



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2025

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Final Reflection:

This summer, I had the profound privilege of serving as a legal intern with the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice. For years, I have admired the Brennan Center's role as one of the nation's foremost defenders of voting rights and democratic governance. To contribute, even in a small way, to that mission during a period of historic challenges to democracy was an experience that both sharpened my understanding of the law's transformative potential and deepened my personal commitment to using legal tools in service of justice.

The Democracy Program's work spans the full spectrum of democratic reform—from litigating against voter suppression and gerrymandering to advancing policies that make government more accountable and inclusive. I was fortunate to be immersed in this work on multiple fronts. One of my primary assignments this summer involved supporting state legislators in Arizona in drafting a voter right protection bill to introduce in the next legislative session. Our team was working in collaboration with other organizations in challenging restrictive voting measures that disproportionately burden communities of color, Native voters, and voters with limited access to transportation or identification. I assisted attorneys by researching the complex interplay between state election laws, state constitutional provisions, and federal protections under the Voting Rights Act, and provided a recommendation for the viability of potential legislation.

My research helped inform an internal memo I drafted which provided strategic recommendations that the senior attorneys will use to assess the strength of potential preemption and equal protection claims, while also providing a throughline to other, similarly situated states with similar state constitutional provisions around voting rights protections. While my contributions were often technical—combing through legislative histories and state court decisions, parsing statutory language, and reviewing past Department of Justice enforcement actions—I came to understand how essential these details are in the fight for democratic inclusion. Every legal argument must rest on a bedrock of careful research, and even the most abstract constitutional principle must eventually translate into a practical safeguard for a voter standing in line on Election Day.

In parallel, I worked with attorneys preparing and supporting legal briefs and position papers in several federal and state court cases addressing election administration and access to the ballot. My role included reviewing case law and empirical data, helping to draft factual background sections, and providing case citations and substantive edits to ensure clarity and cohesion. Additionally, I



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helped draft and publish a piece in the Center's State Court Report blog, where we drafted the history of disability rights under state constitutions. For that piece, our team dove in with research on state constitutional theory, social science data, and state case law that articulated state constitutions serving a dual role in protecting the rights of disabled communities: state constitutions have played a limiting and expansive role in different states for a variety of different reasons. The experience showed me that effective advocacy often lies not just in legal analysis, but in crafting a narrative that makes the stakes unmistakably human.

Those stakes became clear to me one afternoon as I reviewed research reports from community groups in rural Arizona. One report described how elders from a tribal community had to drive more than a hundred miles round-trip to vote in person because mail voting options were severely restricted. Another recounted the confusion caused by last-minute changes to ID requirements—barriers that would seem trivial on paper but, in practice, silenced entire communities. Though I never met these individuals, reading their stories made the work deeply personal. I realized that each line I edited and each source I cited was, in some small way, helping to ensure that their voices could still be heard in the democratic process.

That realization became a defining moment of my summer. It transformed what could have felt like abstract policy work into something profoundly human and urgent. It also deepened my appreciation for how systemic advocacy—though it often operates far from the courtroom spotlight—can generate ripple effects that protect entire communities from disenfranchisement. The Brennan Center's holistic model of combining litigation, empirical research, and policy reform illustrated how legal strategy can drive structural change without losing sight of the individuals most affected.

Professionally, this experience reaffirmed my commitment to a career in public interest law. I learned that advancing justice is not only about representing clients in court, but also about understanding systems, shaping narratives, and defending the democratic architecture that allows communities to advocate for themselves. Personally, the fellowship reenergized me at a time when so much of public life feels marked by cynicism and division. Working alongside lawyers who combine intellectual rigor with moral clarity reminded me that the law can still be an instrument of hope—and that democracy, though fragile, can be fortified through persistence, skill, and imagination.

One moment that encapsulated this perspective came during a team meeting, when a senior attorney reflected that "protecting democracy isn't about winning one case—it's about ensuring there's still a fair fight to have." That insight has stayed with me. It captures both the humility and the endurance that this work demands. The pursuit of democracy is never finished; it requires constant vigilance and collective care. My summer at the Brennan Center taught me that even the smallest acts of legal diligence—checking a citation, synthesizing a case, editing a paragraph—can serve the larger project of keeping the promise of democracy alive.

As I return to law school, I carry with me not only new skills and knowledge, but also a renewed sense of conviction. The Brennan Center showed me what it means to combine excellence in legal analysis with an unwavering commitment to justice and equality. It reminded me that behind every abstract doctrine lies a tangible question of belonging: who gets to participate, whose voice counts, and who the law ultimately serves. Those are the questions that now guide my path forward—and I am deeply grateful to the fellowship donors whose support made this summer of learning, growth, and purpose possible.