

Samuel Coren

This summer I was honored to work as an intern to Judge Michael Scott in King County Superior Court. Going into my internship I was excited to learn about diverse areas of the law and explore my interest in litigation and dispute resolution. I was particularly excited to observe oral advocacy and hear Judge Scott's perspective on aspects of trial that he found particularly compelling or ineffective.

The first day of my internship began with voir dire in a civil commitment trial for an allegedly sexually violent predator (SVP). We hit the ground running and were in trial Monday through Thursday from 9:00 to 4:00, with Fridays dedicated to dispositive motions in civil matters and criminal sentencing. While Judge Scott was assigned to a criminal rotation throughout my internship, he was also responsible for overseeing more than 250 civil cases awaiting trial.

My primary duties beyond observing trial involved research and writing projects relating to dispositive motions in civil matters (motions to dismiss and motions for summary judgment). Every week I drafted bench memoranda analyzing the legal issues in these dispositive motions and recommending a ruling. The cases ranged from contract disputes and serious motor-vehicle torts to niche civil procedure and spoliation issues. Judge Scott also encouraged me to work with Judge Young on several search and seizure and self-defense issues relating to a high-profile murder trial, and with Judge Chung on a toxic-tort matter relating to federal maritime law. It was extremely gratifying to dive into the briefing and case law, analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the parties' arguments, and conclude my analysis by recommending how Judge Scott should rule. We would always meet on Friday mornings to discuss my research and analysis before listening to oral argument on the motions.

The Civil Commitment SVP trial took a full four weeks from the start of jury selection through the verdict. Given the graphic nature of the case, this was not the type of trial that I was the most excited to observe, but it was still fascinating to see real trial lawyers at work. This was as true for aspects of trial that were effective as it was for strategic blunders and other errors that gave me, and I suspect the jury, pause. I particularly noticed this during cross-examination and redirect examination, where I learned how essential it is to get in, make a few good points for emphasis, and get out. This strategy would have been more effective because it would have left the jury with a clear impression of the point the attorney was trying to make, rather than drawing out this stage of trial in an unfocused way while repeating uncomfortable language and drawing additional attention to the most damning evidence.

Judge Scott has been a fantastic mentor, emphasizing the educational nature of the internship and supporting me as I work to further hone my writing and legal analysis. After the SVP trial in Judge Scott's court concluded, Judge Scott encouraged me to find other interesting trials to observe and discuss with him. I was able to observe trials on invasive Atlantic salmon in the Puget Sound, a products liability case relating to AI-selected "customers also bought" items, and so much more. Ten weeks have never flown by so quickly.