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CONGRESSIONAL SPEECH AND DEBATE FELLOWSHIP

The National Association for Urban Debate Leagues (NAUDL) invites associates who have chosen to defer their start dates at firms to undertake a full-time pro bono Congressional Speech and Debate Fellowship in the coming year. The NAUDL creates and supports Urban Debate Leagues (UDLs), which provide academic debate opportunities primarily for urban students of color. Urban debate is a highly-effective program for diversifying the pipeline to the legal profession and improving academic achievement.

The Congressional Speech and Debate Fellowship is an un-paid position designed to give deferred associates exposure to public policy and the legislative process. The program offers recent law school graduates the opportunity to spend between four months and a year in Chicago, IL; New York, NY; or Washington, D.C. working on strategies to engage the federal government. The goal of the Fellowship is to advocate on behalf of urban debate at the congressional level in order to bring debate opportunities to more students across the country. The Congressional Speech and Debate Fellow will provide legal advice and assistance to legislative and public policy leaders, hold informational meetings with government decision-makers, run legal education seminars for former debaters with careers relevant to Capitol Hill, prepare submissions to federal government representatives on matters of public interest, and conduct other legal work, including drafting documents.

"We will soon see, thanks in large part to urban debate, an increasing number of talented, hard-working, and highly successful minority students matriculating at law schools and entering the legal profession."

- Laurence Tribe, Professor at Harvard Law School and former debater

The Congressional Speech and Debate Fellowship can help young lawyers, who have demonstrated academic and professional excellence, garner a better understanding of the governmental process, gain insight into the future of public policy and the legal profession, and assist in creating the legislation and regulations that affect our nation.

Background: The NAUDL, the national leadership organization of the urban debate movement, seeks to facilitate participation in organized debate activities for as many urban students as possible. It does so by building new UDLs, promoting UDL sustainability and institutionalization, expanding the capacity of existing UDLs, and connecting UDLs to form a cohesive Urban Debate Network. Over 40,000 students from 500 schools in 24 cities across the country have participated in UDLs.

Urban students of color and women with great creativity and potential for future careers in the law unfortunately face many challenges in learning the communication and academic skills they need to enter law school and start legal careers. To counter these challenges, many firms have turned to academic debate in urban schools as an effective mechanism to open a larger, more diverse pipeline of students who are interested in, and well-prepared for, law school and legal practice.

The Congressional Speech and Debate Fellow would provide pro-bono legal assistance to help bring debate to more students and more urban schools. By reaching more students nationally, urban debate can train a generation of urban students of color and women to excel in school and become interested in law, policy making, and argumentation. Now is a crucial time for the expansion of urban debate, as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the forthcoming budget provide an opportunity for urban debate to garner unprecedented support as an innovative solution for closing the achievement gap and training America's future workforce.

The Congressional Speech and Debate Fellow will work with the NAUDL's senior leadership to craft strategies and proposals related to the stimulus. The length of the fellowship can vary with availability, ranging from several months to a whole year. The Fellow will undertake the following projects:

Legal Research and Writing. The specific legal expertise of the Fellow can be applied to researching and drafting documents related to rules, regulations, goals, and a general understanding of all components of the public interest concerns related to education funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the federal and state budgets. This work will focus on the NAUDL engaging decision makers and making proposals effectively.

Awareness. The Fellow will be a representative for urban debate in the legislative and executive branches of government, communicating the importance of debate and civic discourse in policy development and serving as an ongoing source of education for Congressional members and staff. Central to these efforts will be support for the creation of a Congressional Speech and Debate Caucus, which will identify champions for urban debate in Congress and grow bipartisan support for UDLs. The Fellow will also connect UDL leaders with federal contacts and produce briefs and papers on federal policies relevant to urban debate.

Policy Development. The Advocacy Fellow can apply specialized expertise toward developing policy documents and proposals related to urban debate and funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Title I, Perkins, the Innovation Fund, State Stabilization Funds, the Workforce Investment Act, and other funding sources. Policy development entails identifying the requirements and priorities of funding sources and aligning urban debate submissions with these guidelines. Depending on the development of the stimulus and the budget, the Fellow can support efforts to craft policy statements for proposed initiatives on the local, state, or federal level. This will include through the Department of Education, Department of Labor, and state and local education authorities. In all cases, aiding with research, proposals, strategies, and communications will be a crucial role.

Qualifications: Fellows must exhibit an interest the urban debate mission and the importance of civic discourse to address societal/public policy issues; have an interest in public policy and/or politics; the ability to analyze, identify, and easily explain public policy issues to a variety of audiences; the ability to write persuasively and convincingly; and the ability to pass a government background investigation.

If you are interested in becoming a Congressional Speech and Debate Fellow, please contact Eric Tucker at the NAUDL at EricTucker@urbandebate.org or 312-771-1816.