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No Jargon Mini-Series on Why Candidates Fail to Represent U.S. Diversity

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With the 2018 elections coming up, it makes sense to ask who runs for office and why. In this archive *No Jargon* mini-series, three SSN scholars explore what difference it makes that most U.S. elected officials are wealthy white men – and ask how this could change.

Professors Carnes, Shames, and Shah join *No Jargon* to discuss why working-class Americans, women, and people of color are underrepresented in the ranks of U.S. elected officials. Research shows that a typical member of Congress has spent less than 2% of his or her entire pre-congressional career in the kinds of jobs most Americans do every day. In addition, although more than half the population is female, only about a fifth of elected officials are women. And as the racial and ethnic diversity of America grows, close to nine of every ten elected officials are white. Lack of representation matters, because researchers have found that the social identities of officeholders affect the kinds of policies governments consider and enact.

Episode 41: White-Collar Government
Nicholas Carnes, Duke University

Nicholas Carnes, Co-Director of the Research Triangle SSN Regional Network, explains why government by and for the rich follows from the fact that most elected officials come from white-collar backgrounds. Although working-class Americans and their interests are currently underrepresented in government, Carnes highlights ways to help them run for office. A *Vox* article and *Washington Post* piece highlight points from his book, *White-Collar Government: The Hidden Role of Class in Economic Policy Making*.

Episode 42: Running against All Odds
Shauna Shames, Rutgers University-Camden

Shauna Shames explains why women who run for office face extra costs, a situation that discourages many potential candidates. Hillary Clinton has overcome the odds and may inspire other women to run for public offices, but she is far from typical. Shames co-directs SSN's working group on Women and Representation and is engaged in various projects on gender and office-seeking.

Episode 43: Seeking Candidates of Color
Paru R. Shah, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Paru Shah discusses how prospects for electing people of color are limited by segregated districts, voter bias, and particular kinds of election rules and timing. Drawing on her experience as an elected school board member, Shah explains the hurdles faced by minority candidates. An article in *The Conversation* and a Key Findings brief spell out Shah's analysis.

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