

August 11, 2006

Dan Ruben  
Equal Justice America  
Building II – Suite 204  
13540 East Boundary Road  
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

First and foremost, I would like to thank you for this opportunity and for the experience I was able to gain as a result of your organization's funding. My summer at the National Health Law Program (NHeLP) has been both meaningful and enjoyable.

Most law students gain experience with clients at their various public interest organizations during a summer clerkship. I, on the other hand, was able to experience a totally different environment where I worked with attorneys and organizations across the country to further state and national legislative endeavors to assist low-income individuals in attaining and maintaining health care and language assistance.

For example, when the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) was enacted, Congress passed a requirement that any individual claiming to be a United States citizen would have to prove their citizenship in order to qualify for Medicaid. In so doing, many individuals were put at risk of losing their health care benefits because most low-income individuals do not have passports and many do not even have birth certificates and/or photo identification. Concerns arose for Hurricane Katrina victims whose documentation was destroyed by the hurricane and aged individuals in nursing homes without any family or even a proper recollection of what county they were born in. Moreover, how this new rule would be administered was also a major issue as the prospect of millions of Americans losing their health insurance was not something anyone wanted to see happen. So, after several policy calls with individuals from across the nation, NHeLP worked with Families USA to file a lawsuit in federal court in the 7<sup>th</sup> Circuit on behalf of several plaintiffs, ranging from foster children to social security recipients, claiming a violation of their Due Process rights for current Medicaid recipients who followed proper procedure in the past and were granted Medicaid eligibility. Probably in response to the pending suit, the Centers for Medicare and Medicare Services (CMS) issued new interim regulations on citizenship verification that were a major improvement in favor of current recipients over the original June 9<sup>th</sup> regulations. While problems still remain with these current regulations, problems which it is hoped that the suit will help to resolve, millions of Americans were saved from having to attempt to prove their citizenship and were spared the loss of any coverage.

Throughout the years in my education, I learned how the "government" works (i.e. how the state and federal government interact, how a bill becomes a law, etc.). However, it was at NHeLP that I actually saw this system at work. After learning of the difficult endeavor that advocates went through in order to get the California legislature to pass a statute requiring language assistance to be provided by health entities, I was eager to be able to work on this

project. On a conference call with Elena Fishman, staff counsel for the Dept. of Insurance Government Law Bureau, I realized that in passing any legislation, all sides are taken into consideration. Ms. Fishman held a phone conference with California advocates, which I was able to sit in on, and a separate phone conference with insurance providers. She requested both sides submit proposed regulations from which she would weave the two together in an effort to find a balance. I helped one of our staff attorneys draft these proposed regulations and explain why we choose specific language, how we determined quality assessment, etc. It was a definite highlight of my summer to realize that statutes and regulations are drafted with all concerned parties in mind and that, surprisingly, money does not always talk. In the coming weeks, I will be sure to follow the development of these regulations and see, if by chance, any of the ones I helped draft are accepted.

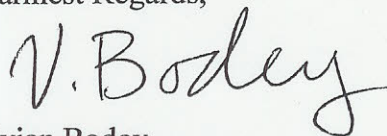
Other projects at NHeLP included working on patient abandonment law across the United States, constitutional law analysis of a possible conflict between a federal and state statute, and several other assignments. I was also given the opportunity to attend case reviews where I learned about individual cases and saw how the macro world I had been working in all summer affected the micro world of actual clients.

Besides the legal experience, NHeLP's attorneys offered us some real life, sound advice for the future. Almost on a weekly basis, we attended brown bag lunches with one of the attorneys where each discussed their lives and explained how they ended up at NHeLP. We learned what life in a law firm could be like and how difficult it could be being both a parent and an attorney. We learned of the struggles each attorney faced and how they overcame them. I found these lunches to be incredibly useful as the attorneys were truthful and honest with us about working in public interest and what it would mean in the long scheme of things. In speaking with my colleagues from law school about their experiences, I realized just how amazing it was to have attorneys who actually cared and who offered us real guidance, not only on our specific assignments but also for the years to come.

If anyone were to ask me do I recommend NHeLP as a clerkship or for employment, I would wholeheartedly answer without hesitation, yes. I can only hope that one day I too am such an ethically and morally sound lawyer as the attorneys at NHeLP who have struck a real balance between personal and professional responsibility.

Again, thank you very much for this experience; I could not have thought of a way to better spend my first summer during law school. I will apply the lessons and skills I have learned at NHeLP in the coming years and for the rest of my life.

Warmest Regards,



Vivian Bodey  
Southwestern University Law School '08