



# A conversation with Kate Ivancic, 2020–2021 congressional science fellow

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ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Congressional Science Fellow, Kate Ivancic, with the other 2020–2021 AAAS

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The ASA, CSSA, SSSA Congressional Science Fellowship is a yearlong Fellowship that provides a Society member the opportunity to work for a member of Congress. The 2020–2021 Congressional Science Fellow, Kate Ivancic, spent her Fellowship year working for the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. As her Fellowship year ends, she shares her thoughts from her year working on the Hill.

**Q: What did you learn about the role of science in policy and government from your Fellowship?**

**A:** I came to this role at an opportune time. The role for science translation and interpretation has been paramount in policy formation around conservation agriculture

as a climate change mitigation tool. The emerging research in this issue area is not only complex but also evolving rapidly. Because I was able to sift through and aggregate the findings for the team, they were able to utilize research as a decision-making tool.

**Q: What issue or project that you worked on were you most proud of?**

**A:** The most difficult and rewarding project I worked on during my time was the quantification of greenhouse gas impacts as a result of potential legislation. It has required the full recruitment of my academic training while learning the speech and phrasing of legislative text. This project has also allowed me to work alongside scientists and senior agency staff that I have long admired and respect.

**Q: What is the one thing that surprised you about your experience as a Fellow?**

**A:** I am continually shocked by how the Committee folded me in as full staff from day one. One would assume Fellows would be relegated to small, inconsequential tasks, at least in the beginning, but that was not my experience. They have mentored me throughout the year while also utilizing and valuing my scientific skill set.

**Q: Obviously, COVID-19 impacted your Fellowship year. Anything you would like Society members to know about advocacy under virtual circumstances?**

**A:** I think it's important to remember to remain flexible under these conditions, whether acting as an advocate for a cause or serving a member of Congress. These times are difficult for a multitude of reasons, not least being home with children, spouses, and other housemates during meetings and work engagements.

**Q: What are your long-term career goals?**

**A:** I am currently staying on as staff with the Committee and am thrilled to do so. It is an opportune time to be here while the research and advancement of carbon storage and ecosystem-serving potential of cropping systems gains traction. This is what I had always been advocating for as an NRCS Soil Conservationist, through research in academia, and now to see it gain attention as part of the solution to mitigate climate change feels serendipitous and surreal.

**Q: Do you have any advice for Society members who would like to get involved in science policy?**

**A:** Contact the Societies' policy team in DC. They're a great, hardworking team and are extremely well versed in the current political and legislative happenings and calendars in DC. Perhaps most importantly, they know which levers are the most influential for Society members to pull for their causes. They organize congressional visits and calls, and congressional staff always appreciate hearing from the scientific community.

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