. The reality is not all women voted for the winning candidates. According to the 2017 Election Exit Polls, **Black women led the way in turning VA and NJ from red to blue, up and down the ballot in 2017.** Conversely, the majority of white women voted for the republican gubernatorial candidates in NJ and VA.

On November 7<sup>th</sup>, Exit Polls reported that Black women voted 91 percent for the democratic gubernatorial candidate, Ralph Northam, who was elected governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia. White women voted 51 percent for the republican candidate, Ed Gillespie. In New Jersey, Black women voted 94 percent for democratic candidate, Phil Murphy, who is governor-elect for New Jersey. Latino women voted 88 percent for Murphy and white women voted 44 percent for Murphy.

To be clear, **Black women have been the most loyal voters for progressive candidates for decades.** For example, in 2016, Black women voted 94 percent for Hilary Clinton; and white women voted 53 percent for Donald Trump. In 2013, Black women were the decisive vote for current Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe, voting at 91 percent. White women voted for anti-choice republican candidate Ken Cuccinelli at 54 percent.

In both 2008 and 2012, Black women led the way in electing President Barack Obama the first African American president of the United States. The Black women's vote, in fact, accounts for the gender gap in support of Democratic candidates as the majority of white women supported Republican candidates in both elections.

*So the question is---*will Black women continue to be the most loyal voting bloc for democrats in the 2018 Mid-Term Election? The recent Black Women's Roundtable/ESSENCE "Power of the Sister Vote" Poll (2017 BWR/ESSENCE Poll), released in September 2017 that gauged Black women's political attitudes, should be a cautionary sign to take a closer look at where Black women are politically.

The 2017 BWR/ESSENCE Poll revealed an 11 percent drop in the "belief that The Democratic Party best represents the interest of Black women, dropping from 85% to 74% over the past year. In fact, more Black women think that none of the political parties represent them well, up to 21% from 13% in 2016." The poll also shows Black women millennials continue to identify more as independents.

The poll further disclosed Black women have a significant interest in running for political office on a local level. The 2017 Election results appears to confirm that growing interest, with several Black women making history in key local and statewide races including Sheila Oliver being elected the first African American elected lieutenant governor of New Jersey; Vi Lyles elected first African American woman elected mayor of Charlotte, NC; Andrea Jenkins, first African American transgender elected to the Minneapolis City Council; Angelyne Butler, first African American mayor of Forest Park, GA and many more across the country.

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These changing political attitudes and trends provide an opportunity for the democrats if they fully embrace and respect Black women's leadership as their most loyal base on a national, state and local level. It is also an opportunity for the Republican Party, if they choose to reverse course from being the party of the "Alt-right," white nationalists and white supremacists. Otherwise, Black women, especially millennials, will likely expand their options as independents or members of third parties in the future.

Further, Black women didn't just vote in 2017, **Black women led the way by running successfully for state-wide and local office; trained, funded and endorsed progressive Black candidates; organized successful Black voter mobilization & turnout campaigns and protected voters and voting rights for all Americans across the nation.**

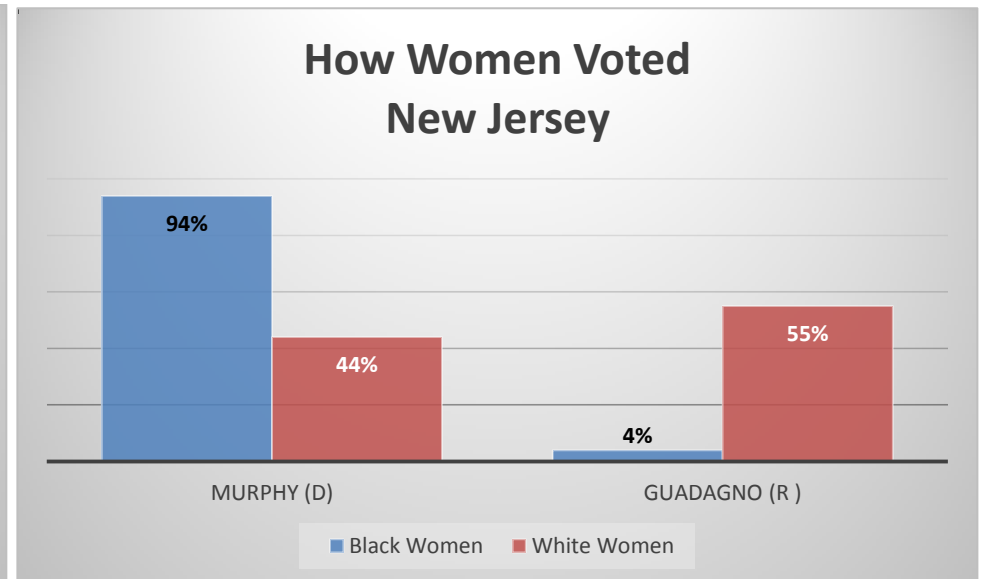
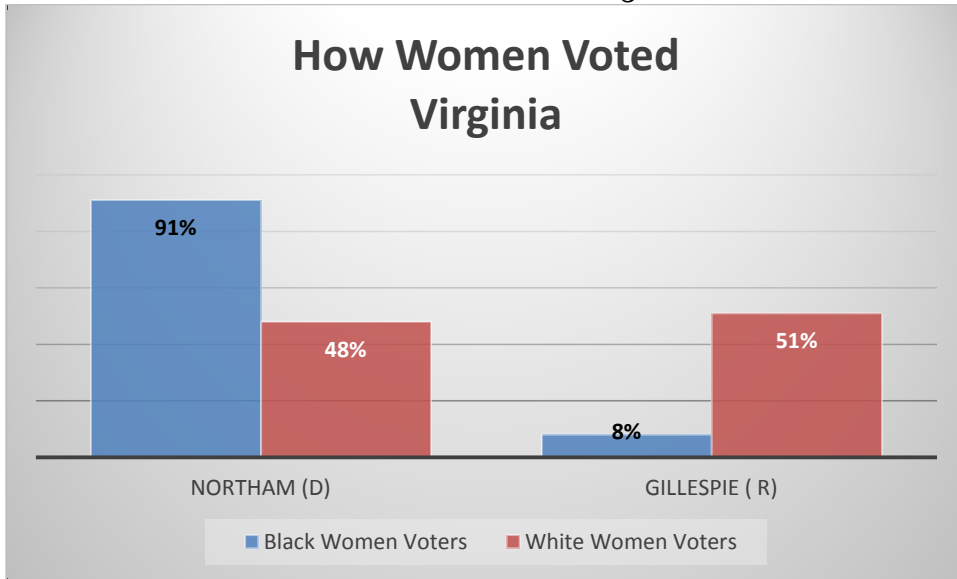
Based on these preliminary findings, we believe Black women will take their politics to new levels of success in the 2018 Mid-Term Election cycle and beyond. So for those who want to win in the 2018, remember Black women are the "secret sauce" to victory....Follow Black Women.

### **Black Women Did It All ... And History was made in 2017!**

- We Organized
- We Voted
- We Endorsed
- We Donated
- We Ran; and
- We Won

## BLACK WOMEN LED THE WOMEN'S VOTE IN NJ AND VA

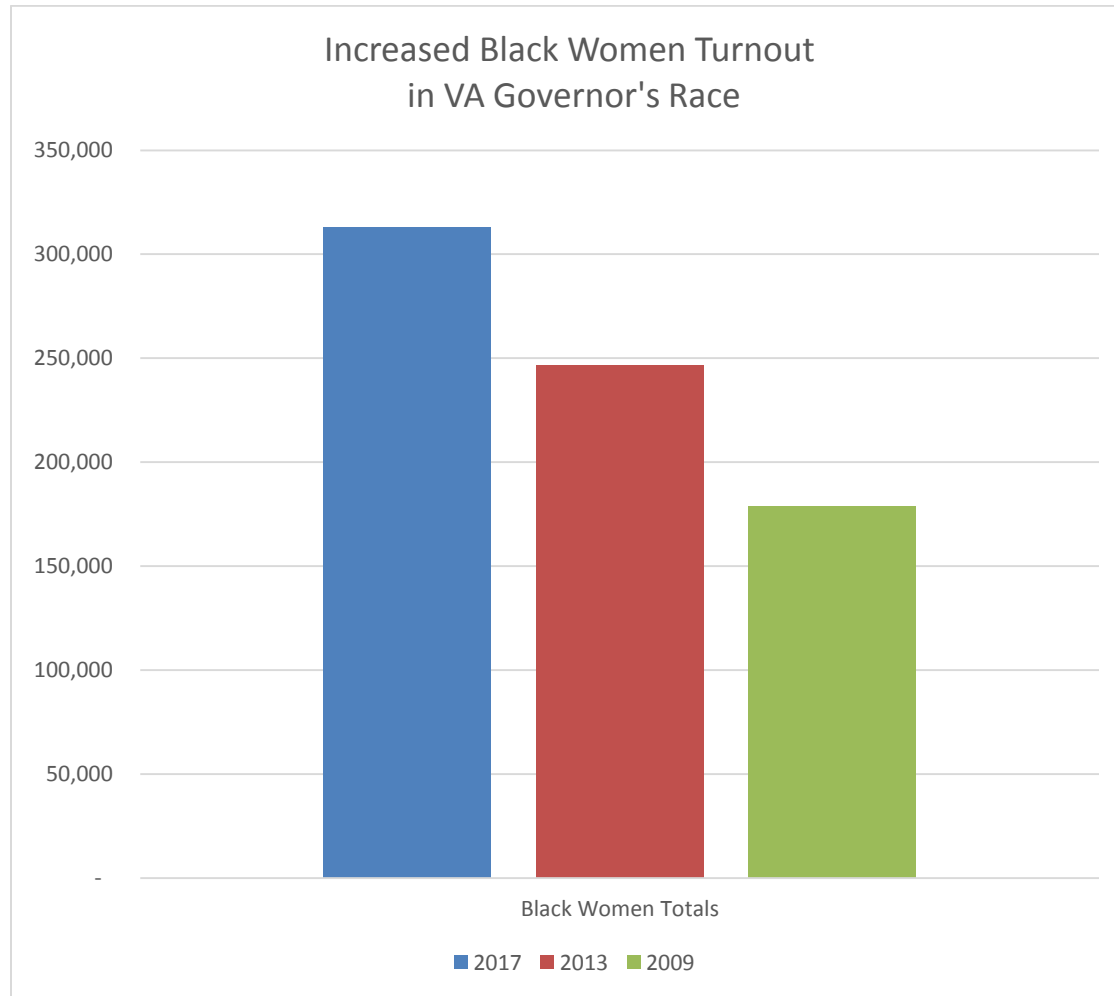
**Black women led the way in turning VA and NJ from red to blue, up and down the ballot in 2017.** Conversely, the majority of white women voted for the republican gubernatorial candidates in NJ and VA. Black women continue to support Democratic candidates. Black women vote and that vote has power. Historically, Democrats rely on 90% or better of the Black vote in order to win and Republicans strive to attract at least 10% of the Black vote away from Democrats for their success, while white women's support for Democrats more often than not is less than 50%.



[Source: CNN 2017 Election Exit Poll]

## Black Women on Turnout in VA

In VA, Black women's voter turnout is on the rise. For the last 3 gubernatorial elections, turnout for Black women has increased and average of 7.5%. In both 2013 and 2017, VA black voters made up 20% of turnout, 60% of which were women. This trend supports information we ascertained from our 2017 BWR/Essence "Power of the Sister Vote" Poll, which supported an increase in Black women's civic engagement.



[Source: CNN 2017 Election Exit Poll]

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## BLACK WOMEN CANDIDATES MAKE HISTORY IN 2017

### **Mayors in cities of over 40,000**

Black women were elected mayor in 10 cities with populations of 40,000 or more—Charlotte, NC; Rochester, NY; Tacoma, WA; New Haven, CT; Flint, MI; Albany, GA; Pontiac, MI; Cleveland Heights, OH; York, PA and Framingham, MA. Half of them were elected in cities with a population of over 100,000. Seven of the 10 were incumbents.<sup>1</sup> There will be at least one additional black woman mayor in this category because the two people in the runoff for mayor of New Orleans, LA are both black women, making history as the first woman mayor of the Crescent City. One of the women in the runoff for mayor of Atlanta, GA is a black woman. Only five black women mayoral candidates in the General Election lost in cities this size (Minneapolis, Toledo, Cincinnati, Greensboro, NC, Stratford, CT).

Vi Lyles will make history by becoming the first black woman mayor of Charlotte, North Carolina after an upset primary victory over the incumbent mayor and a big defeat of her male opponent in the general election. Yvonne Spicer, an educator, will become the first mayor ever elected in the city of Framingham, Massachusetts.

Black men were elected in five cities with populations of 40,000 or more; two were incumbents (Cleveland and Buffalo). Four of the five cities had a population of over 200,000. Black candidates lost elections in Boston and Detroit where they attempted to defeat incumbent mayors.

### **First Timers**

Former New Jersey Speaker of the House, Sheila Oliver, was elected Lieutenant Governor, becoming only the third black woman to ever be elected lieutenant governor in the United States. It should also be noted that Justin Fairfax, a black man, was elected Lieutenant Governor of Virginia.

It has already been stated above that Vi Lyles will be the first black woman mayor of Charlotte, but there were other black women who were the first black woman elected in their city and town. In Georgia, for example, the first black mayor was elected in Forest Park, Georgia, Angelyne Butler; and in Allegheny County, PA, two black women were elected mayor for the first time – Wilkensburg, PA, Marita Garrett and Nickole Nesby, Duquesne, PA.

Black women were also elected mayor in Quitman, Milledgeville, East Point, Fairburn and Fort Valley, GA.

### **Notable Victories**

Black women and other women scored a number of significant victories in the Virginia elections. Jennifer Carroll-Foy found out she was pregnant after she decided to run for State Delegate. She persisted with her campaign, and gave birth to premature twin boys. She defeated her opponent by 23 points.

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<sup>1</sup> In November 1, 2017 issue of Governing, it was projected that a number of big city mayors would lose their seats. This did not seem to be the case with black women.

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Daun Hester and Nichole Richardson Armstead were elected City Treasurer in Norfolk and Richmond, VA, respectively. Two black women -- one incumbent--were elected sheriff in Virginia. Three black women were re-elected to their Commonwealth Attorney positions.

Two Hispanic women were elected to the Virginia House of Delegates the first time as was one Asian-American woman. The size of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus will increase by one woman with the election of Jennifer Carroll-Foy in northern Virginia.

It was not just Virginia where notable victories were attained. Andrea Jenkins, easily won a seat on the Minneapolis City Council, becoming the first transgender black woman elected to that office.

In Atlantic County, NJ, Ashley Bennett, a 32 year old was so offended by a Facebook post about the Women's March from her Freeholder, she decided to run against him. She defeated the incumbent by over 1,000 votes.

Letitia James was re-elected as the New York City Public Advocate. Janice Winfred was re-elected Clerk for the City of Detroit. Felecia Moore is in a runoff for the President of the Atlanta City Council, and Keisha Waites is in the runoff for Chair of the Fulton County, GA Commission.



## BLACK WOMEN-LED ORGANIZING MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

Black women are not only voting---Black women are training, funding and endorsing progressive Black candidates; organizing successful Black voter mobilization & turnout campaigns; protecting voters against voter suppression and voting rights for all Americans across the nation. Here is a list of some of the Black women that are leading the way nationally and in key states (partial listing information only):

### **Registering, Organizing and Mobilizing Black Voters**

Danielle Atkinson, Convener, Detroit BWR, Executive Director, Mothering Justice

[www.motheringjustice.org](http://www.motheringjustice.org)

Salandra Benton

Convener, Florida Coalition on Black Civic Participation

[www.fcbsp.org](http://www.fcbsp.org)

Clayola Brown

President, A Philip Randolph Institute

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Helen Butler

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Erin Byrd

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Melanie L. Campbell, President & CEO

National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, Convener, Black Women's Roundtable

[www.ncbcp.org](http://www.ncbcp.org)

Laverne Chatman

Co-Founder, NoVA Coalition

Cynthia Downs-Taylor

Political Strategist & Advisor, Hampton Roads Virginia

Hon. Stephanie Moore

Convener, Kalamazoo, MI BWR/Director, Mothers of Hope

[www.mothers-of-hope.org](http://www.mothers-of-hope.org)

Rev. Dr. Judith C. Moore

Convener Pittsburgh/Mon Valley BWR, Executive Director, Sisters Saving Ourselves NOW and Girls Excel on Purpose

Mary Montford

President, North Carolina APRI

[www.ncapri.org](http://www.ncapri.org)

Deborah Scott

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[www.georgiastandup.org](http://www.georgiastandup.org)

Adrienne Shropshire

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Petee Talley

Convener, Ohio Unity Coalition

[www.ohiounitycoalition.org](http://www.ohiounitycoalition.org)

Hon. Sheila Tyson

Convener, Alabama Coalition on Black Civic Participation/AL BWR

Cassandra Welchlin

Co-Convener and Lead Organizer MS, BWR, MSCBCP

Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner

Co-Chair, National African-American Clergy Network



## **BLACK WOMEN-LED ORGANIZING MAKES THE DIFFERENCE**

### **Protecting Voters and Voting Rights**

Kristen Clarke

President & Executive Director, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

[www.lawyerscommittee.org](http://www.lawyerscommittee.org)

Judith Browne-Dianis

Executive Director, The Advancement Project

[www.advancementproject.org](http://www.advancementproject.org)

Sherrilyn Ifill

President & Co-Director

NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund

[www.naacpldf.org](http://www.naacpldf.org)

### **Recruiting, Training, Funding and Endorsing Black Candidates**

Stefanie Brown James

Co-Founder & Senior Advisor, The Collective PAC

[www.collectivepac.org](http://www.collectivepac.org)

Glynda Carr

Co-Founder, Higher Heights

[www.higherheightsforamerica.org](http://www.higherheightsforamerica.org)

## FOLLOW BLACK WOMEN TO VICTORY IN 2018 AND BEYOND

If there is one clear takeaway for progressives looking to replicate recent electoral successes in 2018 and beyond, the answer is simple, #FollowBlackWomen; and do so in three specific ways.

***First, invest time and money into recruiting Black women candidates to run for office at the state, local and national levels.*** This cycle has proven that Black women are viable candidates in a variety of contexts. From state-wide elections, to state legislatures, to local leadership and more, Black women have fought and won electoral battles up and down the ballot, often by significant margins and even after consistently facing fundraising disadvantages. In short, they represent a deep, but typically untapped source of new political talent and leadership. With continued focus on and investment in this demographic, a significant shift in state and local political power could be well within reach across the nation.

***Second, provide substantial financial support to Black women-led civic engagement and political empowerment organizations as well as Black women candidates themselves.*** In this election cycle, Black women have once again proven that they can make magic happen even with comparatively few resources at their disposal. A common-sense directive that progressive fundraising mechanisms would be wise to follow is to provide substantial financial backing specifically in those areas that show the best return on investment. And time and time again we see, there is no better investment than Black women. Given the consistent loyalty of the Black women's vote and the specific level of success evidenced in this election cycle related to voter education and get-out-the-vote efforts by Black women led organizations as well as the strong showing among Black women candidates themselves, it's hard to imagine a better investment for the progressive dollar.

***Third, intensify voter protection efforts nationwide.*** Following the results of the 2017 election cycle, it is all but certain that in an attempt to preclude a repeat of these results, voting rights will be under increased attack heading into the 2018 and 2020 elections. We already know the current administration has initiated an Election Commission based on the lie of widespread illegal voting in 2016. We also know that there is no effort out of this administration to address what's now widely acknowledged to be significant Russian tampering in the 2016 Presidential election cycle. Given this reality, progressives must make every effort to be both proactive and aggressive in protecting voting rights and election integrity moving forward. Such action is an absolute necessity in order to ensure that the potential that was unleashed in 2017, has the opportunity to take-hold and grow, leading to additional widespread victories in 2018 and beyond.

**BLACK WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE**  
**2017 ELECTION PRELIMINARY REPORT CONTRIBUTORS**  
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Black Women's Roundtable



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