



# STATE OF REPRESENTATION 2024



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# INTRODUCTION

Over the past two years, the representation of New Americans—defined by New American Leaders (NAL) as first and second-generation Americans—in state legislatures across the United States has undergone a dynamic transformation, signaling a broader shift toward a more inclusive democracy.<sup>1</sup> A comparison of data from 2022 to 2024 reveals not just a rise in the number of New American state legislators but a powerful narrative of progress and empowerment for immigrant communities within the political sphere. This report shines a spotlight on the significant growth of New American legislators, weaving together their inspiring stories, the tangible impacts of their leadership, and the critical role that New American Leaders and New American Leaders Action Fund (NAL/AF) have played in fueling this movement.

Representation is more than just a statistic—it is the heartbeat of a vibrant and healthy democracy. When our legislative bodies mirror the true diversity of our communities, the policies crafted and decisions made are more just, equitable, and reflective of the collective good, fostering a society where everyone feels seen and heard. New Americans bring to the table rich perspectives shaped by diverse experiences and cultural backgrounds. The growing presence of New Americans in state legislatures represents a meaningful step toward a governance model that values every voice, especially those from communities historically on the margins. State legislatures offer a critical platform for New Americans to gain political experience, advocate for

their communities, and influence local policies. With far more seats than in Congress, state legislatures provide greater opportunities for individuals to run for office, increasing the likelihood of representational gains and ensuring that diverse voices have a direct impact on decisions affecting daily life. This experience can also pave the way for broader representation at higher levels of government.

The need for inclusive representation has become more urgent than ever. The voices of immigrants, people of color, women, and other marginalized groups must be amplified in the halls of power where decisions that shape our lives are made. The rising influence and active participation of New Americans in state legislatures are more than just milestones; they are bold steps toward achieving true representational parity and ensuring that our democracy remains vibrant, inclusive, and responsive to all its citizens.

Yet, while we celebrate these strides, we must also acknowledge the road still ahead. Significant gaps remain, and our work is far from finished. To close these gaps, we must continue to support and elevate leaders who embody the diversity of our nation. This report captures not only the progress made and the hurdles that persist but also the invaluable role that organizations like NAL/AF play in empowering New Americans to step into leadership, win elections, and affect meaningful change. By lifting up leaders who reflect the diverse fabric of our society, we take critical steps toward a future where every voice is heard and every community is represented in the corridors of power. The journey is ongoing, but with sustained commitment and collective action, we can build a democracy that truly serves and represents all.



<sup>1</sup> For this report, we define a New American as either a first-generation immigrant (someone who personally migrated to the United States) or a second-generation immigrant (someone whose parent(s) migrated to the United States).

# A GROWING PRESENCE: NEW AMERICANS REDEFINING STATE POLITICS

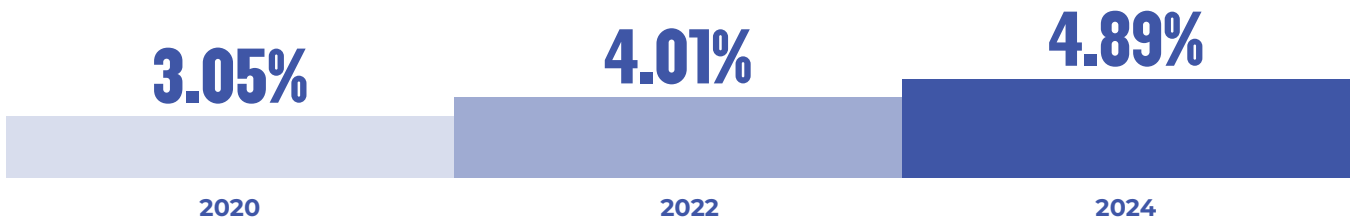
Since 2022, the presence of New Americans in state legislatures has experienced an impressive surge, signaling a dynamic shift in the political landscape. In 2022, there were 296 New American legislators serving across the nation. By the eve of the 2024 election, this number had climbed to 361—a **significant 21.96% increase**.<sup>2</sup> This upward trend not only underscores the growing political engagement and influence of New Americans but also their expanding impact within the broader legislative framework. **Today, New American representatives make up 4.89% of all state legislators**, a powerful testament to their vital role in shaping policy and advocating for diverse communities.

However, this progress also highlights the work that remains to be done. According to the American Community Survey (ACS) data from the Census Bureau, first-generation Americans alone account for 8.97% of the citizen voting age population (CVAP). This stark contrast points to a significant gap in representation, even more pronounced when considering that second-generation Americans and those encountering barriers to citizenship are not included in this statistic. Achieving parity in representation requires continued effort and commitment.

**New American legislators now come from over 60 different countries**, each bringing unique perspectives that enrich the legislative process. The increase in representation spans across various states and demographics, highlighting the widespread influence of New Americans in state governance.

A particularly notable development is **the election of 208 New Americans since 2022**, which not only showcases the dynamic momentum within immigrant communities but also underscores the expanding pipeline of leaders stepping into public service. As we strive to maintain this progress, it is crucial to recognize that **271 New American representatives are up for reelection in 2024**. Their reelection campaigns emphasize the need for sustained support to preserve these gains and continue building a more inclusive democracy. The influx of these new representatives is a testament to the success of strategic training and support programs, such as those provided by NAL/AF, which empower New Americans to run for office and lead effectively.

## Total New American State Legislative Representation

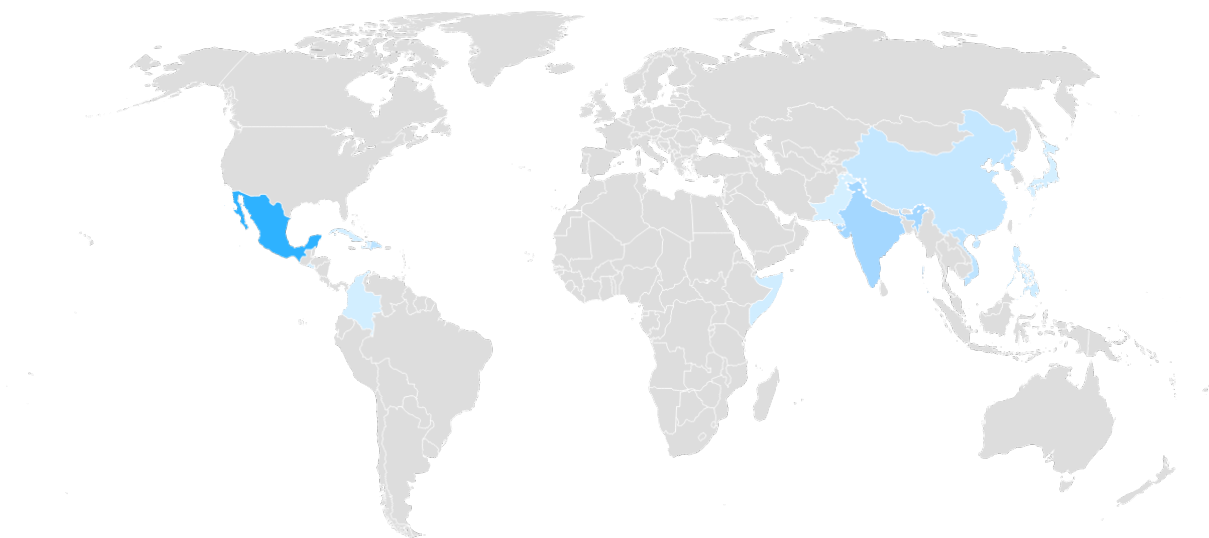
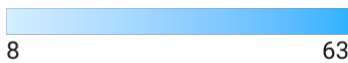


<sup>2</sup> To determine a representative's New American status, we primarily rely on sources such as campaign websites, official biographies on state legislature websites, and newspaper articles. While we strive for accuracy, it is possible that we may be underestimating the number of New Americans in office, as some representatives may not publicly disclose their New American status. However, those who do identify as New Americans may be more likely to advocate for and support New American interests compared to those who do not explicitly identify as such due to the concept of linked fate (Dawson 1994). Despite the potential for underestimation, our methodology focuses on individuals who openly embrace their New American identity, which offers valuable insight into their probable alignment with the interests and concerns of immigrant communities.

While representation has expanded significantly, with **New American legislators now serving in 43 states**, there are still gaps. Seven states—Alabama, Arkansas, Idaho, Mississippi, Montana, South Carolina, and South Dakota—currently lack any New American representation at the state legislative level. Despite

these gaps, progress is being made, with California leading the nation with 27.5% of its legislators being New Americans. Among the 43 states with New American representation, 28 have representation in both legislative chambers, while 15 states have representation in only one chamber.<sup>3</sup>

**Top 10 Countries with New American Elected Officials**



# REFLECTING AMERICA: RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN STATE LEGISLATURES

The racial and ethnic diversity of New American legislators vividly illustrates the multitude of communities contributing to the American mosaic. From 2022 to 2024, there has been a significant rise in representation across various racial and ethnic groups, reflecting the growing political engagement of New Americans in state legislatures.

**Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI)** New American legislators have seen the most significant increase, rising from **103 in 2022 to 135 in 2024**. This group now constitutes 1.82% of all state legislators, up from 1.4% in 2022. As the fastest-growing racial demographic in the United States, the significant representation of AAPI legislators reflects national trends and highlights the increasing political influence of these communities.

**Latinx and Hispanic** New American representation also grew, with the number of Latinx and Hispanic legislators increasing from **124 in 2022 to 130 in 2024**. This group represents 1.76% of state legislators, up from 1.68% in 2022. The steady rise in Latinx and Hispanic New American legislators mirrors the demographic growth of the Latinx and Hispanic populations nationwide, further emphasizing their expanding role in state governance.

**Black** New American legislators saw a rise from **43 in 2022 to 50 in 2024**, now making up 0.68% of all state legislators, compared to 0.58% in 2022. Though smaller in absolute numbers, this increase is significant for a group that continues to navigate systemic barriers to representation.

**Middle Eastern and North African (MENA)** New American legislators experienced a modest increase from **17 in 2022 to 20 in 2024**, representing 0.27% of state legislators. While their overall numbers remain small, the steady growth points to a slowly increasing presence of MENA communities in state legislatures.

The **Multiple Origins** category saw a slight rise, from **9 legislators in 2022 to 11 in 2024**, constituting 0.15% of state legislators.<sup>4</sup> This increase, while modest, reflects the complexities of identity in America, where more individuals identify with multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds.

A new category, **Other**, which includes 15 representatives typically of Caucasian backgrounds (e.g., Slavic, European, Canadian), has been introduced, representing 0.2% of all state legislators.<sup>5</sup>

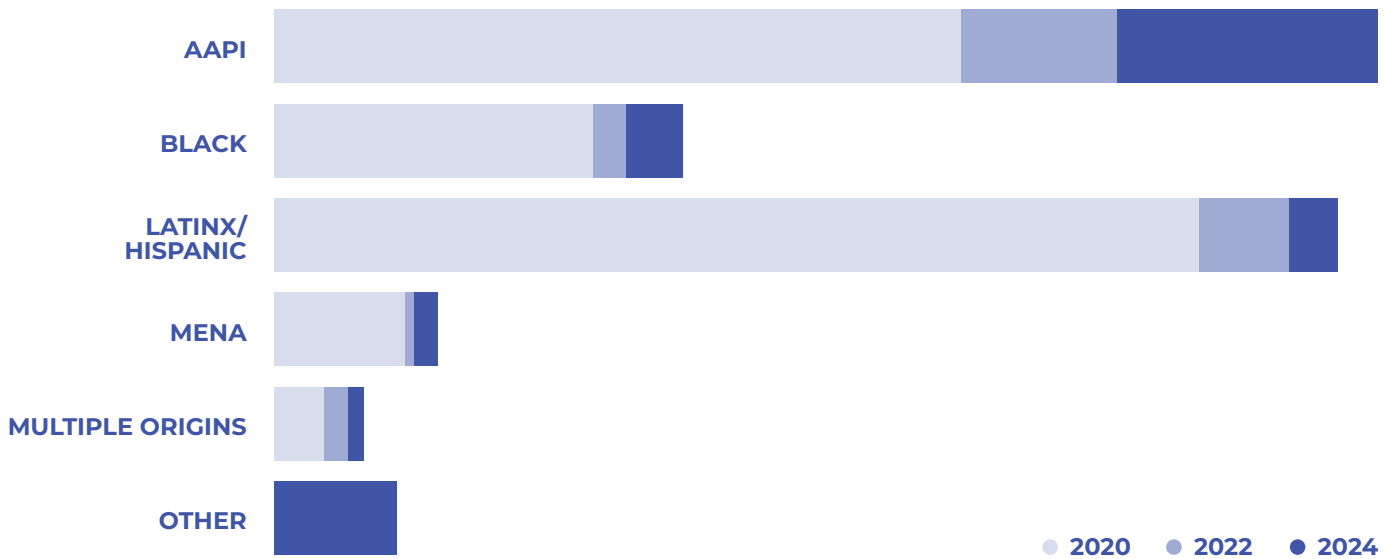


<sup>4</sup> The multiple origins category in this report includes individuals whose parents come from two or more different countries of origin, allowing them to claim multiple New American identity statuses.

<sup>5</sup> As this is a new category for the 2024 report, 2022 and 2020 totals do not have available data; therefore, they are marked as NA in the table.

Table 1. New American Representation by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	2024 Total	2024 Percentage of Total State Legislators	2022 Total	2022 Percentage of Total State Legislators	2020 Total	2020 Percentage of Total State Legislators
<b>AAPI</b>	135	1.82	103	1.4	84	1.14
<b>Black</b>	50	0.68	43	0.58	39	0.53
<b>Latinx/Hispanic</b>	130	1.76	124	1.68	113	1.53
<b>MENA</b>	20	0.27	17	0.23	16	0.22
<b>Multiple Origins</b>	11	0.15	9	0.12	6	0.08
<b>Other</b>	15	0.2	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Total</b>	361	4.89	296	4.01	258	3.5



**AAPI, Latinx, and Hispanic New Americans continue to be the most represented groups among New American legislators**, reflecting broader national demographic trends. The growth

in these groups highlights the integration of diverse communities into the political landscape and underscores their vital role in shaping state policies and governance.

**AAPI, Latinx, and Hispanic New Americans continue to be the most represented groups among New American legislators.**



# A NEW WAVE OF DIVERSITY: GENDER, LGBTQ+, AND GENERATIONAL SHIFTS AMONG NEW AMERICAN LEGISLATORS

The landscape of New American representation in state legislatures is not only expanding in numbers but also becoming more diverse in gender, sexual orientation, and age.



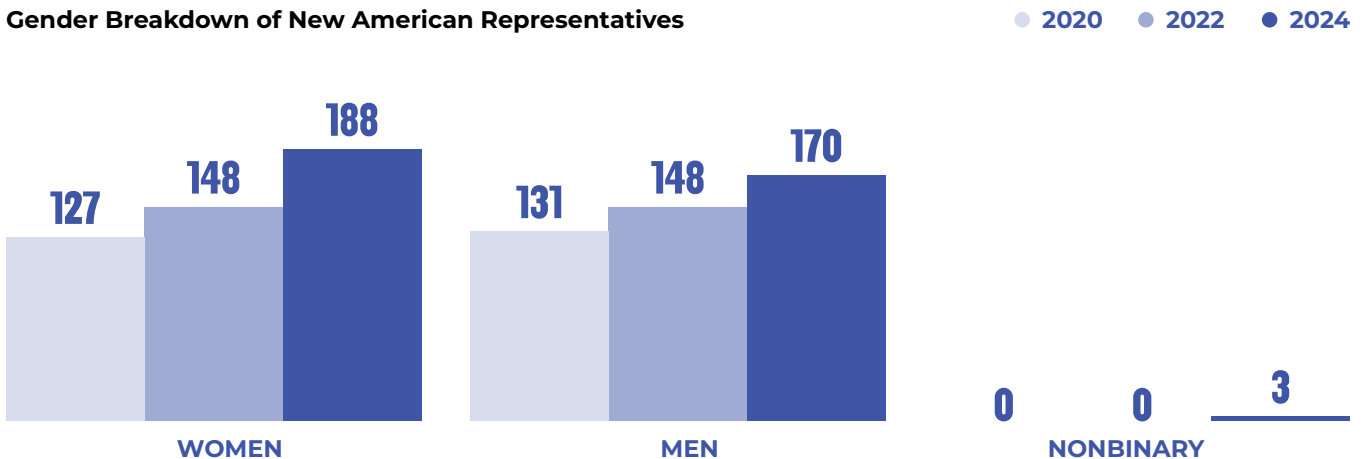
## Gender Representation

The gender composition of New American representatives has shifted notably from 2022 to 2024, with a significant increase in women's representation. In 2022, there were 148 New American women serving in state legislatures. By 2024, this number had jumped to 188, reflecting a robust rise in women's political engagement and representation. This surge not only marks a growing presence of women in leadership roles but also aligns with broader efforts to create more equitable legislative bodies. Beyond the increase in women's representation, a small yet growing presence of nonbinary representatives in state legislatures is emerging, with three nonbinary New American representatives currently serving.

**By 2024, women slightly outnumber men among New American legislators**, with 188 women compared to 170 men. This achievement is a testament to targeted efforts over the last four years by organizations and foundations dedicated to increasing women's political representation.

The figure illustrates the gender breakdown of New American representatives from 2020 through 2024, highlighting the steady growth in representation across gender categories.

Gender Breakdown of New American Representatives



## LGBTQ+ Representation

LGBTQ+ representation among New American state legislators is essential to ensuring that a wide range of voices are heard and that the needs of all communities are fully addressed. As of 2024, **21 New American representatives openly identify as LGBTQ+**, bringing vital visibility to the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, especially those within immigrant communities who often contend with multiple layers of marginalization.

The presence of LGBTQ+ New American legislators not only highlights the increasing acceptance and visibility of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities within the political sphere but also strengthens the advocacy for inclusive policies that protect and uplift all marginalized groups. Their leadership and perspectives are essential in fostering a more equitable and just society where all individuals, regardless of identity, have a voice in shaping the future.



## Age Composition

The age distribution of New American legislators showcases a dynamic shift in American politics, with new generational influences coming to the forefront.<sup>6</sup> Among the 322 New American representatives with available age information, **millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) form the largest group**, with 148 legislators. This substantial presence underscores the rising influence of millennials, who are increasingly stepping into leadership roles and shaping policy nationwide.<sup>7</sup>

Close behind, Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980) is also well-represented, with 120 legislators bringing their experience and perspectives to state governance. Meanwhile, baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) continue to have a notable presence, with 39 representatives contributing their seasoned insights to the legislative process.

Adding a fresh perspective, Generation Z—the youngest cohort in the legislature—has begun to make its mark with 15 representatives born between 1997 and 2012. This emerging presence highlights the start of a new generational influence in state politics, as younger voices begin to shape the future of governance.

The prominence of millennials among New American legislators indicates **a generational shift towards younger leadership**, reflecting broader societal trends where younger generations are increasingly active in shaping the future of governance.

### Generation Breakdown of New American Representatives



<sup>6</sup> Generational breakdowns defined via Pew Research Center: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>.

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that age information for 39 New American legislators is not available, which means these insights represent the known data and may not fully capture the entire generational distribution.

# BREAKING NEW GROUND: PARTISAN DYNAMICS AND HISTORIC FIRSTS AMONG NEW AMERICAN STATE LEGISLATORS

As New Americans continue to increase their presence in state legislatures, the diversity of their political affiliations and the historic milestones they achieve are reshaping the American political landscape. This section explores the partisan breakdown of New American representatives and celebrates the trailblazers who have broken new ground, paving the way for future generations of diverse leaders.

## Party Affiliation

The number of New American representatives continues to grow, with **48 Republicans and 313 Democrats currently serving in state legislatures nationwide**.<sup>8</sup> This distribution highlights the varied political engagement within New American communities, demonstrating a broad involvement in the political process.

The dominance of Democratic affiliation among New American legislators is particularly notable. With 313 out of 361 New American representatives identifying as Democrats, this trend underscores a significant alignment with **progressive values and policies that are often seen as supportive of immigrant communities**. These policies include those advocating for expanded civil rights, social justice, and inclusive economic opportunities—issues that resonate strongly with many New American communities.

In contrast, the representation of Republican New Americans is significantly smaller, with only 48 legislators affiliating with the Republican Party. This disparity points to an opportunity for increased engagement and outreach by Republican leaders within immigrant communities, highlighting the importance of continued efforts to ensure that all voices are heard and represented across the political spectrum. This is particularly important, as many immigrants and naturalized citizens do not feel represented by either party.<sup>9</sup>

### Political Party Breakdown of New American Representatives



**313** DEMOCRATS

**48** REPUBLICANS

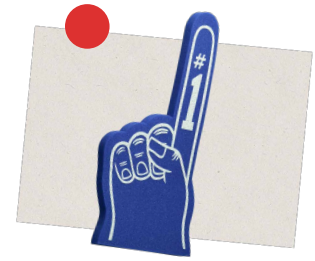
<sup>8</sup> The New Americans in this report did not identify as members of third parties, or as Independents. Although Nebraska is nonpartisan, Ballotpedia recognizes legislators as affiliated with an official political party based on state party endorsements.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/press-release/many-immigrants-including-naturalized-citizens-dont-feel-well-represented-by-either-political-party-though-more-align-with-democrats-than-republicans/>

## Historic Firsts

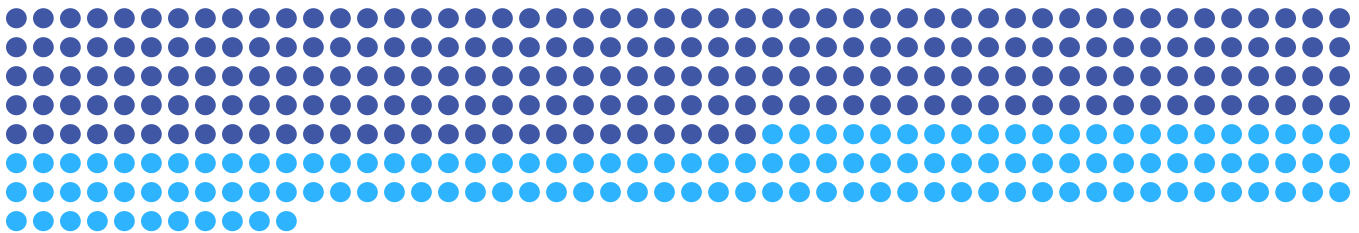
A representative “first” occurs when an individual is the first person of a specific group elected to an office, district, branch, state, or country. **The number of “firsts” among New American legislators has reached an impressive 133** for those currently serving in office at the time of their election.<sup>10</sup> Nine New American representatives currently serving in state legislatures were representative “firsts” in the United States when initially elected to a state legislature. These historic achievements signify personal and community milestones along with a broader shift towards greater inclusivity in American politics.

These extraordinary accomplishments highlight the breaking of barriers that have historically limited access to political power for many communities. By overcoming these long-standing obstacles, these representatives are not just making history—they are **paving the way for future generations of diverse leaders to see themselves reflected in positions of authority.**



### New American Firsts

OF **361** NEW AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVES, **133** ARE FIRSTS!



<sup>10</sup> Representative “firsts” were identified through information on individuals’ websites and prominent news sources; thus, these “firsts” are self-claimed, not defined or verified by NAL/AF.

# NEW AMERICAN FIRSTS DRIVING CHANGE!



**LIZ MIRANDA** D-MA

The first Cape Verdean elected to any state senate in the United States.<sup>15</sup>



**ALMA HERNANDEZ** D-AZ

The first Mexican-American Jewish person elected to public office in the United States.<sup>11</sup>



**HARRY BHANDARI** D-MD

The first Nepali American elected to a state legislature in the United States.<sup>16</sup>



**AISHA WAHAB** D-CA

The first Afghan-American woman elected to public office in the United States.<sup>12</sup>



**RAJ MUKHERJI** D-NJ

The first Indian-Bengali state legislator in American history.<sup>17</sup>



**NAQUETTA RICKS** D-CO

The first Liberian American elected to any state legislature.<sup>13</sup>



**GRACE DIAZ** D-RI

The first Dominican-American woman elected to state office in U.S. history.<sup>18</sup>



**RADY MOM** D-MA

The first Cambodian American legislator in the country.<sup>14</sup>



**MANKA DHINGRA** D-WA

The first Sikh state legislator in the nation.<sup>19</sup>



<sup>11</sup> <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/hernandez-alma>

<sup>12</sup> <https://sd10.senate.ca.gov/biography>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.ricks4co.com/meet-naquetta>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.lowellsun.com/2014/11/05/rady-mom-makes-history-becoming-first-cambodian-legislator-by-taking-lowell-rep-race/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.masslive.com/politics/2021/12/state-rep-liz-miranda-is-running-for-massachusetts-second-suffolk-senate-seat-poised-to-break-barriers.html>

<sup>16</sup> <https://theannapurnaexpress.com/story/45817/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.electraj.com/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.nuestrasraicesri.net/GraceDiaz.html>

<sup>19</sup> <https://senatedemocrats.wa.gov/dhingra/biography/>

**New American legislators are paving the way for future generations of diverse leaders to see themselves reflected in positions of authority.**



# MEASURING PROGRESS: STATE REPRESENTATION AND CITIZEN VOTING AGE POPULATION (CVAP) INSIGHTS

## State-Level Representation

In 2024, New American representation in state legislatures across the United States reveals a landscape of stark contrasts. States like California, Arizona, and New York lead the way with high percentages of New American legislators. However, **many states still lag far behind, with minimal or**

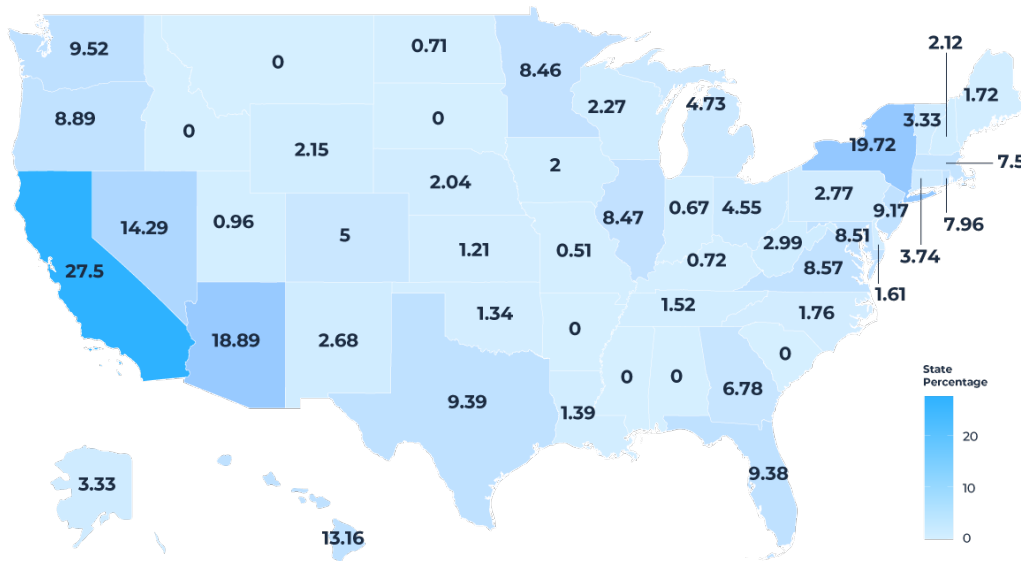
**no representation of New Americans**, reflecting the substantial work that remains to achieve true parity nationwide. These disparities spotlight the uneven progress in incorporating diverse voices into state governance, emphasizing the urgent need for ongoing efforts to promote and support the political engagement of New Americans in every corner of the country.

## Naturalized Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) Comparisons

The naturalized **citizen voting age population (CVAP)** is a key metric used to assess the representation of first-generation New Americans in state legislatures. It measures the proportion of a state's eligible voters who are naturalized citizens, providing insight into whether the percentage of New American legislators reflects the size of their community.

However, the naturalized CVAP has limitations. It does not include second-generation Americans or those who cannot obtain citizenship, such as permanent residents or undocumented individuals. Therefore, it offers only a partial picture of New American representation.

Percentage of New American State Legislators in the U.S. in 2024



As of 2024, progress has been made: **19 states now have a higher percentage of New American legislators than their naturalized CVAP**, showing improvement since 2022. However, **31 states still have fewer** New American legislators than their

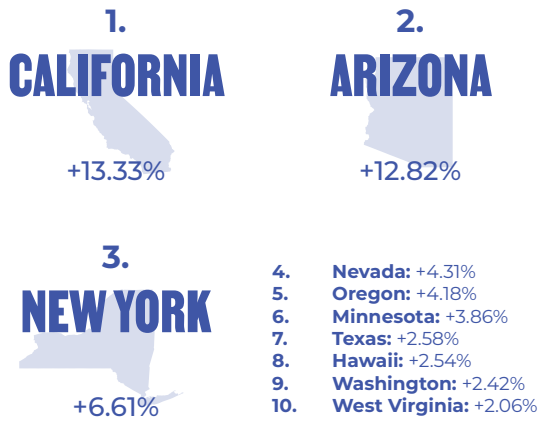
naturalized CVAP, indicating the need for continued efforts to achieve improved representational outcomes. Table 2 provides a comparison of how each state measures up in terms of New American representation.

**Table 2. Parity of Representation by Naturalized Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP)**

State	New American Representation	Percentage Naturalized CVAP	Difference	State	New American Representation	Percentage Naturalized CVAP	Difference
Connecticut	3.74	8.11	-4.37	Tennessee	1.52	2.22	-0.7
New Jersey	9.17	13.25	-4.08	Iowa	2	2.41	-0.41
Delaware	1.61	5	-3.39	Louisiana	1.39	1.75	-0.36
Florida	9.38	12.24	-2.87	Maine	1.72	1.86	-0.13
Utah	0.96	3.63	-2.67	Rhode Island	7.96	8.09	-0.13
Idaho	0	2.52	-2.52	Wisconsin	2.27	2.33	-0.06
South Carolina	0	2.36	-2.36	Maryland	8.51	8.35	0.16
Massachusetts	7.5	9.38	-1.88	Colorado	5	4.42	0.58
Arkansas	0	1.78	-1.78	Wyoming	2.15	1.37	0.78
Kansas	1.21	2.96	-1.75	Vermont	3.33	2.43	0.9
North Carolina	1.76	3.42	-1.65	Michigan	4.73	3.82	0.91
Missouri	0.51	2.15	-1.64	Illinois	8.47	7.4	1.08
Indiana	0.67	2.26	-1.6	Virginia	8.57	6.92	1.65
South Dakota	0	1.54	-1.54	Georgia	6.78	4.9	1.88
Alabama	0	1.45	-1.45	Ohio	4.55	2.57	1.98
New Mexico	2.68	4.06	-1.38	West Virginia	2.99	0.93	2.06
New Hampshire	2.12	3.49	-1.37	Washington	9.52	7.1	2.42
Alaska	3.33	4.65	-1.32	Hawaii	13.16	10.62	2.54
Montana	0	1.29	-1.29	Texas	9.39	6.81	2.58
North Dakota	0.71	1.92	-1.21	Minnesota	8.46	4.6	3.86
Pennsylvania	2.77	3.95	-1.19	Oregon	8.89	4.7	4.18
Nebraska	2.04	3.11	-1.07	Nevada	14.29	9.98	4.31
Oklahoma	1.34	2.39	-1.05	New York	19.72	13.11	6.61
Mississippi	0	1.02	-1.02	Arizona	18.89	6.07	12.82
Kentucky	0.72	1.66	-0.93	California	27.5	14.17	13.33

**Top 10 States for New American Representation**

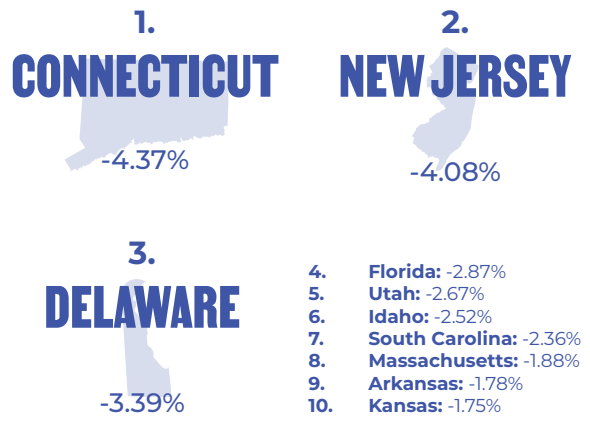
In 2024, the leading states where New American representation in state legislatures exceeds their naturalized CVAP are:



These states have excelled in surpassing their naturalized CVAP with higher representation of New Americans in their legislatures, reflecting robust political engagement and active participation from these communities.

**Bottom 10 States for New American Representation**

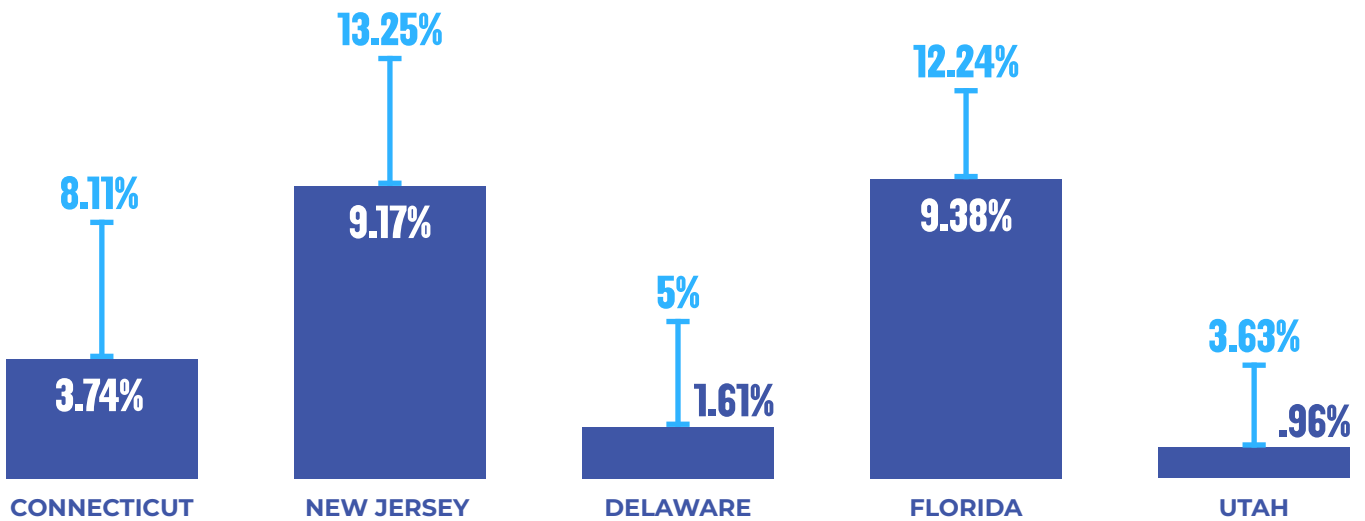
Conversely, the states with the most significant gaps in representation compared to their naturalized CVAP are:



These states exhibit the largest disparities between the proportion of New Americans in their legislatures and their naturalized CVAP, highlighting the need for continued efforts to ensure that legislative bodies better reflect the diverse demographics of their populations.

**Largest Gaps in New American Representation to State CVAP**

● REPRESENTATION ● CVAP



# MAINTAINING MOMENTUM: ELECTIONS, TRANSITIONS, AND THE FUTURE OF NEW AMERICAN REPRESENTATION

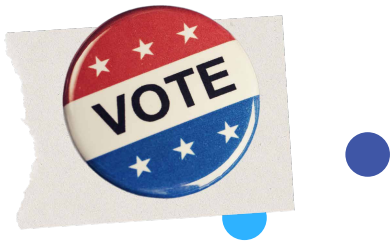
As New American representation continues to grow in state legislatures, the landscape of political participation is constantly shifting. The progress made in increasing representation is not a given; it requires persistent work and dedication to maintain. Elections and transitions play a crucial role in shaping the future of this representation. **While the reasons for some departures are not always clear, understanding these shifts is key** to painting a fuller picture of the current political landscape. This section delves into the reelection efforts of current New American legislators, the significance of their continued presence, and the impact of departures, all of which contribute to the evolving dynamics of state governance and the ongoing effort to ensure that diverse voices are represented at every level.

## Returning Voices: 2024 Reelection Campaigns

The progress made in increasing New American representation since 2022 is significant, but it is essential to recognize that these gains are not guaranteed to endure without hard work. **In the 2024 electoral cycle, 271 New American state legislators are up for reelection**, making their continued service vital to preserving the diverse perspectives and inclusive representation that have been achieved.

To support these efforts, NALAF has introduced the **“New American Candidate Database (NACD),”** a comprehensive database of all New American candidates running for election to state legislatures in the 2024 election cycle. This tool not only highlights the importance of their reelection campaigns but also serves as a resource for tracking the ongoing contributions of New American leaders in state legislatures.

As these 271 representatives participate in primaries and prepare for the general election, their potential reelection holds tremendous significance.<sup>20</sup> Their presence in state legislatures ensures that the unique needs and voices of their communities continue to be heard and addressed in the policymaking process. Beyond reelection, the ongoing effort to elect additional New American representatives is essential to reaching parity with state naturalized CVAP populations, further strengthening the democratic process and promoting inclusivity at all levels of government.



<sup>20</sup> The 271 New American representatives running for reelection are those who have declared their candidacies and are actively participating in primaries. This number excludes individuals who are eligible for reelection but have chosen not to seek another term.

## New American Exits

While there has been remarkable progress in increasing New American representation in state legislatures, it is crucial to acknowledge the ongoing shifts and transitions that continue to shape this landscape. Since 2022, several New American legislators have departed from their roles, falling into three distinct categories:

**Hold Another Office (29.49%):** A portion of New American representatives have transitioned to other roles, continuing their public service at divergent levels of government. Notable examples include:

- **Rob Bonta**, who now serves as the Attorney General of California.<sup>21</sup>
- **Sylvia Luke**, who holds the position of Lt. Governor of Hawaii.<sup>22</sup>
- **Nicole Malliotakis**, who was elected as a U.S. House Representative for New York.<sup>23</sup>
- **Jason S. Miyares**, who now serves as Attorney General of Virginia.<sup>24</sup>
- **Delia Ramirez**, who was elected as a U.S. House Representative for Illinois.<sup>25</sup>

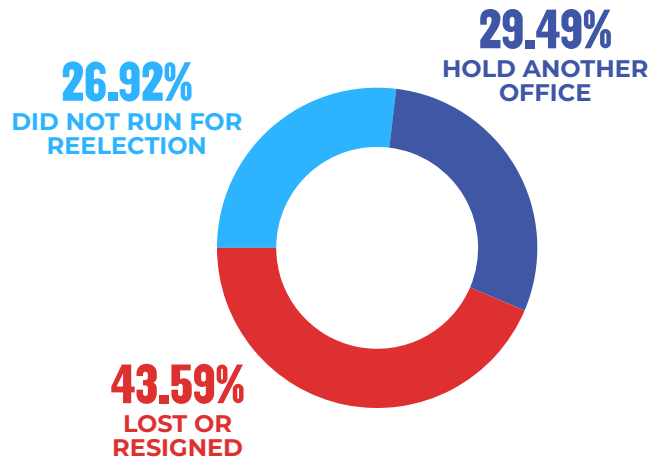
These leaders have moved on to positions where they continue to advocate for their communities and influence policy at higher levels, demonstrating New American representatives' upward mobility and impact.

**Lost or Resigned (43.59%):** A significant number of representatives either lost their reelection bids for their current positions or higher offices, while others chose to step down. These exits highlight the inherent challenges of navigating a competitive political landscape. Despite these setbacks, the experience, visibility, and influence these individuals gained during their service contribute to the broader push for diverse representation, and many continue to be active in the political arena in other capacities.

**Chose Not to Run for Reelection (26.92%):** Several representatives opted not to seek reelection, driven by personal reasons, career changes, or new opportunities. [The State of Pay report by New American Leaders](#) highlights that some NALPistas in our network have been forced to leave elected office due to financial pressures and the need for full-time employment—or because of childcare concerns. These departures underscore a critical barrier to sustained representation: the economic realities that often make it difficult for New Americans and people of color to continue serving in elected roles. While these exits result in the loss of experienced legislators, they also open the door for fresh voices and perspectives, allowing new leaders to carry forward the mission of enhancing New American representation.

These exits, whether due to transitions to higher offices or other factors, underscore the dynamic and ever-changing nature of political service. While some representatives continue their advocacy in new capacities, others pave the way for new voices to rise within state legislatures, ensuring that the movement for inclusive representation remains dynamic and forward-looking.

### New American Exits



<sup>21</sup> He previously served as a member of the California State Assembly for the 18th district from 2012 to 2021 and as a member of the Alameda City Council from 2010 to 2012; <https://oag.ca.gov/about>

<sup>22</sup> She served as a member of the Hawaii House of Representatives for 24 years, from 1998 until her election as lieutenant governor in 2022; <https://www.sylvialukeforlg.com/about-sylvia>

<sup>23</sup> She served as a member of the New York State Assembly for the 64th district from 2011 to 2021; <https://nicolemalliotakis.com/meet-nicole/>

<sup>24</sup> He served as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates for the 82nd district from 2016 to 2022; <https://www.oag.state.va.us/our-office/about-the-attorney-general>

<sup>25</sup> She served as a member of the Illinois House of Representatives for the 4th district from 2018 to 2023; <https://www.deliaforcongress.com/meet-delia>

# NALPISTAS IN ACTION: LEGISLATIVE WINS AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

New American Leaders alumni are at the forefront of transformative change, championing critical issues and driving impactful legislation in their communities. These leaders leverage their unique perspectives and experiences to advocate for inclusive policies that benefit all residents. Here are some notable successes:

## Arizona

**State Representative Analise Ortiz and State Senator Anna Hernandez:** In Arizona, where housing affordability and access have become increasingly pressing issues, Representatives Ortiz and Hernandez took decisive action by successfully passing an accessible dwelling unit **bill to expand affordable housing options** in Phoenix. Additionally, they played a crucial role in protecting abortion care in the state. Faced with attempts to revert abortion laws to an 1864 statute that would have banned nearly all abortions, they led efforts to safeguard reproductive rights, ensuring modern protections remain in place.

**State Representative Alma Hernandez:** Known for her dedication to public health, Representative Hernandez has been a driving force behind legislation aimed at **making healthcare more accessible and equitable** in Arizona. Her work has focused on expanding public health services, particularly for underserved communities, ensuring that all residents have access to the care they need.

## Colorado

**State Senator Julie Gonzales:** A relentless advocate for housing justice, State Senator Gonzales spearheaded the passage of HB24-1098, a landmark law designed to **protect renters from discriminatory practices and enhance housing stability** across Colorado. By championing this legislation, Senator Gonzales has helped create a more equitable housing market, protecting vulnerable renters from exploitation and setting a high standard for tenant rights nationwide.

## Florida

**State Representative Anna Eskamani (FL):** A relentless fighter for social justice, Representative Eskamani has led the charge on multiple fronts, including **securing funding for mental health services, protecting reproductive rights, and advocating for economic relief during the COVID-19 pandemic**. Her efforts to expand Medicaid and defend against abortion restrictions have solidified her reputation as a champion for Floridians' rights, particularly for those in marginalized communities who are often left out of political conversations.

## Georgia

**State Representative Sam Park:** The first openly gay man elected to the Georgia State Legislature, Representative Park has been a powerful advocate for **healthcare access and LGBTQ+ rights**. His legislative efforts have focused on expanding Medicaid to cover more Georgians and fighting against discriminatory laws that undermine civil rights. Representative Park's leadership is a beacon of inclusivity, ensuring that all Georgians, regardless of their background, have access to healthcare and equal protection under the law.

**State Representative Marvin Lim:** Representative Lim, a staunch defender of civil rights, has dedicated his legislative career to protecting voting rights and supporting marginalized communities. His work has included efforts to **combat voter suppression, enhance government transparency, and introduce legislation that ensures fair treatment and representation** for all Georgians, particularly those historically excluded from the political process.

**State Representative Ruwa Romman:** As one of the first Muslim women elected to the Georgia State Legislature, Representative Romman is a powerful advocate for immigrant rights and educational reform. She has been instrumental in passing legislation that **supports immigrant communities and improves access to quality education**, advocating for policies that ensure all children in Georgia have the resources and opportunities they need to succeed.

## Michigan

**State Senator Darrin Camilleri:** Senator Camilleri made history by leading the effort to **overturn Michigan's Right-to-Work law**, making it the first state in 58 years to reverse such legislation. His bold leadership not only strengthened labor rights but also energized a nationwide movement advocating for fair labor practices. Representative Camilleri's work earned him recognition as the 2023 Michigan AFL-CIO State Legislator of the Year, highlighting his profound impact on workers' rights.

**State Representative Ranjeev Puri:** Representative Puri, known for his grassroots campaigning, defied political norms by focusing on low-propensity voters during his 2020 campaign. His innovative approach, involving multilingual outreach and community engagement, led to a decisive victory. Once in office, he continued to prioritize community needs by sponsoring HB 5044 to **expand childcare access** across Michigan, which passed in June 2022. His work ensures that working families have the support they need, highlighting his commitment to inclusive and effective governance.

## Minnesota

**State Senator Zaynab Mohamed:** The youngest woman and one of the first Black woman elected to the Minnesota State Senate, Senator Mohamed has quickly emerged as a dynamic leader for climate justice and social equity. She has introduced legislation aimed at **transitioning Minnesota to clean energy, reducing carbon emissions, and creating green jobs** while also advocating for **police reform and racial justice**. Her bold legislative agenda reflects a commitment to tackling the most pressing issues facing her state and her generation.

## New York

**Assembly Member Marcela Mitaynes (NY):** A tireless advocate for workers' rights, Assembly Member Mitaynes led the fight for the groundbreaking Excluded Workers Fund, a first-of-its-kind initiative that provides **financial relief to undocumented workers excluded from federal pandemic aid**. Her commitment to justice was evident as she participated in a hunger strike, pushing for legislative action. Her leadership not only secured vital resources for marginalized workers but also set a precedent for worker solidarity and advocacy at the state level.

**Assembly Member Catalina Cruz:** As a former DREAMer and DACA recipient, Assembly Member Cruz's journey from undocumented immigrant to elected official is a powerful testament to the impact of a truly representative democracy. She has been instrumental in passing the Clean Slate Act, a transformative law that seals certain criminal records from potential employers, **helping formerly incarcerated individuals reintegrate into society and reducing barriers to employment**. Her lived experience fuels her commitment to social justice, immigrant rights, and second chances, demonstrating how personal history can shape and enhance public service.

**Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas:** A fierce advocate for reproductive justice, immigrant rights, and healthcare equity, Assembly Member González-Rojas has co-sponsored critical legislation **expanding access to reproductive health services**, especially for low-income communities and undocumented immigrants. She played a key role in defending abortion rights in New York and advocated for policies that ensure **comprehensive language access in healthcare settings**, making essential services accessible to all New Yorkers, regardless of language or immigration status.

## Ohio

**State Representative Munira Abdullahi:** As the first Somali-American elected to the Ohio State Legislature, Representative Abdullahi has broken new ground while focusing on educational equity and community development. She has successfully pushed for **increased funding for public schools in underserved areas** and has been a strong advocate for programs **supporting first-generation college students**. Her efforts are centered on bridging educational disparities, ensuring all Ohio children have access to quality education and opportunities for success.

## Massachusetts

**State Representative Liz Miranda:** A champion for criminal justice reform and economic equity, Representative Miranda has worked tirelessly to address systemic issues affecting her constituents and the broader community. She has introduced bills aimed at **reducing recidivism, promoting economic opportunities for marginalized groups, and creating a more just and equitable society**.

The remarkable achievements of these NALpistas illustrate the tangible impact of diverse representation on policy outcomes. By bringing their unique experiences and perspectives into their legislative roles, these leaders are not only advocating for policies that directly benefit their communities but are also setting a powerful precedent for broader systemic change. Their successes demonstrate that when a democracy truly represents its people, it creates space for innovative solutions and inclusive progress that benefits everyone. These efforts underscore the ongoing need to support and elect leaders who reflect the diversity of their communities, as their work continues to inspire further legislative advancements and fosters a more equitable and just society for all.

**When a democracy truly represents its people, it creates space for innovative solutions and inclusive progress that benefits everyone.**



# RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN NEW AMERICAN REPRESENTATION

To continue building on the progress outlined in this report, the following recommendations are crucial:



## Invest in Leadership Development and Community Engagement

Sustained investment in the development of New American leaders is crucial for fostering a representative democracy. This involves **expanding support for programs that provide training, mentorship, and financial resources specifically tailored to New American candidates**, including those from underrepresented groups like Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) communities. Organizations such as NAL/AF play a pivotal role in equipping these individuals with the skills and confidence to run for office. By replicating and expanding these efforts nationwide, we can ensure that aspiring leaders have the tools and support needed to succeed in the political arena.



## Support the Reelection and Success of New American Representatives

With 271 New American representatives up for reelection in 2024, it is vital to invest in their campaigns through **financial support, volunteer efforts, and community engagement**. These leaders have made significant strides in advancing policies that benefit their communities, and their continued presence is crucial for maintaining and expanding diverse representation. Community members, organizations, and allies should actively support these representatives to ensure their voices remain strong in policymaking. To aid these efforts, NALAF will be introducing the "**New American Candidate Database (NACD)**." This tool provides a comprehensive dataset of all New American candidates and incumbents running for state legislative office in the 2024 election cycle, offering a valuable resource to track their campaigns and mobilize support.



## Enhance Access to Campaign Financing and Address Systemic Barriers

One of the most significant barriers for New Americans aspiring to run for office is campaign financing. To overcome this, it is essential to **implement public financing options, offer small-donor matching programs, and create grants or fellowships for New American candidates**. [The State of Pay report](#) highlights that many New Americans face financial hurdles that make it difficult to run and stay in office, including inadequate legislative salaries and the high cost of campaigning. These challenges disproportionately affect those from immigrant and marginalized communities.

Moreover, systemic barriers such as voter suppression, political gatekeeping, and limited access to campaign resources must be dismantled to create a level playing field. Passing the Voting Rights Act and making Election Day a federal holiday are critical steps toward ensuring fair access to voting for all citizens. These reforms, along with ensuring equitable access to campaign resources, will allow all candidates, regardless of their background, to compete fairly.



## Build Strong Community Networks and Foster Bipartisan Engagement

Encourage New American candidates to build robust networks within their communities by partnering with **local civic organizations, religious groups, and community leaders**. Forming coalitions with other minority groups can also amplify their voices and broaden their support base. Additionally, it is important to **foster bipartisan engagement to reflect the diverse views and values of New American communities**. Both major political parties should actively recruit, support, and uplift New American candidates, ensuring a wide range of perspectives in the legislative process.



## Empower Communities Through Civic Education and Advocacy

Strengthening the relationship between New American legislators and their communities is vital for effective representation. This can be achieved by **organizing regular community dialogues, town halls, and advisory councils** that involve constituents in decision-making processes. Launching targeted civic education initiatives within New American communities will provide individuals with the knowledge and tools to navigate the political process, advocate for their rights, and consider running for office. Empowering communities in this way fosters a politically engaged electorate and builds a robust pipeline of future leaders.



## Leverage Digital Platforms and Promote Storytelling and Visibility Campaigns

Use **digital platforms and social media** to boost New American candidates' visibility, connect with voters, and engage broader audiences. Amplifying their stories and achievements through media campaigns and public speaking can inspire others to run for office and foster a more inclusive narrative around political leadership.



## Promote Inclusive Policies and Representation

Advocating for **policies that promote inclusivity and equity** should be a priority in state legislatures. Legislation that addresses the specific needs of immigrant communities, such as access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, is essential for ensuring that all residents can thrive. By implementing inclusive policies, legislators can create a more equitable society where everyone, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to succeed.

# CONCLUSION

The progress made in New American representation from 2022 to 2024 is a powerful testament to the increasing political engagement and influence of immigrant communities across the United States. This surge in representation, driven by the dedicated efforts of organizations like NAL/AF, marks a significant shift toward a more inclusive and representative democracy. The historic firsts and growing numbers of New American legislators demonstrate that **when diverse voices are included, our legislative bodies better reflect the interests and needs of all communities.**

However, the journey toward a truly representative democracy is ongoing. Despite the notable achievements, significant gaps in representation remain, underscoring the need for continued efforts to dismantle systemic barriers such as voter suppression, financial constraints, and limited access to political networks. Additionally, another challenge frequently discussed in women's representation is

the role of party recruitment efforts, which often fail to prioritize or adequately support diverse candidates. Addressing these challenges is crucial to ensuring fair and equitable opportunities for all New American candidates.

To sustain and build on this progress, it is vital for community members, organizations, and political leaders to actively support New American candidates. This includes providing financial backing, mentorship, and advocating for electoral reforms that lower barriers to entry. Additionally, investing in leadership development, civic education, and community engagement will help create a continuous pipeline of New American leaders prepared to take on roles in governance.

Looking ahead, there is much to be hopeful about. The achievements highlighted in this report show that **change is possible when communities unite with a shared purpose.** By continuing to support New Americans in their political journeys and advocating for inclusive policies that address the needs of all, we can ensure a more equitable and dynamic democracy.



## Appendix

### Methodology

The data used in this report was compiled using information from official state government websites, supplemented by data from Ballotpedia. State legislator details were carefully verified, including their electoral results from the 2022 and 2023 elections.

To determine whether legislators were first- or second-generation Americans, the lead researcher examined campaign websites and other published materials to verify their New American status based on self-reported biographies. For this report, we define a New American as either a first-generation immigrant (someone who personally migrated to the United States) or a second-generation immigrant (someone whose parent(s) migrated to the United States).

In cases where a legislator hinted at a New American background but did not clearly specify their country of origin or generational status, the researcher contacted the legislator's office for clarification. This approach ensures accuracy and thoroughness in identifying New American legislators.

This year's data collection introduces a new "Other" category, focusing on individuals who are typically from Caucasian backgrounds and identify as New Americans. This technique departs from previous NAL/AF reports, which primarily focused on legislators of color.

All state legislators included in our dataset have publicly identified as New Americans. However, it is important to note that there may be an underestimation in our figures, as some legislators may not have disclosed their New American status.

### Naturalized Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) Estimates

The information on the naturalized citizen voting age population (CVAP) used in this report was drawn from the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS), which offers five-year population estimates. The New Americans included in this survey data are defined as individuals who became legally naturalized citizens. New Americans, by New American Leaders' definition, also include second-generation immigrants. The data here focuses on first-generation immigrants. It is important to note that the current data and analysis offer a conservative estimation of the effect New Americans may have on forthcoming electoral decisions since it does not account for second-generation immigrants.

## Acknowledgments

This report reflects the collaborative efforts of several key contributors. Shana Hardin, Ph.D. Candidate and Research Fellow at New American Leaders, served as the principal researcher and analyst, applying her expertise in research methodologies to both data collection and the generation of visualizations that brought the findings to life. As a Ph.D. candidate in political science at the University of Houston, Hardin's dissertation on the outcomes of women's increased representation in state legislatures provided a rich foundation for the report's analysis of political representation and its policy impacts. Hardin co-authored the report alongside Samantha Pedreiro, Chief Operating Officer of NAL/AF.





Jeremy Dang, Graphic Design and Content Specialist, designed the report and contributed to the data visualizations, ensuring that complex data was presented clearly and in a visually engaging way. His creative vision made the report both accessible and impactful.


We extend our gratitude to all who contributed to this report and to the ongoing efforts to advance New American representation in government.



#### Connect with us!

NewAmericanLeaders.org  
info@newamericanleaders.org  
347.588.0048

    @NewAmericanLd

   @NALActionFund

New American Leaders is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. Our mission is to empower New Americans to run, win, and lead, creating an inclusive democracy that works for and represents everyone. We do this through trainings, building partnerships with elected officials to pursue inclusive policies, researching solutions to break down systemic barriers, and honoring the contributions of New American elected officials.

Our affiliated 501(c)(4) organization, the New American Leaders Action Fund, is building a democracy that represents and includes all people by engaging new voters, supporting New Americans as they run for office and expanding civic engagement.