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This summer I had the privilege of interning with Senator Bob Corker on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is one of the various committees within the United States Senate and, as the name suggests, deals with foreign policy legislation. I was incredibly fortunate to have this opportunity to work in one of the oldest and most influential sections of the United States Senate. The six weeks I spent with the committee yielded some very unique work experience and instilled in me a newfound interest in public service, specifically within the government.

Though I was specifically working with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, my internship was through Senator Corker's office. As the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Corker has a separate committee staff along with his standard personal staff and the interns are split up between the two offices. Because of my educational background and my personal interests, I was placed with the committee staff. As a Foreign Relations Committee intern, I was charged with aiding Senator Corker's designated staff as well as the committee's non-designated staff with their numerous responsibilities and daily tasks. One of the most standard tasks I was given throughout the summer period was answering the committee's main phones. Unlike the personal office, we received very few calls from concerned citizens and mostly dealt with transferring calls for the staff. Though I was always expected to answer the phones, it was rarely a time consuming project and my supervisor often gave me other projects to do simultaneously. One project I was often handed was copying

files on potential nominees for high-ranking State Department positions. The Foreign Relations Committee is charged with approving these nominees through an interview-style hearing and an eventual vote. Staff members from both the majority and minority offices compile public information about each nominee. Both offices need a copy of the compiled information so I was often asked to make that copy. Though it was a somewhat mundane task, I enjoyed feeling involved in such an important process in our government.

One of the best parts of this internship was the freedom to attend any of the hearings or meetings involving the committee, assuming I wasn't busy with another project or task. These would range from public hearings with a full committee to private meetings between staff members and representative from various NGOs and think tanks. It was incredible having the opportunity to listen in on these meetings. These meetings dealt with very relevant events occurring throughout the world. For instance, during the first week of the internship I was fortunate enough to sit in on a meeting with a representative from an NGO that dealt with human rights issues in Iran. I was also fortunate enough to sit in on a briefing for a group of staff members regarding the likelihood of China and the United States forming a trade treaty. These representatives either requested these meetings or were called in by the committee to inform respective staff members on various topics. Capitol Hill interns are also given the opportunity to attend lectures by some very important and influential people and I tried my hardest to attend as many as possible. Some of the more notable speakers were Martin Dempsey the current chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Colin Powell. Though I attended these meetings and lectures based on my personal interest, often times I was asked to attend

and take notes on meetings with other committees and groups. One of the more memorable meetings was with the House Judiciary Committee hearing on FISA and sections 215 and 702 of the Patriot Act. It was a very long meeting, but it dealt with incredibly interesting topics and involved very influential people both in the House and in the intelligence world. I was expected to take thorough notes on the hearings and report back to a committee staff member.

Another common task I had was helping the Foreign Relations Committee non-designated staff set up for committee hearings and business meetings. These hearings would either be with a group of experts reporting to the committee on a current issue or the interview-style hearing with nominees for Department of State positions I mentioned earlier. Regardless of the agenda, I was charged with setting up the hearing room for the meeting. This involves compiling the meeting agenda, setting the committee members' respective places on the dais, and sectioning off parts of the audience seats for different groups such as State Department members and friends of a witness or nominee.

Besides those few common tasks, I was also asked to perform other random tasks around the office. This was one of the best aspects of the internship because I was not only able to observe and experience the office lifestyle but also able to learn about the inner structures of our government. Sometimes I was fortunate enough to run errands in other congressional office buildings or the Capitol Building. There were times when I was asked to help out in the Foreign Relations Committee room in the Capitol. This was yet another fantastic opportunity because I was around many influential and important people. For example, at one point I was tasked with keeping press out of a meeting between a group of senators planning on reforming Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae through

a bi-partisan process. I also learned the importance of efficient work during a looming deadline. Our office was asked to edit, revise, and finalize a group of letters from Senator Corker to various members of the American Military and Afghanistan military and government. We needed to send them out by the end of the day but the Senator was leaving early we needed his signature and final approval. It was a stressful moment because there was little warning that this task was coming and these were letters addressed to some of the highest-ranking members of the US military and Afghanistan Government.

There are many things I took away from this internship experience. Although I have worked and interned in various places before, this was my first time in a place like this. For the first time, I felt like the work I was doing served a meaningful purpose. Before I began this internship, I had very little interest in working for the government, but the exciting sense of purpose I felt during even the most mundane tasks has seriously given me an interest in pursuing a job on Capitol Hill. I noticed a distinct energy in this office and that energy was contagious. Because activity generally slows down during the summer on Capitol Hill, there were times when I had nothing to do. However, the busy times were the most meaningful moments because they taught me more about the working environment as well as the structure of our own government. Furthermore, the goings on in this office as well as the information I was absorbing throughout created a desire in me to explore these various topics in my spare time. As a result, I have a much broader knowledge of our world's current events and a stronger desire to learn more. I want to thank the Tonya Public Affairs Internship fund for helping facilitate this amazing experience. This past summer has altered my future aspirations in a positive way.