

ACTIVITY 28.2

Diary of Student Intern A

Week 1: It was so exciting to start my internship with Congresswoman Aequus. Yesterday I attended a subcommittee policy meeting. The main topic of discussion was saving domestic jobs in the face of international competition, particularly now that we are experiencing the longest recession since the 1930s. She strongly supports a bill that requires at least six months' notice to employees of any downsizing decision. This makes sense to me, as my own family is hurting financially due to my mother's job loss. It is difficult to make educational plans for me when our family's resources are so uncertain.

Week 3: I am amazed by how much time is needed to prepare legislation for vote. Congresswoman Aequus' original draft was well received, but many changes were proposed by others on the subcommittee. One interesting idea is to require that any layoffs of hourly workers be matched by a proportionate layoff of salaried workers at the company. This would ensure that financial losses would be shared by all levels of employees, not just the lowest level. Another idea is to require that top management salaries be tied to the relative levels that existed in 1990. Back then, executives earned five times the income of an average hourly worker. Now, that figure is 50 times a typical worker's income! We'll soon see if either of these ideas becomes part of the bill.

Week 5: This week, the latest unemployment statistics came out, and the news continues to be grim. Unemployment rates are still high, with no relief in sight, according to respected economists. Given the latest data, the subcommittee is even more committed to keeping further job losses from happening. A controversy is developing this week following the announcement that the federal government is providing funds to a giant corporation to keep it out of bankruptcy. Aequus supports the "bailout," which may save the corporation and preserve jobs. Another proposal mentioned today affects government offices that are considering downsizing. The idea is to require an alternative to layoffs—by insisting that departments cut all workers' hours (or days) by a small fraction, instead of laying off workers. That way, the burden of a sluggish economy is borne by all, not just a select few. Congresswoman Aequus has also begun work on a bill to regulate the financial industry more closely, which she says will reduce the probability of future financial crises. She believes that even in a market economy, some regulations are necessary for the economy to work well.

Week 7: Is it possible that my internship is coming to an end? I learned so much about how legislation is created! Now I am motivated to continue my studies in economics and political science. Perhaps someday I will be elected to public office and help along an intern like me.