

WOLVERINE BAR ASSOCIATION



JUDICIAL EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM GUIDE

The Wolverine Bar Association (“WBA”) was established by a number of African American attorneys during the 1930’s. However, its roots date much earlier, in 1919, when the Harlan Law Club was formed by black attorneys in the Detroit area who were excluded from other bar associations because of discrimination. The name recognized U.S. Supreme Court Justice John M. Harlan, who pushed for equity for all. His philosophy was exemplified in his dissenting opinion of the U.S. Supreme Court case, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which authorized the “separate but equal” doctrine. The Wolverine Bar Association replaced the Harlan Law Club and expanded its influence from Detroit to the entire “Wolverine” state. The Wolverine Bar Association, like its predecessor the Harlan Law Club, is a powerful mechanism by which African American attorneys in Michigan address the unique and distinct needs of their community for legal service, representation, and protection.

In 2000, the Honorable Victoria A. Roberts founded the Judicial Externship Program (“JEP”), in cooperation with the WBA. To date, the program has placed more than 300 students from underrepresented demographic groups and economically disadvantaged backgrounds in summer clerkships with federal judges, and the Wolverine Bar Foundation, the charitable arm of the WBA, has awarded these students over \$400,000.00 in stipends through the generosity of its monetary supporters.

MISSION STATEMENT

WBA strives to expand the pipeline of students pursuing judicial clerkship opportunities. The Judicial Externship Program works in conjunction with the United States District Court of the Eastern District of Michigan and is administered by the Honorable Jonathan J.C. Grey. The Program pairs eligible students with participating federal district and magistrate judges for a minimum of 160 hours, but up to 10 weeks. The Judicial Externship Program is a mechanism for externs to establish relationships with judges and federal law clerks, further their analytical reasoning and legal research and writing skills, and become comfortable with the decision-making process that judges employ. Each student selected to participate in the Judicial Externship Program will be assigned a former federal law clerk to serve as a mentor. Students will have the opportunity to work directly with federal judges and their law clerks in preparing bench memoranda for pending cases and other duties as assigned. Students will also view, first-hand, pretrial matters, settlement conferences, final pretrial conferences, trials, and/or motion and sentencing hearings. Students can also participate in court and affiliated agency intern seminars. Affiliated agencies include the United States Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Michigan and the Federal Community Defender Office of the Eastern District of Michigan.

The Judicial Externship Program offers two options:

1. **Full Summer** – Students in the full summer option will spend 8 to 10 weeks, full-time, in chambers.
2. **Split Summer** – Students who will spend at least 160 hours (equivalent to approximately 4 weeks full-time) in chambers.

ELIGIBILITY

WBA accepts, encourages, and considers applicants of all backgrounds. Eligibility for the Judicial Externship Program is as follows:

First, second, and third year law students are eligible to participate in the Judicial Externship Program. Applicants must: (i) demonstrate a commitment to the mission of the WBA, which *may* include, but is not limited to, life experiences as a member of an underrepresented demographic group; (ii) be in good standing at their law school; (iii) demonstrate strong research, writing and analytical abilities; (iv) have ties to Southeastern Michigan and a desire to practice in metropolitan Detroit after completing law school; (v) have completed a legal writing course before the clerkship begins; (vi) by the time the clerkship starts, have completed **no more than 30 credit hours** toward graduation; and (vii) expect to graduate no later than May 2028 (Dual degree and part-time students must complete the applicable portions of the application).

Students are required to: (i) attend the full-day writing workshop on May 16, 2026, in-person to prepare students for the rigors of federal practice; (ii) complete a minimum of 160 hours in chambers between May and August 2026; and (iii) attend at least **three (3)** court or affiliated agency seminars.

DUAL PROGRAM EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

While students are not required to also apply for the Summer Clerkship Program, interested students are encouraged to do so. Acceptance into **both** the Summer Clerkship Program and Judicial Externship Program provides students the opportunity to split their summers between a firm and a federal judge. Students accepted into the dual program will spend a minimum of 160 hours in chambers with their assigned judge and approximately eight 8 weeks with a law firm/company.

Students interested in working at JEP firms may also split their summer. JEP partners with several law firms that accept referrals from the program. Partner firms include: The Miller Law Firm, P.C.; Brooks Kushman P.C.; Pitt McGehee; and Maddin Hauser.

If you're not interested in splitting your summer, please select the option on the form to opt-out.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

If you wish to be considered for the 2026 Judicial Externship Program you must submit the following materials **no later than noon 12:00 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time), on Saturday, January 31, 2026:**

- Submit completed electronic application form(s). (Links to the applications for both Programs may be found below.)
- A short cover letter explaining your (i) career goals and how you believe participating in the Program will further those goals; (ii) commitment to practicing law in Michigan and connection to the Southeastern Michigan, and (iii) commitment to service through the WBA. Please note that an applicant may be required to further substantiate their ties to Southeastern Michigan during the application and interview processes.
- A current resume.
- An official or unofficial copy of your law school transcript. If an unofficial transcript is not available by the application deadline, you must provide a letter from each professor, on the school's letterhead, reflecting your performance in each course. Applicants who are selected to interview with the Program's Committee must bring a copy of their transcript to the interview.
- A writing sample **not exceeding five (5) pages in length**, double-spaced, in the form of a legal memorandum or brief, showing the applicant's ability to identify and analyze legal issues. The writing sample may be an excerpt from a larger project, if clearly identified as such. The writing sample should demonstrate your legal analytical skills. The writing

sample should not contain any comments or markings from your professor/instructor.

- Two letters of recommendation from current or former employers, professors, or someone familiar with your work ethic, character, and judgment.
- One-page statement exploring either: (1) what does the history of the WBA mean to you; (2) how you would advance the historical and current mission of the WBA; or (3) how would your life experiences or unique perspective contribute to your success in the future?

This year's applications are available electronically. Applicants are required to submit all application materials as a **single PDF** following the completion of the online application.

SELECTION PROCESS

Due to the volume of applications received, the Committee will complete an initial evaluation of each candidate based upon the application package and the criteria listed below. Candidates selected to interview with the Committee will be notified by e-mail no later than February 10, 2026. Interviews are scheduled to be held Saturday, February 21, 2026 (in-person or via Zoom). Applicants will be scheduled for one 20 to 30-minute interview. Each virtual interviewee should plan to log on at least fifteen (15) minutes before their scheduled interviews in case there are any technical issues.

Although the Committee does consider an applicant's class ranking and grade point average, other factors, including the applicant's work history, undergraduate record, extracurricular activities, and oral and written communication skills are also reviewed. After completion of all interviews, the Committee will select applicants for placement with the participating judges. Decisions on acceptance into the Program will be communicated via email no later than seven (7) days following the interviews. Once acceptance into the JEP program is offered, candidates have 48 hours to accept or decline. The committee will make no exceptions. Judge placement will be communicated at a later date and

will sometimes require that candidates schedule an additional interview with specific judges or JEP firms.

All participants are required to attend an in-person training on May 16, 2026, where they will receive valuable training and a clerkship guide. **Failure to attend the training will result in dismissal from the program.**

STIPEND OR CREDIT SELECTION

Students who spend their full summer with the JEP program and are not offered employment from any of the firms in our programs will receive 100% of the stipend amount. Students offered employment from a SCP or JEP firm will only be eligible for a lesser amount of a stipend. Stipend amounts are determined by the Wolverine Bar Foundation on a yearly basis due to the generosity of private donors. Stipends are intended to cover the costs of transportation, lunch, and parking dependent on the length of the externship. While it may provide nominal compensation, a stipend is not intended to replace the wages of a full-time position. The Wolverine Bar Foundation's board will determine the amount of the stipend following selection of program participants.

In lieu of accepting a stipend, students can elect to intern for course credit if their law school permits. The decision to receive credit, in lieu of the stipend is **FINAL**. Any late request to receive a stipend will be **denied**.

Participation in JEP will preclude a student from working in any other legal capacity while externing at the federal court.

PARTICIPATING JUDGES

Participating judges are located in Detroit, Ann Arbor, Bay City, and Flint. Participating judges accept the candidate selected for placement by the Committee. The Committee tries to accommodate students' first location preference. Some judges may require additional interviews with candidates. Students will be given the same type of work assignments as non-JEP judicial interns and term law clerks. Although not required, judges are encouraged to consider the applicants for future employment

as a term law clerk, either within chambers or with another judge. Participating judges for 2026 may include*:

Detroit

Judge Jonathan J.C. Grey
Judge Brandy R. McMillion

Judge Terrence G. Berg
Judge Linda V. Parker
Judge Susan K. DeClercq
Judge Gershwin A. Drain

Judge Mark A. Goldsmith
Judge Denise Page Hood
Judge David M. Lawson
Judge Matthew F. Leitman
Judge Laurie J. Michelson
Chief Judge Stephen J. Murphy III
Judge Robert J. White
Magistrate Judge Kimberly G. Altman
Magistrate Judge Anthony P. Patti
Magistrate Judge Elizabeth A. Stafford

Ann Arbor

Judge Judith E. Levy
Chief Magistrate Judge David R. Grand

Flint

Judge F. Kay Behm
Judge Shalina D. Kumar
Magistrate Judge Curtis Ivy, Jr.

Bay City

Judge Thomas L. Ludington
Magistrate Judge Patricia T. Morris

**United States Bankruptcy Court
for the Eastern District of Michigan**

Judge Joel D. Applebaum
Judge Mark A. Randon

United States Court of Appeals
for the Sixth Circuit Court
Judge Stephanie Dawkins Davis

***Participating judges are subject to change.**

Inquiries about the application process for the Judicial Externship Program may be directed to Danielle Smart at daniellesmart12@gmail.com and James Johnson at johnsonj@millercanfield.com.