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“Have you heard Representative McCarthy’s story?” This is a standard question asked at the beginning of any tour conducted during the summer in Rep. Carolyn McCarthy’s office. Many adults shake their head yes, many of the children shake their head no. I begin to tell the story of a woman who lived her life as a normal citizen until her fifties, when a tragic event shook the foundation upon which she had built her life. After the loss of her husband and the injury of her only son by a crazed gunman on a commuter rail, Rep. McCarthy, encouraged by her community, ran for office and is continuing to make her mark on U.S. legislation by fighting for safer gun laws and answering the concerns of her community.

As an intern this summer in the office of Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY), I learned a lot about politics, relationships, and time management. My main duties revolved around communicating with constituents. I led tours of the Capitol building for families from the district that came to visit Washington, DC. I also responded to their concerns about current local and federal political issues. Having so much exposure to the constituents helped me understand better how our government works and why for the most part it works so well. The constituents have legitimate concerns and take the time to voice those concerns, either by taking the time out of their workday to call, or by corresponding with the office through e-mails or letters. Citizen advocate groups play a very important role in this process, as they are the ones that create the letters that are used by the constituents to figuratively scream, “Hey! I’m concerned about this issue and I want you to fix it.” Rep. McCarthy’s staff really noticed when they received hundreds of calls and e-mails about a particular issue and worked hard to make sure the constituents’ concerns were met.

One of the most enjoyable tasks I had this summer was giving tours to constituents. They came from all over our districts, young and old, and it was my job to give them a brief history of the Capitol building. They enjoyed listening to the stories and were excited that one of their fellow Long Islanders interned with the representative. One thing that we emphasized on the tour was that Rep. McCarthy's office belongs to the constituents just as much as it belonged to her – their tax dollars pay her salary and their votes put her in office. She is working to have their needs heard in Congress and pass legislation that makes their lives and families safer. Families were really appreciative of the time the interns took to show them around and considered us a part of their family vacation.

Being on the Hill gave me an insight to politics; both the underground politics between staffers in different offices as well as the politics that plays on the House floor while legislation is being passed. I got an idea of the compromise that goes along with getting a bill passed in the House - if you're able to compromise effectively you might 60 or 70% of what you were looking for in a particular bill, while others who cannot compromise will get nothing. A lot of getting things done effectively on the Hill lies in the relationships that you make with other offices. In the same way that politicians compromise with one another and do favors to get things done, staffers do favors and compromise to help their constituents and get their office needs met.

Working for Rep. McCarthy gave me a lot of experience with working with a team and thinking ahead. There were a variety of tasks that needed to be accomplished throughout the week: from clerical tasks to making sure phone calls were answered, and making sure to write letters in enough time so that constituents didn't go many months

without a response. I was always aware of deadlines and juggling different tasks so that I accomplished them in time.

My summer working as an intern for Rep. Carolyn McCarthy gave me great insight into the world of American politics. Receiving funding from the Rockefeller Center allowed me to take advantage of the opportunity to live for a term and work in Washington, D.C, where public policy is created and debated everyday. As an intern, the most important thing I learned is how every single person is a part of the American political process and has a voice that can influence legislation.