

Student: Maggie MacDonald
Placement: Public Knowledge
Program: Hatfield DC Scholars in Public Service

I worked for Public Knowledge as a law clerk this summer. Public Knowledge advocates for the public interest in telecommunications, intellectual property, and technology policy.

I worked on a wide range of projects this summer. My written work included legal research memos, blog posts, draft legislation, press releases, and ex parte filings. I also helped prepare written and oral Congressional testimony. I attended a number of advocacy meetings on the Hill, at the Federal Communications Commission, and at the Department of Justice.

I learned a lot through my various work projects. For example, I knew very little about the transition from the public switched telephone network to an Internet protocol system before working at PK. I worked on PK's efforts to ensure that Verizon's deployment of Voice Link on Fire Island after hurricane Sandy didn't set a potentially disastrous precedent for the PSTN transition. Those efforts were rewarded when the FCC recently acknowledged that the transition must be handled mindfully, and took Verizon's application to alter service out of the automatic renewal track. Other projects I worked on included the future of video, patent reform, the spectrum auction, and retransmission consent.

I also learned more generally about how a non-profit group effectively advocates in the public interest. Attending meetings with Hill staff and various allies allowed me to deepen my understanding of what a group like PK can accomplish and how they do so. I also attended a semi-annual internal meeting on goals, issues, and strategy that was informative and interesting.

Being a part of this program was extremely valuable to me. Working at PK was an amazing opportunity to use some of the expertise I'm beginning to build through my coursework, my work for the Journal on Telecommunications & High Technology Law, and my experience in the Samuelson Glushko Technology Law & Policy Clinic. I enjoyed being in Washington D.C. and getting the chance to experience important events first hand. Learning from leaders in the field during our weekly seminars was also invaluable.

Two great experiences were attending hearings in which PK testified. Gigi Sohn, founder and president of PK, testified before the Senate on the future of wireline. Harold Feld, senior vice president of PK, testified before the House on the upcoming spectrum auctions. I also attended the first hearing on Tom Wheeler's nomination as FCC chairman, and hearings on technology as it relates to copyright reform and the reauthorization of the satellite television extension and localism act. I also attended the FCC's Open Internet Advisory Committee meeting, the broadband breakfast, and a number of panels on topics such as net neutrality, phone unlocking, and patent reform.

My summer experience was truly outstanding, and I'm so grateful that I was given the opportunity to be a Hatfield scholar.