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My Internship with the State Representative: An Overview

Office of State Representative Barbara Hernandez

District Supervisor Lily Rocha

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My name is Nathan Tamez, and I am a Junior ('21) at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. I am currently thinking of going into Engineering (most likely Automotive or Mechanical). Honestly, I did not know what to expect when I signed up for the internship program, but what I heard from friends and the internship coordinators reassured me that there would be many opportunities to meet

people with experience and to expand my network. Just as I expected, I was able to meet plenty of people, and even establish a connection with the Aurora Collective, a conjunction of businesses based in the Aurora area. Unfortunately, my connections with the Aurora Collective



did not lead to any internship opportunities, but fortunately the Internship Coordinators were able to help me reach out to State Representative Barbara Hernandez. On October 8th, 2019, Ms. Hernandez interviewed me over the phone, and welcomed me to the team. At first this seemed quite intimidating to me since I knew so little about politics and government, but I was also very excited for this new challenge and learning opportunity.

Barbara Hernandez was previously a Residential Counselor at IMSA, after which she was appointed as the State Representative of District 83 in the Illinois House of Representatives, following Linda Chapa Lavia's reappointment as one of J.B. Pritzker's cabinet members. District 83 of the Illinois House of Representatives consists mainly of Aurora with sections of the district being in North Aurora. The requirements that Ms. Hernandez had to meet in order to

become the State Representative were that she had to “be a United States citizen, at least 21 years old, and for the two years preceding [her] election or appointment a resident of the district which [she] is to represent.” (Illinois Constitution, Article IV) Her assignments, according to the Illinois General Assembly include “Energy and Environment, Higher Education, Cities and Villages, Counties and Townships, State Government Administration.” These are very important as they are some of the biggest issues that the office has to work on. The District Supervisor, Lily Rocha, was my mentor. My role at the office was to mainly assist constituents, but I ended up completing a variety of tasks. One of the first things that I did was sit in on a meeting that the owner of a private business held with Ms. Hernandez and her team. I am unable to provide specific details in reference to what we discussed, but I certainly learned a lot from this experience, as it also helped to give me some insight as to how things would be in the office for the next couple of months.

One of the lasting impressions that surprised me was that everyone in the office was so young, the majority of workers being in their twenties. Not only was this a shock, but I also



really appreciated the diversity in the office, with everyone coming from a different background, and having a unique perspective. I worked the first few weeks of my internship remotely, and was finally able to work at the office in person on November 6th, 2019. The State

Representative’s office was in the lower level of a building owned by another business named

Baum Property. The majority of the workers in the office were college interns, with most of them attending the local Aurora University. The office itself was kept effectively working because of everyone's contributions.

Each person's contributions were helping a cause of some sort. Barbara was the one that would speak at events, go to Springfield for House meetings, go door-to-door in Aurora to ask people what they thought about certain issues.



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Lily was the supervisor of the district, meaning that she gave the interns tasks, addressed constituent issues, and managed the schedule for Barbara and the office. The interns mainly assisted constituents with their problems, looked into casework, brought the concerns of the constituents up to Lily and Barbara, and called district residents to let them know when events were taking place.

It is important to keep note that because of the nature of the work being inclusive of individual constituents' private and personal information, I could not take screenshots or publish any of the work. The representative has acquired a lot of data from many constituents that is received from a number of different contact methods and sources. These may include phone calls, e-mails, in-person meetings, or comments made at various hearings or meetings. All of this various information was stored and logged in Google Sheets. These sheets were often cluttered with a wide variety of different fields, many of which were not relevant to the key data selections, and my job was to optimize the data fields so that quicker access could be provided to

the important information, reducing downtime and allowing for everyone to find useful information more efficiently. Before this project, I had minimal experience working with Excel and Google Sheets, so I spent around a month or so researching how to use Google Sheets during the internship. I ended up completing the project by consolidating similar columns, deleting columns that seemed less relevant, and creating a summary with notes for every constituent present in the form of a hyperlink. I also drafted a pivot table in Google Sheets, which would be used to compile the data in a specific fashion, providing a more useful view of the data selected.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	Date	Time	Constituent	Issue	Recipient	phone	email	address	organizations contacted	Liason
2	1/1	10:29 AM	John Doe	Meeting	Barbara	1111111111	person@gmail.com	123W Place	microsoft, google	A
3	1/1	11:01 AM	Harrison Parker	Fundraiser	Barbara	2222222222		235S Ave	apple, samsung	B
4	1/2	12:30 PM	Jennifer Hughes	Meeting	Lily	3333333333	hughes22@gmail.com	678W Kensington Boulevard	youtube	
5	1/2	1:05 PM	Harrison Parker	Fundraiser	Barbara	2222222222		235S Ave	apple, samsung	B
6	1/2	2:46 PM	John Doe	Meeting	Barbara	1111111111	person@gmail.com	123W Place	microsoft, google	A
7	1/5	9:28 AM	Jennifer Hughes	Meeting	Lily	3333333333	hughes22@gmail.com	678W Kensington Boulevard	youtube	
8	1/5	9:47 AM	Felicia Yen	Advertising	Barbara	4444444444	fyen99@business.com	222 South Street Ave	tesla, ford, nissan	C
9	1/5	10:02 AM	Dmitri Wang	Fundraiser	Lily	5555555555	mrwang@gmail.com			D
10	1/5	2:47 PM	Samantha Jimenez	Personal Request	Lily	6666666666	samjimenez@business.com	83W District Ave	frito-lay, pringles	E
11	1/6	1:08 PM	Dmitri Wang	Fundraiser	Lily	5555555555	mrwang@gmail.com			D
12	1/9	9:39 AM	Kyle Fischer	Advertising	Lily		kfishy519@gmail.com	12342S Drive Ave	ice mountain, dasani	F
13	1/11	2:28 PM	Jennifer Hughes	Meeting	Lily	3333333333	hughes22@gmail.com	678W Kensington Boulevard	youtube	
14	1/12	11:34 PM	Erin Lopez	Meeting	Barbara	8888888888	lopez.erin1@gmail.com	529S Harrington Boulevard	coca-cola, pepsi	G
15	1/12	3:20 PM	Kyle Fischer	Advertising	Lily		kfishy519@gmail.com	12342S Drive Ave	ice mountain, dasani	F

Figure 1: This is the mock data that I used for the Pivot Table.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Constituent	Issue	Initial Contact	Times Contacted	Phone Number
2	Harrison Parker	Fundraiser	1/1	2	2222222222
3	John Doe	Meeting	1/1	2	1111111111
4	Jennifer Hughes	Meeting	1/2	3	3333333333
5	Dmitri Wang	Fundraiser	1/5	2	5555555555
6	Felicia Yen	Advertising	1/5	1	4444444444
7	Samantha Jimenez	Personal Request	1/5	1	6666666666
8	Kyle Fischer	Advertising	1/9	2	0
9	Erin Lopez	Meeting	1/12	1	8888888888

Figure 2: This is the Pivot Table that I made, using the mock data from Figure 1.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1		Date	Constituent	Type of Issue	Recipient	# of calls	Phone #	email	address	organizations contacted	Liason
2	Open	1/1	John Doe	Meeting	Barbara	2	1111111111	person@gmail.com	123W Place	microsoft, google	A
3	Closed	1/1	Harrison Parker	Fundraiser	Barbara	2	2222222222		235S Ave	apple, samsung	B
4	Veteran	1/2	Jennifer Hughes	Meeting	Lily	3	3333333333	hughes22@gmail.c	678W Kensington Boulevard	youtube	
5		1/5	Felicia Yen	Advertising	Barbara	1	4444444444	fyen99@business.c	222 South Street Ave	tesla, ford, nissan	C
6		1/5	Dmitri Wang	Fundraiser	Lily	2	5555555555	mrwang@gmail.com			D
7		1/5	Samantha Jimenez	Personal Request	Lily	1	6666666666	samjimenez@busin	83W District Ave	frito-lay, pringles	E
8		1/9	Kyle Fischer	Advertising	Lily	2		kfishy519@gmail.cc	12342S Drive Ave	ice mountain, dasani	F
9		1/12	Erin Lopez	Meeting	Barbara	1	8888888888	lopez.erin1@gmail.	529S Harrington Boulevard	coca-cola, pepsi	G

Figure 1: This is the Pivot Table that I made, using mock data.

For this particular project, I was able to learn a significant deal on how to utilize and take advantage of the tools that Google Sheets (and Excel) have to offer. While I was able to learn something new from this experience, I think that the most valuable result of this project was that I was able to apply this knowledge, and that I will be able to apply this knowledge to other scenarios in the future.

In addition to this first project, another duty that I fulfilled was contacting constituents, where I would call local constituents and inform them of upcoming events in the community, such as Barbara's "Coffee and Conversation" and the "Town Hall Meetings" that she would be attending, providing the location, time, and purpose of the event. I would also call people to ask them for their opinions regarding upcoming policies that Barbara had to vote on. Due to this experience, I believe that I have gotten a lot better at public speaking and getting myself out there, as well as being concise while doing it. This is because I had to sound confident enough for people to be willing to listen, but I also had to say everything quickly to ensure that they would not just hang up on me. As a result of this experience, I feel a lot more confident talking to new people and introducing myself.

Another project that I attempted during this internship was to develop a website layout for Barbara as a State Representative, not to be confused with her campaign. I have not worked on any of Barbara's campaign resources, because I already work in her state representative office. For the website layout, I created a diagram prioritizing what I thought to be the best criteria for a good website, meaning that it must be simple, eye-catching (in a positive way), and provide the viewer with a lot of information. I submitted my diagram, and even made a Hyper-Text Markup Language diagram as well, which showed the actual layout of the pages and gave a much better idea of the website than the diagram. When looking for my final business project, I considered making a website for Barbara, but I eventually decided against it since she ended up using wix.com, and that I had other talents that could be utilized.

Something that I benefited from that also aided constituents were my small research projects regarding current policies. I was assigned to research one topic or policy and then collect data in correspondence with the policy, and create concise brochures that could be distributed to constituents that were in need of information. One of the first things that I researched was property taxes, and I tried to find out how they worked, what their purpose was, and how the rates were calculated. After my research, I was later on asked to determine why property taxes were known to be significantly higher in Illinois opposed to other states. I believe that this is a very relevant issue, since it not only affects me and my life, but also millions of other people. I am glad to have researched Property Tax, as I have learned a lot of useful information that will benefit me later on when I am the one responsible for paying my own property tax. (here's one of the links that I used to research property tax:

<http://www.kanecountyassessments.org/QuickGuide.pdf>)

Another event that I am grateful to have participated in was the “Lunch and Legislators” activity that we took part in at the office, which I got to contact my own State Representative. I thought that this was particularly interesting because it made me feel like I was involved and making a change, even though I am not yet old enough to vote. I also had the opportunity to learn more about some of the policies that my fellow interns were very passionate about, and had a great time overall.

With all of these projects in mind, I had a lot of trouble making the final decision of which project to carry through with until the end of my internship. I was most likely going to develop another website, except this time as a form website, using it as a method for organizations to contact the office for requesting state funding. This was designed to be an application form which Lily or Barbara could share with the constituents that specifically expressed interest in being funded by the state and needed financial assistance for their business or organization.

Finally, after looking into many different options and seeing what interested me, I can confidently say that I was overwhelmed. I found so many different things that I was passionate about during this internship, and I was having trouble deciding. After a discussion that I had with the college interns, I was able to find an issue that I really wanted to address. This issue was high-school drug abuse and gang violence, which were issues that I had witnessed before in my schools previous to IMSA, and I wanted to do something about them. The reason why we chose to target high school students out of all the potential age groups came from the data that we found online. A scholarly report by Ms. Sarah A. Stoddard and her company even said that “violence rates peak during the adolescent years, and adolescents disproportionately suffer the

consequences of violence, including imprisonment, injury, and death” (Stoddard, I). This article made me even more motivated to work on a way to address drug abuse and gang violence, as it proves that these elements can be detrimental to one’s learning experience and well-being, while also being more inclined to resort to violence than other age groups. I reached out to the college interns, and we agreed to work together on creating some sort of program to have open discussions with high school students about these very prevalent issues. We began by building off of our already existing “Youth Committee” program, and expanding it to allow us to openly discuss both drug abuse and gang violence.

After finishing our programs, we were eager to present and discuss with the local Aurora West high school, but due to COVID-19, we were unable to carry out our project. This experience however, has served as a valuable lesson to me that not everything will work out, and even though we spent a lot of time preparing for the event, I can confidently say that no time was wasted, because I got to learn a lot through this experience, and it has been invaluable to me. With that being said, one of the very last things that I completed for my internship was the research and summarization of the COVID-19 epidemic, and I worked on a brochure that can still help people. Overall, I am very appreciative of this opportunity, and I look forward to what the future holds.

Annotated Bibliography

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