

Hometown: Ithaca, NY

College: Cornell University, 2010

1) What made you decide to pursue an internship with Congressman Arcuri?



Actually, I didn't even plan to have an internship in the Congressman's office, but that is how it ended up working out. I initially applied for an internship with an organization called "TUSIAD," which aims to integrate Turkish Americans into government and leadership roles. My assumption was that I would be doing an internship with them in a legislative capacity down in DC. I found out shortly before I started that it was more of a sponsorship program, where they work with Congressional or other federal offices to place their applicants in specific internship programs and that I had been placed in my Representative's office. Although I was initially taken aback, I am really glad I had this opportunity.

2) What is one thing you have learned about Congress or interning that really surprised you?

To be honest, I really had no idea what goes into a congressman's decision to vote for or against a bill. I guess I just envisioned a congressman sitting at his desk by himself just deciding yes or no on various issues, sort of checking them off on a list. I had no idea the amount of thought and input that went into his decision every time he votes. I was here when they voted on the big energy bill that came up and just seeing how interested he was in what constituents were saying about it when they called or how much discussion he had with his staff on every single aspect of it was sort of surprising to me.

3) What is your impression of Washington, DC and how does it differ from home?

I think the most striking difference is just that Ithaca is a much smaller rural area. No matter where you are you always feel like you are surrounded by trees or open spaces. And, especially when school is out, it is a very quiet and sort of sleepy place. DC is the complete opposite. First, I don't know if I saw anything that could be considered a "wooded area" the entire time I was here. Secondly, there is always something going on in DC, no matter what time it is.

4) What is something that you have learned that you will continue to use after your internship?

Although I thought I was before, this internship has really forced me to be open-minded and really evaluate how I formed my opinion on a variety of issues. When you grow up in a certain place and are raised in a certain way, I guess you come to think that positions on certain issues are really clear-cut, and that you're right and they are just wrong. But, I had the opportunity to talk with and listen to a lot of people that I, honestly, didn't agree with and, most of the time, they had a lot of good reasons why they felt the way that they did. I think now, although I may disagree with someone, I can understand where they are coming from and ultimately, be more respectful of others.

5) What do you think is the most important issue for Congress to address?

I feel like Congress should work on healthcare reform. Everybody has some issue that they are really passionate about: coming from my Turkish background, I of course, have a strong interest in foreign affairs, especially in the Middle East, but healthcare is something that seems to affect everyone. You hear that 46 million people don't have access-that's a huge problem. I've been fortunate enough because of my parents, to not have to worry about that sort of thing. But when you talk to people who either don't have coverage, or not enough coverage and the horror stories you hear, you just think to yourself, "What if that was me or my family?"

6) *What are your plans after graduation?*

Honestly, I am really not sure. Ideally, I would love to pursue becoming a cartoonist, but I am realistic enough to know that many people don't make careers of that sort of thing. I guess, I am at a point with school going into my senior year, that this is something I will have to start deciding. In the meantime, I plan to begin studying for the LSAT and, hopefully, do well enough to go to law school.

7) *What advice would you give a prospective intern?*

I think the best advice I could give is to try to take a step back from the individual tasks you are doing to see the broader picture of things. You're sometimes going to have to do things you don't like or find particularly interesting, but if you understand why your doing it, and how it fits in I think you'll get more out of it. And if there is something you don't understand or want to learn more about, don't be afraid to ask various staff members to sit down with you when they get the chance. I think I learned more about issues and Congress in general just by asking them.

8) *Walk me through your first day?*

My first day, I was too afraid to answer the phones. The entire day, I literally, didn't answer a single one. I just sat there and hoped one of the other interns would pick it up before I had to. Thinking about it now, I am sort of embarrassed.

9) What is your impression of Congressman Arcuri and how does it differ from before you started your internship?

Before I actually got a chance to meet him, I answered the phone when he called and was like "Mike who?" But, he was really nice about it and when he did come into the office, he made a point to tell me it wasn't a big deal and to not be so nervous, which helped.

10) Is there anything you have done or tried in DC that you have never done/tried before (could be food, activity, etc)?

Before I came here, I had never been to a parade before. I know it seems odd; I just had never been to one before. It isn't like I came to DC thinking, "I really want to go to a parade." A friend wanted to go to down to see the gay pride parade, so I went with her. It was a lot of fun. I think in the future I will make it more of a point to go to them.

11) Is there any type of food you really miss or something you've had in DC that they don't make quite like at home?

I think the only thing I really know how to make is chicken, and that's really not too hard to find. I guess the one thing that really would have been nice to go to is a Wegman's.

12) Has anything funny or embarrassing happened to you during your internship?

Well, a number of things happened, but I think this was the worst. So, I go into the back of the office to do some filing and sorting for one of the staff members, Roxanne, and as I am doing this, when I opened the top drawer it just falls over onto me. It must have just been really top heavy and at an angle or something, but it makes this huge crash as things on top of the file cabinet fall down onto Roxanne, spilling a drink she had on her desk, and things go everywhere. I'm hoping one of the other interns can help me put it back before anyone notices, but everyone in the office stopped what they were doing to see what happened and here I am just standing there holding the cabinet up, papers everywhere, Roxanne and her desk covered in liquid. It was really funny-and terrible.

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