

John Breckenridge

TONYA Executive Summary

This Summer I had the opportunity to intern for Chief Judge David C. Norton of the District Court of South Carolina. During my time as an intern I had many responsibilities and duties including helping edit bench memorandums and other court orders, as well as attending court with Judge Norton and other District Judges. I also had the chance to converse with the Judge's law clerks, who are law school graduates, and other interns who were in various stages of law school. The law clerks and fellow interns helped me understand portions of the law that were applicable to the trials and hearings that we observed. This allowed me to understand what was happening while we were in the courtroom. Their advice and guidance helped me become familiar with the workings of the court system, which in turn, made me more interested in a legal profession.

The most interesting aspect of my internship was attending hearings and trials. I had the privilege of attending civil and criminal hearings ranging from felony gun convictions to large class action lawsuits. Before the hearing started, I was given access to files that gave me the background of the case and briefed me on the specific hearing that I was going to attend. This gave me an idea of what the hearing was about as well allowed me to form my own opinion about a possible outcome of the hearing. Once in the courtroom, I would carefully observe the behavior of the attorneys and watched the Judge make a decision that truly made me aware of the breadth of his experience and knowledge. I would always see the errors in my initial opinion and learn from the mistakes I made by listening to the Judge's final opinion. After the hearing, I was free to ask questions to the Judge and also to his clerks and other interns. My experience interning in Judge Norton's Chambers was truly one of the most eye opening experiences of my life. Not only was I able to gain a further understanding of the law and court system, but I also have never been more sure of my decision to pursue a legal career.