



NABPAC Leaders Speak Series

NABPAC is committed to building understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion amongst our stakeholders. The month of April is Celebrate Diversity month, dedicated to celebrating our differences and similarities with the goal of gaining a deeper understanding of each other. This month, we share our third installment of *Leaders Speak*, a series of interviews with members of our NABPAC community. Learn about the importance of learning, growth, and allyship from **Ethan Easterwood, PAC Manager** at Northrop Grumman.



Tell us what you do and how you got into the PAC space.

When I tell people about the PAC world, I tell them that no one goes to college to be a PAC manager. I came to DC to intern for my local Member of Congress from Ohio. I landed a second internship that turned into a full-time job with Home Depot's government relations team. I didn't understand what PAC was, but I had a really great opportunity to learn. I learned what a well-run PAC is and how much fun that can be

as you engage employees and executives and plan events. PAC found me!

Today, I'm a PAC manager at Northrop Grumman, which has a large PAC. I oversee the internal solicitations, the fundraising, financial and compliance portions. If you are engaging, have an interest in politics – the D's and the R's – and a strong constitution to ask people for money in support of politics, PAC is a great place to start a career. There are other avenues – like lobbying – that you can take once you get started.

You're a member of the DEI task force. Why is it important for NABPAC to take on diversity? What excites you about the work that you all are doing?

I have many friends in the PAC community who are different from me, different sexual orientation, and different race. Over the years I have heard them ask for something like the DEI task force, something that focuses on diversity issues. I didn't completely understand, but I knew I wanted to. When the DEI task force was being discussed, I wanted to grow and learn from my peers. My motivation was to have a better foundation of understanding, to give some perspective, and to help create some change. One of the things I'm excited about is how we can expand upon talent; how we reach out to more diverse individuals. As a straight, white male, with everything that is going on, I think now is a pivotal time for diversity conversations.

Everyone has a diversity story - the story of how their similarities to and differences from others has shown up and mattered in their lives or careers. What is your diversity story?



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I grew up in a really small and really rural town in Ohio, not exactly the beacon of diversity. As I grew into my career, my aperture opened and I started to see other people with different backgrounds, upbringings, and faiths. I realized that other people have different challenges and perspectives. And it's okay that I may not understand everything, but I should try to respect those challenges and perspectives. The world looks pretty equitable from a flat cornfield, but then I completed required bias training at a previous employer. It gave me an opportunity to see how I was reacting to certain situations. I realize that I have bias too. I understand that not everyone started off at the same place. I just want to be part of the conversations to help make things better.

The month of April is dedicated to celebrating diversity, to recognizing and honoring the diversity around us so that we can learn to appreciate others more. How has embracing diversity helped in your development? What have you learned?

I'm certainly more aware of the things I say and the actions that I take. Growing up, racism was what we read in the history books about the Deep South. But it's real. I am more aware of how my words impact people or how things come across. I consider the way I phrase my emails and write my sentences. I make sure that I'm not making assumptions about people. I think I am a more well-rounded professional and I hope that's reflected when people engage with me.

Why is allyship so important? How do you apply allyship to your life and career?

Being an ally just makes common sense. I care about my friends and my peers and my colleagues. Their needs, their wants, their problems to a certain level are mine as well. I want to be a good friend to them. To me, with my Midwestern values, it's about "love thy neighbor". It's just being a good person to understand that the problems of your neighbors or friends may not be the same as yours at any given moment. And that their feelings at any particular moment are just as justified as yours. It's common sense.

What else would you like to share?

Equity has been an important concept in helping me understand the importance of diversity and inclusion. There's a difference between you and I each getting half of a sandwich. If I'm already full, then maybe you get more of the sandwich just to make sure that we are at a level playing field. When we're working in the same organization, maybe someone needs something different to have access to the same opportunities that I do. That's OK. There's a big difference between things being equal and equity.