

2008 IEEE-USA Congressional Fellowship - Year-End Report

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My year as a Congressional Fellow in the personal office of Senator Joseph I. Lieberman has been productive and rewarding on many levels. The highlight of my Fellowship was having the opportunity to apply my extensive background in the semiconductor industry to drafting a key legislative provision for the Defense Authorization Act of FY 2009 (S.3001). The Bill became Public Law (110-417) on October 14, 2008.

The Senator's Chairmanship of the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee as well as his membership on the Senate Armed Services Committee, provided me with a network of contacts well beyond the personal office. I wrote the legislative provision on Trusted Defense Systems with the full support and direction of the Senate Armed Services Committee. The provision addressed expanded use of the Trusted Foundry, as well as the use of verification tools on commercially procured semiconductors, by the Department of Defense. As the bill moved forward, I wrote a Statement for the Congressional Record and ultimately drafted a merged Senate/House conference report. In the course of preparing the legislation, I held briefings with members of the Department of Defense, the National Security Agency, DARPA, and the Trusted Access Program Office (TAPO).

In addition to drafting legislation, my portfolio included support for research funding at the National Science Foundation, issues relating to NASA such as the Space Suit competition, making recommendations on legislative amendments and co-sponsorships, meeting with constituents, and preparing a White Paper on Nanotechnology for the Senator. This paper addresses nanotechnology's economic promise as well as the numerous barriers to commercialization. It focuses on areas of legislative interest to the Senator.

Early in the year I took the lead in preparation of a Dear Colleague letter on NSF funding, initiated by my office as Majority sponsor. I also assisted with the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act S.3036 when it came to the floor of the Senate in June.

During the course of the year, I was invited to speak at several meetings and conferences on topics including University/Industry research partnerships, and on my experiences as a Congressional Science Fellow. I was also pleased to be able to participate in the Science and Technology Summit on the America Competes Act, held at Oak Ridge National Laboratories.

As a scientist, I was privileged to have the opportunity to experience public policy-making in action, and to contribute to the process. I felt that coming from the industrial sector gave me a unique perspective on the challenges of implementing policy. I appreciate that my IEEE-USA sponsorship provided me with access to programs put on by AAAS, and to the network of Science Fellows in other Congressional offices and Executive Branch agencies. Overall, it was most gratifying to be able to apply my background and expertise to the development of science and technology policy.