

## *National, Multi-office Firm Opens Honolulu Office for Class of 2017 Federal Clerk and General Litigation Candidate*

Federal and state court clerks are getting a surprising amount of traction right now. For the first several months of the pandemic, from March to around July, things were slow for clerks. At the time, I was working with an Alaska State Supreme clerk, a Nevada State Supreme Court clerk, several federal district court clerks and a bankruptcy court clerk. Initially, none of these candidates were getting much traction, I think for several reasons: most of their clerkships were set to send in August or September, and usually a firm won't be interested in hiring a clerk six months out. I have seen it happen, but it is a lot more common for firms to hire clerks on the same sort of timeline that they hire normal associates - one to two months out. The other reason that these clerks likely weren't getting traction was that firms were initially being very cautious about hiring when COVID-19 first hit. I had many interviews and several likely or even soft offers going into March, and then by mid to end of March, literally all of these were put on hold. Firm hiring stopped almost completely from mid-March to around mid-May, and then things slowly, slowly started to pick up again. The first movement that I saw in May was in niche practice areas and smaller markets. For example, in May, I placed an experienced and senior Antitrust Counsel at a top Am Law 100 firm in Seattle. I didn't start getting traction for my clerk candidates until around June or July, as while litigation was perhaps the first practice area to pick up again, firms I think were prioritizing candidates with post-law school firm experience.

As mentioned above, I have worked with several clerk candidates recently, and all of these candidates have landed jobs on their own in the last month or two (mostly at very small firms). Bankruptcy clerks seem to be getting more traction than traditional clerks, as bankruptcy generally does very well when the market and economy are not as robust. However, perhaps the best type of clerk candidate to be right now is a federal clerk candidate that has prior litigation experience at a firm from after law school. That is what the candidate that I just placed is. In terms of her background, she served as a summer law clerk and then worked after law school at a small boutique litigation firm in Honolulu, Hawaii for about two years. Then, she went to clerk on the United States Courts of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in Honolulu, Hawaii for a year. This candidate boast great academics from a local law school and from a local undergraduate school, studied abroad in Canada during college, was the Editor-in-Chief of her school's Law Review in law school, participated in Moot Court in law school and participated in Teach For America between college and law school. All of these things are very impressive - law firms even find studying abroad noteworthy, as they like well-rounded and worldly attorneys. I think the one real sticking point with this candidate was that she was only barred in Hawaii, and of course Hawaii, and in particular Honolulu, is a very, very small market. We ended up submitting this candidate to only two firms in Hawaii, as there were only two litigation openings at law firms in Honolulu.

However, lucky for us, this candidate was very open geographically. She approved firms in Chicago, Portland, Oregon, Houston, Seattle, Dallas, Austin, Honolulu, Amarillo, San Antonio and Plano. She didn't have ties to any of these markets except for Texas, where she lived for two years during TFA. While a couple of Texas firms expressed an interest in her, and one national, multioffice firm interviewed her for their Houston office, they ultimately decided to pass on her because she didn't have the Texas bar. While not having a particular state's bar doesn't necessarily pose a big hurdle to a top corporate candidate, I have noticed that even very strong litigators will have trouble getting traction in a state if they aren't barred there, or haven't at least sat for the bar.

We got very, very lucky because one national, multi-office firm with a Seattle office reached out to interview this candidate, and were, as luck would have it, very interested in her because they just happen to have a heavy Hawaii caseload, and they were intrigued by her strong ties to Hawaii and her Hawaii legal practice background. This firm only conducted one Zoom interview with my candidate before deciding to extend her an offer. They liked her so much that they gave her the option to work from their Seattle office, without having

to sit for the WA State bar, or to work from Honolulu, where she could either work from home or from an office that they would open and set up for her! I have never seen a firm so invested in a candidate that they offer to open an office in a new market for the candidate. This was truly amazing! The firm also offered the candidate a higher base than what she was making at her previous firm, as well as a signing bonus to sweeten the deal. As this was the only firm to express interest in her and because the offer was solid, the candidate happily accepted. She will be starting with the firm in about two weeks, and is thrilled to have landed at a great firm in such a tough market. I couldn't be happier for her, and I know that she will excel at her new law firm home!