

With the conclusion of my internship at Congressman Jim Cooper's District Office in Nashville, I find myself awake. I have been challenged to be ravenous for learning, to develop a backbone, and acquire the competence to recognize the world's needs and fill them. Congressman Cooper inspired me to erase the old adage, "Youth is wasted on the young." He wanted me to wake up before the day passed.

From meeting with Chancery and Supreme Court Justices and learning of law being a jealous mistress to meeting with and leaders of the community and researching bills that were presented over the table, I have developed experience in the field of research, communication, collaboration, and punctual presentation. I have acquired an experiential knowledge in politics and am deeply grateful for this, as I have gained a deeper understanding of my surroundings near and far, whether it be my neighbor or Hong Kong.

I am tremendously grateful for those who have made this summer possible. From daily readings of the *Wall Street Journal* and drafting, research, and clerical assignments in the office to meeting with public servants and constituents from all walks of life outside the office, I have learned that I actually have much to learn. However, this experience has given me opportunities, resources, and inspiration to live a life that is awake, a life of diligence and dedication to service. It has awakened in me a sense of reality that is still growing. It has also enhanced my interest in education and healthcare reform. Congress is not man's greatest creation and it is not his cancer; I have concluded that it is his cold, which will improve. Congress is a democratic institution that is subject to its creators: U. S. citizens. Sure, we can say Congress is a broken machine that keeps eating our change, but I have come to learn that with everything that is broken, there is a fix. Hopefully, the mechanics will come soon. Congressman Cooper has been educating new ones for the past decade.