

FAQs about the BSCES Legislative Fellow Program

1. What is a Legislative fellow?

A Legislative Fellow (LF) is a representative of the BSCES membership that functions as a technical resource at the Statehouse. The LF works at the Massachusetts Statehouse, usually with the staff of the Joint Committee on Transportation and comments on current issues relating to the engineering profession that the legislature has identified. This can be a very wide range of issues. To date, most of the LF's efforts have been on legislation in the transportation arena with some involvement on environmental project impacts. However, every session of the legislature is different and the issues vary greatly from session to session. The LF job is a cool job with great visibility within BSCES and the Statehouse! The prior LF's love to talk about their experiences and would welcome questions. More information about the program is found at the BSCES website: <http://bsces.org/index.cfm/pid/10937>.

2. Why should I apply and become an LF?

You get to go to the statehouse as often as you want and have an email address that allows you access to the Statehouse news – you are always in the know! A LF can make a real difference by helping solve real world problems that the state is wrestling with. While serving as an LF, you come to really understand how state legislation is developed as well as have a definite impact on the shape of that legislation with your comments/expertise – you can affect the outcome. The LF is automatically the “expert” on many topics and your comments/input are sought after. It also provides an opportunity at public service and means to give back to the BSCES and the civil engineering profession.

3. How much time is involved in being an LF?

On average, two days a week is spent actually working at the Statehouse. Some commitments, such as intermittent night meetings, committee meetings on an alternate day, or a critical time schedule, are beyond those two days. Assume approximately 20 hours per week.

Further, BSCES asks that you prepare a brief article for the BSCES newsletter describing your experiences for the membership. There may also be a request to be part of a panel or make a presentation to a BSCES board. This “PR” allows others to understand the value of the position and allows the LF to let others know of the interesting work he/she is doing on behalf of BSCES.

4. How will I be assigned work?

You will be located in the area of the House Chairman of the Joint Committee on Transportation. Upon your arrival, and sometimes in between, you will send out an “all statehouse” announcement that you have arrived, who you are, and that you are available for assignments. The response will be sufficient to keep you busy. In addition, some LF’s have seen pending legislation, attended committees meeting and sought out those involved to offer expertise. You may also help the committee staff in preparing for and during public meetings of pending legislation. Some time is spent writing articles for the BSCES newsletter.

5. I am not a transportation expert or an environmental expert – can I still be effective?

Yes, you are still most likely the most knowledgeable person in the room even if not within your area of expertise. However, the beauty of BSCES is that you can call on other members to provide specific expertise in an area that you may not have strong knowledge in. This network of other available engineers allows the LF to be a technical resource to the legislators, provide the broad services that the position needs and gives the LF a “sounding board” for proposed ideas.

6. Why should my company agree to let me work a reduced schedule? What’s in it for them?

The overall experience of being an LF is so much more than attending a training course or commenting on legislation after publication as a member of a specialty technical group. To actually review and comment on materials in real time is an amazing growth experience. You get a “ring-side seat” during transportation funding legislations and get a better understanding of the transportation priorities of both the Executive and Legislative branches of government. This experience will stick with the employee and cause them to view the engineering profession (and current employer) as a more motivated employee – the upshot is that an employee will most likely stay with its employer longer. Even with the LF time commitment, you will still be able to provide at least 2 to 3 days of work with your current employer.

From the company’s perspective, a commitment to keep critical work flowing with your reduced schedule would be important to emphasize. Also, you will need to have a discussion about the number of hours you will plan to work during this term period. Will there be any impact on your benefits, projects/work assigned, etc. Your employer is required to submit a statement as part of your application to indicate their support of this endeavor.

7. Do I have to be an active BSCES Member?

Yes, your dues and membership must be current. Further, you must be a Registered Engineer in the Commonwealth.

8. Do I get paid?

Yes, the position comes with a \$15,000 stipend for 12 to 18 months of service – the exact number of months is a bit dependent on the legislative schedule as well as assignments given. For example, some LF's have served beyond their paid term to complete review of a report. The stipend will be paid in regular increments; some LFs have chosen 2-4 payments, others monthly.

9. What are other reasons to become an LF?

As a LF, you will make a difference! The work you will perform really matters and your expertise (in any engineering related matter) is a sought after skill by those in the Statehouse.

In addition to an office space and availability of the statehouse news service, you will be able to take advantage of statehouse tours/orientation session, go to legislative conferences on a wide variety of current topics, sit in the Legislative Chamber, and meet the actual legislators and their staff in person or just roaming the halls. You will have a renewed appreciation for the backdrop of how this Commonwealth's rules and regulations are prepared. For many LFs this service has been a life changing experience.