



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

### EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

<b>NAME</b>	Nora Cowherd
<b>LAW SCHOOL</b>	UC Davis School of Law
<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Texas RioGrande Legal Aide

---

#### **Update 1:**

The past few weeks I have had the incredible opportunity to attend Ask A Lawyer events through my internship with TRLA. This allows us to meet in person with veterans and discuss solutions for their legal issues. We also assist veterans with filling out an application for our services. This has been a great opportunity to meet the real people that our day-to-day work is benefitting and is an extremely rewarding experience.

---

#### **Update 2:**

I am working on a discharge upgrade for a veteran. This has enabled me to learn about military law and I have learned a ton about new changes in the military law regarding what qualifies for a discharge upgrade. For example, the military now takes mental health into consideration when awarding discharge upgrades. This research has been extremely interesting and has made me interested in potentially going down the JAG route.

---

#### **Update 3:**

This week I have been working on public benefits cases that involve immigration. Specifically, whether someone who is admitted into the country as a refugee is entitled to receive SSI. This work has led me to a deeper understanding of the safety nets in place for refugees and victims of human trafficking and how important it is for people who are entering the country as a refugee are notified of the safety nets available to them.

---

#### **Update 4:**

This week I have been wrapping up my internship with TRLA. This has been a great summer experience and by far the best part was attending outreach events. At these outreach events, we spoke with veterans about TRLA's services and how they may benefit. At our Ask A Lawyer events specifically, we were able to give some generalized advice to veterans and help guide them in the right direction with resolving their legal issues. Many veterans are concerned with securing a will or a trust, so I was able to put together a document that walked through the basics of both.



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

---

## **Update 5:**

This summer with TRLA has been a wonderful experience. On top of the practical skills I gained, I was lucky to be able to work with many different teams at TRLA. I assisted the environmental team with research on relevant air quality issues and was even able to draft a FOIA request for TCSEQ.

In addition to my work with the environmental team, I also worked with the veteran's team and spent the majority of my time on a discharge upgrade project. In the process of drafting this discharge upgrade, I was able to speak directly with the client which was a great experience. Being able to connect directly with the client made me feel even more passionate about completing my project because I felt connected to the actual person TRLA was working to help. The discharge upgrade also challenged my legal research skills because I was dealing with military code, a completely different type of law than I am used to working with. The discharge upgrade was also challenging because the arguments we were making were a bit unique. I definitely had to lean on critical thinking skills to complete this project. It was great to work with an attorney who was clear in his instruction, available for help, and helpful in guiding me through the process. This project was definitely the biggest stretch for me in terms of the level of challenge I faced in grasping the legal issues, but this is also what made completing this project extremely rewarding.

Going forward, I am eager to take advantage of the outreach events held at my law school that help people in the Davis, California community in similar ways to TRLA. I hope as I continue on my career journey, I am able to seek out opportunities that allow me to work directly with clients in need of help.