

Student: Kurtis Zinger

Placement: AT&T

Program: DC Scholars in the Private Sector

Over the summer of 2013, I worked as a legal intern in the Federal-Regulatory office of AT&T's External & Legislative Affairs Division in Washington, DC. During my time at AT&T, I worked on three primary projects: (1) privacy and big data research and analysis; (2) accessibility issues related to telecommunications relay services; (3) and the FCC's interpretation of its accounting regulations on price-cap carriers.

Privacy and Big Data Research:

Upon my arrival at AT&T, I was swooped into a conference room with AT&T's Chief Privacy Officer, the Deputy Chief Privacy Officer, and other privacy-related staffers to discuss the continuing rollout of a new privacy policy. I was given the latest version of the privacy policy and was asked to review it. Two weeks after my first assignment, information regarding the NSA programs leaked, which put all of the work I was doing into context and made for an extremely exciting time to be working on privacy issues in the nation's capital.

As a side-project related to the privacy policy rollout, I researched other tech companies' privacy and data retention policies. Because AT&T was beginning to collect large amounts of potentially sensitive user information, I was tasked with looking into what companies were currently doing to protect consumer data and make recommendations on the types of policies AT&T should adopt moving forward. I can now say that I helped AT&T's privacy team understand certain issues related to data anonymization and aggregation.

Accessibility Issues:

I was also tasked with looking into the different obligations placed upon AT&T by the Telecommunications Act of 1996 regarding the delivery of telecommunications relay services. Because many of the regulations related to the distinction between intrastate and interstate calling, and because such distinctions mean less in the digital age, AT&T was looking into whether the same obligations continued to make sense given an all-IP ecosystem. I was also asked to attend multiple FCC meetings where relevant video relay service regulatory updates were discussed and report back to my supervisors with summaries or outlines.

Accounting Assignment:

A final major project on which I spent a great deal of time involved whether the FCC had recently reinterpreted a 2008 ruling that granted AT&T forbearance from certain accounting regulations. I met with business units and learned about AT&T's history as a price-cap carrier. This project culminated in a formal legal memorandum discussing the relevant interpretive issues and providing my opinion on the FCC's rulings in 2013 as opposed to 2008.

My DC Experience:

Outside of the AT&T offices, I was able to meet with some of the most influential policymakers in the telecommunications industry. Because of the upcoming spectrum auction, many of these opportunities revolved around discussions about how the auction should be handled moving forward. I met with many CU alumni and attorneys working in the telecommunications field, and I also travelled on many weekends to the various battlefields, national parks, national monuments, and memorials that surround the DC area.

Conclusion:

My time in Washington, DC with AT&T was extremely valuable, especially for a first-year student. I met so many wonderful professionals and saw a part of the country I had never truly experienced before. The legal work was extremely rewarding and continues to help me be marketable to employers throughout my second year at law school.