

Sydnee Anderson

University of Colorado Boulder Law School

Word count: 500 words

Falling from the face of the cliff, I feel the sharp yank of the rope stop my descent. I reposition my hands and feet on barely-there notches in the rock. I notice a small handle that I hadn't before; it was slightly out of my reach, meaning I'd have to leap and trust my grip. Leaping to grab that ledge would be taking away the security of firmly planted feet and forcing reliance on the strength of my arm. I take a deep breath, and I jump. I reach for the lip of the rock and for a moment the only thing between me and another failure is four small fingers. With determination, I pull my body upward; my foot finds a ledge. Secure again, I celebrate the payoff of my risk, ready to overcome any obstacle still left in my path.

I began college on the pre-med track. My head was filled everything that the successful pre-med student should know. But while I had a firm grasp on all this incredible information, I felt that something was missing. Then, I stumbled across an article about an environmental lawyer. Something inside me was ignited. Every blissful moment I'd spent outdoors and every concerning article I'd read about the state of our planet flashed before my eyes. Immediately, I enrolled in environmental and policy-based courses. I easily excelled in these courses because I loved the material, solidifying that I'd made the right decision.

I began work with the Alaska Wilderness League to fight against oil drilling in the arctic. My supervisor noticed my passion and recommended me for a legislative internship position with the Izaak Walton League. At the close of my interview the Executive Director said, "you have no experience with this; I am solely giving you this position based on the recommendation from your

supervisor.” It was as if I was jumping from the secure ledge of biology to grab a small handle that could propel me to my goal of being an environmental attorney. So, I took the leap. This internship was yet another risk that I celebrated. It got me excited about the power of the law and introduced me to a plethora of impressive environmental activists, amplifying my own passion for the work.

Never did I feel more alive than when I was running alongside the Speaker of the House, attempting to make my case for environmental protection. Never did I feel more inspired than when I witnessed hundreds of people rallying outside the Senate Chambers, chanting for renewable energy. The solution to climate change could show up at our front door, but nothing can be solved without the power of the law. Though I do not know exactly where this path will take me, I will never stop pursuing my passion for environmental protection. The leap from the comfort of my biology textbooks to the world of law will be worth it when I can stand atop the cliff and say, “I made a difference.”