

Elizabeth Boyle

**Graduation Year:** Sophomore

**College:** Arts & Letters

**Major(s):** Political Science & Peace Studies

**Minors(s):** International Development Studies

**Scholar Group Membership:** N/A

**Did you received other funding for this project?:** No

**Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding?** No

**More details on CUSE funding assistance?** As an unpaid intern at the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, there was no other way for me to go to the briefing without the monetary support from CUSE. Thank you!

**Project Title:** As Assessment of Minority Voting Rights Access in the U.S.

**Project Location:** North Carolina, United States

**ND Faculty Mentor:** Thomas Kellenberg

**Project Type:** Conference - Attendance

**Why did you undertake this project/experience?** Career discernment and/or preparation

**Did your funded experience help you:**

**[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]:** Yes

**[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]:** Very Much

**[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]:** Very Much

**[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]:** Very Much

**[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]:**Very Much

**Tell us about your experience.**

I had the opportunity to attend the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights briefing in North Carolina about voting rights access in the United States. I heard from voting rights experts across the country and across the political spectrum. As an intern at the Commission, I took copious notes that are then being used to create the new Statutory Enforcement Report for the Commission. Additionally, I was able to spend time outside of the briefing with the Chair, Catherine Lhamon, the Staff Director, Mauro Morales, the Commissioners, and the Staff. From the staff of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, I learned how to conduct in-depth research on a topic and then host a briefing for the public to examine the issue. From the expert witnesses, I learned about the nuances of voting rights and the myriad ways in which minorities' access to voting rights is restricted in the U.S.

**Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.**

This project had an immensely positive impact on me as a scholar. To prepare to go to this briefing, I had to immerse myself in voting rights research so that I was prepared to understand

and debate the testimony presented at the briefing. In the weeks leading up to it, I read many court briefs, research journals, and federal documents pertaining to the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This entire experience has fostered a love for research and analytical writing and has helped me develop new skills which I can use further in my studies. This project will also have a tangible impact on not only the people in North Carolina, but in the United States as a whole. The testimony that we gathered from this briefing is being used to lay the groundwork for our Statutory Enforcement Report. This report is send to President Trump, Vice President Pence, and all members of Congress. Because of this, members of Congress will have the research necessary to advocate for legislation on the House floor pertaining to voting rights which will hopefully alleviate the barriers that many minority voters face.

**Describe how this experience is connected to your plans as a student or future professional.**

This entire experience has solidified my plans to work in the public sector and to go to law school. The work that I have done as an intern at the Commission this semester strongly resembles the work of a paralegal - conducting legal research, drafting policy memorandum, and assisting the Commission. Additionally, the majority of the Commissioners, Chair, and Staff Director all have law degrees and being able to see them use those degrees on a daily basis has inspired me to do the same. This experience, especially the briefing, has also ensured my desire to work in the public sector. Being able to hear from people who have been personally impacted by a problem created by policy and knowing that I have the power to change that and make their lives a little bit better is very inspiring.

**What advice would you give other students who are planning to pursue similar projects?**

I would tell other students to take every opportunity that comes their way. Many students at Notre Dame are not aware of the various funding opportunities that CUSE has and only think it is for students with large week long summer research projects. My advice for students is that if they find something that they love, that they are passionate about, they should seek it out and contact CUSE for support. The process of applying for grants from CUSE is not difficult and the staff is there to help you every step of the way.

I acknowledge that this form has been filled out truthfully and to the best of my ability. I understand that this information will be shared with many different CUSE constituencies. As such, I have provided as much useful information as I was able. I understand that CUSE will not complete my award disbursement until this form is successfully completed. If I have any questions or concerns, I will contact CUSE before submitting this form. To illustrate that you understand all of these points, please enter your Notre Dame email in the box below.

eboyle3@nd.edu

