Congressman Fortenberry with interns in his Lincoln office.

When I was a young student, I was very interested in government, history, and social studies. I recall writing to President Nixon in 5th grade about his trip to China. He didn't write back, but nonetheless that early interest continued to grow.

Today I am always encouraged to hear from young students who enjoy government affairs. My office provides an excellent opportunity for students through our internship program. Both in Washington D.C and in Nebraska, interns have the opportunity to experience the inner workings of a congressional office, and learn more about the various systems of governance.

Since 2008, 53 students have interned at my Lincoln District Office, and another 15 have interned in Washington. Interns come from a variety of backgrounds and academic interests- we have had political science majors working alongside those pursuing degrees in business and chemistry. Our interns have ranged from international students to those born and raised in Nebraska. Although our focus is primarily on college students, we do occasionally accept upper-level high school students.

Interns assist staff members with office tasks, including answering phones, assisting constituents, and media clips. Additionally, many interns have the opportunity to help perform research on policy or casework issues and some help with office communications projects.

Many colleges, including the University of Nebraska Lincoln, give academic credit to those who complete congressional internships. Not only do they provide valuable hands-on experience, internships also help develop professional skills and lasting commitments to service for those in need of assistance. The life skills our interns learn will continue to serve them for years after they graduate.

There are other opportunities for students apart from internships. One of these is the congressional page program, which is available to high school juniors with strong academic and public service ethics. This program allows students to directly experience our federal legislative system. Pages help with the day-to-day operations of Congress, including delivering messages and documents for congressmen, helping to tally votes, and taking phone calls. Pages not only become familiar with the workings of Congress, but also have the chance to serve with other young people from all parts of the country. It is a unique and rewarding experience.

To learn more or to apply for the internship program, you can contact my Lincoln or Washington, D.C. office by clicking on the following link: http://fortenberry.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3157&Itemid=300059. This will provide you with a brief description of our program, along with the email addresses of the two staff members who coordinate it. I strongly urge all young people with an interest in civic service to apply.