

Before I started working for the Honorable David C. Norton in the 4th Circuit of the U.S. District Court, I tried to write down three bullet points of what I wanted to learn from my internship. I only knew a handful of facts about Judge Norton, the District Court, or even what my vested interest was in public law. Unsurprisingly, I only managed to scribble down two goals, total.

First and foremost, I wanted to gain insight into every possible aspect of our judicial system. I envisioned myself exiting the Charleston Courthouse on my last day, having retained a clear idea of law and justice, and how the two massive concepts interact with each other. This was not the case. Instead, I witnessed firsthand how intricate and complex the law can be. Everyday I had the chance to observe Judge Norton in his proceedings. I sat in the Jury Box, and often found myself confused, especially in civil cases. Quickly, I realized that I would not walk away with a hardy grasp on law or justice, but I would be lucky enough to understand a few core concepts. Judge Norton, as well as his law clerks, acknowledged this. Every time we entered the elevator to return to Judge Norton's chambers after a hearing, Judge would ask if I understood what just happened, and would always take the time to explain if I had not. Both law clerks assigned me to tasks that required a basic comprehension of legal analysis, research of pertinent court cases, and ultimately written summaries or arguments of the matters ripe for the court's review. But both clerks always answered any questions I might have with gusto. In particular, I enjoyed researching and writing social security briefs. One of the clerks gave me a basic overview of how to write the brief, and explained how to find the most relevant case information through WestLaw, the database which the government uses. I was asked to read through the complaint, subsequent hearings, and the ultimate appeal. Next, I used WestLaw to research cases and ground my opinion as to why a social security appeal should be granted or denied. Finally, I

produced my own written argument for the outcome of the appeal, which would be reviewed and submitted to Judge Norton.

Reflecting on projects such as social security appeals, I realize that I came nowhere close to my first bullet point. However, I reached a more important point of understanding. Instead of exiting the Charleston Courthouse on my last day with a picturesque comprehension of all things law and order, I retained real knowledge on the intricacies of even the smallest parts of the law, and the delicate treatment which should be afforded to the law at all times. I believe my summer with Judge Norton exceeded my first bullet point's expectations.

I was aware, and quickly reminded upon my arrival, that Judge Norton had given me an incredible opportunity; undergraduate students are not usually provided the chance to closely observe or intern for federal judges. With this in mind, my second bullet point was a bit simpler: I wanted to know more about Judge Norton, his appointment to the U.S. District Court, and his time practicing law and presiding over it.

The night before my first day of work, I had dinner with a family friend who had previously worked with Judge Norton. She told me that while everyone only had great things to say about him, and his staff, he took his work very seriously. I came to work the next day anxiously awaiting to be put to work in a serious manner. When I met Judge Norton, I was immediately at ease. His friendly greeting and questions about Sewanee made it seem like I was speaking with fellow Tiger. However, despite jokes on the elevator down to his courtroom, I realized how intimidatingly brilliant Judge Norton was.

For the next four weeks I observed Judge Norton and his clerks work tirelessly to provide a just verdict in every imaginable scenario. It was this endless effort, on the part of Judge Norton and his staff, which demonstrated to me a clear passion for law and justice. I cannot imagine a

better environment to learn in, than one where your teachers are passionate about what they are doing.

I believe that lately, there are parts of our judicial system as a whole which have been challenged, and at times, forgotten: compassion, humility, and respect. We are all able to cast judgement upon one another, with a District Court judge title, or not. However, are we all able to treat each other compassionately, or with a basic standard of respect? I cannot say that I have always done this. However, watching Judge Norton preside, I realized why respect, especially when in an authoritative position, is crucially important. A few instances struck me. The first occurred on the Judge's 70th birthday, when I overheard the Judge stating, "All I want for my birthday is another birthday." It may seem irrelevant, but I remember it as such a simple wish and demonstration of humility from Judge Norton's brilliant mind. Another particular example stuck with me. At one point, a man appearing in court was unhappy with his current situation. Judge Norton reminded him that it was ultimately his life, and he could proceed in the hearing however he wished. Through this polite reminder, Judge Norton gave this man a sense of self-authority, and provided him with a feeling of respect from the court. From what I could tell, the man's feelings of anger and frustration were in part resolved from Judge Norton's simple gesture of compassion and respect.

In the four weeks I observed and interned for Judge Norton, I noticed his passion and respect for the law, and all who come before it. Only upon reflection have I realized that Judge Norton offered me that same respect and passion on my first day. I can easily say that both of my bullet point goals were satisfied to the fullest capacity. I cannot thank Judge Norton, or his staff, enough for a wonderful experience, that I hope to carry with me as I move forward.