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### **“Political” Science**

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Politics and policy affect all of us, both as scientists and as citizens, and issues ranging from laboratory budgets to arms control treaties clearly require research problem-solving skills and technical expertise. There is a critical role for scientists in each aspect of the political system, and in fact, we as a society need more scientists to take part in politics. Furthermore, the research we pursue has important societal applications and is fascinating! We have a right and a responsibility to share our scientific knowledge not only with each other, but with the general public as well. So, why are we as a community of scientists reticent in the public arena, hesitant to enter politics, and even at times unsupportive of our peers who transition into governmental roles? In this time of fiscal constraint, when difficult research funding (and de-funding) choices are regularly being made, we as scientists must step up to the plate, reach across the aisle, and explain why what we do is fascinating, inspiring, and important, not just to us, but to society as a whole. A range of policy-relevant roles exists inside and outside the laboratory, such as Congressional Fellowships. Each year the Congressional Fellowships program brings together approximately thirty scientists at all stages of their careers to serve as scientific advisors in a variety of offices in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. Although the jump from lab to lobbying meetings can be frustrating, the transition can also be intriguing. Firsthand experience with the “how” and “why” (or lack thereof) of politics and policy is invaluable and provides a unique opportunity to expand and broaden one’s background. The opportunity to work on Capitol Hill is unparalleled, particularly because our nation has a definite need for scientists with the inclination and interest to inform and develop policy. But, whatever role you decide to take, from contributing scientific news to local publications to running for Congress, it’s high time to show that we as scientists have important contributions to make both inside and outside the laboratory. We as scientists can and should contribute to ongoing political discussions, and there is no better time than now to speak up and apply our expertise to the policy issues at hand.