

A Family Experience at the Legislative Fly-in



Robin Amstutz and her daughter, M.J., during the 2025 Federal Legislative Fly-in on Capitol Hill.

GROWING UP IN middle class suburbia, I often heard, “Anyone can grow up to be President.” As a female sixth grade student in 1990, I never took it to heart. The members of the 101st Congress included only two female Senators and 29 female Representatives. Thirty-one out of 535. In 1984, Geraldine Ferraro had lost her bid as the first woman major-party Vice Presidential candidate by a landslide, and any little girl’s dreams of being President or Vice-President from that day forward were only of

the pipe variety. I had little interest in politics beyond passing my eighth grade Constitution test for the State of Illinois.

I can see the difference in my daughters. Politics is now more mainstream and more diverse. A woman won the popular vote for President and a woman was elected as Vice President. There are currently 25 female Senators and 125 Congresswomen (plus 4 Delegates). Incidentally, Illinois’ first female U.S. senator was the first African-American woman to serve in the U.S. Senate (from 1993-1999). My girls will grow up seeing a representation of themselves in their elected officials, and any dreams they may have of becoming one will be valid. Regardless of political party, I think that’s something we can all celebrate and support.

My oldest daughter, M.J., 11, became enamored with presidential history and trivia after the 2020 election. Want to know which presidents

had the coolest pets? She can tell you. Her sixth-grade social studies class spent the first two months covering the basics of U.S. government: the election process, the three branches, how bills become laws. Given her interest in the subject, I decided it would be a great experience for her to join me for the NASBP and SFAA Legislative Fly-in and see legislation in action.

M.J. attended four meetings with me and my colleagues. We met with staffers for U.S. Representatives Sean Casten (D-IL-6) and Robin Kelly (D-IL-2), and U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Dick Durbin (D-IL). Having M.J. there was a great ice breaker for the meetings, as the staffers were excited to see her. Because we live in Rep. Casten’s district, they interrupted an internal meeting to introduce us. He invited us into his office and spoke with all of us for a few minutes and then was gracious enough to offer M.J. a seat at his desk for a photo. Having M.J. there provided an opportunity to speak directly to the Congressman about H.R. 1285 and S. 570.

M.J. was very excited when she found out we would be visiting Senator Duckworth’s office. She had read a short biography of the Senator earlier in the year and found her service and sacrifice for our country to be inspirational. Not only did the Senator’s staffer engage her in a conversation about her interest in civics after our meeting, but she also asked if she could take a photo with M.J. and promised to get her book signed for her.

I can’t express my gratitude enough to NASBP and SFAA for making this experience possible, and I highly recommend everyone to bring your (age-appropriate) children, nieces/nephews, grandchildren, etc. I never really knew what lobbying



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY ROBIN AMSTUTZ

BY ROBIN AMSTUTZ



M.J. Melsbakas on Capitol Hill during the 2025 Federal Legislative Fly-in between visits with offices of her members of Congress.



The 2025 NASBP and SFAA Federal Legislative Fly-in Illinois Contingent met with U.S. House of Representative Sean Casten (D-IL 6th). From left, Tim Bowen of EPIC, Representative Casten, M.J. Melsbakas, and Robin Amstutz of Risk Strategies Company.

was until I watched “The American President” and “The West Wing.” My daughter not only knows what it is, but has experienced it, which is incredible. My younger daughter, Billie, has already told me she’ll be coming with me when she’s in sixth grade. I guess we’ll see you there in 2030!

And for those that are curious, Benjamin Harrison had two alligators that lived in the White House Conservatory and Calvin Coolidge had

a raccoon named Lucy that walked on a leash. ●

Robin Amstutz is Surety Senior Account Executive and Lead Healthcare Surety Broker with NASBP Member Risk Strategies Company. Amstutz participates on multiple NASBP Committees, serves as an instructor at the NASBP Surety Schools, and is a NASBP Director. Amstutz is also the Immediate Past

President of the Midwest chapter for Women in Surety, which she led the founding of in 2020. She lives in Lisle, IL with her husband and two daughters. She can be reached at ramstutz@risk-strategies.com.

**Be sure to plan to attend the
February 24-25, 2026 Federal
Legislative Fly-in.**

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