

## **Jack Bwalya was placed with Eamon Gilmore TD from February to July 2015**

### **Biography**

Jack has both Zambian and Irish nationality and currently lives in Dublin. Before moving to Ireland in 2002 he managed a restaurant in Zambia for 3 years. Jack worked in the retail and construction sectors in Ireland for a number of years before he began his studies in Kimmage Development Studies Centre. Jack received his BA in Development Studies in Kimmage in 2008 and his Masters in Sociology from UCD in 2012. Since 2012 Jack has been studying for a PhD in Politics in UCD. He is also currently a teaching assistant/tutor and occasional lecturer in UCD's School of Social Justice.

### **Part 1**

My experience so far in this internship has been interesting and I am enjoying every moment of it. Below is the breakdown of what I have been doing over the last 3 weeks while working in Deputy Eamon Gilmore's office, two days a week (Monday and Tuesday).

First week: On the Monday when I first started the internship, I was introduced to all the staff in Deputy Gilmore's office. We then decided how the work was going to be divided up for the rest of my internship. Mondays are dedicated to constituency work only, while Tuesdays are purely research and data analysis based. On the first Monday of the internship, I was introduced straight into the ins and outs of Irish constituency politics. I went with the team (Sharon and David) for a door to door leaflet drop in Deputy Gilmore's constituency. The leaflets were information on a planned footpath in the Newpark area of the constituency. My first Tuesday was spent in the Leinster House office. I was tasked with researching media discourses on the Bills before parliament for this current Dáil term that Deputy Gilmore would be speaking on. The idea is to access coverage in the media on the proposed Bills so as to know what type of information/coverage a given Bill is attracting in the Irish media.

Second Week: On Monday, we did a leaflet drop with a new Labour councillor in Deputy Gilmore's constituency. The leaflets were about giving the constituents more information about their new councillor. Tuesday, I carried out some desktop research on a named

human rights activist who is imprisoned in Columbia that the Deputy is going to visit sometime in March. The research focused on gleaning both positive and negative information on the human rights activist.

Week Three: I spent time in the office researching on public events happening in the constituency as well as researching further on the Columbian case.

## **Part 2**

The last few weeks have been busy in the office. After the Labour party general conference, we have been helping out the new councillor in the constituency to familiarise herself with the daily workings of her constituency for a few hours every Monday morning. The work we have been doing included leaflet-dropping as well as knocking on doors to have a chat with some residents.

On Tuesdays, I have been researching the on-going activities in Dun Laoghaire as well as other general happenings in the constituency. We are currently working on producing a newsletter for the constituency. Tuesdays have been designated for researching interesting things to include in the newsletter. The Tuesday before last was the first time I attended a committee meeting and I found it quite interesting.

## **Part 3**

### Reflection and Summary of my work Experience

I enjoyed working in Deputy Gilmore's office very much. Deputy Gilmore and his staff were very welcoming and they really helped me to settle into my new working environment. They also very generously answered the many and sometimes what I felt were 'boring,' questions I had about Irish politics. Their answers to my questions as well as the practical experience I gained in getting involved in some aspects of constituency political party workings opened my eyes to some of the rigors of Irish constituency party political life.

With the little exposure to political party constituency workings I experienced, I would say that, Irish politics and most especially the work of members of parliament is quite unique and largely exhibits aspects of community care and attaches a humane aspect to politicking

that not many people appreciate. You will most likely, if you are a very hard working Irish TD, I think, get to meet and personally acquaint yourself with your constituents and their everyday needs. Deputy Gilmore I felt exemplifies this.

As an African party politics enthusiast, the first-hand experience working as a political intern in the office of Deputy Gilmore was something I found quite interesting and eye opening. I gained a whole new understanding of how community level workloads of the TDs, including everyday listening and attending to the routine needs of their constituents, makes them true servants of their electorates and constituency.