

The American Law Division (ALD) is one of six research divisions of the Congressional Research Service (CRS), the department within the Library of Congress which, by statute, serves exclusively the legislative and representational needs of Members and committees of the United States Congress. CRS employs approximately 600 personnel **with a budget of approximately \$100 million**; an ALD staff of 45 attorneys and associated information professionals provide legal analysis and information to congressional clientele.

**Overview of Division Work.** The Division's work is most often the result of congressional requests received by letter or telephone centrally by CRS (and routed to the law division if legal questions are involved), directly by the Division or generated by individual attorney contacts with congressional clients. These inquiries span the range of legal questions that may emerge from the congressional agenda and representational needs of Members, from constitutional questions of separation of powers and executive-legislative relations to inquiries arising out of federal, state, and/or international law. They may be associated with any phase of the legislative process from the considerations that precede bill drafting and introduction through committee hearings and floor debate to oversight of enacted legislation and agency activities. Analysis of litigation impacting on the work of Congress and the congressional response to judicial developments also form the basis of much of the Division's work.

Written analyses and legal opinions are the primary work product of ALD attorneys. These may take the form of confidential memoranda addressing the questions of a particular congressional client or more general, wide-ranging reports on legal issues. Written works are signed by the individual attorneys and are released as CRS products after Division and CRS review. The latter review is focused on preserving the impartiality and non-partisanship that is a hallmark (and statutory requirement) of CRS work for the Congress. ALD memoranda and reports are often reprinted or referred to in the Congressional Record, congressional hearings, and committee reports. Extensive telephone and in-person consultation are also features of the work.

The Division also conducts a twice-yearly series of lectures, entitled Federal Law Update, that focuses on current legal topics of interest to Members of Congress and staff. The bars of several states have approved continuing legal education credit for attendees of this series. Division lawyers also participate in seminars and workshops held throughout the year on subjects pertaining to the issues before Congress.

A premier work in constitutional law, *The Constitution of the United States of America, Analysis and Interpretation* (popularly known as the Constitution Annotated) is the statutory responsibility of the Library of Congress and is prepared in the American Law Division. An on-line version, regularly updated, is maintained by ALD for congressional staff.

As an attorney in the American Law Division, one is exposed to the myriad legal issues that confront Congress. The day's newspaper headlines may be quickly translated into congressional inquiries to CRS and the Law Division. Legal work can range from assisting a congressional committee in its investigation of executive wrongdoing to responding to a tax question from a Member's constituent. One day, a Division attorney may advise a Member on an ethics question, brief a staffer prior to hearings on a bill, or explain the state of the law in an area about to be the subject of proposed legislation; the next day he or she may be asked to help a Member respond to a constituent inquiry about a particular matter, assess the legality of an agency's actions, or examine the constitutionality of a proposed law.

Attorneys attend meetings with Members, deal with committee counsel and respond to the questions of a caseworker. The ever-changing Hill staff presents a client base that is both fluid and of varying levels of sophistication. The ability to deal with the variety of issues and people in an atmosphere of frequent time deadlines is essential to success in the job. The personalized nature of the work and the individual attribution of written products enable an attorney to develop a clientele, generate repeat inquiries, and gain a reputation as a knowledgeable and trusted legal advisor. All are marks of success in the job of legislative attorney in the American Law Division.

**Staff Profile.** The American Law Division is headed by an Assistant Director and Deputy. Its staff attorneys are divided into five sections supervised by section research managers. Each section deals with particular subjects; the variety of legal issues on the congressional agenda at any one time and the ever-changing focus of congressional activities, however, make strict substantive alignments among the sections difficult. The section system is more of an administrative construct than a comprehensive description of Division workload.

Division attorneys come from law schools throughout the country. Some have joined the Division immediately after graduation from law school or after completing judicial clerkships, others have come from federal agencies and academia. Approximately 2/3 of the attorney staff have been with the Division for ten years or more.

The CRS Knowledge Services Group staffs a consultancy of information professionals, located in ALD, providing the full array of legal research and reference assistance. The CRS Law Library, housed within the Division, contains a comprehensive collection of Federal legal materials with over 20,000 volumes. The resources of the Library of Congress main law library, located adjacent to the Division, are also available to Division staff. A support staff provides administrative services to Division lawyers.

**Pay and Benefits.** Entry level salaries for American Law Division attorneys are at the GS-11 level, which is currently \$62,467. To qualify, applicants must demonstrate a level of competence required to successfully perform the duties of legislative attorney, namely, an interest in legal research and writing in a public service legislative context. Candidates who demonstrate strong research, writing, and oral communication skills and possess a portfolio of high quality legal analytical writing are encouraged to apply. The Division's work is non-litigating.

The promotion ladder for staff attorneys is to GS-15 (\$123,758 - \$155,500) with promotion eligibility and review taking place on an annual basis. There are Specialist research positions at a level above GS-15 and the Division currently has two. Senior Specialists, specifically created by the statute that established CRS and embracing various disciplines, including law, are affiliated with the research divisions of CRS, with one currently associated with the ALD.

Federal Government retirement benefits, group health insurance, and life insurance are available. Annual leave is accrued on the basis of length of government service, with 13 days earned per year for the first three years, 20 days per year for years three to fifteen and 26 days per year thereafter. Sick leave is accrued on the basis of 13 days per year. The benefits of the Family Medical Leave Act are also available to CRS employees.