

Job Report: The World of Working on Capitol Hill

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About The Interviewee and Job

Emily Kastenbergh currently works as a staff assistant and legislative correspondent for Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon (PA-05) on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Emily graduated from Emory University in 2020, where she studied psychology and women and gender studies, and has been working in Scanlon's office since the Fall of 2020. She started her career on the Hill as an intern in Scanlon's office. She was then hired for a full-time role in the Spring of 2021 and has remained in that position. Prior to applying for jobs on Capitol Hill, Emily planned to take the LSAT and attend law school immediately following her graduation from Emory. However, after watching Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock win their Senate races in 2020, she felt energized and empowered to get involved in politics. Ultimately, she decided she would go to Washington D.C. for a year to work on policy, before applying to law school. That year-long experience turned into a full time job, and she has continued to work on Capitol Hill. As of now, Emily does not know if she will ever go to law school but it remains an option.

As a staff assistant and legislative correspondent for Congresswoman Scanlon, Emily oversees the office's intern program and serves as a mentor to the interns. She explained that "there is truly no two days that are the same over [there]," meaning her responsibilities change daily, based on the needs of the Congresswoman. This includes tasks such as covering Congressional hearings, staffing an event, and helping staffers with research. Additionally, Emily manages the mail program, for which she sorts through daily physical and digital mail, categorizes it into different issue buckets, and responds to each bucket accordingly. She also updates correspondence as the Congresswoman signs new legislation and gets involved in new issues as they arise. *Included in this report is an analysis of one of the letters that Emily wrote about the war in Ukraine.* One final aspect of the legislative correspondent sector of her job

includes focusing on particular legislative issue areas. Specifically, she is in charge of covering arts and humanities and animal welfare issues for the Congresswoman. She is responsible for staying abreast of legislation discussed in the House relating to these issues and to write proposals for any legislation she thinks is important for the Congresswoman to co-sponsor. She also writes speeches about those policy issues for the Congresswoman.

Writing as a Staff Assistant & Legislative Correspondent

Following our interview, Emily provided me with a letter she wrote for constituents on behalf of the Congresswoman about the war in Ukraine. The audience for this piece of writing is Congresswoman Scanlon's constituents, more specifically, those who have written to her about the war in Ukraine and have raised concerns about it. Because of this, the piece Emily wrote is targeted for a specific audience. Additionally, Emily has to write from the perspective of the Congresswoman, since the letter is being sent from her, not Emily. The purpose of this letter is to make sure Scanlon's constituents feel they are heard and acknowledged by the Congresswoman. The letter takes a strong stance on the conflict, to ensure the Congresswoman's position is explicit and understood by the recipients of the letter.

Emily's letter begins with a strong statement on the issue, so the constituents know the Congresswoman's stance. She writes, "I join President Biden and the international community in condemning Russia's unprovoked, unjustified, and unlawful invasion of Ukraine." By starting the letter with this statement, the readers immediately know how the Congresswoman feels about the war in Ukraine. It also includes a call to action. It states, "We must come together as a country to support our president and our allies in a united response to Russia's aggression." Additionally, the letter mentions steps the Congresswoman thinks must be taken, and more

specifically, the work Congress must do to help the Ukrainian people and punish Russia for their attacks. Another important part of this piece is Emily's ability to talk about the issues, while also showcasing direct action the Congresswoman has taken to help the people of Ukraine. She writes, "I proudly voted alongside my colleagues in the House and the Senate to provide nearly \$14 billion in aid to Ukraine. I also voted to pass the Suspending Energy Imports from Russia Act." It is important that Emily has highlighted these points and included them in the letter so that Scanlon's constituents feel confident in their Congresswoman and will continue to support her if she decides to run for re-election. Overall, through this letter, Emily is able to capture Scanlon's policy positions as well as reassure her constituents that their concerns are heard by the Congresswoman.

Insight on Getting a Job on Capitol Hill

During our interview, Emily shared that getting a job on Capitol Hill is very competitive and it is extremely helpful to have had an internship there before applying for a full-time position. Because of this, Emily ended up applying for and getting an internship in Congresswoman Scanlon's office for the fall after graduation, and while in that position she applied to many full-time positions on the Hill and ended up getting a full time job in Scanlon's office. Emily also explained the importance of networking and speaking with anyone who could have any influence on whether or not your resume is read. She told me that she asked people to flag her resume and speak on her behalf to anyone with pull on the Hill. In addition to this advice, Emily reassured me that working in Washington D.C., and more specifically on the Hill, is so exciting and memorable for anyone interested in politics.

Interview Conclusion

Overall, speaking with Emily was very insightful. I learned a lot about her role on the Hill as well as the intense job search process she endured. Additionally, after reading her piece of writing for the Congresswoman, I was able to better understand the tasks that someone in her position is responsible for. Although writing letters is only one of the many different types of writing that someone completes in a job in politics, I think it is something I would be able to succeed in doing.

Correspondence with the Interviewee

Below is my initial correspondence with the interviewee that I sent via LinkedIn.

Hello Emily,

Hope you are doing well. I am a Senior at Emory studying political science. I saw you graduated from Emory and wanted to learn more about your experience working on the Hill. Additionally, I am hoping to use this interview for a class project that is due in October. Please let me know if you're willing to discuss your job and what your availability is. Thank you in advance for your time.

Best,
Layla

Below is the interviewee's response to my LinkedIn message.

Hi Layla - I'd be happy to chat. Can you email me to figure out when it works best? My email is emily.kastenberg@mail.house.gov. Thanks!

Below is my follow up email to schedule a meeting.

Hi Emily,

Thank you so much for agreeing to talk with me, I really appreciate it!
What is your availability like next week?

Best,
Layla Wofsy

Below is an email I sent to her after our interview.

Hi Emily,

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me this morning. It was so helpful to hear about your experience and advice for working on the Hill. I definitely will keep doing networking calls and will stay in touch with you throughout the school year.

Whenever you get the chance, please send me some form of writing that you have done in your role for my class assignment. Thank you again for your time!

Best,
Layla

Below is her response to my post-interview email.

Hi Layla, It was great chatting with you this morning. Please do keep me updated on your job search, and enjoy the rest of your senior year!! I've attached one of the letters I've written as Congresswoman Scanlon's legislative correspondent here. Let me know if you need anything else for your course.

All the best,
Emily

Interview Notes

Planned Questions

- 1) What specifically do you do as a Staff Assistant & Legislative Correspondent? What writing do you do?
- 2) What was your planned career path while at Emory? Did you always want to work on the Hill?
- 3) How did you get your job? What is the best way to get a job in politics, ideally in DC?
- 4) What are your future career goals?
- 5) Is there anything else that I should know about your role or working on the hill in general?

Notes:

“There is truly no two days that are the same over here”

- Tour coordinator
- General helping out, looks different everyday
 - Helping staffers with research, covering hearings, staffing an event
- Manage the mail program
 - Sort through physical and digital mail that comes in everyday, categorized into different issue category buckets, respond to everything
 - Go through and sign letters that have written on issue area that the batch is related to and send them out everyday
 - Updating letters as congresswoman signs new legislation, does other things, world events
- Cover legislative issue areas
 - Started covering arts and humanities and animal welfare
 - Stay on top of legislation that is discussed in the House and write out proposals for congresswoman to co-sign
 - Write speeches about those topics for the congresswoman
- Schedules are based around supporting the congresswoman

Psyc and women and gender studies

Got very involved in campaigns at Emory

- Worked for Stacey's campaign sophomore year
- That energy and excitement drew her in
- Voter protection team for DPG during runoffs

Thought she was going to go to law school right after graduation

- Pre professional pressure
- Decided that she would take a year off and go to DC after being so energized from Ossoff and Warnock winning, wanted to be on the policy end

Fell in love with city and working on the hill

- One year of gap year turned into 2+ years, don't know if will go to law school