



# Class of 1954 Internship Fund

## INTERN PROFILE



### Benjamin Wilkins '24 Orleans Parish District Attorney's Office

Benjamin Wilkins '24 is a Sophomore at Dartmouth College. His areas of academic interest include government, economics, and Judaic studies. His on-campus interests include Hillel, the Dartmouth Political Union, and Rockefeller Center programming. Prior to attending Dartmouth, Benjamin graduated from Lusher Charter School in New Orleans, Louisiana. While at Lusher, he was co-captain of the swim team, an alto saxophone player in the Certificate of Artistry Band program, and a student in a specialized AP Government course co-taught by the former Mayor of New Orleans, Mitch Landrieu. Benjamin has also held leadership roles in his Jewish youth group and at his local synagogue.

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*"I am grateful for my internship as a place where I could foster and grow these (career) passions."*

#### **Executive Summary from Ben's final report:**

For ten weeks of summer, I spent my days working at the Orleans Parish District Attorney's Office in the Major Offense Trials (MOT) unit. Initially, I found myself compelled to work under the new District Attorney, Jason Williams, due to his bold progressive policies, grounded in amending the criminal justice system from within. Upon being elected to office, Williams expanded his Civil Rights Division, pledged to not prosecute crimes linked to addiction and homelessness, and personally worked to exonerate dozens of wronged individuals. Despite my allure to these shared goals, however, I soon found myself flung into MOT, "major offenses", containing primarily murder and rape cases. While it wasn't reform, I did find myself upholding the integrity of parts of the criminal justice system that truly needed it. Each case required extreme precision in delivering justice to victims' families while confirming to not put innocent men behind bars.

My favorite part of the internship was time in court. The New Orleans courthouse, one of the oldest in the country, filled me with excitement and purpose. Watching judges, attorneys, defendants, victims, and witnesses all come together brought the job to life in a very serious manner. It reminded me of the real lives affected by our work. I saw direct and cross examinations, victims crying on the stand, and judges sentencing defendants to life in prison. It placed my life into greater perspective, humbled me, and made me grateful to have my privilege.

Upon reflection, my summer internship confirmed my interest in law, and has driven me to pursue a major at Dartmouth related to government. More importantly, however, working at the District Attorney's Office led me to discover a new interest of mine: mock trial. After sitting for tens of hours in a courtroom on the sideline, I was desperate to get into the main pulpit, speak to a judge, and make my case be heard. So, when I saw that Dartmouth had a mock trial team, I knew I had to try out. I prepped my case beforehand, delivered an opening statement, and cross-examined a witness on the stand. Ironically, mock trial brought the real courtroom I knew and loved to life. Now, as a member of the team, I look forward to learning more about law without the stresses of people's lives being affected.

In these pursuits, both academically and in extracurriculars, I am grateful for my internship as a place where I could foster and grow these passions.