



Corporations and the Politics of American Citizenship Laws in the 20th Century
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Advisor: Rogers Smith

This summer I performed research into the area of corporate citizenship under Professor Rogers M. Smith. The research was funded by the Penn Program on Democracy, Citizenship, and Constitutionalism and sponsored by the Penn Undergraduate Research Mentoring Program. Working off of Dr. Smith's comprehensive work on citizenship laws in the 19th century, I took on a specific type of citizenship – legally afforded to corporations – as part of Dr. Smith's greater analysis of citizenship laws in modern times.

My research analyzed the concept of the “corporate citizen” in practical, legal, and political frameworks. Unrelated to the concept in business of corporate social responsibility or being a “good corporate citizen,” legal corporate citizenship manifests itself primarily in one area of law. That area, known as “diversity of citizenship jurisdiction,” plays a key role in determining a corporation's access to the federal court system. My research examined why and how citizenship for purposes of diversity jurisdiction has changed for domestic corporations, alien corporations, and nationally chartered banks since the year 1900. The resulting project has culminated in a paper in which I argue that the concept of legal corporate citizenship has lost its meaning and purpose and thus should be abolished by Congress.

The project was a success on multiple levels. Before beginning my research, I hoped to gain important insights into both the research process and the details and significance of the citizenship status of corporations. The result achieved these goals and more; my understanding and also my enthusiasm for research and my subject is greater than it ever has been. I have gained competence in navigating legal resources such as LexisNexis and HeinOnline as well as political science resources such as the Congressional record. This experience has made me excited to pursue research in the social sciences.