



Supporting a New House Intern Resource Office



internproject.org



FIRST BRANCH INTERN PROJECT

TO: Committee on House Administration Chair Bryan Steil
Committee on House Administration Ranking Member Joseph Morelle

CC: Members of the Committee on House Administration
Chief Administrative Officer Catherine Szpindor
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Lisa Sherman

RE: House Intern Resource Office

DATE: April 25, 2023

Dear Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle:

The organizations of the First Branch Intern Project listed below commend the House on taking steps to establish a House Intern Resource Office (HIRO) within the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer.

Congressional internships provide insightful political training and experience that are integral to the professional perspective often necessary to work on Capitol Hill. For interns who are on the Hill, internships can be difficult to navigate, with each office utilizing a different onboarding process and management structure. There is no centralized institutional recordkeeping on internships offered — how many are paid, how many in district or DC offices, how many are remote or hybrid. Similarly, the House does not currently track intern demographics such as economic, geographic and racial diversity; the various paths to securing and internship; and whether compensation is sufficient — especially for those who work and live in Washington, DC.

We note the bipartisan work of the 116th and 117th Congresses that laid the foundation for this development, including recommendation #110 in the final report of the House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress:

Intern and Fellowship Program Office or Coordinator

The House should establish an Intern and Fellowship Program Office or Coordinator that helps with onboarding, developing educational curriculum, professional development, and training for office coordinators.

This recommendation was further developed in the FY2023 Appropriations report:

House Intern Resource Office

The recommendation provides \$350,000 for the creation of a House Intern Resource Office within the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The House Intern Resource Office shall promulgate best practices for intern hiring; provide guidance, training, support, assistance to interns regarding their work environment; connect with personal, committee and leadership offices regarding the use of funding rules and regulations for internships; reach out to historically underrepresented communities to provide greater internship opportunities; and gather demographic and other data about interns (including stipends and wage rates) employed by the House of Representatives in personal, committee, and leadership offices and to make publicly available statistical summaries and trends concerning that data.

Housing of U.S. House of Representatives Interns

Finding short-term housing as an intern can be challenging. The Committee directs the CAO House Intern Resource Office to submit a report on the feasibility and potential impacts of a needs-based subsidized intern housing program, such as the subsidized housing provided for the Senate Page program, to ensure the broadest pool of applicants for House internships. This report should include any recommendations for legislative proposals. Furthermore, the Committee directs the House Intern Resource Office to explore the possibility of providing a list of intern housing resources and report its findings to the Committee no later than 180 days after enactment.

This recommendation follows the successful launch of related efforts over the past few years, including the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the House Human Resources Hub and the House Resume Bank. These initiatives have expanded access to Congressional employment opportunities, increased pipeline diversity, and contributed important resources for those seeking and attaining a position in the House of Representatives. We believe the House Intern Resource Office will build on and expand this important work.

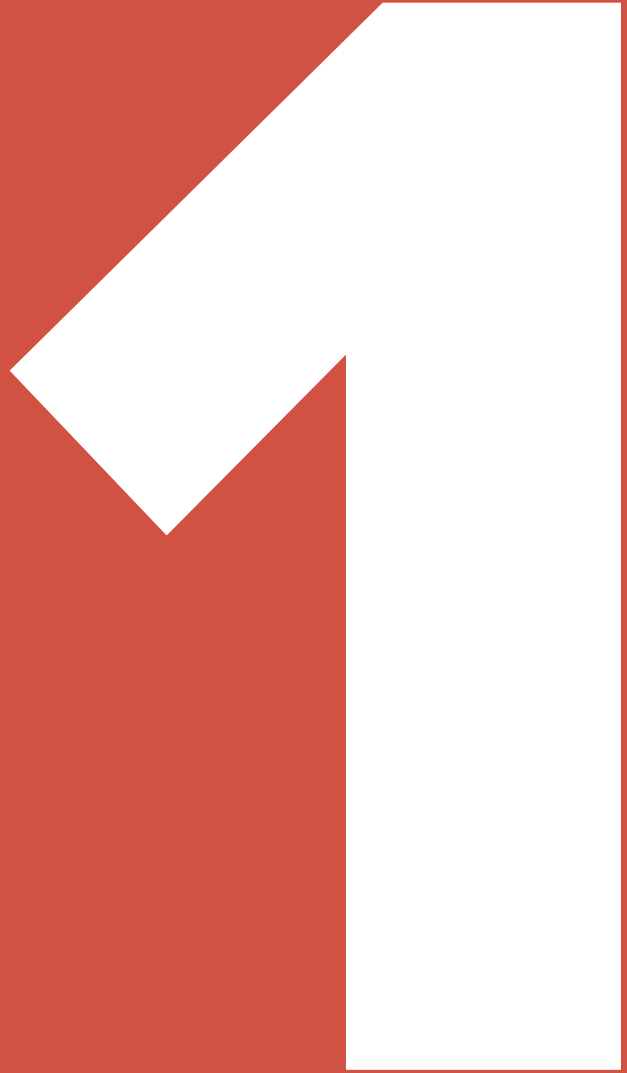
As organizations that work to support and encourage congressional internships, we welcome any opportunity to provide technical assistance to help with the launch of the House Intern Resource Office. The attached document provides recommendations and links to existing resources relevant to these specifics, along with a timeline for major intern-related events that may be helpful in your efforts.

Again, we offer our deep appreciation for the work of this Committee to support Congressional interns through a new House Intern Resource Office and welcome any opportunity to engage, support or amplify your efforts in the months and years ahead.

Sincerely,

Asian Pacific American Institute for
Congressional Studies
BPC Action
Black Women's Congressional Alliance
College to Congress
Congressional Black Caucus Foundation
Congressional Management Foundation
Demand Progress Education Fund

Pay Our Interns
Partnership for Public Service
POPVOX
POPVOX Foundation
Prolegis
TourTrackr
United States Capitol Historical Society
Victory Institute



Background: Creation of the House Intern Resource Office



Lessons and Insights from Similar Offices



While the House Intern Resource Office will be the first House office specifically to serve interns, the House has piloted several successful similar initiatives in the last several years: in particular, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), and the Office of the Whistleblower Ombuds (Whistleblower) are relatively similar in their scope, budgets, and missions.

The First Branch Intern Project brought these organizations together earlier this spring for a closed-door conversation on what the House Intern Resource Office can learn from their experience standing up new staff-facing offices. From this conversation, we identified three primary takeaways:

1. Establishing a Clear Mission

Both offices—ODI and Whistleblower—agreed that working to establish a clear mission, vision, and metrics for success early in this office’s establishment will be helpful in focusing activity and making smart use of taxpayer resources. This should be expressed in nonpartisan terms that resonate with internal and external stakeholders.

A clearly articulated mission will also help this office identify its “lane” in the larger ecosystem of support resources for Congressional staff. For example, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion identified three primary value-adds that they provide that are duplicated nowhere else in the House:

1. Candidate services, including professional development, for potential applicants from diverse backgrounds for roles in Member offices and committees
2. Early-career support for hires from diverse backgrounds starting in their new Congressional roles, and
3. Structural support for representative hiring practices, including breaking down silos between different hiring authorities, and sharing best hiring practices for diverse hiring.

These three areas help ODI focus on building a pipeline of talent that is representative of the country as a whole, while avoiding duplicating work performed by other organizations including:

- » HR Hub
- » House Resume Bank
- » CAO Coach Program
- » Congressional Staff Academy, and
- » Staff Associations.

2. Data for Evaluation and Success

For both offices, the ability to gather and analyze in-house data is vital to evaluate offerings and communicate successes and resource needs to stakeholders. Using data effectively depends on two factors:

1. The ability to work with data in-house by hiring for data and analytics skills, and
2. Building data and feedback into office activities from the start.

For example, the Office of the Whistleblower Ombuds prepares a [yearly annual report](#) examining progress toward defined goals, as well as quarterly reports presented to a network of internal and external stakeholders at regular virtual meetings. These reports focus on defined, measurable metrics, including the number of House offices who have attended a training, consult calls answered from House offices, downloads of self-service resources, and more. These reports help make a concrete case for the office's activities as a good use of taxpayer resources, and identify areas for further effort.

3. Building a Network of Champions

Finally, while both offices are focused on staff, both noted their collaboration with networks of external stakeholders that can help serve as validators, promote messaging and resources, and share observations and expertise that help the offices identify and serve House needs. For ODI, this may include college and university networks to help recruit early-career professionals; for Whistleblowers, this includes whistleblower support and advocacy organizations who may help refer whistleblowers and Congressional staffers to House resources.

The discussion also raised several questions that may be important for early leadership at the House Intern Resource Office to review and discuss in consultation with CAO, CHA, and other stakeholders:

- » How will this office balance service to prospective interns and currently-serving interns?
- » How public-facing will the office be?
- » How will this office interact with the network of paid internship/fellowship programs that place interns/fellows on the Hill?



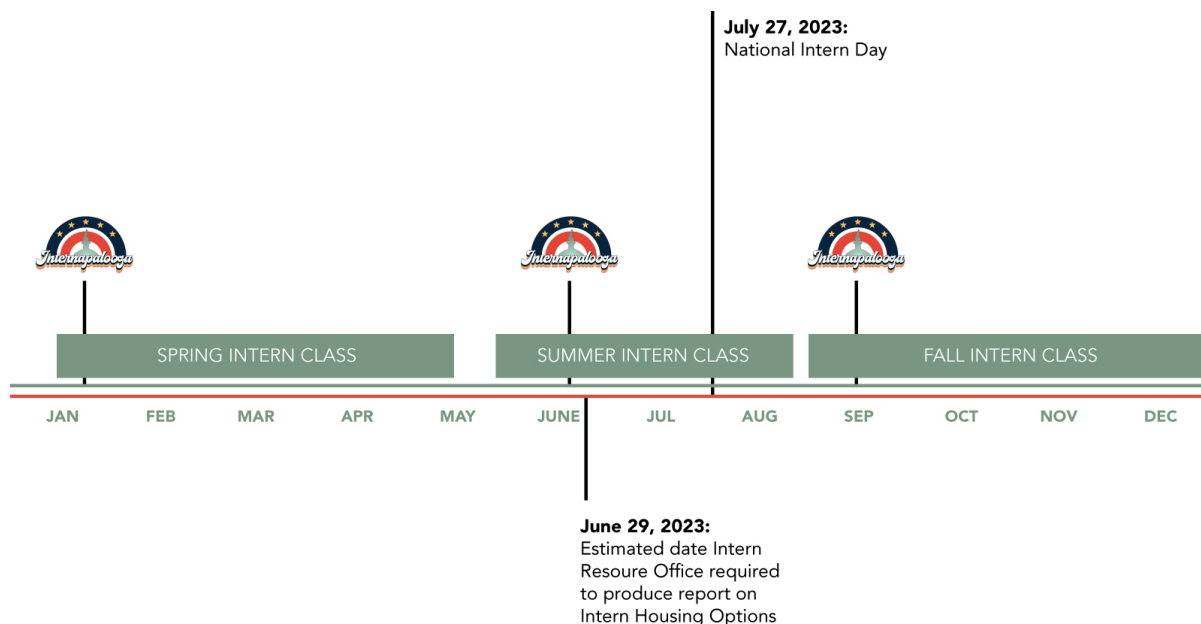
Key Dates for the 118th Congress



Key Dates for the 118th Congress



The FY23 House Legislative Branch Appropriations bill report provides \$350,000 for the creation of a House Intern Resource Office within the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). While the appropriated funds must be used in FY23, the only other date mentioned is a requirement that the CAO House Intern Resource Office “submit a report on the feasibility and potential impacts of a needs-based subsidized intern housing program” to the Committee “no later than 180 days after enactment.”



The image above highlights rough estimates for when interns start and finish in Spring, Summer and Fall (though each office has its own policy about start and end dates).

“Internapalooza” Welcome and Orientation events

Since October of 2021, the organizations of the First Branch Intern Project have hosted “Internapalooza” – a welcome and orientation event every semester for incoming interns. The first four (Fall 2021, Spring 2022, Summer 2022, Fall 2022) were held “in collaboration with the House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress.” The Spring 2023 Internapalooza was held on January 19, 2023 with thanks to the Committee on House Administration for assistance in securing the CVC Auditorium for the program. The First Branch Intern Project hopes to work with the new House Intern Resource Office for future Internapalooza events, which are scheduled for June 8th, 2023 for the summer program, and tentatively for September 8th, 2023 for the fall.

National Intern Day: July 27, 2023

We also commit to working with the House Intern Resource Office to recognize current interns and raise awareness about Congressional internship opportunities on National Intern Day, July 27, 2023.



**Resources to Support
the Work of the House
Intern Resource Office**



Intern-related Resources

As organizations that have worked for years to support Congressional interns, the organizations of the First Branch Intern Project welcome the opportunity to contribute to and support the work of the new House Intern Resources Office. Many First Branch Intern Project organizations provide or have created resources that directly address or may be helpful context and templates for HIRO responsibilities as outlined in the recommendations and language above. Examples include:

“Promulgate best practices for intern hiring”

- » Modernization Staff Association’s [Staff Assistant/Legislative Correspondent Best Practices Guide](#), includes a section on setting up an internship program and hiring interns (p. 30)
- » [Intern Coordinator Training](#) (Modernization Staff Association)
- » Joint webinar, [Successful Management & Wellbeing of Remote Interns](#)

“Provide guidance, training, support, assistance to interns regarding their work environment”

Since Fall members of the First Branch Intern Project have hosted “[Internapalooza](#),” a collaborative free, nonpartisan orientation and welcome event for incoming Congressional interns. Over the five previous events, the event has refined its scope to focus on resources for interns on networking, career planning, and making a good impression in their host offices. Internapalooza has hosted almost 2,000 interns from hundreds of House and Senate offices; many Internapalooza attendees have gone on to jobs in Congress and now send their own interns to attend. Demand for Internapalooza (and similar events for prospective interns and district interns) continues to be high.

The First Branch Intern Project also runs a [weekly newsletter](#) specifically for interns, with a focus on understanding Congress, staying up-to-date on Congressional events, and sharing resources for career opportunities after an internship.

Additional intern support [resources](#) include:

- » Internapalooza Event: [What to Expect in your Congressional Internship](#)
- » [Affordable Housing in the DMV](#) (Modernization Staff Association)
- » [Affordable Workwear in the DMV](#) (Modernization Staff Association)

{continued on following page}

- » Internapalooza Resource: [Wrapping Up your Internship](#)
- » [Congressional Intern Handbook: A Guide for Interns and Newcomers to Capitol Hill](#) (Congressional Management Foundation)
- » [Internship Resources Center](#) (Pay Our Interns)
- » [2023 Summer Guide for Interns](#) (Pay Our Interns)
- » [C2C U](#) (College to Congress)

“Connect with personal, committee and leadership offices regarding the use of funding rules and regulations for internships”

TourTrackr, POPVOX, and Modernization Staff Association’s [How to Pay Congressional Interns](#) Guide

“Reach out to historically underrepresented communities to provide greater internship opportunities”

Multiple First Branch Intern Project member organizations offer internship programs supporting historically underrepresented communities.

- » Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies [Congressional Internship Program](#)
- » [Black Women’s Congressional Alliance](#)
- » College to Congress [Internship Program](#)
- » Congressional Black Caucus Foundation [Internship Program](#)
- » Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute [Internship Program](#)
- » [National Association of Latino Elected Officials](#)
- » Victory Institute [Victory Congressional Internship](#)

Additionally, Congressional intern demographic information gathered by the First Branch Intern Project through Internapalooza events points to other underserved populations: namely, interns from low-income households, interns from households where one or both parents do not have college degrees, and interns attending community colleges.

“Gather demographic and other data about interns (including stipends and wage rates) employed by the House of Representatives in personal, committee, and leadership offices”

A survey to gather intern demographic information has been a central component of Internapalooza since the fall of 2021. The Internapalooza survey was developed in consultation with academic researchers, current and former interns, and members of the First Branch Intern Project. Questions cover demographics in line with best practices from the Census bureau, family and educational background, prior experience, sources of financial support, and educational goals and concerns related to serving as a Congressional intern.

- » Current survey questions are available [here](#).
- » [Additional research](#) on Congressional intern demographics and pay from Pay Our Interns

“Make publicly available statistical summaries and trends concerning that data”

As noted above, the First Branch Intern Project has collected survey data from Internapalooza registrants over the past five Internapalooza events. Notable findings from this data include:

- » 2061 current and prospective interns registered for Internapalooza events since Fall 2021
- » Interns identifying as racial/ethnic minorities or mixed-race have been the majority of Internapalooza participants at 3 out of 5 previous Internapalooza events
- » A majority of interns have reported being paid by their employing offices at 4 out of 5 previous Internapalooza events
- » Interns' top identified barriers to a Congressional internship are consistently:
 - Affording moving costs/DC cost of living
 - Lack of mentorship/no one to ask questions about interning for Congress
 - Getting through the competitive selection process
- » Interns' top identified worries about succeeding in a Congressional internship are consistently:
 - Finding friends and mentors in their internships
 - Getting up to speed on Congressional operations and procedure
 - Building up confidence in a busy office environment

Anonymized datasets from previous Internapalooza events can be found [here](#).

Participating First Branch Intern Project Organizations



Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS)

A national non-partisan, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to promoting Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander participation and representation at all levels of the political process, from community service to elected office.

Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC)

A not-for-profit organization that ensures policymakers work across party lines to craft bipartisan solutions.

BPC Action

The premier federal political advocate for bipartisan solutions to the challenges facing our country—including health, security, and economic growth.

Black Women’s Congressional Alliance (BWCA)

The Black Women’s Congressional Alliance supports over 500 Black women who work in the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate. We are challenging the ‘ole boys network’ by building a pipeline of our own.

College to Congress (C2C)

Systematically changing Congress by empowering a diverse, inclusive, and effective generation of public servants through a comprehensive program that levels the playing field for Congressional interns.

Congressional Black Caucus Foundation

Advancing the global Black community by developing leaders, informing policy, and educating the public.

Congressional Management Foundation (CMF)

Advancing citizen trust in an effective and responsive Congress by working directly with Members of Congress and staff to enhance their operations and interactions with constituents.

Demand Progress Education Fund

Educating members and the general public about matters pertaining to the democratic nature of our nation’s communications infrastructure and governance structures and mobilizing them to engage with executive branch agencies with jurisdiction over these matters.

{continued on following page}

Pay Our Interns

The nation's leading organization fighting to ensure all students have equitable access to professional career paths through the implementation of paid internships countrywide—especially students from historically excluded communities.

Partnership for Public Service

Helping our government address the challenges of the moment to better solve big problems in a bipartisan manner.

POPVOX

A neutral, nonpartisan platform for civic engagement and governing with a mission to inform and empower people and make government work better for everyone.

POPVOX Foundation

Supporting innovation in government and civic engagement, including reimagining the concept of civic infrastructure and providing new ways for government to share information and engage the public with an emphasis on diverse participation and rebuilding public trust.

Prolegis

Prolegis is a free, non-partisan, all-in-one legislative solution designed for and by Congressional staffers and policy professionals.

TourTrackr

Digitizing, streamlining, and organizing the tour booking process.

United States Capitol Historical Society (USCHS)

Founded in 1962, the USCHS is chartered by Congress to educate the public on the history and heritage of the U.S. Capitol, its institutions and the people who have served therein.

Victory Institute

The only national organization dedicated to elevating openly LGBTQ+ leaders who can further equality at all levels of government.