

In November I had the opportunity to spend a month at the AAP's Federal Affairs office in Washington, D.C. This is headquarters for the lobbying efforts of the Academy. Fifteen staff stay informed about all legislation affecting children and pediatricians, lobby, and educate AAP members about advocacy. The Federal Affairs office offers training in policy, advocacy, and government all year round to residents who can commit at least two weeks time.

My activities varied greatly from day to day. I attended coalition meetings, researched EPA studies, and participated in the March of Dimes Pink and Blue Lighting Festival. I had two major projects which occupied most of my time. I helped prepare folders for the new congressional members describing the AAP's history, mission, and goals. This gave me the opportunity to learn about the health of children on a national basis and about pending legislation. My second project was preparing a presentation on advocacy that will be available from the Federal Affairs website for training. This was a great refresher course on the United States government. I also learned how something as simple as sending a letter to your congress member can profoundly affect the outcome of a bill.

November was a great time to be in DC not just because of the crisp fall air and beautifully colored leaves. It was election time and everyone was excited and anxious to see the results. Yasser Arafat passed away and everyone was focused on how new leadership would affect the pursuit of peace in the Middle East. The Homeland Security Advisory went from Orange to Yellow and I saw firsthand what this means as checkpoints were removed from around the capitol.

My time in D.C. was a great learning experience and I highly recommend this rotation to anyone interested. The staff were fun and helpful and DC is a great place to visit. More details can be found on the Federal Affairs website. If you only have a few days, try to attend one of the annual Legislative Conferences. This year it is April 10-12.