

# Sustaining Good Scholarship and Good Politics: The Steiger Fund

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The July 2006 issue of *PS: Political Science and Politics* carried a story (“Continuing a Legacy: William A. Steiger Fund Supports Former CFP Fellows at Centennial Center”) that did not create the ground swell of interest one might have hoped. Thus, the message bears some repetition, particularly with respect to the legacy of the man whose name the fund carries. This will delay, rather than bury, the lead as we’ll then get to the new aspects of the fund that should attract some attention from former APSA Congressional Fellows.

After six years in the Wisconsin State Assembly, the 28-year-old native of Oshkosh was elected to represent Wisconsin’s 6th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives’ 90th Congress on November 8, 1966, and re-elected to succeeding Congresses until his untimely death on December 4, 1978. His death was memorialized by the 96th Congress on January 15, 1979. The first eulogy in the bound book of that event was offered by the long-term member of the CFP Advisory Committee, dean of the Washington press corps, and Washington Post reporter and columnist David Broder. “It is a cliché in the political reporting business,” wrote Broder, “that every one of us carries around in his head a list of stories that he would have given his eyeteeth to have written. Some are scoops on which you were beaten. Some are exposes for which you wish you could claim credit. But the most uncomfortably remembered stories are those where you might have said—but did not—that somebody is doing a helluva job in public office. Bill Steiger had done that kind of job ever since he came to the House of Representatives . . . Steiger was a man of exceptional talent, integrity and drive. But there are more than a few of his kind in politics. It would honor his memory if we occasionally wrote about them, too—before they die.”

In his own turn, columnist George Will was equally praiseworthy. “It was not chance that advanced Steiger to the front rank of his party and his profession. But chance has done what only chance could

do: It has prevented him from completing what would have been one of the most distinguished careers Congress has known. It would be doing less than justice to Steiger,” Will continued, “to say only that he was a superb legislative craftsman. He also resembled another bundle of useful energy from the upper Midwest. It may seem a contradiction in terms to speak of anyone as a ‘Republican Hubert Humphrey,’ but Steiger exemplified what Humphrey called ‘the politics of joy.’ Plainly put, he loved his profession, and it showed.”

For a Congressional Fellow to find that magical fit between her or his long-term career goals and the needs of an office such as William A. Steiger’s has been the goal of the fellowship since its founding in 1953. The fund has been well named and the fund’s mandate is to continue his legacy was providing some supplementary funding for former Fellows, whether they be political scientists, journalists, government specialists, or international scholars whose continuing focus on Congress and the U.S. Government requires another stay in Washington, D.C.

As an April 2006 article in *PS: Political Science and Politics* noted, the Steiger Fund, whose mandate has been to provide office space for former APSA Congressional Fellows whose on-going research or study would benefit from a stay in Washington, D.C., has been woefully under-utilized. Thus far, only two former fellows have spent a short period at the Centennial Center. At the request of the Centennial Center Advisory Board, which has been managing the fund, the Congressional Fellowship director met to discuss a change in direction. During the discussion a consensus emerged that the fund guidelines failed to encompass the diversity of Fellows which the typical class now represents. A new mandate was agreed upon:

The William A. Steiger Endowment enables current or former APSA Congressional Fellows to apply to the Centennial Center for Political Science and Public Affairs in order to conduct research or complete a writing project

on any aspect of legislative politics, domestic and international, or a project related to their experiences as Congressional Fellows.

In addition to reshaping the mandate, the Centennial Center Board felt the Steiger Fund should be administered by the APSA Congressional Fellowship Program with an outside selection committee of former fellows designated to allocate the available funds on a rolling basis. Such a committee would ideally reflect the core political scientist and journalist constituencies represented by the fellowship; have an ongoing understanding of the Congress, which is the focus of the fellowship; and be engaged in successive classes of the fellowship to maintain their appreciation of its diversity (e.g., be residential in the D.C. area and participate in the orientation and other enrichment activities).

The Center Board and the Congressional Fellowship Advisory Board both enthusiastically endorsed the participation on the Steiger Fund Selection Committee of Colleen Shogan, Steiger Fund political scientist from George Mason University in the 2006–07 class of fellows and currently a legislative assistant with Senator Joseph I. Lieberman; Neil Simon, journalist fellow in the 2006–07 class and currently employed by Media General; Arthur Burris, a political science assistant professor from California State University at Hayward in the 2000–01 class and currently deputy staff director of the House Budget Committee; and John Haskell, a political science associate professor from Drake University in the 1997–98 class and currently senior fellow with the Government Affairs Institute at Georgetown University.

Reinvigorated, the Steiger Fund is now a natural extension of the Congressional Fellowship. It already has two applicants and is anxious for more. In the process, the fund hopes to sustain good scholarship and good politics. To apply, go to the web site at [www.apsanet.org/CentennialCenter](http://www.apsanet.org/CentennialCenter).