

Building Bridges: Community Engagement at the Virginia Office of the Attorney General

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In partnership with the Virginia Office of the Attorney General

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HART LEADERSHIP
PROGRAM



“Equality, Opportunity, & Justice” – Virginia Office of the Attorney General

The Virginia Office of the Attorney General (OAG) is responsible for representing the legal interests of Virginia residents and Virginia's state agencies. In addition, the Office has original jurisdiction to prosecute and enforce certain laws, conducts and assists with various criminal investigations, defends criminal convictions on appeal, provides legal advice to members of the General Assembly, and provides resources and information to the public on a range of issues. The Office also engages in community outreach and provides a variety of services to Virginia residents, including consumer protection assistance, victim support programs, and public education initiatives.

Why the OAG?

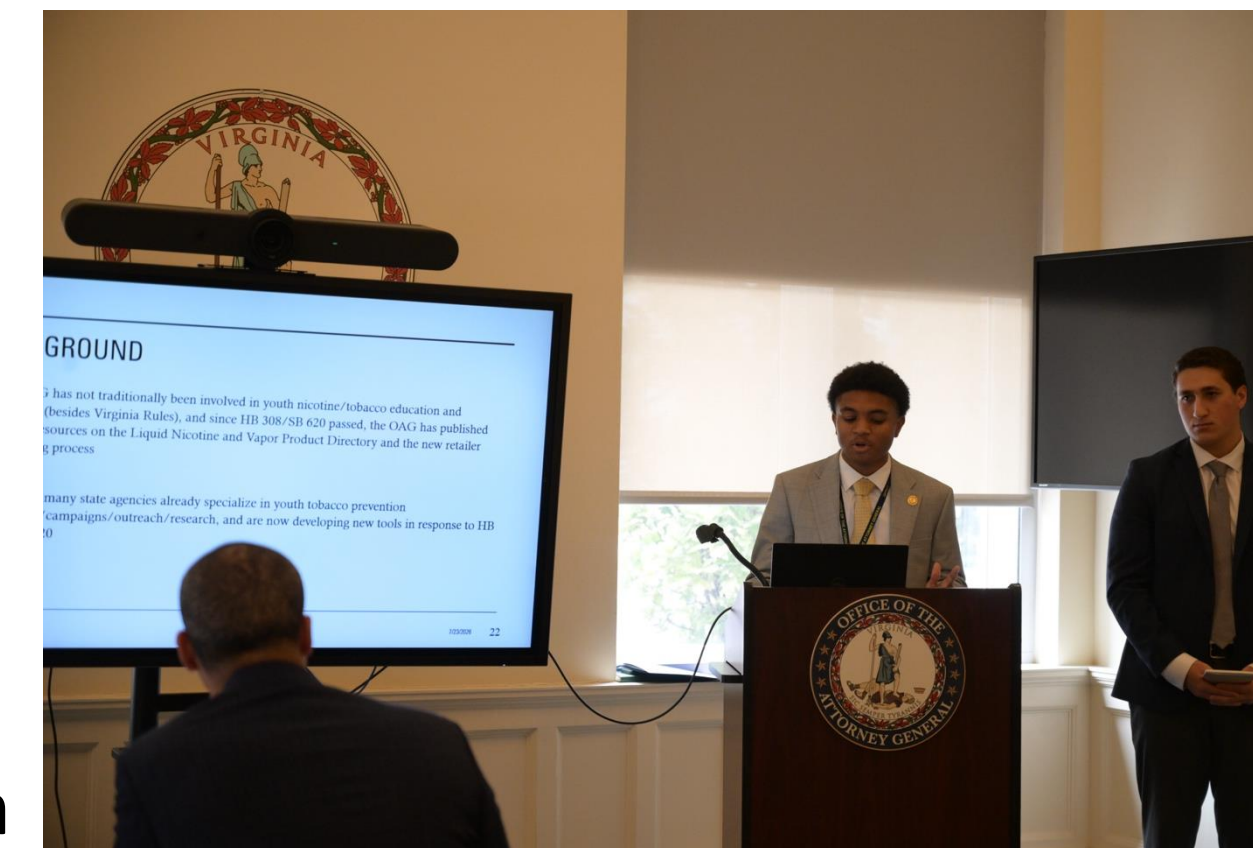
Government vs. Community Organizations

Last summer, I worked closely with two non-profit community advocacy organizations and stakeholders in Cape Town, South Africa, where my research focused on how these organizations could better serve and support their respective communities. Building on this experience, I chose to work with the OAG because I am interested in understanding how similar goals of equitable community engagement can be achieved from within a large government system. Throughout my summer experience, I had the following guiding question: how can large government institutions, such as the OAG, most effectively serve and equitably engage with communities to create meaningful impact?

My Role and Contributions

At the OAG, I worked under the Director of Outreach, where I:

- Supported the team in planning and coordinating roundtable discussions with community stakeholders across the state, advancing the the Attorney General's priorities while creating space to hear directly from constituents about issues affecting their communities
- Helped develop an Education and Outreach strategy for a new law tasking the Attorney General with enforcing provisions targeting tobacco and nicotine product consumption, collaborating with key stakeholders throughout the process
- Researched what a broader outreach strategy might look like for the office, given the Attorney General's recent election



Presenting my Education and Outreach Strategy to the OAG Senior Leadership

In addition to my work, I also had the opportunity to explore the different branches of government in Virginia including the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, the Supreme Court of Virginia, and the Virginia State Capitol.



Field Trip to the Supreme Court of Virginia, where I got to speak to Chief Justice Cleo Powell

Outcomes, Leadership Lessons, & Reflections

In addition to answering my guiding question this summer, one of my main goals was to effectively contribute and ensure that the proposal for the Education and Outreach Strategy for the new law was rooted in community engagement and equity. This proposal was ultimately adopted and implemented by the office, leading to the creation of a new unit at the OAG, the Regulated Products Enforcement Unit.

Sitting at the Attorney General's desk with the Attorney General



Public Service

Public service is one of the most direct ways to create real impact. Observing accomplished attorneys lead with purpose, and taking on that role myself, from coordinating stakeholders to advocating for community voices, affirmed that I want a career rooted in purpose-driven leadership.

Time and Impact

To make meaningful change takes time, consistency, and intentional effort. Watching this proposal grow into a new enforcement unit, and seeing how seasoned attorneys approached long-term, community-rooted work, taught me to value patience over quick solutions, which is lesson I hope carry into my career.