Andrew Ayala  
UCDC Experience Fall 2013

During my internship at the Office of Congresswoman Linda Sanchez, I was able to see government working in a very personal manner. I was here during two major events in the United States: when the United States threatened to launch missiles at Syria and when the government shut down for the first time in almost 20 years. When I reflect on my time here and analyze it based on what I think civility and democratic engagement are, I see a grim picture. I was able to see how unwilling to compromise Congressional factions actually are. The lack of democratic engagement in Congress was disheartening and inspiring. It is disheartening because of the lack of desire to work together. Partisan rhetoric seemed to always be more important than the interests of the American people. It is inspiring because, due to this internship, I have decided to stay in Washington, D.C., because I feel that while there are problems here, they will not be fixed without people to offer solutions.

My research was closely tied to the lack of compromise that I just articulated. I wanted to know why Speaker John Boehner was unable to control his party and prevent a government shutdown. I concluded that the reason is because of the increased ideological polarization in the Congress, the rise of the Tea Party, and campaign finance restrictions that have been recently imposed. I feel that my internship was critical for me to find the conclusions of my research, as well as to gain invaluable experience that I will use for future career prospects. I am grateful for the opportunity to come to Washington. I now hope to work as a staffer on Capitol Hill or at a government affairs firm.