

## Mid-Year Report

### Fellowship Activities

-Please describe any major projects you have taken the lead on as a Fellow.  
I have taken the lead on a small bill concerning a form of renewable energy, on extensive background research on several topics in renewable energy and on preparing a comprehensive document detailing the many grants and loans available in the renewable energy area.

-Please describe any major projects you have assisted with as a Fellow.  
I have assisted with background research and stake holder outreach on two renewable energy issues.

-Please describe any other activities you have worked on as a Fellow.  
I have attended many briefings, a few hearings and two conferences and reported back to staff on the content, taken many meetings with constituents and special interest representatives and reported to staff, have met with several members of the Montana public sector (state and university) to learn background about Montana specific issues, written a few thank you letters to constituents for the Senator's signature, presented successfully for the Senator to co-sponsor a bill (the act of co-sponsoring generated a small press release) and responded to a few specific constituent requests for help but without necessarily resolving their difficulty. I also attend the weekly staff meetings with the Senator and report to him on my activities at that time. I was fortunate to be part of two meetings the Senator had with the Undersecretary of Energy and had a follow up meeting with the Secretary at Department of Energy headquarters.

-Please describe the significance of your work to your office/agency.  
The significance is minor. By attending meetings, I have freed my mentor to do other tasks. The rest of what I have done simply would not have been done but neither has it borne fruit, so it is not significant as of now.

-Please share any highlights of success (e.g., awards, honors, articles, reports, seminars, conferences, workshops, committees formed, partnerships, media coverage).

My only success is minor: a press release on co-sponsoring a bill. I believe I have enhanced the perception of the Senator in some constituents' eyes simply by showing them that the Senator has a scientist in his office. Constituents and special interest representatives that have a science background are always pleased to make their case to a fellow scientist.

### Supervisors/Advisors

-Are you benefitting from the interactions with your supervisor and/or advisor? If yes, what is most valuable? If no, what might help improve the situation?

Yes, with the most valuable interactions being information transfer whether it be background information or commentary on hearings, briefings or meetings.

-What type(s) of additional supervision and/or mentorship would be helpful?  
Although we do briefly meet nearly every day and often have a significant meeting each week, additional meetings would be helpful. It would also be good if my mentor invited me, just as an observer, to some of the more important meetings.

-Any other thoughts you'd like to share about either your supervisor or advisor?  
Being a good mentor is difficult. I know as I have previously been a mentor. My mentor is very busy and perhaps should have been better informed about the time commitment required of a mentor. I should add that my mentor is excellent at interacting with people so that is not a source of problems. My mentor is also one of the most productive legislative assistants in the office.

### Challenges/Opportunities

-What challenges have you encountered during the first half of your fellowship year?

The challenges are many. It is difficult to find a project that is mostly your own but that is important enough to the office so that they are interested in what you do. Otherwise you can become isolated from your mentor and office staff as you work hard on something that is not of interest to them. A second challenge is rapidly learning about the (usually arcane) legislative, regulatory, political and historical background of any subject that you work on. It is easy to research a topic but completely miss the point because you haven't found the one or two (probably political) facts that completely change the conclusion.

-What recommendations do you have to address these situations?

These situations are not easy to address. For the first, one could simply ask if the topic is important. However the answer will probably be that it is important but (unspoken) only if your mentor will also be engaged by the topic. The reality may be that your mentor does not have the time to give the topic. If the mentor did have time, the mentor would probably be working on it and not giving it to you! It is important to remember that, while you may be on staff for only a year, for your mentor it is part of a career. Your mentor needs to have successes and will find it difficult to let success depend on you. For the second, frequent transmission of your results to your mentor will help expose the facts you need. This again implies that your mentor has time to interact frequently.

-Do you feel the presence of a Fellow is benefitting your host office? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

No, not significantly, because none of what I have done is bearing results even though the topics are of importance to the office.

-Do you feel your current office would be a good choice for future Fellows? If yes, why? If no, why not?

A qualified yes if my mentor were given some additional training and accepted more responsibility as a mentor. That said, the office atmosphere, including the Senator himself, is welcoming, friendly and relaxed.

#### Suggestions for Program Enhancement

-How might the Fellowships staff help to enhance the overall fellowship experience?

I believe the Fellowship should organize monthly formal get togethers of the 30 or so Congressional Fellows with structured discussion of both the successes and problems each Fellow is experiencing. It is true that the Congressional Fellows do meet at lunch on Friday but discussion of problems has not occurred to a great extent. Friday Happy Hours are available but I suspect less useful for problems. I haven't attended any. I would suggest the monthly formal get togethers be followed by informal discussion (a small reception would be ideal but of course that requires a budget) to allow individual as opposed to group conversation. The availability of the space in the Hall of the States during placement and the presence of Paget Graham for advice was essential. On the other hand, the Congressional reception at the end of orientation was somewhat stressful and not helpful to me. I didn't meet any of the offices with whom I ultimately had mutual interest at that reception. It is difficult and embarrassing for both parties, I think, to wander about a reception looking at nametags to decide whether or not it is a person with whom you want to speak.

-Do you have comments/suggestions regarding the orientation program, the professional development workshops, and/or other Fellowships events?

The orientation program is excellent but I would suggest devoting more days to programs exclusively for Congressional Fellows. We could use more orientation on Congress and work in Congressional offices. The events at which former Fellows spoke were especially helpful. I have attended only one professional development workshop, that on work for NGOs. I found it helpful. I have attended a few other Fellowship events, mostly lectures. They are informative although not usually directly relevant to work in a Congressional office. For my office, it is somewhat difficult to take the time off to attend events during the day or early evening, but I have to admit I have not pushed either.