



Senior Hadley Nagel stands with Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court John Roberts on Constitution Day in 2008.

by Jessica Shambora

Ask a group of people to picture a lobbyist and they likely envision a big Washington powerbroker, maybe a bit older, with a fancy suit and a healthy sense of self-importance. In short, the ultimate "fat cat." What they probably don't picture is a fresh-faced Nightingale senior named Hadley Nagel, who never imagined herself as a lobbyist either until she traveled to D.C. in 2007, seeking support for a James Madison memorial.

Watching as lobbyists were ushered in and out of lawmakers' offices, Nagel saw more than a way to advance her cause—she saw a reflection of her own determination. "They had a sense of purpose that seemed to say, 'I'm here for this. This is what I'm going to get done,'" observed Nagel. Soon after her visit, she completed the paperwork making her the youngest registered lobbyist on Capitol Hill at 17 years old.

Nagel's love of history can be traced back to the stories of the American Girl dolls of her childhood, but her fascination with Madison began with a visit to his Montpelier, Virginia, estate during its restoration. She already knew about the Fourth President's role in creating the Constitution and Bill of Rights. But as she learned in greater detail about his influence on the format of American government, she marveled that the home of such an historical figure was only now being reinstated. She was even more troubled to discover that there was no monument to Madison in Washington.

"He wasn't the tallest, most charismatic man in the room," Nagel says, explaining that Madison stood just five and a half feet tall. "He was the quiet intellectual coming up with big ideas in the corner of the room."

Concluding that he had been unfairly overlooked, Nagel founded Americans for Madison, an organization dedicated to celebrating his legacy and promoting the bill at the heart of her lobbying efforts: H.R. 3640, the James Madison Memorial Act of 2007, sponsored by Congressman Baron Hill (D, IN-9th).

While the bill has been pending since it was presented in September 2007 and referred to the subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, Nagel continues to lobby lawmakers with calls and e-mails. And clicking a button on americansformadison.org enables visitors to petition Congress to support the bill.

Nagel has continued her campaign to raise awareness of Madison on other fronts too. A calendar on the Web site outlines annual historic dates and events like the panel she convened this past October at the New York Historical Society. The event featured Joseph Ellis, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, and Sean Wilentz, general editor of the James Madison Library at Princeton—both members of the Americans for Madison advisory board. Ellis calls Nagel Madison's "best advocate since Dolley [Madison's wife]."

Nagel has written op-ed pieces about the Madison bill and is currently working on curriculum for a federally mandated day of Constitution education in schools. Last summer she interned at the University of Virginia, helping to annotate the letters of Dolley Madison. She is also the founder of the history club at Nightingale.

Nagel's U.S. history teacher, Diana Frangos, has told her she could be running the world one day. "I've never had a student who followed up so persistently and successfully on her interests," said Frangos.

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As the bicentennial of Madison's inauguration approaches on March 4, 2009, Nagel hopes to help Americans connect the freedom they enjoy today with Madison's efforts 200 years ago to establish the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the branches of government that serve as our checks and balances. "Everyone should know their rights and that they are protected in large part thanks to Madison."