

PhDs—started their 12-month terms in Congress and the executive branch this summer as fellows of a program managed by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. More than 30 scientific organizations partner with AAAS to sponsor the fellows; the American Institute of Physics (AIP), which also sends a fellow to the State Department (see accompanying story), and some of its member societies are sponsoring seven congressional fellows this year, up two from 2008.

The public option

This year AIP and the Acoustical Society of America cosponsored PhD physicist Jeffrey Fox, who will focus on education policy in the office of Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM). Fox says he's learned that in Congress, "it's about knowing how to evaluate what the problem is and who to talk to." Although fellows traditionally gravitate toward science policy, "the health-care debate dominates backroom office discussions" right now, says PhD astrophysicist Marcos Huerta, this year's AIP/AVS congressional fellow, who is working on environmental issues for Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ). Huerta, who was a volunteer for Barack Obama's presidential campaign, says he'd like to stay on the policy track and may eventually consider running for public office.

Cosmologist heads to the State Department

In 2007 University of Chicago graduate student Matthew Sharp took a break from his research in experimental cosmology to attend a conference of the Union of Concerned Scientists. He says the experience of meeting scientists who contribute to public policy was "like climbing out of a cave and into the sunlight."

Now, after analyzing nuclear nonproliferation issues as a postdoc at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, Sharp will continue the evolution of his career as this year's American Institute of Physics State Department Fellow. He is working in the Office of Multilateral Nuclear and Security Affairs in the Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation. A few weeks into the fellowship, Sharp says one thing he has learned is that "meeting deadlines is more important than perfection." He is already looking to extend his fellowship but says he isn't ready to turn his back on physics forever.

Last year's AIP State Fellow Suzanne Koon is now a postdoc in nuclear astrophysics at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. "I wanted to stay on [at State], but given the available opportunities, I chose to return to science [research]," says Koon. Among the highlights of her time at the State Department, she lists travels to Egypt for a conference of the International Association of Geomagnetism and Aeronomy and to Zambia for a workshop in celebration of the International Heliophysical Year. **Jermev N. A. Matthews**



Sharp

"The change in administration has made it an exciting time to be in Washington," says this year's OSA/SPIE fellow, Matthew McMahon, who is on leave from Second Sight Medical Products Inc, a California company that develops visual prostheses for the blind. A PhD experimental psychologist, McMahon is working on space and

climate-change issues as a staff member for the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. Also working on climate-change legislation is midcareer PhD industrial geologist Maeve Boland, a native of Ireland and this year's American Geophysical Union (AGU) fellow. The Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act, the

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