



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Noah Brunner
LAW SCHOOL	University of Wisconsin Law School
ORGANIZATION	Citizen Advocacy Center

Update #1; As I have just started my first legal internship, I would love to thank Equal Justice America for making this internship possible and for supporting law students around the country.

My specific internship is with Citizen Advocacy Center, assisting citizens in the Chicagoland area to better understand and influence the democratic processes that affect their daily lives. We do this by monitoring various government activities, from municipal ordinances and city council meetings to state regulation and federal laws, to better inform and advocate for the millions of people living in this wonderful area. If you would like to learn more about the Center, visit their website at citizenadvocacycenter.org.

I would be hard pressed to do this exciting internship without the support from Equal Justice America. Equal Justice America funds numerous internships for law students working with individuals that normally can't afford legal services.

Update #2: As I am nearing the halfway point of my internship, I wanted to take a minute to share what I have been working on at the Citizen Advocacy Center.

My project that I am working on involves the Illinois TRUST Act and how it limits local law enforcement in Illinois from assisting federal immigration enforcement. The TRUST Act requires that local law enforcement in Illinois not transfer individuals in custody to agencies such as ICE without a criminal warrant being provided. As amended by the Illinois Way Forward Act, local law enforcement agencies must now submit yearly reports to the Illinois Attorney General's Office. These reports must include if the agency received any immigration warrants or detainers, as well as if the agency received any requests from ICE or DHS and their responses to these



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

requests.

My project has involved working on canvassing local law enforcement agencies regarding their interactions with immigration enforcement in the last year. I am very excited to eventually look at all the data we collect and show the community how their police departments have responded to immigration efforts in the Chicago area. I have also worked on other projects such as looking at how local municipalities adhere to the Illinois Open Meetings Act, following the development of data centers in the Chicagoland area, and finding avenues to better protect the beautiful nature preserves in the area. If you have any questions about the Center and the work that they do, visit their website at <https://lnkd.in/gVQjndsG> or connect with the executive director Sheilah O'Grady-Krajniak on LinkedIn.

I'm yet again so grateful to the Citizen Advocacy Center for allowing me to join their team to work on such important and interesting projects, as well as Equal Justice America for making this internship possible. Equal Justice America provides funding to numerous individuals to engage in civil legal aid work and fill a gap that is overlooked by the legal system.

Thank you again to these two organizations and everyone who has made my internship possible. I'm looking forward to all the good work yet to come!

Update #3: I wanted to post about a recent development in the Chicagoland area that I have been following for about a month now. Hoffman Estates is a suburb of Chicago known for its shopping and dining options along with its expansive park districts. In early June the city's Planning and Zoning Commission held a public meeting to discuss the rezoning of a 186-acre property. Residents of Hoffman Estates and the nearby Village of Barrington packed the city hall meeting room to protest what was believed to be the project that prompted the rezoning; a new data center. Close to 50 individuals gave public comments at this rezoning meeting opposing the rezoning, and even more gave public comment at a later city council meeting and protested outside of the property itself.

Regardless of my view on data centers, this was a very eye-opening process to watch unfold. I was at that first 3-hour zoning meeting and saw all types of people, from 30-year residents to concerned students, state how they were concerned on the impacts a data center would have on the surrounding nature, the neighborhood, and their families. Recently, the developer withdrew their rezoning request, stating that they had heard the feedback from the community and will bring forward a more specific plan before any future proposal.

All-in-all, this was a real-world example of what I have been hoping to experience at my internship with the Citizen Advocacy Center. People influencing their local government with the



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

goal of bettering their community. Assisting similarly situated people, people passionate about issues affecting them and their neighbors, is what I hope to spend my legal career pursuing.

Here is also a link to a Chicago Tribune article on the Hoffman Estates data center story.
<https://lnkd.in/gdHcrWf6>.

Update #4: Yesterday, my fellow Citizen Advocacy Center intern Joe O'Brien and I presented on the Illinois TRUST Act. The TRUST Act was enacted in Illinois in 2017 and prohibits state and local law enforcement in Illinois from assisting federal immigration agents in immigration enforcement without a criminal warrant. This includes transferring individuals from local custody to federal custody, giving federal agents information about individuals in local custody, and generally providing support to federal agents in enacting immigration enforcement. The act seeks to leave the issue of immigration entirely up to the federal government, as determined by the Supreme Court in *United States v. Arizona*.

Along with the basic overview of the TRUST Act and surrounding litigation, we also covered the CAC's own TRUST Act Survey. This survey was distributed to 38 municipalities in DuPage County as well as 5 sheriff's offices to better understand how state and local law enforcement is interacting with immigration agencies and how they are complying with the TRUST Act. This process was a very interesting one and I'm very proud with the work we have done so far.

If you are interested in hearing more about our research into the Illinois TRUST Act, we are also presenting more detailed data at the Citizen Advocacy Center's Democracy Night along with many other intern presentations covering topics such as the Voting Rights Act, Automatic License Plate Readers, and media literacy in the digital age. Democracy Night will be held at the Wilder Mansion in Elmhurst, IL on Wednesday the 29th at 6:00 PM. We hope to see you there!

Final Reflection; Last week my internship at the Citizen Advocacy Center came to an end, and I want to speak about my summer and what I took away from this experience.

First, I had an amazing time at the Center and worked on many projects that I am very proud of. The chief of these projects was our research on local and state law enforcement agencies and their compliance with the Illinois TRUST Act. My fellow intern and I presented on this topic at the Center's Democracy Night a couple of weeks ago which you can watch along with many other videos at the Center's YouTube Channel, <https://lnkd.in/gdHWRppm>.

Second, even though Democracy Night was the cumulation of many hours of work and research that I am very proud of, I enjoyed my time working on intakes just as much. Working on intakes allowed me to help community members with the issues they cared about. Helping these people



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

influence and understand their local governments was the main reason I wanted to work at the Citizen Advocacy Center. Experiencing the gratitude from these community members has shown me that I enjoy client work and the direct impact that can be seen from helping others. I hope that I can pursue this in later positions going forward.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the Citizen Advocacy Center staff. The amazing interns that worked together, gave different perspectives, and made some long days light and fun. Also, big thank you to executive director, Sheilah O'Grady-Krajniak, who taught me how to engage with community members, approach legal research, and maintain a good balance between work and life.

I would also like to thank Equal Justice America for helping to fund my internship this summer. EJA supports law students in legal aid roles with the goal of expanding legal representation for all. If you would like to support Equal Justice America in this goal, donate to their organization.

Thank you so much to everyone who made this summer possible. This internship has been a great experience and opportunity, and I cannot wait to continue my legal career and help more people in the future.