

Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America,
13540 East Boundary Road Building ii - suite 204
Midlothian, VA 23112
(804) 744-4200

Dear Mr. Ruben,

The reason I went to law school was to serve veterans, specifically regarding disability compensation and discharge upgrades. Through the Equal Justice America Fellowship, I was able to live out my passion over the summer at Legal Aid of North Carolina's (LANC) Veteran Law Practice Group.

I primarily assisted in cases concerning low income or poor veterans with an other than honorable discharge in need of discharge upgrade. An other than honorable discharge has so many negative effects on a veteran's life. The discharge bars them from HUD-VASH housing and other public benefits including VA healthcare. The greatest indignity though for these veterans though is the VA's determination that they are not veterans for the VA's purposes. I became very aware of how important the discharge upgrade process was to veterans. It can literally change their life.

One example of this life changing upgrade is a veteran who was given an other than honorable discharge for smoking marijuana. He presented symptoms of PTSD while in service. He did not receive proper treatment for his PTSD and resorted to self-medication through marijuana. The military did not do its job to help this service member and gave him an other than honorable discharge. The discharge prevented him from gaining housing assistance and became homeless as a result. Through the LANC Veteran Law Practice Group's efforts, we made the argument to a discharge review board that the veteran should not carry the burden of an other than honorable discharge because of his PTSD. While I left before the decision was received from the discharge review board the veteran was so thankful that someone would just listen to his story. That someone cared about him.

While at LANC I was also able to represent clients in other legal matters. LANC emphasized that all interns should have the opportunity to litigate a case at some point during the internship. Veteran law cases take a very long time with few opportunities to litigate a case at a hearing. Knowing this was the case, my primary supervisor assigned

me to help with an unemployment case another attorney was working on. I worked hard with the client and building their case in preparation for the hearing. Unfortunately, the result did not go in the client's favor. However, the client was nonetheless so appreciative of the work I and my supervising attorney did for them. Despite the result, I am thankful I got to have the experience of representing someone and being a zealous advocate on their behalf.

I would have gladly taken this internship without a stipend. However, I would have had to split my time between the internship and another job to help with my expenses over the summer. Thanks to the Equal Justice America Fellowship I was able to dedicate all of my time to the efforts of Legal Aid of North Carolina. My experience over the summer confirmed not only that I want to practice veteran law but also practice veteran law in a public service environment. I am truly grateful that Equal Justice America made this opportunity possible.

Sincerely,
Claire Scott

Campbell University Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law, '18

Legal Aid of North Carolina, Inc.

Raleigh Office

224 South Dawson Street (27601) • P.O. Drawer 1731 • Raleigh, NC 27602
919.828.4647 • Fax 919.839.8370

Serving low-income clients in Wake County

Victor J. Boone, Esq.
Senior Managing Attorney

www.legalaidnc.org

July 31, 2017

Mr. Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Equal Justice America provided an opportunity for Claire Scott to do an internship with Legal Aid of North Carolina, in our Raleigh Office, during the summer of 2017. I am grateful that you were able to make this internship possible for her and for us. She has been a value asset to our organization.

Claire has spent the majority of her internship helping us assist veterans obtain benefits for service connected disabilities and to obtain discharge upgrades. She has also provided assistance to clients who were in need of unemployment benefits and supplemental nutrition benefits. Her responsibilities included, among other things: interviewing clients; drafting documents and letters to the VA; and researching statutes, regulations and case law in support of claims before the Veterans Administration. She also provided invaluable assistance for an appeals case pending at the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims through her review of documents, research, and drafting of a Rule 33 Memorandum.

Claire developed a very good rapport with clients and was able to establish trust and confidence in her ability to assist them. She listened attentively and was able to ask appropriate questions to obtain essential information. Claire conducted her legal research competently and located pertinent law for the issues at hand.

It was a pleasure working with Claire. She was always present as scheduled, utilized her time wisely, appropriately prioritized and timely completed tasks. She was always very professional and maintained a positive, can-do attitude.

Sincerely,



D. Toni Pinkston
Veterans Practice Group – Managing Attorney

