



Mike Goff recently returned from a year in Washington, D.C., helping the lab maintain a close relationship with the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Nuclear Energy.

INL researcher wraps up year at DOE headquarters

By Brianna McNall, *INL Nuclear Science & Technology intern*

Absence might make the heart grow fonder, but it can also make collaboration and communication difficult.

While Idaho National Laboratory isn't the farthest lab from [U.S. Department of Energy](#) headquarters, there is still a significant distance between the two. As DOE's lead lab for nuclear energy research and development, INL has to maintain a close relationship with DOE's [Office of Nuclear Energy](#) (DOE-NE). To help, INL sends one of its scientists to Washington, D.C., for one or two years at a time. Mike Goff, an INL deputy associate lab director, is in the process of transferring back to Idaho after spending a year at DOE-NE.

He arrived there last summer, only a few months after the beginning of the Obama administration. Originally, he provided general support for the office, but that lasted only until the president nominated Warren "Pete" Miller as Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy.

"My job changed from providing general support to providing technical support for Dr. Miller," Goff said. He worked on everything from strategic planning to speech and presentation preparation. Whatever his job might have been, though, it was never boring.

"It was a different task each day," he said.

And some of these tasks required a little extra help from the home team.

"To be successful in that role, the help of people back at the lab was critical," Goff said. He was able to call back to INL whenever he needed assistance with a project and always found someone willing to lend a hand, whether he was putting together a presentation or trying to describe highly technical research projects.

"It was a very good experience for me," he said, noting that he enjoyed getting to work with DOE-NE and with Miller.

Despite how interesting the job was, Goff doesn't seem too upset about coming back to INL now that his year is up. He spent a significant amount of time flying back and forth from Idaho Falls to D.C. because his wife and daughters stayed in Idaho. He said leaving his family at home was "the biggest challenge."

But his cross-country trips aren't quite finished yet. Goff will have to spend several more weeks going back and forth from D.C. to INL while he transitions out of his role at DOE-NE and his replacement, Deputy Associate Lab Director Harold McFarlane, transfers in.

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Goff (right) helped host a recent visit from U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu.