

Final Thoughts on Interning at Planned Parenthood North Central States

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It has been an interesting experience working at Planned Parenthood in St. Paul, Minnesota from the comfort of my own home this past summer. The pandemic has forced everyone to adjust how they live, work, and play and my internship has been no different. The Planned Parenthood office in St. Paul also houses a clinic and for

the safety of everyone, only essential staff are allowed in the building until at least the fall. This meant that myself, the staff I worked with, and the other interns all had to coordinate our work from home. There was a dance of figuring out how to work together while separated.

Due to these special circumstances, most of the work I did was researching candidates, elections, and representatives for the organization's electoral arm, The Planned Parenthood of Minnesota Political Action Fund, calling candidates in preparation for the upcoming election, making spreadsheets (so many spreadsheets), and participating in volunteer phonebanking sessions. A few exceptions to that were when I registered voters at a North Minneapolis Juneteenth celebration (with distancing and masks) and when I packed bags of condoms, menstrual products, dental dams, and voter registration cards to be distributed to local communities in need.

Voter registration and community support efforts like distribution of condoms and sex education, which are run through the clinical arm of Planned Parenthood Minnesota are an important way that the organization protects and expands reproductive freedoms and access outside of working directly within political systems. There is a focus on people and public health in regards to reproductive wellness that is great to see and to work within, but also incredibly necessary and necessary to expand, especially now when political systems are increasingly failing to care for communities.

While for the most part I did not get the opportunity to experience the hands-on environment of working in Planned Parenthood offices, I felt like I got a fulfilling and exciting experience when I did important reproductive political research. I researched important local elections in order to create volunteer and phone-banking materials, I researched neighboring state bills and the candidates who most support reproductive freedoms, and I gained skills in how to efficiently and thoroughly research policy. I really enjoyed being able to put time, energy, and attention into finding detailed information about a cause I care about. Doing research within this role has opened my eyes up to not only possible career and academic interests, but also the power that mobilizing information can have and the importance of leaving no stone unturned when it comes to issues as important as reproductive health. If one piece of information from a candidate's voting record or a quote could change a voter's mind, that matters!

Ultimately, while my internship looked nothing like what I had originally expected, I always felt like I was doing important work. Despite the pandemic, political opponents, and constant restrictions and bans, the work for reproductive justice and freedoms does not stop. The Planned Parenthood staff that I worked with worked hard to give interns important work that would benefit the organization and utilized all the resources they could despite all of the challenges. I am left feeling optimistic about all of the work going into protecting and expanding reproductive health and reproductive freedoms.