

Columbia Justice Fellowships 2026

Columbia Law School announces the third annual Columbia Justice Fellowship, which will help launch the public interest career of up to three Columbia Law graduates by placing each with one of a select group of participating impact litigation organizations focused on promoting justice. During the fellowship's two-year term, fellows will have the unique opportunity to work on cutting-edge impact litigation for prominent organizations and to participate in effecting social change through legal advocacy. Applicants may choose to apply to any of the below organizations. Successful applicants must demonstrate substantial commitment, ability, and preparation for making a difference as a public interest lawyer. Fellows will receive a stipend of \$70,000 per year, and benefits will be covered by the participating organizations. **Applications for the fellowship are due on October 15, 2025, at 11:59 p.m.**

Terms of the Fellowship

Up to three fellowships will be awarded, each for a two-year term. Fellows must be graduating members of the Columbia Law School J.D. Class of 2026 (graduating in October 2025, February 2026, or May 2026).

The fellowship will be awarded to applicants who demonstrate a deep commitment to public interest legal work and an ability to make a substantial contribution to their field. Fellows will join an organization committed to significant justice-oriented work, engaging in impact litigation and related legal work. The fellowship does not require development of an independent project; fellows instead will do work similar to that of staff attorneys at each organization. Descriptions of each organization's scope of work are below.

The fellowship carries a stipend of \$70,000. The participating organization will provide all fringe benefits to which an entry-level lawyer at the host organization is entitled. At the organization's discretion, they may also supplement the stipend. The fellow must begin work within five months of graduation.

Participating Organizations

- **The Center for Reproductive Rights** is a global human rights organization working to ensure that reproductive rights are protected in law using litigation, legislation, and advocacy before courts, governments, and human rights bodies worldwide. The Center's issues include abortion, maternal health, contraception, assisted reproduction, and integrating the full spectrum of reproductive rights. In the United States, the center has been involved in every major abortion case before the U.S. Supreme Court and is

advancing innovative litigation in state courts across the country. The fellow will work to develop novel constitutional theories and frameworks to robustly protect reproductive autonomy. Projects may include research to inform short and long-term legal strategies; tracking cases, court compositions, and legal trends; amicus work in priority issue areas; and public reports and thought leadership. The fellow may also assist with the center's litigation and related advocacy within the Litigation Unit. The fellow will have opportunities to collaborate with teams focused on policy, human rights, and communications.

- **The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)** combines the power of more than 3 million members and online activists with the expertise of some 700 lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists to confront the climate crisis, protect the planet's wildlife and wild places, and ensure the rights of all people to clean air, clean water, and healthy communities. For more than 50 years, NRDC has been shaping critical environmental policies around the world, ensuring those policies are upheld and holding polluters accountable. We are seeking a legal fellow to work with NRDC attorneys on litigation, policy, and/or advocacy matters in the following program areas: environmental health, environmental justice, and nature. Potential projects for a fall 2026 fellow may include building support for climate superfund and climate right of action laws in various states; helping our most vulnerable frontline communities push back against dirty energy projects that threaten their health; defending bedrock environmental laws, such as the Endangered Species Act, through the regulatory and legal process; and helping on cases to force federal government action to protect pollinators like bees and butterflies.
- **The New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU)** is one of the nation's leading advocates on behalf of constitutional rights and liberties. Founded in 1951, as the New York affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union, the NYCLU is a not-for-profit, nonpartisan organization with more than 85,000 members and supporters, and eight offices statewide. For 2026-2028, our fellow will be based in New York City and can expect to work on litigation and policy matters focusing on the full range of NYCLU priorities, including racial justice, criminal justice and police accountability, voting rights, immigration, free speech, gender equity, reproductive rights, LGBTQ justice, education equity, privacy and technology, and environmental justice.

Application and Selection Procedure

The application deadline is October 15, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. Please upload the following materials at cglink.me/2it/s81834.

- Your resume
- An *unofficial* copy of your transcript
- Two letters of recommendation, preferably one from a Columbia Law School faculty member and one from a supervisor at a relevant organization. If the recommenders prefer, they can email their letters to rh2523@columbia.edu by the October 15 deadline.

- One statement of interest (one page, single-spaced) for each organization you are applying to. (For example, if you are interested in two organizations, submit two separate statements.) INCLUDE YOUR NAME AND THE NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION ON EACH PAGE.
- Note: if you are applying to more than one organization, the online application will require you to rank the organizations by preference. This will be for internal use by the Office of Public Interest/Public Service Law and Careers only.

A committee consisting of faculty members, staff from the Office of Public Interest/Public Service Law and Careers, and representatives of the participating organizations will select the fellowship recipients. As part of the selection process, applicants will be invited to participate in interview(s) with the selection committee after submitting their applications.

Fellowships will be awarded by December 1, 2025.

Fellowship Contacts

For questions about substantive issues such as fellowship criteria or your materials, please contact:

Emily Harris, Director of Public Interest Lawyering and Strategic Initiatives
eh3097@columbia.edu

For questions about submitting your materials, the application timeline, and payments, please contact:

Rebecca Hinde, Coordinator for Postgraduate Fellowships
rh2523@columbia.edu