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ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The American Geosciences Institute (AGI) congratulates Dr. Christine Ray on her selection as the 2023-2024 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.

Dr. Ray earned her Ph.D. in physics in 2021 under the joint space physics program of the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) and the Southwest Research Institute (SwRI), where her dissertation work focused on modeling geochemical and physical processes on two icy moons, Enceladus (of Saturn) and Europa (of Jupiter), to explore their potential to host life. Upon completion of her Ph.D., she continued working at SwRI as a postdoctoral scientist, helping to design a sampling approach for the mass spectrometer on NASA's Europa Clipper mission to search for chemical indicators of life and habitability in Europa's ocean.

During her time at SwRI, and particularly as a member of a large NASA mission, Dr. Ray came to appreciate the role that policy plays in science and worked to advocate for NASA's science funding on Capitol Hill. After finishing her postdoc, she became the science policy fellow of the Geological Society of America (GSA), where she tracked geoscience-related legislation moving through Congress and being implemented by federal agencies. She represented GSA at coalition meetings, kept members informed about relevant policy issues and engagement opportunities, worked with GSA's Geology and Public Policy Committee, and organized Congressional Visit Days for GSA members to meet with their legislators.

"Working for GSA has been a wonderful opportunity to learn about the range of geoscience issues Congress is focused on and all of the work and coordination that goes into advocating for federal geoscience funding," said Ray. "Now, through AGI's Congressional Fellowship, I can experience how the policy world works on the opposite side of the coin, learning more about the complexities of these issues and seeing firsthand how they are written into legislation. I am excited to spend a year diving deeper into policy on Capitol Hill, and hope to come out of it a stronger advocate for the geosciences."

"The latest, most accurate geoscience should be used to inform policy at every level, and this means ensuring that geoscientists are actively engaged in decision-making processes," said AGI Executive Director Jonathan Arthur. "Christine is well positioned to make a valuable contribution in her work on Capitol Hill, not only because of her scholarly qualification, but also through her work in the policy arena."

Previously, Dr. Ray earned a master's degree in physics from UTSA and a bachelor's degree in astrophysics and animal sciences from Rutgers University. She is a member of GSA and the Association for Women Geoscientists.

Each year, AGI's Fisher Fellow joins more than 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 at <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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