



What Makes Ricky Run

Ricky Gill '12 felt it was time to consider running for Congress, and his résumé seemed to agree: high school valedictorian, Phi Beta Kappa at Princeton, Greater Lodi Area Youth Commission co-chair, California State Board of Education member, California Secretary of Education adviser, and other leadership roles. So in May—at age 24—Gill announced his candidacy for California's 11th Congressional District, which includes his native San Joaquin County.

With the local unemployment rate nearly twice the national average, Gill says, "We've got to develop and retain human capital in San Joaquin County." He hopes to revitalize the area's agriculture industry and to "foster ties with innovators in Silicon Valley."

The son of immigrant parents from India, Gill was appointed to the California State Board of Education at 17. As its youngest member, he spoke on educational equity at California's 2005 Republican convention.

Gill later worked for then-Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions. "Public service," he says, "is a noble calling." —*Andrew Cohen*

Lifeline for Capital Cases

For defense attorneys, success in a capital case is not always synonymous with acquittal. In many cases, convincing a prosecutor to forgo the death penalty for a negotiated plea counts as a solid victory. However, the pervasive lack of funding for the defense, especially in Southern states, all too often precludes the vigorous investigations that would give prosecutors reasons to take death off the table.

That's where Boalt's Death Penalty Clinic comes in. Since 2008, students involved with the clinic's Southern Capital Assistance Project (SCAP) have aided defense attorneys in capital cases in Texas, Virginia, Georgia, and Alabama with hundreds of hours of research, motion writing, witness interviews, and other help. In the process, they've seen firsthand the challenges of defending indigent criminal clients in a region well known for inequalities in imposing the death penalty.

Two recent cases illustrate the project's effectiveness in averting death sentences.

In Virginia last year, three students and the Death Penalty Clinic's staff attorney Kate Weisburd, who heads up SCAP, scoured the state to interview friends and family of a man charged with double murder, to document his mental illness. "Their thorough research, legal memoranda, and witness interviews were crucial in helping local defense attorneys secure a life sentence with the possibility of parole," Weisburd says.

In a second case, a SCAP

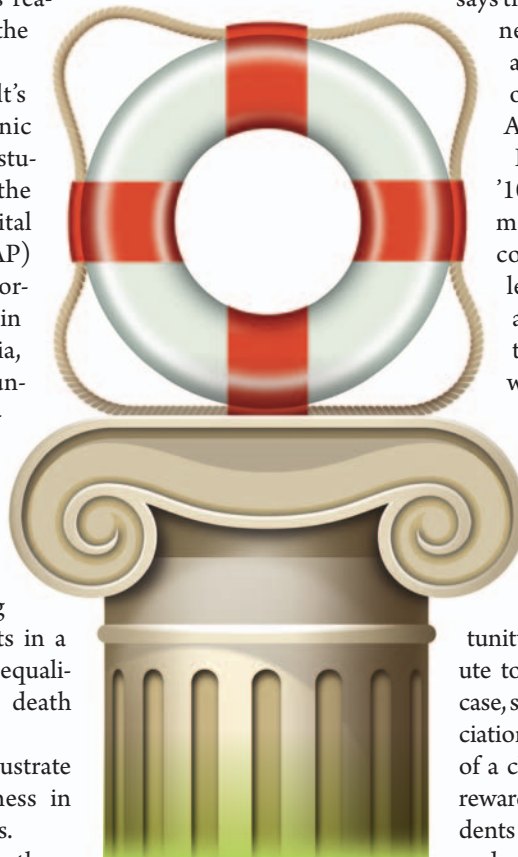
team supported an Alabama defense attorney by reviewing thousands of documents and conducting legal research on mental health issues to better understand the defendant's history of profound mental illness. In the end, the defendant pled guilty to murder in exchange for a life sentence. "The students produced some of the most useful reports that we had in the case,"

says the grateful Alabama attorney, "including substantial and very helpful research on some key points of Alabama law."

For Tess Hand-Bender '10, who admits she is "far more comfortable behind a computer screen doing legal research," working on a capital trial investigation in the Deep South was a revelation. "Nothing could have been better for building my confidence and honing my skills as an advocate," she says.

SCAP selects cases that offer the best opportunity for students to contribute to the defense of a capital case, says Weisburd, whose association with the project grew out of a clinic fellowship. "It's very rewarding to watch as the students come to truly understand and appreciate the death penalty's impact on our clients, their families, and their communities." More than 60 percent of Death Penalty Clinic alums are currently working in public-interest positions.

SCAP is funded entirely by gifts from alumni and other sources. More about the Death Penalty Clinic, including news stories, cases, and information about its graduates, can be found on Boalt's website and at deathpenaltyclinic.org. —*Bob Rucker*



DEATH PENALTY DATA

The Southern Capital Assistance Project has worked on cases in **Texas, Virginia, Alabama, and Georgia**, four of seven states with the most executions since 1976.

More than half of Alabama's death row inmates were represented at trial by lawyers whose compensation for out-of-court preparation was **capped at \$1,000**.

Of the men and women on death row, **53%** are people of color and **99.5%** are indigent.