

Congressional Insight

Political Education Program

With knowledge comes empathy and with empathy comes an understanding of how to be a more effective grassroots activist for YOUR (animal science) profession.

If you are the least bit curious to walk a mile in the shoes of a politician, be sure to plan to attend this Legislative Workshop during the Western meeting. This program will be presented by ASAS staff and is an integral part of ASAS-FASS grassroots education.

The *Congressional Insight* (CI) program is a novel, state-of-the art, interactive computer model designed to simulate a two-year term of office in congress. This program is a lot of fun, time passes incredibly quickly, and participating in the workshop will illustrate to you why politicians must (or should) make some of the decisions they do.

The objectives of the program are to introduce you to the pressures faced by a member of congress, show you the demands placed on their time, help you understand that legislators are public officials whose actions are open to public scrutiny, and to provide you with a better understanding of the role of elected officials and their staffs.

The format focuses on policy and political issues and effectively demonstrates some of the tough decisions faced by elected officials. Teams of up to eight people represent a newly elected member of congress. Each team is given a specific biography, district description, and political party/staff information. Teams select staff, choose party leaders, and deal with issues of public policy. Policy issues are discussed and each team has to reach a consensus to solve the problem in a given period of time. To realistically complicate the picture, your answers to posed questions generate local and national press articles, while other unrelated news bulletins, which could affect your voting decisions, are announced along the way. Managing time, especially in the election year, between meetings and fundraising events in Washington, D.C. and the district becomes quite a juggling exercise.

Each team, representing one member of congress, faces an election at the end of their two-year term. The outcome is a direct, cumulative result of all the decisions, wise or not so wise, each team makes along the way. Those animal scientists interested in politics at the grassroots level will benefit from and enjoy this "game" immensely. The new format for the 107th Congressional (2001-02) version of CI is predicated with correct political party control of the House of Representatives (R) and White House (R).

If you are interested in bringing this grassroots education program to your Animal Science Department or other animal science affiliated meeting, contact Dr. Ellen Bergfeld, Executive Director ASAS, 217-356-9050, or via e-mail at ellenb@assochq.org. The address is ASAS 1111 North Dunlap, Savoy, IL. 61874. The facsimile number is 217-398-4119. Thank you for your interest.