

Get an insider's view of government

At the close of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, a woman asked Benjamin Franklin: "What kind of government have you given us?" "A republic," Franklin said, "if you can keep it."

When President Johnson announced the White House Fellows program in 1964, he concurred with Franklin, saying, "A genuinely free society cannot be a spectator society." The White House Fellows program opens a window for citizens across the country to stand side by side with the leaders in our government.

Through this exceptional program, the President's Commission on White House Fellowships chooses professional men and women to spend one year in Washington, D.C. This initiative provides Fellows paid full-time positions in the offices of cabinet secretaries, senior White House staff and other high-level executive branch officials. In addition, Fellows participate in roundtable discussions with renowned leaders in the public and private sectors, and travel inside and outside of the country to study U.S. policy in action.

Alumni include former Secretary of State General Colin Powell, former Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao, CNN Chief Medical Correspondent Dr. Sanjay Gupta, historian/author Doris Kearns Goodwin and Univision Networks President Cesar Conde. For all of them, the White House Fellowship was a transformational experience.

A visit to Washington, D.C., is a stunning experience that brings all the pictures and everyday references to life. From the White House to the Capitol building to the monuments that rise above the skyline, it is flush with the history that has shaped the nation. The Fellows program is an invitation to journey inside these traditions and participate in the mechanisms of government.

The Fellows programs is a nonpartisan endeavor. The White House Fellows invites the most demanding among us to step forward, to venture into an amazing realm of knowledge and possibility.

Wherever alumni have invested themselves, they brought the element of service and contribution to their communities and the nation. Each will tell you it's a year they have never forgotten, and one that continues to influence the course of their lives.

I have had the privilege of serving as chairman of the Southeast panel that recommends White House Fellows from the region. I know that people in our South Florida community have the same leadership potential as the exceptional people named above, and I encourage anyone interested to consider applying for the program. Visit

www.whitehouse.gov/fellows to learn more and determine if you meet the White House Fellow eligibility requirements. Applications are due by Jan. 15, 2013.

Eduardo J. Padrón, president,

Miami Dade College, Miami

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