

It is never too early for a law student to investigate the field of law in which he or she would like to practice. In my case, it is the field of energy law. I recently found an ideal opportunity to learn about real-life practice in this field and to meet those who engage in it at the Kentucky Mineral Law Conference, hosted by the Energy & Mineral Law Foundation.

The conference lasted for three days, with one day dedicated to exploring matters related to oil and gas practice, one day dedicated to coal practice (including a joint session with the Kentucky Coal Association), and one day designated to jointly cover both areas of practice. Speakers focused on an array of topics that covered the spectrum of issues that face lawyers in energy practice, including: acquiring oil and gas permits; handling federal, state, and municipal regulations; and addressing technical requirements of mine seals. Many of the sessions focused on new developments in the law, giving me a better understanding of the cutting edge of legal developments as they relate to the industry. In addition, the different areas of focus for each of the sessions gave me a sense of the variety of roles which lawyers can serve in the energy industry.

Speaking with attorneys at the conference, one thing particularly stood out to me, and that is the sheer optimism that surrounds the energy law field. There is great enthusiasm for the practice of energy law, and for good reason. The Utica and Marcellus shales are proving to bear enough natural gas to dramatically increase the projected supply of gas in the United States, and new developments in hydraulic fracturing and vertical drilling methods allow producers to reach deposits once considered out of reach. Coal prices are higher, ensuring that mining will remain profitable for the foreseeable future. All of this is part of the equation of American energy independence and industrial growth, and energy lawyers get to be a part of it. Not to mention, the energy industry is shaping up to represent a bright spot in an economy that badly needs one. While I arrived at the conference enthusiastic to get involved in energy law, I left even more convinced that it is an ideal path for me or any other law student willing to work hard to make a meaningful career in this vital industry.

I am delighted to have had the opportunity to attend the Kentucky Mineral Law Conference and I am grateful that the Career Services Office at the University of Kentucky College of Law pointed me in the direction of EMLF. Not only do I look forward to furthering my involvement with the organization, I encourage other law students to do the same.

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