

Let's Support a Congressional Science Fellow

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Integrated pest management (IPM) is one of many complicated issues facing Congress. The complex scientific and technical nature of IPM increases our need to assist congressmen and their staffs. Most of the meetings of the Intersociety Consortium for Plant Protection (ISCPP) are held in downtown Washington, DC, or nearby. The ISCPP consists of the American Phytopathological Society (APS), the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA), the Entomological Society of America (ESA), and the Society of Nematologists (SON).

The ISCPP is considering how we might collectively support a Congressional Science Fellow. If we decide to do it, each of the constituent societies must agree to provide a significant portion of the \$25,000 annual salary cost. The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) will help cosponsor the first fellow for ISCPP. AAAS then coordinates the entire program. Several societies (AAAS, American Institute of Biological Sciences, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, American Chemical Society, American Physical Sciences Society) during the past decade have availed themselves of this educational mechanism without compromising their nonprofit tax-free status and their nonlobbying status. Thirty science fellows now serve their societies on the Washington scene. Each has a 1-year tenure. Fellows offer special skills to our politicians and in turn acquire valuable experience of great benefit to their employer and, more important, to society.

The purpose of the Congressional Science Fellow program is to provide a unique public-policy learning experience, to demonstrate the value of science-government interaction, and to make practical contributions to the more effective use of scientific and technical knowledge in government.

If, as a newly graduated Ph.D., you wish to avail yourself of this opportunity, you must be mature, knowledgeable, and broadly educated. You will be expected to serve entomology, weed science, plant pathology, and nematology. The support staffs in the offices of senators and representatives require facts and figures to make decisions just as do scientists in extension and research.

Possibly, if one were to select an ideal individual, he or she would be a professor with enough experience and educational

background to have a maximum impact in that "short" year. Only 1 year is available to you to do this work, so you have to learn fast and deliver your message quickly, decisively, and accurately. A mature person perhaps can find the way around the offices and the chambers more easily and quickly than someone younger, but no matter what the person's age, the prime requisite is a willingness and desire to do this work.

During an intensive 2-week orientation program, the fellow and the congressional office with which he or she wishes to associate reach mutual agreements on cooperation and on the specific legislative, oversight, and investigative work to be done. Support by ISCPP suggests that a significant portion of that work should directly influence or benefit some aspect of integrated pest management or pesticide activities or encourage funding of basic science in agricultural pest biology. By performing as a regular staff member, the fellow would educate many others about IPM and in this way influence congressional thinking. The fellow would be expected to attend the annual meeting of each constituent (APS, ESA, SON, WSSA, and ISCPP) and give a progress report of activities plus obtain education and information valuable to his or her work in Washington.

Characteristics important in a fellow are clear thinking, self-starting with exceptional competence in a plant protection science, a rather broad professional background, cognizance of many matters both scientific and nonscientific, keen communication skills both oral and written, a willingness to learn and to work with a variety of people, an expressed interest in applying knowledge toward the solution of societal problems, possession of a high tolerance for ambiguity, and ability to work under occasional pressure. He or she must be flexible and adaptable.

Why not consider a sabbatical leave with a new twist. You can be much more useful to your faculty once you return from a year of bouncing around and between the Senate and the House offices, the Congressional Library, and "up and down The Hill." We as scientists can gain a respect for the job the politicians must do. Politicians can gain a greater respect for agricultural science, for research and for extension, and for the information available to them.

Further information is available in the November 7, 1980, issue of *Science* (page 183) and the August 1977 issue of *Physics Today* (page 36), and the AAAS offices will provide details.

I believe APS has grown to the stature and maturity whereby we can ill afford not to take a positive action such as this. My personal view is that we should help provide support for a fellow. As one of your three voting ISCPP Council members, I seek your advice. Council can then deliberate in a knowledgeable manner on this issue. If all four societies agree to assist in providing support, we could have a fellow on board September 1, 1984.