



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## Summer 2025

## EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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### Final Reflection:

I am writing to you as part of the Equal Justice America Fellowship program to provide a final update on my summer internship, which EJA generously sponsored. Over the summer, I had the pleasure of working as part of the legal department at the ACLU of Texas. While I worked on various assignments over the summer, I was primarily tasked with researching rejection rates for mail-in ballots across Texas during the 2024 election.

This voting rights project focused on investigating why certain counties had higher rejection rates of applications for ballots by mail (ABBM)s or mail ballots and the reasons for these discrepancies following the enactment of S.B. 1 in Texas during the 88th Legislative Session. To vote by mail in Texas, you must be over the age of 65, have a disability, be detained in jail, or be within 3 weeks of giving birth. Voting by mail is a two-step process, where voters first must submit an application to vote by mail and then, if approved, the county mails them their ballot, which must be returned by election day or the following day. Some common reasons that either the application or the ballot/carrier envelope will be rejected are that the applicant was not eligible, the applicant forgot to include an identification number, or they included identification numbers that did not match the numbers in the voters' file.

My primary role was to reach out to individual counties through Public Information Act requests, sort through the data that they provided, analyze rejection rate trends, and determine what additional information would be beneficial. The biggest challenges I faced with this project were delays in receiving responses from various counties, discerning gaps in the data, and determining how to fill those voids with the information available. After a significant amount of work and creativity, we sent out updated requests to counties and sought information specifically related to the rejection rates by category of reason for rejection.



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While we were not able to fully determine why some counties have higher rates of rejection, we were able to find which counties are outliers. As such, the project will continue with research focusing on the reasons for greater levels of rejection, such as misinterpretation of the law and inadequate notification of rejections to voters. Through this project, we have a better idea of which counties have higher rates of rejecting ABBMs and mail ballots, and we will be able to further identify the reasons before communicating our findings to these counties.

In addition to my primary project, I also contributed to research on redistricting in Texas. During the latter part of my summer internship, redistricting became a prevalent topic following the announcement of a special legislative session by Governor Abbott. This assignment required analysis of previous court cases and strategic planning around the harms to minority communities. Finally, I had the opportunity to table with the ACLU of Texas at one of several Pride festivals around Austin. While tabling was not directly tied to any project or legal assignment, it provided me with an opportunity to connect with the community and share updates about ongoing litigation and the status of legislation.

I was incredibly grateful to have come back to the ACLU of Texas for my summer internship. It was amazing to work with everyone I previously knew, meet the wonderful new staff members, and experience a glimpse of what it is like to work in the legal department. Furthermore, I would not have been able to spend my summer working at a non-profit organization without the support of Equal Justice America.

Through the EJA fellowship, I was able to be a part of making a meaningful difference for Texans and work with an organization on the front lines of protecting civil liberties and civil rights. Through this internship, I was able to explore my interest in voting rights and learn more about how Texans are impacted by restrictive voting laws. Going forward, I plan on pursuing a career in the field of public service while focusing on disability rights and civil rights litigation.