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Thanks to the financial support from the Center on Civility & Democratic Engagement, I was able to spend a semester living, studying and interning in Washington, D.C. I was an intern at the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) in the U.S. Department of Justice and had the opportunity to work with the attorneys, paralegals and administrative staff in the Solicitor General's office. The Solicitor General, Donald Verilli, represents the U.S. government before the Supreme Court. The role of the Solicitor General is to decide which cases the government will appeal, what position the government will take, and whether the government will act as *amicus curiae* in cases the government is not directly involved in. The Solicitor General, appointed by the President, yet known as the "tenth Justice," serves as the bridge between the Executive Branch and the Judicial Branch. Therefore, interning in the OSG was the perfect way to gain exposure to law, government and Supreme Court litigation.

The highlight of my internship was attending two oral arguments in the Supreme Court, *Lockhart v. United States* and *Fisher v. University of Texas, Austin*. For both cases, I had the opportunity to arrive at the Supreme Court with the OSG attorneys and assistants and visit the Solicitor General's Supreme Court office until the oral argument began. The *Lockhart* case was a great learning experience for me, because my internship supervisor gave me the assignment of writing a legal brief on the case. It was my first time writing a legal brief, but I had several resources at my disposal, such as past legal briefs from OSG attorneys and the Department of Justice Library. It was also amazing to have my brief judged by a panel of paralegals from the Department of Justice.

Attending the *Fisher* case was an even more exciting experience, because I had the opportunity to hear the Solicitor General, Donald Verilli, argue as *amicus curiae*. Public engagement in the case was visible from the public seating at the Supreme Court, which was at maximum capacity, to the peaceful protest outside that advocated for affirmative action. I also witnessed civility through the discussions about the case in my Supreme Court class. Throughout the discussion, we were receptive to others' opinions on the merits and constitutionality of affirmative action.

My internship also offered an opportunity to increase public knowledge about the Solicitor General's office. I was in charge of reviewing the OSG website for compliance to federal standards, such as the Plain Writing Act of 2010, which requires that the government release information that the general public can understand, regardless of whether they have a background in law or politics. While reviewing the website, I also offered recommendations to make the website more accessible to non-English speakers and people with disabilities, so that more people would have an opportunity to become informed and therefore engaged in the government.

Living in D.C. for a semester was an amazing experience. I loved that every block of Washington seems to be a piece of history. I loved touring the Smithsonian museums, walking through the monuments, and visiting the Library of Congress. One of my favorite things about D.C. was that almost everyone is informed about what is happening in Congress, the Supreme Court and the White House. Washington is a great place to witness civility and democratic engagement in action, and there were always opportunities to become more informed about the issues. From Congressional hearings, to think-tank lectures, to UCDC's Monday Night Forums, I truly felt connected to government and politics.

One thing I took away from my experience in Washington was that California is one of the states least represented in Washington, even though we have the greatest number of U.S. Representatives in the House. While Washington is definitely not the only place for democratic engagement, I do believe that it is important to encourage California students to spend some time in the nation's capital and help bring our ideas to the forefront. I am grateful to the UCDC Program and the Center on Civility & Democratic Engagement for allowing me to have one of the greatest experiences in my college career. I hope to one day return to D.C. and work as an attorney in the Department of Justice.