

Dan Ruben
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer I worked as a law clerk for Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, primarily in its Housing section. All of the clients were indigent, and had issues ranging from evictions, foreclosures, land sale disputes, and public housing application denials. Much of my work included doing research on various legal issues and writing short memorandums on the subject. Because clients often came to us very late in the process, my work was very time sensitive. I also met with clients in person to do their initial intake interviews, and explain what our organization could do for them. I prepared clients for their administrative hearings and would conduct the hearings before the Housing Authority official. At the close of each case, the supervising attorneys would evaluate my work.

Being involved in this organization allowed me to see a very particular problem in today's society; that there is a large segment of the population who cannot obtain legal representation when dealing with their issues. This is especially true for civil claims. For every client we represented, there were two to three who were denied for various reasons. Some did not meet the income requirement. Others had claims where it was too late in the process for the attorneys to assist them. However, many applicants were turned away simply because the office did not have enough manpower to help everyone. Because the vast majority of funding for most legal aids is through the government, the only way to help this problem is to get more funding. One attorney in the Austin office took four months off and became a lobbyist of sorts trying to obtain extra funding from the state government, or at the very least make sure funding was not cut. Only efforts like this will help the problem. The extra funding can be used to hire more attorneys, open offices in areas where the services currently do not reach, and try to represent more individuals. This was an extremely valuable experience for me because I can use the legal education I am obtaining to help individuals who otherwise would have no other recourse. Even with

one year of law school, I was able to help the clients understand their problem and try to formulate an action plan to get them the best solution possible.

Sincerely,

Maulik Shah
Georgetown University Law Center
J.D. Candidate, May 2011