

Placement Report to the IEEE-USA Government Fellowship Committee

Sherry J. Gillespie, Ph.D.

March 2008

I am an IEEE-USA Congressional Fellow for the calendar year 2008. I began my assignment in January 2008, in the office of Senator Joseph I. Lieberman.

In September 2007, I participated in the AAAS Fellows Orientation Program. At the conclusion of orientation, I interviewed extensively in both the House and the Senate, in both personal offices and committees. I was fortunate to have a choice in placement, and selected the personal office of Sen. Lieberman for my fellowship year. Sen. Lieberman is Chair of the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee (HSGAC) and is also a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), the Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee and the Small Business and Entrepreneurship (SBC) Committee. He has a long history of having Science and Technology Policy Fellows on his staff, and the ones I spoke with had all been pleased with their assignments.

I have several areas of focus in my assignment, including NSF, NASA, science and technology for the armed services and for homeland security. I have had the opportunity to work not only with other members of the Senator's personal staff, but with members of the SASC and HSGAC committees as well. I took the lead in writing and circulating a "Dear Colleague" letter in support of NSF funding in the '09 Appropriation. This entailed enlisting a Minority Party co-sponsor so that the effort would be bi-partisan, meeting with the local technical professional organizations, and securing support from other Senators. My work with SASC has been especially interesting. It draws upon my experience in the semiconductor industry and has the potential for my being involved with writing legislation. I have requested briefings, and also provided support for a briefing on Basic Science for Defense. I have learned a great deal from briefings on nuclear terrorism relating to issues of interest to the HSGAC committee. In addition, I have had several opportunities to meet with constituents from Connecticut in areas relating to small business and technology. I feel really fortunate to be able to work with such a capable and dedicated staff and I try to take advantage of the many opportunities to learn, through hearings, briefings and classes, and particularly through networking.