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## Scientist Congressional Fellows

This week, the AAAS has initiated a Congressional Fellow Program designed to place scientists and engineers with congressional staffs for approximately 1 year.\* Limited funds place the possible number of fellows between three and six this year, but additional funds are being sought. The scientists who serve as congressional fellows will be assisting Congress, while deepening their understanding of the nation's technological and political problems. Their experience should be helpful to them personally and to the profession as a whole, whether they remain in government work or return to positions in teaching and research.

The AAAS is not alone in seeking to implement such a program. The American Society of Mechanical Engineers placed one fellow last January with the Senate Commerce Committee. The American Physical Society (APS) has approved in principle an APS congressional fellow program, and a committee is preparing a full proposal in cooperation with AAAS. At least four other scientist-interns have recently found their way into effective working relationships with Congress. One, an ecologist from Cornell, became involved with the Senate Air and Water Pollution subcommittee through the American Political Science Association's (APSA) long-established Congressional Fellow Program; another, a former APSA fellow and a physicist, is now a permanent staff member of the House Committee on Science and Astronautics; another, a biologist, worked part-time with the House Public Works Committee; and the fourth, a physicist, volunteered to work for a congressman concerned with the energy question and has now become that representative's administrative assistant.

In no way does the active involvement described above mean that the scientific and engineering societies are promulgating the erroneous philosophy that "only science can save the world." However, science and technology are crucial elements in the consideration of many problems facing decision-makers. The congressional staff includes a few people with strong scientific or engineering backgrounds, but the resources available to congressmen for informing themselves about the technical components of national issues and effectively utilizing existing scientific information are considerably less than those available to the Executive Branch. The reorganized Congressional Research Service and the emerging Office of Technology Assessment will provide greater informational resources, but the utilization of these by individual congressmen often requires an in-office capability.

Representative Mike McCormack (D-Wash.)—one of the very few trained natural scientists in Congress—stated in a talk presented during the 1972 AAAS Annual Meeting that a scientist-intern program would be immensely valuable to Congress and the scientific community. He observed that "there is a tremendous gulf of ignorance on both sides, and this sort of program would do a great deal to bridge that gulf." Regarding the kind of person who could make significant contributions in such a program, he noted: "We need young men and women [scientists and engineers] who have a social consciousness, who are interested in government; they must be flexible enough to become involved in the office work and then to make their contribution through expertise in this manner rather than coming in as scientific experts. . . ." McCormack commented that Congress would have no difficulty in using 50 to 100 such individuals today, if they were readily available.

It is hoped that the AAAS Congressional Fellow Program and the events described here will encourage other scientific and engineering societies to initiate similar activities, thus putting forth an effort to match the need and the opportunity.—RICHARD A. SCRIBNER, *Director, Science and Society Programs*

\* A fuller description of the AAAS Congressional Fellow Program appears in the April AAAS Bulletin. Further information can be obtained from the author.