



Yale College
Center for International & Professional Experience

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Class of 1960 John Heinz Government Service Fellowship
St. Paul, MN

The Office of Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton – Intensive Policy Internship

During the summer of 2015, I was privileged to work in the policy department of Minnesota governor Mark Dayton. As a lifelong Minnesotan, my time in St. Paul represented not only a meaningful educational opportunity but also a chance to contribute meaningfully to the state I call home. During my time in the Governor's office this summer I researched state environmental policy, briefed Governor Dayton on pertinent policy issues, and worked with other interns to develop a system for cataloguing policy letters and briefs in the office.

Before the internship began, two primary goals defined my thoughts about the approaching summer. First, I was determined to gain an understanding of the way in which private business and public policy interact to shape policy in the state of Minnesota. In other words, how much power do lobbyists really have? Second, and just as importantly, I wanted to engage with other interns in forming a community that would challenge my political assumptions and provide a space for productive conversation. I also wanted to ask the Governor about his time at Yale (he completed his undergraduate degree here), although that was more wish than goal.

After three months in Governor Dayton's office, I can honestly say that the internship exceeded all of my expectations and goals. Not only did I work with private sector interests on drafting policy (bass fishing, it turns out, is a big economic factor in northern MN) but I also spent hours talking directly with Governor Dayton's policy aides and his chief of staff. My cubicle was directly across the hall from Dayton's Deputy Chief of Staff, and I repeatedly found myself helping her with briefs and other policy procedures. Furthermore, I could not have asked for a better group of fellow interns. After the first awkward week of wary introductions, the group fell into the rhythm of the office and the rest was history. Over lunchtime debates in the cafeteria to long hours helping with tours at the Governor's mansion, we grew to know one another very, very well. I made friends and met role models that I will carry with me well into the future.

I applied for the Class of 1960 John Heinz Government Service Fellowship because of my commitment to creating strong communities through engagement with the political process. I firmly believe that we can create positive change in our communities by thinking long and hard about which policies we choose to support and whose ideas we choose to amplify. This internship provided me the opportunity to work in my home state and to generate positive change in my community.

I owe a heartfelt thank you to the Class of 1960 John Heinz Government Service Fellowship committee for honoring me with this fellowship. It is easy in the present day to forget the favors and generosity of the past: I will not forget the support and smiles I received from the committee on the day of my interview, nor will I let their generosity stop with me. I intend to pass it on. In all honesty, thank you.