

## Placement Report to the IEEE-USA Government Fellows Committee

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I am pleased to inform the Committee that I have accepted an offer to serve my Fellowship on the staff of Congressman Jay Inslee, a Democrat in his 6<sup>th</sup> term representing the 1<sup>st</sup> district of Washington. I will be joining his energy policy team, following in the shoes of 2007-08 AAAS Congressional Fellow Holmes Hummel. Congressman Inslee has a reputation as a strong proponent of alternative energy, not only as a means of combating climate change and establishing energy independence, but also as a way to reinvigorate American industry and create opportunities for economically depressed areas. Energy is likely to be a major issue in the upcoming Congress, and I expect to be quite busy next year. I will begin work when the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress convenes in January 2009. In the meantime, I am getting ready to move to Washington DC, and preparing myself for the year ahead by reading as much as I can about energy and speaking with experts from Stanford, UC Berkeley, and UC Davis.

I interviewed extensively with House and Senate personal offices and committees, and with both Democrats and Republicans. In total, I sent 38 resumes, was invited to 16 first-round interviews, and received three offers. I encountered some challenges as a January start, as many offices were looking to staff Fellows immediately. However, I was pleased to have a choice of offers from offices with excellent staffs and very engaged members, and I believe that I would have had good experiences with all of them. I ultimately decided to join "Team Inslee" because of the opportunity to play a major role in setting the direction of our nation's energy policy. While the other offices offered a broader portfolio of issues, Rep. Inslee's seniority meant I would be able to have a deeper impact. Additionally, energy is a very high priority for Rep. Inslee, which assures that I will be an integral part of the staff.

I decided to look for my placement immediately following the AAAS Orientation in September, along with fellows from other societies, rather than wait until after the November election or just before my fellowship start in January. This choice was motivated by a desire to take advantage of support services offered by AAAS, maximize my choice of offices, and give myself time to establish relationships with other fellows. My decision involved some tradeoff, because the placement period coincided with the planned end of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, and many staff members were focused on work that had to be completed before adjournment and did not have time to respond to inquiries from a January start Fellow. However, I felt that the support offered by AAAS and the opportunities to network with other Fellows and Congressional staff outweighed any potential negatives.

The three most important pieces of advice I can give future fellows regarding placement are:

1) Choose a staff over a project. Your relationship with the staff can make or break your fellowship experience. Congressional work hinges on relationships – no amount of passion or interest in a subject will make up for a bad working dynamic with your staff colleagues. Along the same lines, be sure to meet with the Member before accepting a position.

2) Be flexible and cast a wide net. Be prepared to abandon any prior expectations about your preference for an office. Interview in both the House and the Senate, for committees and personal offices, and for both Democrats and Republicans. Not only will it give you an understanding of the variety of opportunities available, it is a unique opportunity to begin building a network of staff in other offices that you will need to rely on during your fellowship. Additionally, your preferred assignments may not be available, and your interests may change during Orientation or Placement. Only one office on my original preference list (San Francisco South Bay representatives) was looking for Fellows, and there were few members in general interested in my preferred areas of work (entrepreneurship, healthcare, education and foreign affairs.) The vast majority of members requesting Fellows were looking for help with energy policy. I found myself having to change my approach on the fly and cast my skills and interests in a way that would make them relevant to energy policy in order to get responses from offices.

3) Be patient. The first 7-10 days of placement can be very frustrating. I had very few responses during the first week – most of the offices did not respond until the second week. Keep in mind that Congressional staffers have multiple demands on their time, and January start Fellow may not be an immediate concern for them. Follow up with offices every 2-3 days until you get a response. I highly recommend allowing 2-3 weeks for placement.