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Consumer Law Clinic Formed At Seattle University

By Melissa Huelsman

Seattle University School of Law has begun a new program this year in its Ronald A. Peterson Law Clinic in which students participate in a newly prominent area of law consumer law and predatory lending litigation.

The program was created by Professor and Director Bryan Adamson and Professor Betsy Hollingsworth. It will allow second and third year students to participate in handling actual litigation of civil lawsuits against lenders and mortgage brokers that engage in predatory lending practices. Students will also take a year-long class on consumer litigation, predatory lending practices and predatory lending litigation. Through the clinic, they will learn the practical application of civil procedure to a real case.

The students are also participating in writing an amicus brief for an appeal to the Ninth Circuit on a class action lawsuit filed against Beneficial Mortgage by Bob Parlette, an attorney in Wenatchee. The class action plaintiffs were granted a significant victory in a ruling by Judge Lasnik earlier this year when he denied the defendants' requests to compel arbitration of the matter. However, a short time ago Judge Lasnik denied class certification on the case and Mr. Parlette's clients are appealing. The case could have a significant impact upon the status of predatory lending class action cases in the Ninth Circuit.

Students take the lead in factual investigation, legal research, analysis and application of law. They will determine a plan of action, conduct negotiation and mediation, and will participate in all aspects of the case.

The students will be advocating for justice on behalf of those most vulnerable in society and will seek to have clients retain their homes with loans that they can afford and will work towards obtaining compensation for those who have been injured by the loss or possible loss of their home. In addition to the benefit to the community, the students will have a unique law school opportunity to work on actual civil litigation and to gain skills that will have practical application to their future careers.

The Clinic is taking referrals of clients in the immediate future and anticipates being able to handle at least 15 cases during the school year.

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