

My Final Semester with Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast (PPGC)

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It's crazy to think that my time as an intern with this amazing Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health internship is coming to a close. I'll be graduating within the next month and I am confident in saying that this internship has shaped my undergraduate career, given me opportunities that I'd never thought I'd have, and helped me meet so many inspiring people. A lot has shifted with the COVID-19

pandemic, yet the support I receive from this group has remained a constant, which is something that I am very grateful for.

The bulk of my work in the fall centered around advocacy and organizing around the 2020 November election. The election was a hot topic across the country – and for good reason. For many, eyes were focused on the presidential election but we were also working against the passing of Amendment 1. The Amendment on the table would add a clause to Article I of the Louisiana Constitution, stating: “To protect human life, nothing in this constitution shall be construed to secure or protect a right to abortion or require the funding of abortion.” Article I, at that point, did not explicitly mention access to reproductive healthcare or sexual education. The addition of anti-abortion language to the Louisiana Constitution carried much weight, including: banning abortion without exception (rape, incest, threats to physical and mental health), prohibiting any public funding for abortion, and threatening to criminalize physicians who provide patients with abortions.

To combat this amendment, some points of advocacy that I worked on this term were a voter registration week, phone banking, tabling, event data entry, and researching prior legislation that has limited abortion access in the state.

In the spring, I collaborated with PPGC’s TeenReach program to talk about legislation with teens. I’m so glad that I was able to share this information with such bright and motivated people, especially since a lot of legislative pieces largely go unknown among the general public. I created a “Bill Bingo” to encourage the teens to start their deep-dive into legislation and was happy to receive positive feedback from them. We are hoping on continuing to track the current 2021 session bills throughout the legislative session, with each teen focusing on bills that speak to them.

All in all, what held me together was my productive weekly meetings with my lovely supervisor Kristin, who has been such a great pillar of support this past year. In that same vein, I’m so appreciative of the supportive environment of this internship. Without it, I wouldn’t have been able to develop as much more confidence in my ideas and perspective. This confidence has helped me initiate more effective conversations and tackle problems head-on – in not only this internship but in other aspects of my life as well. I am so grateful to have had this space to grow as a leader and as a woman of color.