Keeping TABS

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Gabriel Cazares, President

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Washington Seminar: My Experience

By Jhosselin Sosa

From the editor: Jhosselin is currently a protégé in the NFB of Texas Project CHANGE Program. As the recipient of the first ever TABS Glenn and Norma Crosby Washington Seminar Scholarship, she had the unique opportunity of attending one of the largest and most influential gatherings of blind people. Josselin is currently a freshmen at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas studying Public Relations with the long-term goal of becoming a motivational speaker. Let her words inspire you to apply for next year’s scholarship; here’s what she has to say!

Reading about Congress in a textbook is one thing, but try standing in front of a representative of the house and trying to explain to him why he should support a certain piece of legislation. Suddenly you wish you hadn’t slept through all those political science lectures.

When I first found out I’d be attending the Washington Seminar, I’ll admit, I was more excited about traveling to Washington, D.C. than the actual purpose of the trip. But during the seminar, I learned more about the three pieces of legislation we were pushing for, and I realized why everyone was so passionate about going to Capitol Hill. The issues we were trying to get sponsored affect me now, and probably will affect me in the future. Who wouldn’t want the opportunity to change laws that affect them personally?

Our group leaders had warned us that we probably wouldn’t get to speak to a representative, but we’d be lucky if we got to give one of their aids our information folder. They didn’t count on the fact that most house representatives like dogs, and two of us had brought our Seeing Eye dogs along. Sure enough, we were standing in the hallways speaking to an assistant when the representative himself walked up. It impressed me how down-to-Earth he was, and we appreciated that he’d taken the time out of his busy day to listen to what we had to say. Furthermore, he seemed very interested on the issues we were speaking of and promised to help us as much as he could.

Even though taking a picture with a Congress representative certainly was a highlight of my experience, my favorite part was getting the opportunity to meet and interact with blind students from other states. Although I didn’t get to go sight-seeing much, (I preferred to go shopping), I enjoyed traveling and getting lost around the city. It amazed me the lengths people would go in the streets, stores, and restaurants to make us feel welcomed to D.C., and I hope I get to go back someday.

All in all, I was sad to come home. I was fortunate to have been chosen to be part of this impressive seminar. It was definitely a memorable experience, and I hope more students will be able to continue to be a part of it for years to come.