

**Department of Justice  
Environment and Natural Resources Division  
Environmental Enforcement Section  
Undergraduate Program:**

**Overview of Section:**

The Environmental Enforcement Section is one of the largest litigating Sections in the Department and includes nearly one-half of the Division's lawyers. The Section is responsible for bringing civil judicial actions under most federal laws enacted to protect public health and the environment from the adverse effects of pollution, such as the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Oil Pollution Act, RCRA and the Superfund law (CERCLA). The breadth of the Section's practice is extensive and challenging. It includes cases of national scope, such as cases against multiple members of an identified industry, to obtain broad compliance with the environmental laws. Through its enforcement of the Superfund law, the Section seeks to compel responsible parties either to clean up hazardous waste sites or to reimburse the United States for the cost of cleanup, thereby ensuring that they, and not the public, bear the burden of paying for cleanup. The Superfund law is also a basis of the Section's actions to recover damages for injury to natural resources that are under the trusteeship of federal agencies.

**Duties/Assignments:**

Under the "Undergraduate" Program, the interns are usually assigned to supervisory paralegals, in some sections the intern is assigned directly to an attorney. It is the responsibility of that paralegal/attorney to assign the work. Sometimes, other attorneys approach the intern directly with assignments too. It could include:

- working on trial exhibits;
- putting trial notebooks together;
- redacting information;
- preparing privilege logs;
- researching, inserting or extracting information from databases;
- internet research;
- minor legal research;
- participating in mock trials;
- attending brown bags;
- proofreading documents;
- reconciling records; and
- filing, copying, faxing, and the like.

No one can predict what one will be doing on a daily basis because it depends on the posture of the case what the assignments will involve. We check in with the undergrads frequently to see what they are working on and to make sure that they understand their assignments.

### **Commitment:**

We ask for a minimum 6-8 week commitment, with a minimum of 3 days per week. Partial days are allowed as long as they total a minimum of thirty (30) hours. Office hours equals 8 hours between the hours of 8 and 6:30 with some flexibility. All internships are unpaid, and housing is not provided.

### **The Application Process:**

It's a two step process. The first step is all potential interns must answer the following questions before we can send out the paperwork:

1. Full Name (**including middle**)
2. Date of Birth
3. Place of Birth (City, State, Country)
4. SSN
5. Reliable Mailing Address
6. Reliable e-mail address
7. Reliable phone number

In addition, Volunteer legal interns must be US citizens. If the applicant is a dual citizen, they should be prepared to fill out additional paperwork regarding the dual citizenship.

Volunteer legal intern applicants must complete a background check. The screening will specifically inquire into an applicant's police record, payment of taxes, issues of indebtedness, and drug use, specifically within the last year. There are a number of things that have resulted in recent applicants' security clearance being delayed or denied. Here are the top four:

1. Drug Use. Certainly admitted illegal drug use – even in states where marijuana is legal – can be problematic for securing a federal government position, even one that's a volunteer position.
2. Failure to pay taxes.
3. Defaulting on student loans.

4. Residency Requirement. There have been several recent candidates who have spent considerable time living abroad. (E.g., travel, study abroad, work abroad, visiting family). Candidates must have lived in the US for 36 of the last 60 months (non-consecutive is fine). There are very narrow exceptions (e.g., US military or diplomatic service).

Answers to the 7 questions, a resume and a writing sample should be sent to [gavin.hilgemeier2@usdoj.gov](mailto:gavin.hilgemeier2@usdoj.gov) .

The second step is a security background check. The background check paperwork is sent out about 10-12 weeks before the semester begins. This means prospective interns have approximately 2 weeks to fill out the paperwork, get fingerprints etc., as the clearance process takes 6-8 weeks. During that 6-8 week period if all is well the applicant, and this office, will hear nothing from the vetting officials. This is normal, do not be concerned.