



Feature

Job Opportunities for Civil Rights Attorneys

Civil rights attorneys follow a calling, defending the Constitution of the United States in order to make sure that the rights of their clients are being protected. These lawyers tend to take on the sorts of cases in which the rights of individuals have been attacked and need to be defended accordingly. Civil rights attorney jobs may involve advocating for women’s rights, civil rights, human rights, gay and lesbian rights, voting rights, first amendment rights, and disability rights, and a lawyer may also specialize in one form of rights over the others if he or she so chooses. Becoming a civil rights attorney takes the same level of education as it does to become most other types of attorneys, but involves specialized education geared toward rights laws rather than some other area of law like criminal law. When specializing in civil rights, an attorney will choose specialized schooling to make sure that the he or she obtains the right qualifications. Job duties vary greatly from one civil rights attorney job to the next, meaning that there are plenty of fields of study and practice that a civil rights attorney can go into.



Education Requirements

The process of becoming a civil rights attorney begins with getting a four-year undergraduate degree from a university. That’s followed by a three-year education at a

law school. During law school, an aspiring civil rights lawyer will make the decision to take the courses needed to specialize in constitutional law. After graduating from law school, the lawyer has to pass the bar exam before practicing law. Every state has its own bar exam, so be sure to check for your state’s requirements. Many prestigious law firms are tough to get into because of the competition for admission that exists, so education is very critical. Some law students find it hard enough just to get into a prestigious law school these days, which should speak to the amount of competition that exists within the legal industry in general.

Job Duties

Depending upon the specialization of a given civil rights attorney, there are different duties that are required. A lot of the specializations involve special interest groups. These include gay and lesbian rights, disability rights, human rights, and women’s rights. Civil rights attorneys fight to ensure that individuals in these groups are being treated fairly. Other civil rights lawyers, meanwhile, will focus on just one major issue or amendment, such as privacy, freedom of expression, the eleventh amendment, voting rights, and so on. Fundamentally, though, every civil rights attorney is about ensuring that individuals are treated equally, no matter what.

Salary

In 2006, the median salary for a civil rights lawyer was \$102,470, with the bulk of salaries in the range between \$69,000 and \$145,000 per year. Fresh out of college, an average lawyer will earn a median annual salary of \$60,000 within nine months, though some may earn upwards of \$85,000 per year. More experienced lawyers, meanwhile, will earn significantly more money, although the salaries vary as much as the employment locations and specialties. What is important to know is that civil rights attorneys can take on numerous different jobs in the legal industry, and each will come with its own unique salary and benefits.



Job Opportunities and Outlook

In 2006, there were more than 761,000 lawyers employed in the practice of law all throughout the country. Of those, 27 percent, including numerous civil rights attorneys, were self-employed and acted either as a partner in a law firm or by flying solo in their own practice. There is quite a large number of government and public service positions that are held by civil rights lawyers, but that being said, civil rights attorneys can find a wide variety of different jobs to fill that would utilize their skills and specialties.

In the case when there is not an immediate opening in the civil rights field, there are many other specialties that one can enter into until enough experience is accumulated to more easily enter one’s desired specialty. Lawyers fresh out of law school can go into general practice while looking for a job that matches with their specialty, and they should generally have no problems transferring into a specialty civil rights attorney job later on.



Feature

Conclusion

The civil rights attorney is a person who fights for an ideal and for the rights of the citizens of our country. Working solo or as part of a law firm, the civil rights attorney is one of a myriad of specialists within the legal field. There is a lot of competition

for civil rights attorney jobs, but the field is worthwhile to enter into because it allows for attorneys to fight for the rights of their clients, regardless of whether they are women's rights, voting rights, gay and lesbian rights, first amendment rights, or any of the other rights that we cherish as citizens of this country.

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