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ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The American Geosciences Institute (AGI) congratulates Laura Szymanski on her selection as the 2021-2022 William L. Fisher Congressional Geoscience Fellow. The Fisher Fellowship offers geoscientists the unique opportunity to spend a year in Washington, D.C., working as a staff member in the office of a member of Congress or with a congressional committee.

Currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Geography at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Szymanski studies the potential of carbon in buried soils to contribute to atmospheric carbon dioxide with land disturbance and changes in climate. While working on agricultural practices that could improve soil quality and fertility, the limited options for communicating directly with those affected reinforced Szymanski's desire to pursue a career in public service, address societal issues, and further evidence-based policies, she said.

Szymanski began building her understanding of Congress and policy as the Geological Society of America's (GSA) 2018-2019 Science Policy Fellow. As the fellow, Szymanski followed geoscience policy issues and represented GSA on Capitol Hill, in stakeholder meetings, in coalition meetings, and at conferences. She attended congressional hearings and briefings, and relayed policy updates to GSA members. Szymanski looks forward to deepening her understanding of the federal legislative process by working for a member of Congress.

"My goal is a career in public service as an advisor on science and technology issues," said Szymanski. "This fellowship will allow me to learn first-hand how policy is made by working directly for a member of Congress or congressional committee and provides the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to the writing and passage of legislature."

"Geoscientists must be directly engaged in decision-making processes at every level to ensure that policy is informed by the latest, most accurate geoscience," said AGI Interim Executive Director Sharon Tahirkheli. "Laura is sure to make a vital contribution through her work on Capitol Hill, not only because of her strong academic background, but also through her passionate commitment to enriching our discourse around geoscience policy."

Previously, Szymanski earned a master's degree in Geography and a bachelor's in Biology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Recently she worked for a year in the American Geophysical Union's Voices for Science program, conducting policy outreach, promoting communication to advance science policy, and building relationships between the scientific community and members of Congress.

Funding for the fellowship is provided through an endowment established by the AGI Foundation to honor William L. Fisher, the Leonidas T. Barrow Centennial Chair in Mineral Resources and Professor at the John A. and Katherine G. Jackson School of Geosciences at the University of Texas, Austin.

Each year, AGI's Fisher Fellow joins about two dozen other scientists and engineers for an intensive orientation program on the legislative and executive branches, organized by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), which also guides the placement process and provides educational and collegial programs throughout the year. Learn more:

<https://www.americangeosciences.org/policy/internships-and-fellowships>

About AGI

The American Geosciences Institute (AGI), a federation of scientific and professional associations representing over a quarter-

million geoscientists, is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to serving the geoscience community and addressing the needs of society. AGI headquarters are in Alexandria, Virginia.

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