



# THE CPAC INFORMER

Political Issues Impacting the  
Caribbean American Diaspora

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## Caribbean-Americans and Political Activity

**D**espite our many contributions to American life, and our growing presence in this country, Caribbean-Americans, as a people, have not been engaged in political activity in any significant, organized way. As individuals, we have made significant contributions to the political discourse. Persons of Caribbean heritage such as Colin Powell, Stokely Carmichael, Harry Belafonte, Shirley Chisholm, Marcus Garvey and many others, have greatly influenced the political direction of America. However, I believe the time has come for us to band together as a people, politically, to fight for those causes that are of importance to us and to our countries of origin.

Most immigrants from the Caribbean find it relatively easy to integrate into American society. However, living in America is not without its challenges. We often face the specter of racial discrimination that is deeply rooted in America. And, for many of us, our “Caribbean accents” immediately identify us as “different.” In addition, we retain strong connections to our countries of origin through family and other connections. Consequently, our sense of well being is, in many ways, tied to the Caribbean.

Because the Caribbean exists in such close proximity to the United States, American foreign policy, and to a great extent, American domestic policy, is of major importance to the region. It has often said that, “when America sneezes, the Caribbean catches a cold.” It is very important then, that we, as Caribbean-Americans, involve ourselves, in an organized way, in the political affairs of this country. Many American policies, such as those regarding immigration, reparation of persons convicted of criminal offenses and travel to and from the Caribbean, impact the Caribbean, often negatively. We should add our collective voices to the debate of these policies before they become the law of the land. The Political Action Committee (PAC) is the legal means by which to do so.

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# What is a Political Action Committee?

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, a PAC is “the name commonly given to a private group, regardless of size, organized to elect or defeat government officials or to promote legislation.” The District of Columbia Office of Campaign Finance Guide defines a PAC as, “a proposer, individual, committee, club, association organization or other group of individuals organized for the purpose of, or engaged in, promoting or opposing a political party, the nomination or election of an individual to office, or any initiative, referendum or recall.” Consequently, PACs are formed when citizens, collectively, wish to influence the actions of their government. And, you may deduce, by its very definition, that when a PAC is formed, politicians will take notice, particularly if the PAC is

well funded. This is well understood by politically active Americans. According to The Center for Responsive Politics, most PACs represent business, labor or ideological interests, such as:

- a) National Association of Realtors
- b) American Bankers Union
- c) National Beer Wholesalers Association
- d) Hispanic PAC
- e) LA Citizens for the Defense of Marriage
- f) US Cuba Democracy PAC
- g) National Rifle Association
- h) National Jewish Democratic Council PAC
- i) Progressive Women on the Move for the Democratic Party
- j) Political Organization of Women to Elect Republicans

There are two types of political action committees: State or Local PACs and “national” PACs. A State PAC supports or opposes initiatives or candidates for office at the Local or State levels. All PACs must register with their respective State regulatory body. A PAC cannot support a candidate for President, Senator or Congressman unless it has also registered with the Federal Elections Commission (FEC). A PAC that is registered with the FEC is a “national” PAC and can support candidates for Local, State or Federal offices. PAC contributions and expenditures are regulated and restricted by the laws of the State of incorporation and the FEC (where applicable.)

## The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee (C-PAC)

**C-PAC** was founded in December, 2005 and incorporated under the provisions of the District of Columbia’s Non-Profit Act by Chris Gardiner, Denys Vaughn Cooke and Elizabeth Stanley. C-PAC is not registered with the FEC. This is so because of the FEC’s costly and burdensome reporting requirements. In addition, because “all politics are local” as former Congressman Tip O’Neill so eloquently put it, we thought it best to focus on establishing a solid base of support in the Washington metropolitan area before venturing onto the national stage.

Each State has its own rules and regulations regarding a PAC. A PAC incorporated in the District of Columbia must:

- a) Register with the Office of Campaign Finance and file a Statement of Organization within ten days of incorporation;

- b) File reports of Receipts and Expenditures by mandated due dates;
- c) Have a treasurer and a chairperson.

Since its incorporation, C-PAC has:

- a) Received approximately \$30,000.00 in contributions from 100 distinguished individuals (our **Founding Patrons**) representing almost every country in the Caribbean;
- b) Established a Board of Advisors drawn from our list of Founding Patrons;

- c) Developed a fundraising brochure and a website ([www.caribbeanpac.org](http://www.caribbeanpac.org));
- d) Contributed to various candidates for elected offices in the District of Columbia, Prince Georges County and Montgomery County, Maryland. All of whom (except one) won his/her election;
- e) Met with various officials of the District of Columbia Government to lobby for the creation of an Office of Caribbean Community Affairs.



# How to become a CPAC Member

As is stated in our bylaws, membership in C-PAC shall be open to all persons of Caribbean decent, or persons who are desirous of furthering the goals of C-PAC.

The categories of membership are:

- a) General
- b) Senior (age 62 and older)
- c) Student
- d) Life
- e) Honorary

The associated dues shall be determined by a majority vote of the Board from time to time, except that such dues shall not apply to honorary members. With exception of Honorary and life members, the membership terms shall

begin the January 1 of each year and end on December 31 of each year. Persons joining C-PAC after January 1 shall pay the full annual dues. All members, regardless of the category of membership, shall have the same rights and responsibilities, except that:

- Honorary members shall not have the right to vote on any matter or to stand for election to the Board of Directors; an honorary member shall be selected by a two-thirds vote of all the members of the Board of Directors for exemplary service to the Caribbean-American community; the term of an honorary member shall be indefinite;



Student members shall have the right to vote but not the right to stand for election to the Board of Directors.

- A member may be granted a life membership, absent the payment of the associated dues, by a two-thirds vote of all of the members of the Board of Directors for exemplary service to C-PAC.

## POLITICAL BEAT

### Washington, D.C BEAT

The Washington DC metropolitan area heats up with a number of candidates vying for various seats to represent the region. For Washington, DC, there is a slate of persons running for mayor. In fact, we have a crowded field of persons for the April 1st Democratic primary. In addition to the current mayor Vincent Grey, they include four DC Council members – Jack Evans (Ward 2); Muriel Bowser (Ward 4); Tommy Wells (Ward 6) and Vincent Orange (At large) as well as Reta Jo Lewis, a Former State Department official and Andy Shallal, an activist and restaurant owner. One question the Caribbean community can ask itself is who will best serve our collective needs? But first what are those needs? With a significant number of Caribbean businesses, to include restaurants, and the new laws governing, as well as issues relative to immigration, health care and housing for instance, CPAC will be reaching out to the candidates to assess their views on issues affecting the Caribbean community. We will share their responses with the community via our website. CPAC and its members will determine via secret ballot, which candidates to endorse at the end of this process.

### Maryland BEAT

CPAC and its membership have voted to endorse the following candidates:

1. Lt. Governor Anthony Brown for Governor  
Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown: Lawyer, Soldier and Politician

Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown, now in his second term, is the eight Lieutenant (Lt.) Governor of Maryland. Prior to serving as Lt. Governor, Anthony Brown represented Prince George's County for two terms in the Maryland House of Delegates, rising quickly to the position of Majority Whip. Lieutenant Brown was a respected voice on critical issues including veterans' affairs, health care and various development initiatives to promote economic growth in distressed areas. A graduate of Harvard University and Harvard Law School, Brown has a distinguished military career which spanned over a quarter of a century. This military service spans five years of active duty as a helicopter pilot in Germany after college.

In 1994 Brown joined the firm of Wilmer Cutler Pickering (now Wilmer Hale) where in 1998 he received Wilmer's Pro Bono Publico Award for his work representing indigent clients. Brown, a Colonel in the United States Army Reserves, served a 10-month tour of duty in 2004, with the 353rd Civil Affairs Command, working with military and

civilian officials to deliver humanitarian assistance to the people of war-torn Iraq. Brown received the Bronze Star for his distinguished service in Iraq.

Lieutenant Brown champions two issues closest to his heart—helping redouble Maryland’s efforts to combat domestic violence; and encouraging and recruiting families to become foster and adoptive parents, he being an adoptive parent himself. Lieutenant Brown embodies the message taught to him by his father - who emigrated from Jamaica to the United States and became a physician serving the most needy communities - that you must serve others before serving yourself. Source: <http://anthonybrown.com/meet-anthony/>

## 2. Shirley Nathan-Pulliam for Senate: District 44 Delegate Shirley Nathan-Pulliam: Nurse, Businesswoman and Politician

Delegate Shirley Nathan-Pulliam is serving in her 19th year in the Maryland House of Delegates. The Jamaica-born naturalized American citizen is the first Caribbean-born person and the first African-Caribbean Registered Nurse elected to the Maryland General Assembly.

Delegate Nathan-Pulliam has been a leading advocate for improved health care for the underserved and health care disparities. Key legislative initiatives include funding for breast cancer diagnosis and treatment programs, oral cancer mortality reduction program and treatment for co-occurring disorders—substance abuse and mental illness.

Additionally, she has been sponsor or co-sponsor for Minority Business Enterprise legislation. Delegate Nathan-Pulliam also has a record of educating and fighting for immigrant communities.

Her dedication to public service has been recognized with numerous awards and honors including the naming of the Shirley Nathan-Pulliam Health Equity Lecture Series by the University of Maryland School of Public Health Center for Health Equity and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in 2011.

Delegate Nathan-Pulliam holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from the University of Maryland and a Masters degree in Administrative Science from The Johns Hopkins University, Carey Business School. Source: <http://www.shirleynathan-pulliam.com/about>

## 3. Aisha Braveboy for Attorney General

### Delegate Aisha Braveboy: Lawyer and Politician

Delegate Aisha Braveboy declared her candidacy for Maryland’s next Attorney General of the State of Maryland. Her candidacy comes in the wake of her success as State Legislator. Delegate Braveboy began her public career in 2007 when she was voted Delegate to the Maryland House of Delegates from the 25th Legislative District. Delegate Braveboy wasted no time in becoming one of the hardest working Legislators in the Assembly where in her “Freshman” year, she served as Chair of the Prince George’s County House Delegation Committee on Water, Sewer and Transportation.

Delegate Braveboy’s tenacity as a Legislator has led her to successfully obtain the passage of a bond financing package that cleared the way for the development of the National Harbor, a 300 acre waterfront entertainment district. Her humanitarian efforts are demonstrated through the tasks she undertakes, but not limited to: ending domestic violence; promoting fair and affordable housing and providing equity in education. In order to gain insight to the issues facing low-wage workers, Delegate Braveboy shopped for groceries alongside a minimum wage earner to fully understand how members of that income group manage their food budget. For the 2014 Legislative session, Delegate Braveboy is backing a bill that would raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour by 2016.

Aisha Braveboy born in Washington DC, is a graduate of the University of Maryland (1997) with a BA in Politics and Government and a JD from Howard University (2000). Source: <http://www.marylandjuice.com/2013/01/del-aisha-braveboy-announces-run-for.html>

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