

Public Employment Relations Board Summer 08

Working at PERB has been a good experience and a great start towards law school. The environment here is very friendly and has been welcoming from the start. All the offices are connected through a hallway so the overall atmosphere is rather quiet and allows for concentration on work. I was given my own desk right outside of a board member's office and next to her legal advisor. Although the board member was never here as she is away dealing with medical problems, I still had a lot of interactions with the other board members and extensive interactions with their legal councils. I was given my own desk and a computer as well as a personal door code and e-mail address as soon as I arrived which allowed me to be integrated quickly into the system and watch many of the interactions though e-mail. I also had a chance to talk with a couple Administrative Law Judges and general council who deal with conflicts before they reach the board. The office appears large, but I had a chance to meet with everyone and get an understanding of what a lot of people here do, many of them lawyers.

I have had a wide array of tasks. Mostly, the tasks I have gotten were intended to be longer tasks which I enjoyed because I was able to get involved and understand what I was doing. I often was given full control of these projects and allowed to structure them on my own. The first project I received was a research project for a pair of legal advisors who wanted a list of cases that had been overturned. This involved searching the database for a few key terms and reading the cases that I found had been overturned. Once organized into a data sheet, I gave it to the legal advisors who now use it often to ensure they do not use any overturned cases in their decisions. This project has appeared helpful for them and others have commented that it was a project they really needed done. The next project I worked on was another just waiting to be completed. This involved looking through pages of regulations and organizing aspects of their information. While this was simple data entry, it still progressed quickly although there was quite a bit of work to be done. Once the pages were highlighted for specific information I created and entered everything into a database which I forwarded on. The project was boring at times, but simple enough to complete quickly but it did help to have other projects at the same time to do for a break. During this case I got another project doing basic research. One legal advisor was working on a rare case so he put me on the project of looking for possibly similar cases. I found two close cases, but it turned out that the case was quite rare.

The largest and most important project I received, and was quite surprised to receive, was writing a decision. This was a simple case that had been appealed to the board and the case was straight forward. I was given all the case facts and information needed along with some examples and precedents. I integrated it all together and created an argument and reasoning for the decision and it should be a published decision soon.

The last project I received was more critical reading as I was given cases to summarize. I had to find the outcome of the case and the legal reasoning behind it. This project was tedious, but helped build reading comprehension skills and some critical thinking skills.

While I was excited to work in public policy before the internship, this internship did not advance that. I still want to work in Sacramento, but not in labor law. I found the law here to be a bit dry for my taste but was still a good experience to see what this flavor of law is like.

At this job I was pushed into reading a lot more than I am used to and reading more legal things than I ever have. However, the reading goes quite smoothly and now

with decisions being read I feel that it is an advantage I have once I get to law school. Also, I have had a great opportunity to see PERB in action through Administrative Law Judge hearings, informal hearing, one PERB meeting and a trip to the court of appeals to hear a case challenging PERB's jurisdiction. All of these instances I got to see parts of the law in action that I normally would not have the exposure to. Going to the court of appeals was especially interesting because I was able to see the judges in action and how they question the litigants even before the litigants get far into their argument.

Overall, I had a great experience at PERB. The staff was all very friendly and there is a lot of different things going on there. I saw and participated in every step of the process from initial complaint to informal hearing to formal hearing to board decisions. This gave me a taste of labor law, and while it might not be for me, I still gained a great amount of experience and enjoyed being part of this group for the summer. I would recommend PERB for any possibly law student, even if they are undecided in what law field they wish to work at.