

General Questions About Being/Becoming an Attorney

- 1. When did you know you wanted to be an attorney?**
I originally thought I wanted to be a lawyer when I was in grade school, changed my mind in college, and then later after starting my first job decided again that I wanted to go to law school after all.
- 2. What is most important when planning for the future?**
Be flexible and willing to try new and different things that may not have been part of your original plan.
- 3. What is a consistent obstacle in your field?**
Keeping up to date with ongoing developments in the law and policy, and how that might impact your client.
- 4. How to choose a good law school? Should it be the same as undergrad?**
I chose my law school (The American University Washington College of Law) based on geographic location (I wanted to be in DC) and the fact that it was known for public interest work and highly ranked for clinics. You should certainly do tours and explore different options to see what is a good fit for you. Hope this helps!
- 5. What was something difficult you found doing while working in the law field?**
Getting up to speed on the particular laws that applied to my work, and time management.
- 6. What is the time frame reality of getting a good legal job?**
This varies and depends on what kind of legal job you are looking for. For any job though, especially out of school, additional time should be planned for submitting your law school grades and recommendations, including any recommendations from employers when you are in law school. Some legal fields have more potential openings and are perhaps less selective, whereas others will take more time.
- 7. Best way to prepare for a legal job right now? As a high schooler?**
Become a really good writer. Law is all about communicating effectively.
- 8. What kinds of activities appeal to judges when appointing clerks?**
My judges wanted to ensure that I was a good writer, quick on my feet, organized and detail-oriented. I would find ways to show that you have those skills. You can also consider interning at a court during law school to show your interest in working in the courts. Hope this helps!
- 9. What are the best LSAT courses that you recommend?**
The LSAT is really all about finding and understanding patterns and testing your analytical skills. So for me even just getting the practice books and doing several practice tests help. I would think about how you study best (individually, in a group etc.) and use that to help make your decision. Best advice is to practice as many types of questions as you can. Good luck!
- 10. Tips on writing a bench memorandum?**
I would make sure that it is organized, easy to read, and avoid legal jargon. Focus on the law and using the facts you have to support your position. Be sure to consult style guides for the jurisdiction you are in.
- 11. What do you like most about your profession?**
The law is always evolving and changing and policies are being updated so I am always learning and growing in the field. I like having a good challenge.

12. **What did you study for your profession in college? What is most satisfying about your profession?**
I studied International Studies and Spanish in undergrad. The most satisfying thing about my current job is that the law is constantly changing and being updated so I am constantly learning something new and challenging myself.
13. **Where did you go to college and why?**
I went to Oberlin College in Ohio and to law school at Indiana University in Bloomington. My major was political science. I decided to go into law because I saw it as a powerful tool to work for social change and greater equity, and a tool that could be applied in many different ways - it is not just all about courts and trials.
14. **How did you decide this is the kind of law you wanted to do?**
It actually fell into my lap when I accepted the job, so I had to learn while doing, but over time I've come to love my field as I learn more about it. Best advice is to be willing to try different things until you find something that you enjoy and that challenges you.
15. **Why is it good to always talk to a lawyer?**
They can think through both sides of your issue and give you the best and worst case scenarios for your issue. They can also help you think through the facts that support your position. It can be very difficult to navigate the legal system if you're unfamiliar with it.

Tenant's Rights and Real Estate Law

16. **What are real estate lawyers?**
They do a lot of contracts work and some negotiation and property law work too.
17. **Why can you no longer obtain a subsidy?**
Because too many people are on the waiting list which has been closed for almost 10 years, currently there are over 30,000 people on the waiting list.
18. **Are there different categories for tenant's rights for families, elderly, financial status, etc**
Elderly tenants and tenants with a disability have additional protections against rent increases. They can declare elder/disability status with the DHCD.
19. **What is a consistent obstacle in your field?**
At the high level, it is social structures that create such inequity in our city and nation. The average monthly rent in DC is well above what a person working full time at minimum wage can earn.
At the individual level, I am frustrated by clients who are too timid to stand up for their rights even when I am willing to help them act to assert their rights. And it is so frustrating to see how many tenants do not know what rights they do have and therefore can't act to protect their rights.
20. **How have housing laws changed in the last century?**
Generally, housing laws have moved from considering the relationship between landlord and tenant to be a matter of private contract law to passing state and city laws that regulate the obligations of landlords and give tenants some protection. In many states, the landlords still can evict a tenant more easily than in DC.

The program of the government providing housing support began sometime around the late 1960s. First, it was the government building and maintaining the apartment buildings. Then the federal government decided to give money to tenants that they could use to rent with private landlords. These programs came with protections for the tenants and due process rights when the government tries to end the subsidy or public housing.

21. **How do can you evict a person in a household?**

The answer depends a lot on the particular facts that you are thinking of. I have had elderly clients who let a younger family member move in during a difficult time for that younger person. My client thought it would be for only a few weeks, but then that family member refuses to move out and intimidates my client. That creates a very difficult situation. My client can try to get help from the police or Adult Protective Services. Going to court to get a civil protection order against the younger person is a possibility. If the landlord thinks one member of the household is dealing drugs, the law gives the court a lot of power to evict the whole household, with many fewer protections than other situations of violating the lease.

22. **In our current state are attorneys advocating for people that cannot pay rent due to COVID-19 (not just low income anyone)?**

There are two levels to advocacy - immediate protections during the emergency and figuring out how to give people time to recover their jobs and income and catch up with debts after the emergency. We have a national network of housing advocates that are working hard to figure out how to protect people at each level. There are things that can be done at each level of government

23. **How has COVID-19 impacted tenant's rights and housing law? In D.C.?**

"Fortunately, in almost all states, courts have said they will not proceed with eviction cases during the public health emergency. Landlords in DC can still file a complaint for eviction, but there will be no hearings or other steps taken until the emergency is lifted. Tenants still have to pay rent, if they can, but there are also some protections that are being figured out right now - the landlords have been told they won't lose their buildings if they don't pay their mortgage if it is insured by federal programs, and in turn, those landlords are supposed to allow tenants longer times to catch up with their rent if they lost their jobs due to covid 19 emergency. DC Housing Authority has also put all their enforcement actions on hold during the emergency. So no one with a subsidy will lose the subsidy during the emergency and will be given time after it to complete the necessary steps for keeping their subsidy."

Patent Inventions/Intellectual Property

24. **How close does a knock off brand have to get before they can get sued for stealing intellectual property?**

Each patent includes claims, which are ways of describing the aspect of an invention. So, if a claim is infringed by a party, then that party could be sued by the patent owner, sometimes for close products, because it appears that the knock-off copies one or more claims from one or more patents.

25. **Can you talk about your practice? What does it usually consist of?**

I am both an intellectual property and a food and drug attorney. The issues I work on typically involve a mixture of both - many drugs/ biologics and medical devices require some sort of FDA approval and are protected by patents and trademarks.

26. **Can I obtain a patent for a software related invention?**

You can, but it is typically more difficult than a physical invention, because the software-related invention needs to include use of a computer or a device to use the invention, plus there are many software-type inventions out there that can block subsequent inventions for the same concept. Also, ideas that are too abstract and human-type actions are not usually patentable - it needs to be related to a computer-driven process that is different than a mere abstract process.

27. **How many patents can you get per year?**

The sky is the limit! There are no restrictions how many patents per inventor/per year.

28. **Is a patent valid in every country?**

No, a patent is only valid in the country where the patent is granted.

29. **Do I need a patent attorney or an agent to prepare and file a patent application?**

"It certainly helps but not required, particularly for a provisional application. Here is a more detailed response: Legally speaking, nothing prevents an inventor from preparing a patent application (or provisional patent application) without a lawyer. Indeed, thousands of inventors regularly do so, using self-help guides such as Nolo's Patent It Yourself, Patent Pending in 24 Hours or Online Provisional Patent Application process. Filing a patent application without an attorney definitely saves a great deal of money. Depending on the type of patent and the complexity of the issues, a patent attorney can cost a minimum of \$5,000 to \$10,000. To the extent that your patent is more complicated, or the USPTO patent examiners raise concerns about any aspect of the application, the costs of the legal feels could be significantly higher.

Despite these cost savings, when it comes to filing a patent application, many inventors prefer to use the services of a certified patent specialist with a scientific or technical background. The primary reason that inventors use attorneys to prepare and prosecute their documentation is concern over properly protecting invention rights: The prosecution process is complex and requires considerable research; and the patent application must be written in a somewhat dense style and format.

30. **Are there any ways of producing generic versions of a unique drug before the patent expires?**

In terms of producing, you cannot sell generic products that would infringe a patent unless the patent owner is Ok with that generic product's infringement - usually because some royalties are being paid or there is some other exchange of products/inventions.

31. **Do you have to pay to file a patent?**

Yes, there are fees for filing a patent as well as along the way answering questions from the Patent Examiner. The fees are not so high for filing but can become larger if you request extensions to file responses to questions or responses from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

32. **How much does it cost to patent an invention?**

This varies. One response I saw and is a ballpark - Average Cost To Patent An Idea. The average cost to patent an idea ranges from \$5,000 to \$16,000+ depending on how simple or complex your invention is. An extremely simple design such as a paper clip typically costs \$5,000 to \$7,000 to patent, whereas a highly complex invention such as software or satellite technologies runs \$14,000 to \$16,000+.

33. **Can you get money from a patent?**

You can get money in the form of royalties for someone using the invention claimed in your patent. You can also get infringement damages for someone using your patent's invention without your permission, but these damages need to be obtained by bringing a patent infringement suit in a federal court, winning, and then as determined by the court's decision.

Branches of Government/Rulemaking

34. **What do you do as a lawyer?**

Prianka Sharma currently serves as an Assistant Chief Counsel for Advocacy at the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy where she oversees federal agency compliance with the Regulatory Flexibility Act.

35. **If the public doesn't agree with a law or legislation can the government still go through with legalizing it?**

Unfortunately, yes. Especially if the law is statutorily required. But the public can sue and ask the court to reinterpret the law especially if there is a constitutional issue

36. **How can young people's voices be heard if a law or act affects us?**

Get involved by requesting public hearings and writing letters and lobbying elected officials.

37. **If a state law contradicts a federal law, what happens in terms of which law overrules the other?**

States have what is called preemption. They can be more strict than federal law but at a minimum have to comply with the federal law.

38. **Where do the major branches of our federal government meet and work?**

They are almost all headquartered in DC with regional offices in various locations.

39. **How many federal regulatory agencies are there?**

Too many! <https://www.usa.gov/federal-agencies>

40. **How often are public comments heard?**

Agencies are required to respond to public comments in their rulemakings and tell you why they did not change the rule based on your suggestion. If they don't do this they could be subject to litigation.

41. **Are there any internship opportunities available?**

Yes! The hill has many internship opportunities and so do many of the federal agencies.

42. **How did you arrive at this career choice?**

I applied for my current job after reading the description and throughout working at my agency decided I really enjoyed it.