

Melissa Rudd
Rocky Summer Internship Report
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Rockefeller Center Summer Internship Final Report

This summer, with the help of the Rockefeller Center, I was able to work as an unpaid intern for the Independence Institute, a free-market think tank in Golden, Colorado. In the course of my internship I learned a great deal, not only about the organization and internal functioning Independence Institute itself, but also about the various ways in which interested people and organizations influence policy issues on the state level. Prior to this internship, I had long been interested in political ideas, but had very little insight into the practical actions carried out by various players in the political system. My experience this summer gave me insight into the real world of politics and helped me evaluate the extent to which I would enjoy working for a political think tank or other politically influential organizations in the future.

The Independence Institute, founded in 1985, is a Colorado-based think-tank dedicated to providing citizens, public officials, and others with information on free-market and community based alternatives to government intervention on a wide variety of public policy issues. The Institute is organized into six major policy centers, each focused on a particular area of policy (education, healthcare, second amendment, fiscal policy, campus accountability, or urban development) and headed by one or two "senior fellows," research experts in that area. On my first day of work for the institute, I was interviewed by Anne McIntyre, the head of the intern program, in an attempt to determine my political interests and knowledge in order to figure out which senior fellow to pair me

with. I was assigned to Dave Kopel, the Institute's Research Director and the head of their Second Amendment project, and worked closely with him throughout the summer. Besides working with Dave on a variety of projects, I went on weekly trips with other interns to lunches to meet various influential people in the Colorado political process. By the end of the summer, I had had lunch not just with the leading conservative researchers and publicists in my think tank, but also with entrepreneurs, lobbyists, newspaper columnists, radio talk show host Mike Rosen, and the governor of Colorado.

The environment at the Institute turned out to be very different from what I had expected. Going in, I had the odd impression that employees of a think tank would be extremely serious, focused, and formal, devoting every moment of their lives to brilliant research that would further their cause, coordinating everything perfectly, and always on schedule. Instead, I found myself in almost a family environment, inhabited by a small but dedicated group of friendly, fun, ordinary people who came and went at will, often taking significant time out of their lives to drive me and the other interns to lunches or chat with us about future job prospects. Above all, I learned that influencing the political process is a lot of work, but something anyone can do with enough effort. I was inspired by the strong sense of camaraderie among the Institute's employees and by the friendliness with which they welcomed me and the other interns into their organization. We helped with a few menial tasks such as moving furniture, but then were given the chance to go to press conferences, parties, and meetings with officials. In other words, we experienced the glamorous and not so glamorous sides of work in public affairs.

My own work with Dave Kopel also turned out rather different from what I had expected, but was interesting and useful. As well as the Research Director for the

Institute, Dave is a writer for National Review Online and has written a variety of columns on subjects related to his second amendment research. Seeing from my resumé that I spoke French, he made my primary job the translation of his articles from English into French for the French version of his website. Although I had taken a French literature course here at Dartmouth, I had never translated large amounts of text from English to French before. Doing so gave me great appreciation for the difficulties inherent in translation as well as for the content of the articles, and I was even able to put my research skills to work searching for obscure and technical terms. As valuable as the translation itself, though, was the opportunity to work closely with Dave and observe first hand what day to day life was like for a leader of a think tank: extremely busy, full of reading, writing, research, and TV and radio interviews. My three major summer projects for him, the French translations for his website, research on Jewish holocaust resistance for a book he was writing, and research on MI5 activities, illustrate the busy and varied nature of his schedule. Dave also had the background of having gone to law school, and was able to tell me what he considered the benefits and drawbacks of a legal career to be.

The most surprising result of my internship was that I was given the opportunity to become a research assistant for a book by journalist David Harsanyi, one of the best known opinion columnist in one of Colorado's major newspapers, the *Denver Post*. We interns all met with David for lunch near the capital and I learned that he, like me, was a Jewish Republican. I decided to email him an article about Jewish Republicans I had just written for the *Dartmouth Beacon*, and he read it and emailed me back asking if I was interested in being a research assistant. I had never anticipated anything like this going into the internship, but decided it would be an interesting way to find out something

about political research and journalism. (I now have research to juggle, along with my classes.)

The funds for my internship were spent, as I had forecasted, on transportation to and from the Institute, and also enabled me to pay for a little of my tuition for German Classes at the University of Colorado that I took concurrently with my internship. I feel that I accomplished a great deal this summer, both academically and at the internship, where my goal was simply to gather as much interesting information as I could about life in the world of politics and to help out the internship in every way I could. I'm very grateful to Rocky for helping give me this opportunity to see behind the scenes of an influential political think tank.