Evaluation of International Studies Internship

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1. Loretta Kerner
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2. The San Antonio office serves as the Congressman’s main office outside of his DC office. Therefore the main goals of the office as a whole include overall Texas representation, meaning authority over the other offices in the district. Congressman Cuellar serves the 28th district of Texas, and perhaps the most important role the San Antonio office plays is that of constituent representative. San Antonio is the largest city in the district; therefore it serves the largest body of constituents by default. If ever a constituent needs assistance they either phone in or visit the office. Beyond helping to manage the Congressman’s busy schedule and monitoring relations between the district offices, the San Antonio office primarily serves the constituents.

3. As an intern, my main task was often serving the constituents that either phone in or visit the office. Polling, as we refer to it in the office, is an extremely important part of the democratic process, as it allows for everyday citizens to both voice their opinions to the Congressman as well as seek assistance on personal matters. These issues include financial difficulties, military concerns or issues, or retirement struggles to name a few. As an intern, I would fill out the proper
documents regarding individual cases, and then either refer the case to a different government office or call or obtain information from different agencies to help with the case. I also spoke with many constituents who simply wanted to voice their opinions on political matters, which was often very interesting. Finally, there were a number of daily tasks that took place in the office each day, including correspondences between the offices, especially DC, as well as scheduling for the Congressman. During my time as an intern, I was given the opportunity to participate in the Congressional Art Competition, which invites high school students from the district to submit art work. After hanging the art work, the Congressman and the office chose their favorite piece to submit to Washington. Also, as it is nearing graduation time for high school seniors, interns in the office helped to submit Congressional certificates acknowledging the graduates achievements, which were sent to all graduating seniors.

4. Overall, the internship was a very positive experience. Certainly, it fulfilled my expectations as an intern, and in many ways exceeded them. My political experience was limited prior to this internship, but my understanding grew while serving the Congressman. Perhaps the most rewarding aspect for me personally was the opportunity to interact with so many constituents. I was both surprised as well as relieved to see the significant number of individuals that both sought aid from the Congressman as well as took the opportunity to provide their heartfelt opinion on matters. In many ways, I felt that I was given a rare opportunity to see a true democratic process take place.

5. My internship was relatively short, as I was only in the office twice a week for several hours each time. My recommendation for future interns would be to take on more hours, as I regret being unable to spend more time in the office. The interaction with the constituents keeps the internship from being at all mundane, and as time goes on, one realizes the value of the
relationship that is formed between each constituent and the individuals in the office. Finally, I recommend that future interns prepare themselves to think quickly and actively, and to prepare themselves for a truly unique experience.