Congressional Fellows Program

In July of 1996 the Board of Direction approved funds to initiate an ASCE Congressional Fellows Program. The Program provides an opportunity for an ASCE member to work for one year on the staff of a Congressional Committee, U.S. Senator or member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Fellows participate by taking a leave of absence from their regular jobs and serving a one year appointment as a Congressional staffer. The Fellow becomes directly involved in the process of crafting federal legislation and advising members of Congress. The Fellow benefits by learning how the federal government operates, developing leadership skills, expanding his or her horizons and having the opportunity to make an impact. ASCE benefits by having a member with an in-depth knowledge of the Congressional decision making process and the development of a network of members with experience, knowledge and contacts.

Most important, Congress and the nation benefit by having the daily participation of a skilled civil engineer with a depth of knowledge that is in short supply among members of Congress and their regular staff.

A Brief History

The Congressional Science and Engineering Fellows Program was created by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in 1973. That year seven engineers and scientists spent a year working on Capitol Hill. Since then, the program has expanded to include more than 40 Congressional Fellows annually.

Since its inception the Congressional Fellows Program has had several objectives.

- First and foremost was to create a cadre of Congressional staffers who understand science and engineering issues.
- Second was to develop a group of scientists and engineers who understand how Congress works and who will return to help the science and engineering community improve its ability to impact public policy.
- Third was to expose members of Congress and their staffs to the ways of thinking in scientific and engineering fields.
- Fourth was to make it easier for the general scientific and engineering community to deliver messages to Congress.

AAAS serves as the coordinating body among the more than twenty national science and engineering groups participating. AAAS’s involvement begins after the selection of Fellows by the participating organizations. Following a brief but intensive orientation, the Fellows move on to the placement process, during which Fellows find their specific assignments. Placement of Fellows is usually a matter of mutual agreement between a Fellow and a particular Congressional office.
How to Get Involved

The ASCE Congressional Fellowship is open to any ASCE member who is a U.S. citizen. Factors to be weighed by the selection committee include advanced degrees, registration as a Professional Engineer, involvement in ASCE, public policy experience and professional experience. Additionally, the selection committee must also be sensitive to possible conflict of interest concerns.

Funding for the Congressional Fellows program is augmented by a grant for the ASCE Foundation.