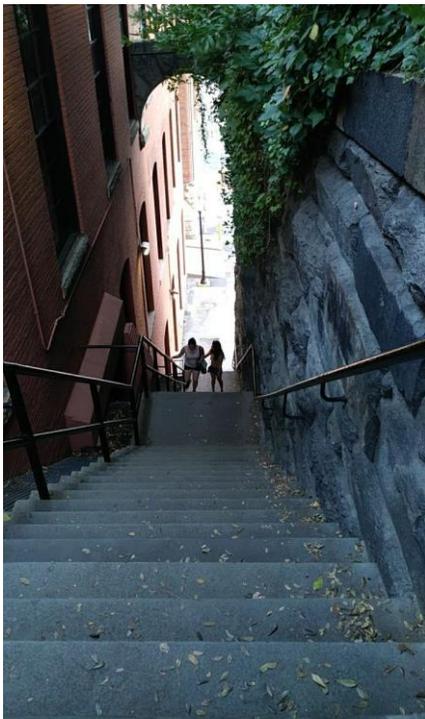


Week 5

This week, roughly the halfway point of my internship, has undoubtedly been the most eventful. I attended the Congressional Baseball Game (which my boss played in), played in a congressional staff minor league rife with injuries, assigned the legislative report at work, and volunteered my weekend at two food banks. Moreover, while any of these are worthy of this week's focus, I decided my topic the day it occurred. This event was noteworthy because it influenced my work and me the most. The scene begins on Thursday, the last day before the weeklong July recess, staffers and members of Congress use as vacation time. I am assigned the weekly legislative report that morning, a summary of the member's voting and cosponsor activity meant to be part of a fly-out package. After completing my assigned tasks, save the days pending votes, I begin watching the live feed from the House floor. Immediately my interest is piqued because the bill under debate provides emergency funding for the detention centers housing migrants seeking asylum in the United States. This situation dominates the national media and discussion in Washington. Ordered debate continues normally, both members supporting and opposing the bill reference the infamous photo of a drowned father and daughter in the Rio Grande. By this time, I had made my peace with the photo and the weeks' worth of analysis and reporting of the crisis, which cries out, to my own history of immigration. After ordered debate there is a disturbance. I watch for half an hour in confusion before the staff comments that House Republicans are protesting and abusing the system of debate on the House floor. They are arguing to shelve the House aid bill and adopt the already passed Senate version. Democrats argue that the Senate version does too little – with indecisive language and lack of oversight. In emerging chaos, the Speaker acts – calling the House into recess subject to her recall. What follows can be described as nothing less than pandemonium – the democratic coalition splits wide open on the question to adopt the Senate bill – which promises almost definite passage in place of its shortcomings. Caucus's scramble to form their decisions, entrapping members from other caucuses deciding the opposite course. Members much search largely within themselves

– both in relation to their conscience and the political ramifications. Hours later, when the House did reconvene, the vote was mostly decided. Whips and leadership had done their jobs, and the coalitions weighed in favor of adopting the bipartisan measure. Whatever holdouts of the original House measure remained, they seemingly resigned themselves to making a nay vote out of conscience. The feed opens to a tearful moment of silence for the suffering migrants called by the Hispanic Representatives. Following the normal procedures of passage, the House then quickly finished off the last two legislative votes in its docket – and closed session for July recess. Representatives then largely boarded their flights home, while staff busied themselves with the remainder of the work related to the day’s excitement. I am left numb from the hours of public and private debate on an action that will affect the people I have dedicated my life to serving. Three days later, I am still processing my thoughts from that experience, and I am no closer to forming a conclusion or fully comprehend the lessons learned from what I observed.



LEFT

Fellow CAMP interns Marlene and Metzin climbing the infamous Exorcist Steps in Georgetown – however slowly!



RIGHT

The CAMP group taking a break in between the breakfast and lunch shifts in the So Others May Eat (SOME) soup kitchen!