

[Livingstone students on Capitol Hill](#) (Salisbury Post – June 23, 2011)

By Laurie D. Willis

Livingstone College students Eugene Brown, Jeremy Ratcliff and Stephen Graddick IV are spending their summer vacation answering phones, processing mail, researching issues, drafting correspondence, assisting with press conferences and attending hearings and briefings. On Capitol Hill, that is. Until sometime in July, the three Livingstone students will work unpaid summer internships with the Congressional Black Caucus. Brown, who will be a senior when classes resume in the fall, interned on Capitol Hill during the summer after his freshman year and worked in the office of I. Lanier Avant, chief of staff for Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss. Colleagues Ratcliff and Graddick are working just minutes away from 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., home of President Barack Obama, for the first time. “The internship is phenomenal,” said Graddick, a political science major from Charlotte. “The CBC placed me in the office of senior member John Conyers Jr. It’s interesting. Already I’ve been able to work with his office on a bill dealing with foreign affairs and our troops in Libya. I’m learning a lot.” Stephanie L. Young, communications director for the Congressional Black Caucus, said the office was inundated with hundreds of applicants from throughout the United States seeking summer internships. “After reviewing resumes and cover letters, we chose applicants based on their work and school experiences,” Young said. Beside Brown, Ratcliff and Graddick, the Congressional Black Caucus also hired a fourth intern and two legal fellows, she said. “Eugene, Jeremy and Stephen are self-starters, understand leadership because they’re members of the Student Government Association at Livingstone College and have a sense of community responsibility judging by the organizations to which they currently belong,” Young continued. “We are happy to have them.” Likewise, Brown, Ratcliff and Graddick are happy to be there. Ratcliff said his mother, Toni Ratcliff, was moved to tears when he told her he’d been chosen for the CBC internship. “I immediately called my mom and she was on her lunch break,” said Ratcliff, a political science major from Raleigh. “She cried. She was praising the Lord.” Because the internships are unpaid, the students were responsible for their housing and transportation. Brown is living in an apartment while Ratcliff and Graddick are living with a Livingstone alumnus in the Washington D.C. area. Ratcliff said he hopes “to get a better understanding of the political system and how it works” while he’s in Washington this summer. He’s especially proud that three Livingstone students landed such a prestigious summer gig. In addition to the

Congressional Black Caucus interns, there will be many other interns working on Capitol Hill this summer. “I think it says volumes that most everybody else will be from a school like Harvard or Howard or Duke and we three kids from Livingstone College will be working side by side with them,” Ratcliff said. “It speaks well of not only ourselves but also of the college.” Brown, a business administration major from Brooklyn, N.Y., said he’s thankful to get the chance to work on Capitol Hill for a second time. He said when he was in Washington the first time he chose to be part of work “aimed at helping HBCUs get funding.” He also was taught how to use the Library of Congress, saw a baseball game in National Stadium and attended an auction sponsored by the Embassy of Finland. Congressman Mel Watt said the students have been given an invaluable opportunity. “The Congressional Black Caucus Internship Program is a wonderful opportunity for selected students to learn about the inner workings of Congress and gain valuable experience that can be extremely beneficial to them in whatever endeavors they decide to pursue after college,” **Watt** said in a statement. “I congratulate the students from Livingstone College that were selected to participate in the CBC Internship Program this summer and I am certain they will have a memorable and valuable experience.” Livingstone College President Dr. Jimmy R. Jenkins Sr. said he is proud of the three young men, who exemplify what college students should be about. “Eugene, Jeremy and Stephen have come to Livingstone College and made the most of their time here,” Jenkins said. “They excel in the classroom, are active in student government and participate in many extra-curricular activities. Likewise, they’re well-versed in community service and fully understand it’s important in today’s society. “Not all young people would recognize the value in working an unpaid summer internship,” Jenkins continued. “And it’s my understanding that at least one of them was a finalist for a paid internship elsewhere in the country but he decided to spend his summer in our nation’s capital working with men and women who pass the laws that govern our country. I’m sure they’ll have an outstanding summer on Capitol Hill, and I look forward to having them share their experiences during one of our weekly chapels during the fall semester.”