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# The Florida Legislative Fellowship Experience: 7 Years in the Political Kitchen

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2008, the Florida Radiological Society (FRS) developed the FRS Legislative Fellowship in Tallahassee with the purpose of introducing radiology residents to both organized medicine and the political process. At the time, the fellowship was the first grassroots, state-level governmental experience within the ACR [1]. It has since been emulated by other state chapters of the ACR, including those of Texas, Michigan, and Washington [2]. The FRS fellowship model is under consideration by other ACR chapters. Moreover, each of these fellowship programs is in part modeled after the ongoing national-level Rutherford-Lavanty Fellowship, established in 1993 by the ACR to provide radiology residents direct personal exposure to ACR government relations activities. In this article, we assess the impact of the fellowship on the individual participants and the return for the state chapter.

## APPROACH

Since 2008, 25 radiology residents have participated in Tallahassee's political kitchen during the state legislative session through the FRS Legislative Fellowship. We both formally and informally surveyed these past participants about their perspectives on the benefits of the

program and whether it had an impact on their participation in either organized radiology or the legislative process. We also attempted to assess the return for the state chapter by their participation in activities of state chapters, the ACR, and/or legislative processes as they move through their careers.

## EXPERIENCE

Florida radiology residents apply for the competitive fellowship by submitting the online application (Fig. 1), their curriculum vitae, two short responses to questions, and letter of recommendation from their residency program directors. Once the fellows are selected by the Scholarship Board of the FRS, the applicants are notified via e-mail. When the day on the hill arrives, the schedule of events is coordinated by the highly effective FRS lobbyist, Alison Dudley (Table 1). She guides the radiology residents through the Florida legislature's buildings while explaining the background and roles of different elected officials. At each scheduled meeting, Ms Dudley finds a common ground whereby young physicians share a cup of coffee with state senators and representatives while discussing the ingredients of health care policy directly. Through these exposures with legislators, the

radiology residents develop realistic perspectives about how daily interactions shape ideas into law throughout the legislative session.

Generally, many radiologists, especially radiologists in training, do not associate our day-to-day patient care with politics at the state capitol. However, the macrostructure in which we operate is formed by daily interactions within an essentially free market of ideas, some of which are transformed into law by the process of drafting bills. The principle that the extent to which we practice medicine is ultimately governed by the state legislature is brought home to the residents. They also learn, firsthand, the importance of effective lobbying. Although most legislative decisions are not dictated by political fundraising alone, lobbying efforts undoubtedly mold the legislative process. A major concern involves the creation of new laws that limit physicians' (radiologists') ability to practice medicine in their patients' best interest. This is the point at which we have made it onto the proverbial menu and are no longer sitting at the table [1].

Aside from political funding, personal moments of interaction with legislators at the state capitol provide a face-to-face venue to convey our concerns for the well-being of our patients as well as our profession. The future of medicine is

**APPLICATION  
FLORIDA RADIOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

The FRS Legislative and Government Relations Fellowship give radiology residents direct personal exposure to the FRS's government relations activities and the state regulatory process. The goal of the fellowship is to better inform residents of the state governmental factors, which play important roles in shaping the future of radiology in medicine and in the Florida health care system.

The one-week program includes historical background on the state legislative relationship with the radiology profession, an exposure to the FRS's Government Relations Division and its relationship to the other activities conducted by the FRS, and participation in meetings with members and staffs of State Congress regulatory agencies. The internship pays a stipend and covers the cost of accommodations in the Tallahassee, Florida area. **The 2016 program date is February 1-3, 2016.**

Some individual reading and writing tasks may be assigned to the intern and the intern may be asked whenever practical to assume work duties that will actually contribute to the office's work product. The intern also may gain certain experiences outside the office to get exposure to other types of government relations operations.

If you are interested in being considered for The Legislative and Government Relations Fellowship Program, please forward your completed application to your Program Director by November 30th, 2015. Three residents within the state of Florida will be selected to attend this program. Selected residents will be notified by January 1st.

**1. General Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ ST: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ (☐Work ☐Home ☐Cell) Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Training Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Subspecialty (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_ Expected Year of Completion of residency: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Program Director or Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Please attach a current CV.**

**3. Please respond to the following: (Attach additional sheets if necessary)**

a. What prior experiences (activities, courses, jobs) have best prepared you for this fellowship?

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b. Statement of Interest (250 words or less):

Why are you applying for this fellowship and what do you hope to gain from it?

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**4. For consideration, please have your program director write a letter of recommendation to Lorraine Roger, FRS Society Administrator, along with a completed application by November 30, 2015 and email it to ([lroger@flrad.org](mailto:lroger@flrad.org)).**

Florida Radiological Society  
5620 West Sligh Avenue  
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**Fig 1.** Government relations and legislative fellowship application.

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