

A photograph of the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C., featuring its iconic dome and classical columns. The image is partially framed by a large orange circle.

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**DIVERSITY IN  
GOVERNMENT  
RELATIONS COALITION**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

2021

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# LETTER FROM CO-FOUNDERS

*Dear Friends,*

There is power in partnership, and working in unison toward the same end can bring about systemic change. This is why in the summer of 2020 we founded the Diversity in Government Relations (DGR) Coalition with the aim of strengthening diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the government relations industry.

We know that our family members, friends, neighbors, and colleagues don't all have the same access to opportunity or lived experience when engaging our systems of government. The government relations industry is uniquely positioned to directly impact the variance of these lived experiences if equipped with knowledge and diverse human capital.

With a shared vision and deep understanding

of the strength that comes from inclusion and diversity, the DGR Coalition was formed building on the existing efforts and momentum created by those who came before us and continue to work alongside us.

Our efforts are fueled by the industry's passion. It is this industry's resolve, sense of unity, and sincere desire for change that will contribute to this change we seek. The DGR Coalition is a resource and partner as the industry embraces the power it holds and works to increase diverse representation and its understanding of the impact DEI can have on policymaking.

It will take ongoing collaboration to achieve diverse perspectives in all aspects of the policymaking process, and we are pleased to share in this report the contributory strides in our inaugural year.

With gratitude,



*M.R. Almond*

**Monica R. Almond, Ph.D**  
Co-founder



*C. Tomlinson*

**Cicely Tomlinson**  
Co-founder

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# DGR COALITION MEMBERS

## **Leadership**

Monica Almond, Ph.D., The Almond Group  
Kodiak Hill-Davis, Republican Women for Progress  
Gina Kim, National Journal  
Angela Lee, Goodwill Industries International  
Liz Lopez, Hispanic Lobbyists Association  
Cicely Tomlinson, The Almond Group  
Jaime Werner, Congressional Management Foundation  
Gerald Yao, FiscalNote

## **Members**

Katie Allen, America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP)  
Lisa Arafune, Forge Policy Solutions  
Chatrane Birbal, Women in Government Relations (WGR)  
Poorvie Bishnoi, Monument Policy  
Vaun Cleveland, National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies (NAMIC)  
Paulo Pontemayor, The Catholic Health Association of the United States  
Ben Grove, Q Street  
Aria Janiszewski  
Joya Patel  
Mya Price, Feeding America  
Kristin St. John, National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC)  
TR Straub, Russell Reynolds Associates  
Laura Uttley, Lewis-Burke Associates, LLC  
Cherie Wilson, Washington Government Relations Group (WGRG)

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## Mission Statement

The Diversity in Government Relations Coalition exists to foster and strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion among entities that influence local, state, and federal policy through data collection, strategic communications, and stakeholder engagement—leading to a more diverse government relations workforce, which yields inclusive and transformative policymaking that reflects the diversity of America.

# A YEAR OF PROGRESS

## 2021



### JANUARY

The DGR Coalition formerly convenes, established by the co-founders and leadership team, to bring attention to and increase diverse representation in the government relations field

### MARCH

Launched to the public



### APRIL

Held a briefing for the general public to formally introduce the DGR Coalition, and to share its mission, vision, and immediate goals

### JUNE

Launched the [DGR Coalition Industry Pledge](#), which currently features more than thirty supporting organizations



### JULY

Began distributing a quarterly newsletter "[DGR Coalition Quarterly Roundup](#)" providing timely news, information, and resources for the field

### SEPTEMBER

Hosted "[Hiring for Diversity](#)" forum with Conrad Woody of Odgers Berndtson to discuss the opportunities and challenges with diversifying the government relations field



### OCTOBER

Launched annual [Diversity & Inclusion in Government Relations Survey](#) that garnered responses from over 800 professionals in local, state, and federal government relations

Published a [joint op-ed](#) on the importance of diversity and inclusion in American policymaking



# SURVEYING THE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS FIELD

***The DGR Coalition seeks to strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion among entities that influence local, state, and federal policy through data collection.***

In October 2021, the DGR Coalition launched the [Diversity and Inclusion in Government Relations Survey](#). This survey is a mixed methods study of the government relations profession with a specific focus on employee demographics and workplace experiences. The survey gathers self-reported information from individual employees who work directly or indirectly to influence local, state, and federal policy.

*“Diversity and inclusion performance in government relations is integral to advancing policies that reflect diverse perspectives throughout the private and public sectors. Thanks to the Diversity in Government Relations Coalition for their creative efforts to measure the important aspects of diversity and inclusion within the government relations field.”*

–U.S.  
Representative  
Joyce Beatty



**This is the first industry survey that collects and reports diversity among race/ethnicity, gender, political affiliation, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and other areas of difference.** The data is useful for corporations, nonprofit organizations, lobbying firms, law firms, associations, trades, and policymakers to assess the current state of their organizational and policymaking apparatus to ensure it reflects and represents the growing diversity of the nation.

Breaking industry records, more than 800 respondents completed the survey.

The DGR Coalition will use the data to recommend solutions and put forth evidence-based best practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in positions of leadership and throughout the government relations field.

**The DGR Coalition will be sharing survey results in the coming months.**

# FOSTERING COLLABORATION & PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE

*The DGR Coalition seeks to be a partner by fostering collaboration through healthy and productive dialogue.*

The DGR Coalition creates a platform that allows members of the government relations community to share DEI best practices and lessons learned when working to build inclusive environments that attract and retain diverse government relations professionals.



In September, the DGR Coalition hosted a discussion, [Hiring for Diversity: Fostering Opportunities to Diversify Government Relations](#), with Odgers Berndtson's Conrad Woody and DGR Coalition co-founder Dr. Monica Almond on the challenges and opportunities to diversify the government relations field.

We will continue to host events that foster meaningful conversations on DEI in the government relations field.

In July 2021, the DGR Coalition began releasing [Quarterly Roundup](#), a quarterly newsletter that provides timely news, information, and resources for the field. Quarterly Roundups are a collection of various resources that are sent to our mailing list four times per year. They are designed to help increase understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion; address gaps in representation on your teams; and explore the unintended consequences that result from policy and advocacy that lack diverse representation, voice, and perspective.

[Join our mailing list and receive Quarterly Roundups straight to your inbox](#)



# The Government Relations Field

The government relations field plays a critical role in the policymaking process. That process can create unintended policy outcomes when key voices from underrepresented communities are not part of and leading essential policymaking efforts.

The DGR Coalition has issued a pledge, the **first-of-its-kind in the industry**, to gain commitment from all entities influencing local, state, and federal policy **to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion is prioritized** internally and externally. (The data below focuses on race because data on other demographics for government relations professionals is limited. The DGR Coalition acknowledges other demographics are equally as important.)



In August 2020, people of color accounted for **40%** of the US population, but only **11%** of the US Senate's top office staff ([\*Joint Center\*](#)).



In August 2018, people of color accounted for **38%** of the US population, but only **13.7%** of the US House top staff ([\*Joint Center\*](#)).



**56%** of respondents at least somewhat disagree with the statement that women and people of color are equally represented in leadership positions in the government relations field ([\*Bloomberg & Women in Government Relations\*](#)).



**17%** of public affairs professionals, among nearly 130 organizations, are people of color ([\*Public Affairs Council\*](#)).



*Will you sign the pledge?*

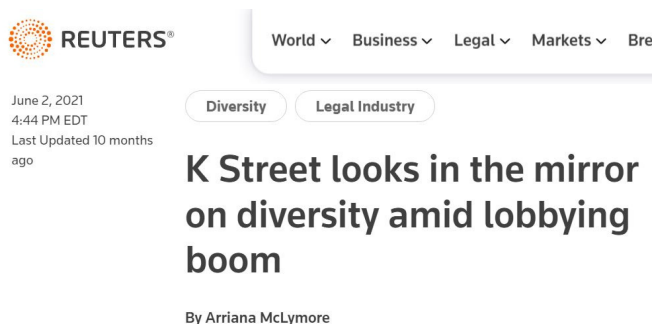
For Employers



# MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

*The DGR Coalition is creating a presence in national, local, and social media to keep the importance of diversifying the government relations field in the spotlight.*

In June, the DGR Coalition gained its first mention in the media in Reuters' [K Street looks in the mirror on diversity amid lobbying boom](#), which reported that lobbying firms and other entities that influence federal, state, and local policies need to start diversifying their staff to better reflect the demographics of the people they serve.



“Law firms have trumpeted their diversity efforts for decades, pressed by clients, piles of data and industry rankings showing where they fall short on race and gender. K Street, despite its overlap with Big Law, has been another

story.” The DGR Coalition is named as a group working to change this and “bring the lobbying industry's diversity picture into focus.”

**The DGR Coalition was featured** in POLITICO Influence in March in [Lobbyists launch coalition to solve K Street's diversity problem](#), which reported on the aims of the coalition: to “release its first report on K Street's diversity... After that, it will aim to be a ‘central’ organization for the government affairs community that brings together the work of other minority lobbying groups...and serves as a ‘repository of best practices’ – like how should the government affairs community be driving diversity, equity and inclusion, not only internally within their organizations, but also externally in their policymaking.”

In October, the DGR Coalition published an op-ed through Medium entitled [American Policymaking is in Jeopardy without Meaningful Efforts on Diversity and Inclusion](#). The op-ed discusses the critical role government relations professionals play in the policymaking process, and the policy outcomes when there is a lack of diverse representation. “As government relations professionals, we represent the interests of our companies and clients, however, we are also responsible for shaping policies that impact the lives of all Americans. Therefore, we must be intentional in creating a more inclusive government relations field that attracts and retains diverse talent in order to more effectively advocate for policies through a lens of equity.”

POLITICO Influence featured the DGR Coalition’s inaugural survey of the government relations field in [Lobbyists launch survey to measure K Street’s diversity](#). “The coalition aims to use data from the survey to compile a report...that will offer solutions and best practices to help the downtown community more closely resemble the makeup of the country and advance equity efforts across the industry.”

This survey is a mixed methods study of the government relations profession with a specific focus on employee demographics and workplace experiences. This is the first industry survey that collects and reports diversity among race/ethnicity, gender, political affiliation, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and other areas of difference.

DGR Coalition co-founder Monica Almond is quoted in December in Politico's [Black lawmakers threaten to cut off K St unless it diversifies](#) about how some members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) are not meeting with firms without Black and Hispanic representation. “[The CBC is] losing their patience because we've been talking about this for decades,” said Monica Almond, who co-founded the Diversity in Government Relations Coalition, which launched a demographic survey of the profession earlier this year.”

## POLITICO

### Lobbyists launch survey to measure K Street’s diversity

By CAITLIN OPRYSKO | 10/12/2021 06:00 PM EDT

With Daniel Lippman

**LOBBYISTS LAUNCH SURVEY OF K STREET’S DIVERSITY:** The coalition of lobbyists looking to spur more diversity on K Street has launched an inaugural survey that the group hopes will help pressure lobbying firms into action when it comes to diversifying their rosters. The group behind the push, called the **Diversity in Government Relations Coalition**, formed earlier this year and is looking to establish baseline data on the demographic makeup of the influence world — similar to surveys being carried out on Capitol Hill to measure the diversity of Hill staffers.

The DGR Coalition’s media outreach will continue as we work to highlight the importance of diversifying the government relations field and drive change towards more equitable and inclusive policy outcomes.

# IN OUR OWN WORDS: WHY WE JOINED THE DGR COALITION



**Monica R. Almond**  
*The Almond Group*

"The opportunity to inspire change in the way policy is shaped is what compelled me to start the DGR Coalition. Historically our nation has excluded key voices from the highest forms of political influence. To truly have a Republic that is by the people and for the people, all of the people need a seat at the table. We're working to inspire confidence that this actually breeds better policymaking for our beautifully diverse and unified democracy."

"Diversity is like travel - they are both interesting, exciting, fun, and different every day! People with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives are also interesting, exciting, and fun! I thrive with variety and change, and when my workplace has a diversity of people and voices, I'm more likely to be interested and challenged intellectually, and produce a better outcome for customers and stakeholders. Including diverse voices in policy making processes makes the final outcome better for all."



**Lisa Arafune**  
*Forge Policy Solutions*



**Chatrane Birbal**  
*Women in Government  
Relations*

"As a female, minority, first generation college graduate and government relations professional, I believe it is critical to have diverse voices in the policymaking process to reflect the views of today, tomorrow and the future U.S. population."

“Inclusive policymaking is a reflection of inclusive lobbying. For lobbying to be effective, it must embody America’s diversity and include voices from underrepresented communities. As a woman of color and a first generation American, I have seen firsthand how more diverse representation in lobbying results in more equitable policy outcomes, and am committed to the coalition’s mission of making the government relations industry more reflective of the makeup of America.”



**Poorvie Bishnoi**  
*Monument Advocacy*



**Vaun Cleveland**  
*National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies*

"I have spent a lot of my professional life thinking about constructive ways to improve diversity. The DGR Coalition offered me an opportunity to become a part of a community of professionals fully committed to working collaboratively to improve diversity in GR and most importantly bring more stakeholders into the conversation."

"Throughout my fifteen year government relations career, I've often been the only woman in the room. I decided that if I wanted those rooms to look and feel different, then I needed to help bring more people into those opportunities and spaces. The DGR Coalition will help the government relations industry evolve to be more inclusive and representative of the country as a whole."



**Kodiak Hill-Davis**  
*Republican Women for Progress*



**Aria Janiszewski**

"The DGR Coalition is committed to working towards a future where the voices who influence policy are as diverse as the people and communities who will be impacted. That is why I joined this coalition, to work alongside others who believe in that vision."



**Gina Kim**  
*National Journal*

"I joined the DGR Coalition because a diverse and inclusive government affairs profession encourages more equitable policy outcomes."

"As a Korean woman and first generation American, I've grown up understanding the importance of representation and have seen firsthand the impact policies can have. It's an honor to be a part of this incredible coalition that's committed to ensuring a better, brighter future for all."



**Angela Lee**  
*Goodwill Industries International*



**Joya Patel**

"Ideas propel into change when teams are made up of all colors, bringing diversity of lived experiences to the table. Advocating for diversity in government is crucial for institutionalizing equity and influencing policy for the upliftment of all people."

"My journey to the nation's capital has been strengthened by growing up as the grandson of immigrants who moved to the U.S. Territory of Guam. I hope to bring another perspective to the government relations profession that is inclusive of the many diverse voices that seek to make the country better. I am grateful to be part of the DGR Coalition, where I get to work with others who want to build this career pipeline for members of all communities."



**Paulo Pontemayor**  
*The Catholic Health Association of the United States*

"Diverse representation in advocacy leads to better informed decision-making and more equitable outcomes. It's not just the right thing to do; it's the smart thing to do."



**TR Straub**  
*Russell Reynolds Associates*



**Cicely Tomlinson**  
*The Almond Group*

"I feel strongly that the variance in human experience with the laws governing the way we live is too wide, proactively including the voices of the underrepresented in the lawmaking process provides a solution to narrow this variance. Being a part of the DGR Coalition allows me to live out my personal values (leading with love, appreciating the opportunity to learn, and activating a growth mindset) while being a part of the solution. I also get to be in a space with some amazing humans."

"Ensuring all people have a voice is critical to a thriving democracy. Therefore, we must be sure those advocating on their behalf accurately reflect the communities they represent."



**Jaime Werner**  
*Congressional Management  
Foundation*

To learn more about the Diversity in Government Relations Coalition, [visit our website.](#)