

Weekly Report: 6/20 – 6/24
Olivia Pham

Monday June 20, 2016

David Abernethy - Managing Director, Winston Fellowship
Kerry McAteer - Operations Manager, Winston Fellowship

Earlier in the morning, Kerry gave us a quick orientation to the Winston office and wrapped up the few remaining tasks related to our onboarding. She and David graciously treated us to lunch where they discussed the history of the Winston Fellowship. David provided us his thoughts on the current health policy landscape.

Susan Winston - Board Member, Winston Fellowship

Mrs. Winston discussed with us the history of the Winston Fellowship and shared stories about her late husband. She suggested that we speak to several former board members including Dr. Bob Rubin and Dorcas Hardy.

Tuesday June 21, 2016

Laura Berntsen - Sr. Advisor for HHS, Committee on Finance

Ms. Berntsen shared her career path with us and talked about her work on entitlement programs, specifically TANF. She mentioned that she would be working on a huge TANF reform bill next year, and would attempt to transform TANF into a state-federal match program. Having worked in both Senator Wyden's personal office and on a committee, she gave us an interesting piece of advice: if we want to see people make decisions, then we should work in a personal office. If we want to really work, then we should work on a committee. One of the first policy topics I ever had an interest in was entitlement programs – I'm glad we had a chance to discuss some of these programs and renew my interest.

Chip Kahn – President & CEO, Federation of American Hospitals

Over lunch, Chip told us about the history of health reform and his role in creating some of the most important health policy legislation in recent history. He talked about the "Harry and Louise" campaign, and provided us with insight on the Republican approach to healthcare. We briefly discussed the recently released Republican health reform plan, and talked at some length about ACOs, their effectiveness, and the research around them. On a whim I asked Chip about his personal relationship with Newt Gingrich and what the man was like in person – Chip graciously offered to try and secure a meeting with him!

Chris Jennings – President, Jennings Policy Strategies

Chris Jennings asked both fellows about our interests and made several helpful suggestions about people with whom we should speak. He gave us his insights as to ideal placements for each of us, keeping in mind the upcoming change in administration. He also gave excellent practical advice on how to make ourselves valuable staffers: showing humility (especially in our knowledge of policy and the culture of the hill), building trust, producing quality work, and taking a keen interest in the members and *their* interests. I think that one of the most important pieces of advice he gave us was to “become the expert you want to be”.

Dean Rosen - Partner, Mehlman Castagnetti Rosen & Thomas Inc.

Like Chris, Dean asked both fellows about our interests and proceeded to give us several ideas for placement and for meetings. Specifically, he mentioned that I should read Sen. McCain’s POLITICO article on Medicaid and to speak to Melanie Bells. He also suggested two things: declare our partisanship for placement, and find an office that will nurture us and help us grow. Dean then spoke at length about his firm and about their clients. I find it interesting that many of his clients, though seemingly unrelated to health policy, take a keen interest in even the smallest health policy changes that could impact their relationship to their employees.

Lydia Orth and Adrianna McIntyre

Lydia and Adrianna invited us to dinner to discuss our transition into the fellowship and to answer our questions. We talked about their experience as fellows and received quite a few ideas for meetings and for conferences, including the annual AcademyHealth conference next year. I am especially interested in visiting the CDC, as Lydia did. They both gave us the advice to use our entire travel fund and to ask organizations if they will waive our conference fees. Congratulations to both Adrianna and Lydia on their accomplishments as fellows and on their upcoming career developments!

Wednesday June 22, 2016

Amy Hall - Minority Staff Director, House Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Health

Since the Republican health reform plan and the Medicare Trustees report had been recently released, the office was extremely busy and we only met with Ways and Means briefly. However, in that time, Ms. Hall told us that Ways and Means would certainly be interested in another fellow and that we should expect a fast-paced environment with a broad range of work areas. We would be able to attend hearings and engage witnesses. We would also be able to work on messaging, write legislation, take constituent

meetings, and produce in-depth reports if we wished. We will be scheduling another meeting with Amy for a later time.

Elizabeth Karan - Associate, Feldesmann Tucker Leifer Fidel LLP

Elizabeth shared her experience with us as a former fellow and her placement on the Finance Committee. She also discussed her current work in federal grant compliance. We talked for some time on her 340B clients since I am familiar with the program.

Minority Staff, House Energy & Commerce Committee

E&C treated our meeting very much like an interview and really delved into our interests. Since E&C has such broad jurisdiction, they assured us that they would be able to find us an interesting portfolio. I was very surprised to learn that we would be allowed to join investigations, participate in negotiations, read testimony, and develop questions for witnesses. Tiffany Guarascio, Chief Health Adviser, emphasized that there is variety in every day and that E&C is a fast-paced environment. I really appreciated the diversity of the team in both interests and personality.

Joe Antos - Wilson H. Taylor Scholar in Health Care and Retirement Policy, AEI

During our meeting, I told Joe that I was interested in learning about finance and budgetary decisions in legislation. He suggested that I in turn educate myself on health financing and Medicare payment, especially Medicare regulations and MedPAC. He also spoke about a potential placement at CBO or OMB, but advised against it because I do not have a strong background in economics. He suggested that the best place for me to gain knowledge in health financing would be the Finance Committee. Joe said that “to understand policy, you have to understand minutia”. This really struck me and encouraged me to 1) find out what skills I am lacking and 2) find a way to address those deficiencies.

B'nai B'rith National Healthcare Award Dinner

Chip Kahn kindly invited the fellows to the 2016 B'nai B'rith National Healthcare Award Dinner in his honor. B'nai B'rith is an international Jewish community service organization that serves people around the world, with healthcare as one of their areas of focus. Chip was honored with the National Healthcare Award and with acknowledgments to his long career in health policy. Newt Gingrich and Speaker Nancy Pelosi were both featured in a tribute video. It was wonderful to see Chip being honored for his work, and to learn more about his family and his hobbies (especially his photography). Congratulations to Chip!

Thursday June 23, 2016

The 2016 Medicare Trustees Report: One year closer to IPAB cuts?

Joe Antos invited us to this panel discussion at the Brookings Institute on the 2016 Medicare Trustees Report. Joe acted as panel leader, and CMS Actuary Paul Spitalnic spoke at length about the new Medicare insolvency date. Mr. Spitalnic explained why previous projections had been inaccurate and then discussed some of the implications of the new insolvency date on future spending cuts from IPAB.

Mary Grealy – President, Healthcare Leadership Council

We met with Mary, Debbie Witchey, and Tina Olson Grande to discuss HLC and their members. Learning how they navigate conflict among their members and reach consensus was very interesting to me. After hearing I was interested in evidence-based policy structures, Ms. Olson Grande suggested three offices that I would like to explore: the Office of Science and Technology, PCORI, and the VA. She also suggested we speak to Claudia Williams, who is leading the cancer moonshot.

Meghan Taira – Legislative Director, Office of Senator Charles Schumer

During our meeting with Meghan, we discussed our upcoming meetings and received general advice about our experience. She made the specific suggestion of balancing questions about mandatory programs with questions about public health. We will be having our weekly check-in call with her every Friday.

Jay Khosla - Chief Health Counsel and Policy Director, Senate Committee on Finance

Jay spoke with us about his experience as a fellow and provided advice on how to make the most of our experience. He mentioned that the Budget Committee would be an excellent place to develop technical skill, which would be valuable after the fellowship. He also suggested we study rising premium costs and MACRA to prepare ourselves for September.

Monica Popp - Chief of Staff at the Office of the Senate Republican Whip John Cornyn

While in the office of the Majority Whip, Monica took time to speak with us about her day-to-day work. I very much enjoyed our conversation because she suggested we develop the following concrete skills:

- Always know your opponent's position and why that is their position.
- Have mutual respect for the opposition.
- Learn how CBO scores legislation and what the scores mean.
- Understand statutory structure and legislative language. Find opportunities to write legislation.

KT Kramer and Leif Brierly

KT and Leif kindly took us to dinner and discussed their fellowship experience with us. In particular, I asked Leif about his experience in Sen. Bennet's office. I have a friend currently serving as a health policy fellow in Sen. Bennet's office, and it was reassuring to hear the same positive things about the office from Leif. I also really enjoyed hearing about KT's Peace Corp assignment in Turkmenistan and her previous experience at the VA. Over this past week I have been thinking about the VA as an area of interest, although I do not know of any fellows who have taken a placement on that Committee/Department.

Friday, June 24, 2016

Winston Fellowship Luncheon

Following a board meeting, the board enjoyed lunch and heard closing statements from both Lydia Orth and Adrianna McIntyre, as well as their respective preceptors.

Glenna Crooks – President, SageMyLife, Inc.

Glenna has had a long and varied career in health policy, it really was a pleasure to speak with her! It was fascinating to hear about her approach to public health and her role in shaping major pieces of legislation, especially regarding orphan drugs and the HIV/AIDS crisis. I also appreciated speaking to someone who approaches health policy from a public health perspective. As Glenna described her company and the importance of human networks, she brought my mind to the topic of patient engagement (which is a topic of interest to me). I am unaware as to which placement would allow me to work on patient engagement assignments, but I will continue to explore my options. Something I have found truly satisfying this week is the reawakening of my interest in different healthcare topics. I previously believed that I had to focus in on a narrow set of interests to get the most out of this fellowship, but as I reflect on my experiences this week I no longer think this is true. I believe that these interviews are meant to expand our interests, and to find a placement that will allow us to explore as many of them as we can.