

# AUTISTIC PERSON'S GUIDE TO HILLTERNSHIPS



## INTRODUCTION TO HILLTERNSHIPS



### What is a hillternship?

A hillternship is an internship on Capitol Hill. A Hilltern is someone who participates in a hillternship program. Members of Congress and congressional committees provide these internship opportunities to people of all ages and backgrounds. To be a Hilltern, all you need is a passion for politics and the drive to succeed.

There are three basic types of internships: legislative internships, press internships, and committee internships. These programs are different in every office, but they all have some things in common.

Legislative interns focus on policy and help the policymakers do their work. They go to briefings and hearings for staff members

and write summaries about the events. These summaries help give policymakers the information they need to write good laws. Legislative interns also do research projects for the staff. Congress writes laws about many topics, and interns help congress research these topics.

Press interns focus on presswork and help manage social media and the website. Every congressional office has a Twitter account and a Facebook account, and some also have an Instagram account. Press interns help the press team announce what that member or committee is doing. Interns draft tweets and Facebook and Instagram posts. They help write press releases about recent news and may be asked to help draft op-eds. If you work for a member of congress, you will compile a daily list of every article that mentions your member. This helps that office stay up to date about what the press is saying about them.

Committee internships on the other hand are a little different in that interns rarely get to talk to constituents. Committees have a narrow focus and research only those issues. Committee interns, therefore, help staffers with research that the committee is focused on. It is therefore important when applying for this type of internship, that you are interested in that **committee's work...**

The most important part of a hillternship is you, irrespective of the type of hillternship you decide to pursue. Do not sell yourself short and have the courage to share your opinions and beliefs with the staffers from your congressional office. Hillternships give people the chance to help shape the laws that run our country. Bring your perspectives and life experiences to Capitol Hill and make it a better place for all autistics.

*Why we need more autistic hillterns?*



Federal policymaking can seem out of reach for a lot of autistic people, but the road to a political career is not as hard as it seems. There is a clear path from intern to policymaker. For this reason, internship classes should be as diverse as America itself. It is also important that internship classes include autistic people. No matter how much a non-autistic person studies or tries they cannot know what it is like to be actually autistic. Right now, federal policymaking is missing the autistic voice. If more autistic people work as interns, then someday we will have more autistic policymakers on Capitol Hill.

Most congressional staffers started as interns. They did not need a lot of experience or education to leap from intern to congressional staffer. It only took them a few years to make that leap. The most important thing a person needs to build a career on Capitol Hill is determination. Autistic people are some of the most determined people out there. We should be using

congressional internship programs to make our mark on Capitol Hill.

Only actually autistic people know how much extra work it takes to exist in a world that is not accessible to them. People think that if an autistic person has a career that it means that their autism does not affect them. This is not true. Successful autistic people are people who overcame a lot of challenges to achieve their dreams. These people still deal with sensory overload, meltdowns, have social difficulties and live with other challenges related to their autism. Successful autistic people found a way to live in a world that did not create space for them. Not everyone can do this. Many times, only the most privileged autistic people have the chance to make their mark on the world. To change this, autistic people need to work where the rules are made. It may be more difficult for us to work in places that were not made with our needs in mind, but it is necessary to make the world a more accessible place.

## How to find a hillternship



**EXTRA!  
EXTRA!  
INTERNS  
WANTED!**

The path from intern to policymaker is difficult, but it is worth it. Autistic people influence congressional staffers just by working with them. These staffers see us for who we are and not the stereotypes we are known for. Imagine the difference we could make if we got to write laws for our country. It is not as out of reach as it seems. The opportunity to prove people wrong is the essence of the American dream. We are bright and determined people who have what it takes to write federal laws. There is a well-worn path to doing this so let us take it.

Every office in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate has an internship program. Applications for internship **programs are listed on each office's website and on job boards** and newsletters. You can find internship postings in the following places:

- **Legislators'** official websites: Members post their applications for internship programs on their websites all year long. The application questions and required materials are listed here. The due date for the

application should also be posted. There may be extra steps in the application for paid positions.

- **Committees'** official websites: Committees also post internship applications on their websites. They may be **more difficult to find. Search "internship" in the search bar** to find the application.
- Senate job bulletin: The Senate job bulletin lists internship vacancies for Senate members and committees. This is a good place to find opportunities outside of normal application cycles. It is also a good place to learn about committee internships and fellowships.
- The Dome Watch app: The Office of the House Majority Leader runs an app with a virtual job board. Internship vacancies are posted on the job board. The app also includes the House legislative calendar and a detailed day-to-day voting schedule for House members. It is the first place that House Democrats post job and internship vacancies. Everyone looking for an internship should download this app. The app is free.
- House internship and job bulletin: The House of Representatives sends out a weekly newsletter with job and internship openings every Monday. The newsletter includes dozens of immediate openings. The newsletter only goes out once a week. Posts are often a few days old when the newsletter goes out.
- Senate diversity initiative: The Office of the Senate Majority Leader runs a resume bank for diverse candidates seeking all positions. As a person with a disability, you can use this service. The resume bank will pass on your resume to offices that need interns. The website also has a list of all Senate internship programs and internships with outside organizations.

There are three internship application cycles every year. Internship cycles run from January to May, May to August, and September to December. Plan to apply to your desired intern

cycle at least 2-3 months before the program starts. Give yourself enough time to look over the application requirements and prepare your materials. Congressional intern programs have competitive application processes. It is important to present your best self in your application.

It is always better to apply to internship programs on time, but if you miss the deadline, you should still submit your application. Offices need interns at all times of the year. You could still be hired if you apply after the posted deadline.

Internship postings are everywhere. If you prefer to work for a certain member of congress, look on their official website for details about their internship program. If you are looking for an internship at an odd time of the year, then search virtual job boards and explore the Senate Diversity Initiative website. If you have your heart set on doing a congressional internship, then apply to as many programs as you can. There is a place for everyone on Capitol Hill.

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- **“The Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center (SARTAC) seeks to strengthen the self-advocacy movement by supporting self advocacy organizations to grow in diversity and leadership. The resource center is a project of Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE), the oldest national self-advocacy organization in the country.**

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