

Alum takes Tulane lessons to Washington, DC, as a congressperson

June 5, 2023

|

Mary-Elizabeth Lough, PhD mlough@tulane.edu

[View PDF](#)



United States Democratic Rep. George Wilmarth "Wiley" Nickel III (TC '98)

From the time he was a teenager, United States Democratic Rep. George Wilmarth "Wiley" Nickel III (TC '98) knew he wanted to make a difference.

Now the U.S. representative for North Carolina's 13th congressional district, Nickel credits his Tulane BA in political science as providing foundational skills.

Nickel's commitment to politics as a force of positive change took many forms during his undergraduate career. Before he came to Tulane, he worked as an intern for United States Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California. At Tulane he was student body president of the Paul Tulane College and a member of the student senate. He then interned at the White House the next summer.

It was a powerful combination, and one that continues to impact the congressman today. “Every time I come across an issue, I think back to the lessons [from Tulane]. ... To do this job well, you need to understand politics in America and how the electorate functions.” After graduation Nickel worked for then-Vice President Al Gore as a member of his national advance staff and later as a member of Gore’s Climate Reality Leadership Corps. He went on to receive his Juris Doctor from Pepperdine University School of Law and worked on Barack Obama’s presidential campaign. He served on the White House national advance staff from 2008 to 2012 before being elected to the North Carolina Senate in 2018.

The commitment to helping others engrained in Tulane through its motto “Non sibi sed suis” continues to be a driving force behind Nickel’s political career.

“It’s a job where all I get to do is just help people. ... The job every day is how can I move legislation that will help my constituents every day. I’m fighting to make a better world for my kids and the people I represent here in Washington.”

Tulane provided Nickel with a second type of training — the demands of extensive study combined with his passion for the vibrant culture of New Orleans meant he quickly adapted to long hours. It’s a habit he continues in Congress where his days run from about 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

“It’s a very busy schedule, but if you can handle going out to the French Quarter and seeing your friends and getting back and getting up for class and doing well in school, you are certainly prepared,” says Nickel.

His vivid memories of New Orleans and deep gratitude for his learning experience at Tulane have made a profound impact on Nickel. “Like anyone, you want to give back to the school that’s given you so much. I would love to help folks who want to intern in Washington. I would love to be a resource to help them with whatever careers they are into — certainly political science and public policy!

“I hope we can get a ton of folks out here and pay back all the help that I got along the way.”