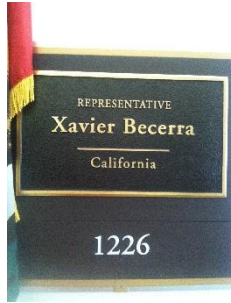


Ariana Rodriguez

Week 2

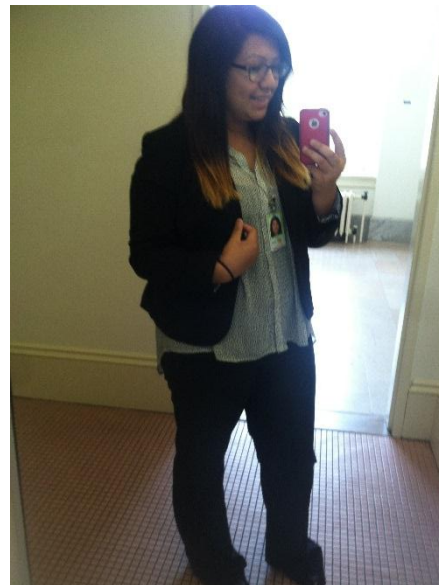
June 22, 2014



Being in DC is like a different world sometimes, I seem to lose track of time and seem to forget how I even got here. I feel that my first week working in Capital Hill really made me grasp the idea that I am here in DC and that I am working in the same place where Congress meets and creates laws that impact the nation. It all went by so fast I can't believe I already made it through my first week of work and my second week in DC.

Monday was my official first day of work and I felt extremely nervous because this is a Congressional internship and I really wanted to make a great impression at work. As soon as I arrived at the office of Congressman Xavier Becerra, I was excited to meet all the staff and my fellow intern Sara. It made me feel less nervous knowing that it was also Sara's first day, and that way I would not be behind but be able to get my training with someone else. The office staff was very inviting, understanding, and seemed to want nothing but to help us.

After hearing how fast pace life is on the hill, and the lack of time everyone had, it was a relief to have people willing to take time to explain things to me. My first day really consisted of earning the procedures of the office and understanding my responsibilities for the future. It seemed incredible to me how precise the instructions for our tasks were from answering phones, logging calls, and just the daily task. As soon as I read through the intern manual I knew that I wasn't in Kansas anymore; or in my case California and that I was in the big leagues now. I felt very intimidated while I read the manual because I had never had a job where there was so much pressure placed upon me, while having little to no margin for error. However, I knew that despite the pressure I had a lot of support in DC to help me make it.



After the first day of work the rest of the week felt like a blur, it just went by so fast. My Tuesday consisted of practice and review of all the procedures of the office. We also had a chance to walk around the building which is huge and very easy to get lost around there. In the few weeks I have been in DC, I learned that walking is a way of life here and comfortable shoes are a must. You have to be ready to walk to a completely different building in a matter of minutes when you are in the office, but weekends are when we get the most walking to and from around the city.

Tuesday was also very exciting because it was the day that I received my staff ID. Even if it may seem like a simple thing it was very exciting to have my own staff ID that basically allowed me to go around the buildings without questions. My ID made me feel very official, I knew that it was the real deal and I was working in a Congressional office.

Wednesday was an exciting day because I was able to go to my first event which was a briefing for a program called Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs or GEAR UP. The program works to provide early college awareness and support with grades 7th till your freshmen year of college. Going to this briefing was one of my highlights of the week because I had the opportunity to listen to some very inspiring stories. Coming from a low income neighborhood I felt that within the public schools there was always a lack of college awareness and knowing there are programs that work to really help students from similar backgrounds made me very happy.

I also hear some incredible stories from a guy named Hector of how a GEAR UP mentor was able to help him return to school after he dropped out of high school. Eventually he returned to high school graduated, went to university and is now pursuing his masters. I love listening to stories like these because they remind me of the reason why I want to become a teacher because it really just takes one person to believe in their students and that could make a great change. It was a great briefing and it gave me a chance to make some connections with the GEAR UP Alumni that spoke.

Thursday was the day I put all my procedures to the test and practiced answering phone calls. It was a very full and long day. As soon as I got home I felt so tired all I wanted to do was stay in and rest. I had never had a job where I worked from 9am till 6pm it was extremely tiring. I often felt like I had very little time to do anything, I would come home and have no time to do anything. Therefore, Thursday night, I took time to just relax and enjoy myself by watching movies.



Friday was spent listening to speakers with the CHCI that focused on identity and what it means to be Hispanic or Latino. Overall it really empowered me to believe in the power of our community and the fact that we can really make a change if we stick together. On Friday afternoon we also went dancing which was fun because it gave us a chance to dance Spanish music. It was nice to be able to be around people that understand and share a similar culture.

The weekend was the most fun because we had a chance to go to the Smithsonian National Zoo, which was great because it was full of some of my favorite animals like pandas and lions. I felt like a little kid running around watching all the animals. I yelled when I got to see a baby Panda and I got to hear a lion roar. It was amazing and the Sunday we went out to eat some real Salvadorian food, which felt great to have food that reminds me of home.