

SPOTLIGHT

News from AGI and the geoscience community

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AGI Foundation Endows Congressional Geoscience Fellowship Honoring William L. Fisher

ALEXANDRIA, VA — Energy, mineral and water resources, the environment, natural hazards. No matter where we live, our lives are affected by how we interact with and respond to these aspects of our world. And at the local, state, and national levels, nearly every issue addressed by our community, corporate, and government leaders either is impacted by or causes changes to these and other natural factors. Professional geoscientists who get involved in the policy-making process are able to provide a scientific perspective to these discussions. To facilitate this practice at the national level, the American Geological Institute Foundation (AGIF), in cooperation with the American Geological Institute (AGI) is pleased to announce the establishment of the William L. Fisher Congressional Geoscience Fellowship Endowment to enable selected geoscientists to work as congressional staffers.

“The endowment was created to ensure a lasting commitment for the geosciences and is named in honor of Dr. William L. Fisher to commemorate his important geoscience contributions and the key role he has played in development of geo-policy decisions at the national level,” said Russell G. Slayback, chairman of the Foundation. Fisher is the Leonidas T. Barrow Chair in the Department of Geosciences and the director of the John A. and Katherine G. Jackson School of Geosciences at the University of Texas, Austin. For three decades, as director of the Bureau of Economic Geology, Fisher was the state geologist of Texas. At the national level, Fisher served as Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Energy and Minerals under President Ford. Over several administrations, he has been an advisor to the President and to the Secretaries of Energy and the Interior, and he has chaired numerous National Research Council committees and boards. Fisher continues to be a strong proponent of the congressional fellow program as a means to foster greater involvement by geoscientists in the policy arena. Thus far, the AGI Geoscience Congressional Fellowship fund has nearly \$1.5 million of the more than \$2 million being sought. The endowment will sponsor one to two fellows annually.

Geoscience congressional fellows are in high demand on Capitol Hill because of their broad scientific training and the relevance of geoscience knowledge to real-world issues. After an intensive orientation, fellows seek placement in personal offices of senators and representatives or in congressional

committee offices where they spend a year working as a professional staff member. These individuals share their scientific knowledge and expertise and make practical contributions to the legislative process while gaining invaluable experience in how the political process works. Several former geoscience fellows have obtained permanent congressional staff positions or leadership roles in federal agencies following their fellowship. Others take their congressional experience back to the private sector or to state and local government service.

The Congressional Science Fellowship Program, initiated 30 years ago, is coordinated by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Each year, a variety of scientific and engineering societies sponsor about 30 congressional fellows, including those from the American Geological Institute, the American Geophysical Union, the Geological Society of America (with the U.S. Geological Survey), and the Soil Science Society of America (with other agricultural science societies). The 2003-2004 AGI congressional fellow is Eloise Kendy, an independent hydrologist from Helena, Montana.

The American Geological Institute Foundation supports educational, scientific, and charitable activities of benefit to the entire geoscience community and the member societies affiliated with the Institute. The Foundation is the principal source of U.S. tax-deductible endowment and programmatic contributions to the American Geological Institute from industry as well as private foundations and individual donors.

The American Geological Institute is a nonprofit federation of 41 scientific and professional associations that represent more than 100,000 geologists, geophysicists, and other Earth scientists. Founded in 1948, AGI provides information services to geoscientists, serves as a voice of shared interests in our profession, plays a major role in strengthening geoscience education, and strives to increase public awareness of the vital role the geosciences play in society's use of resources and interaction with the environment. More information about AGI can be found at <http://www.agiweb.org>. The Institute also provides a public-outreach web site, <http://www.earthscienceworld.org>.

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