

## Gunnar Olson

This summer I had the opportunity to work in the Washington Attorney General's Office. Specifically, I was in the Labor and Industries Division. Our division's task is to be the legal muscle behind the orders and decisions of the Department of Labor and Industry. Our office handles everything from industrial insurance (workers comp) cases to WISHA and employment standards cases.

I worked mostly on industrial insurance cases. I had the opportunity to work on cases both in the appeal phase and pre-jury trial phase. The appeal phase was a complex and interesting bit of legal writing. A denial of a benefit was being appealed to a Superior Court, as our division's litigation starts in administrative law courts and gets appealed to Superior Court, on cross motions for summary judgment. The motion was long and I was assigned one section of the overall brief. The issue was somewhat obscure. The issue was essentially what is a decision "on the merits." There is surprisingly little case law on what is considered to be a decision "on the merits." It took many hours of surfing Westlaw until I eventually found what I was looking for.

I was surprised how much fun I had working on a brief for an actual legal dispute. In addition, I was glad to see how useful the skills I learned in Legal Writing 2 turned out to be. In the end, the court would end up ruling against us. Nonetheless it was a great learning experience. Writing a part of a brief that an actual judge would use in making her ruling was truly thrilling.

In addition to legal writing, I also had the opportunity to try my hand at some litigation related tasks. I was a licensed Rule 9 this summer, meaning I could, under the supervision of an attorney, appear in court. I had two jury trials assigned to me. One was dismissed early on. The other was set for trial in my second to last week of work.

The one that was set to go my second to last week consumed much of my time. I wrote the brief, again I was glad to see my legal writing classes come in handy. In addition, I wrote an opening and closing for the case, which I then got to practice in a mock opening and closing in front of the attorneys I work with. I got good feedback from these practice sessions. I also did a mock voir dire in front of 20 attorneys and professional staff (all of whom were serving as the mock potential jurors.) This was a nerve racking experience. Getting 20 people to interact with you over zoom is hard. I found a new appreciation for my professors who had to teach on zoom. It was by far the most challenging mock litigation task I did over the summer and I also learned the most from the experience.

Unfortunately, my trial got continued as the courts have an enormous backlog due to COVID. Fortunately, I did all the prep work for a trial and got to at least do a dry run with the office's attorneys and professional staff.

Overall, I learned a lot this summer. I am glad to have had the opportunity to learn about the law in a public service oriented environment like the Attorney General's Office. In addition, the attorneys in the office were very friendly and eager to teach me and my co-clerk. Working at

the Attorney General's Office was a fulfilling legal experience serving the people of the State of Washington.