

BY ED FINKEL



# Let's Get Legal!

**ISBA members go live on the ISBA-sponsored WGN Radio show, Let's Get Legal.**

**WHETHER IT'S PERSONAL INJURY LAW, CRIMINAL DEFENSE, OR WORKERS' COMPENSATION**, legal topics fill the airwaves every Saturday from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. on WGN Radio 720 AM and WGNRadio.com, thanks to a sponsorship by the ISBA. Launched in July 2021, the show Let's Get Legal features ISBA members answering questions from WGN host Jon Hansen and listeners who call into or text the show. The station's 50,000-watt signal and streaming service reach more than 600,000 adults in the Chicagoland area and throughout the state, and attorneys who appear can gain credibility and name recognition with WGN's loyal listeners.

For packages starting at \$560 per week, ISBA members receive a spot on the show, radio and podcast interview segments, live and recorded radio commercials, social media promotion, and a WGNRadio.com digital presence.

Hansen has served in various capacities at WGN over the years, including as a traffic and news reporter, fill-in host from 2015-21, and as the current host of the Your Money Matters financial show. He also works full-time at WCIU-TV while handling podcasting for BlockClubChicago.org and emcee duties for Chicago



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Blackhawks home games.

While general practitioners can be great guests on Let's Get Legal, Hansen is particularly drawn to attorneys who concentrate in specific practice areas. "I love talking to the estate planning lawyer who knows every in-and-out of wills versus trusts versus powers-of-attorney," he says. "I love talking to a tax lawyer who can 'nerd out' on any question. I've talked to First Amendment professors who focus only on that, or just on freedom of speech. I feel like I'm a mile-wide-and-an-inch-deep type of person. I love lawyers who are a mile deep and an inch wide."

The show's two-hour format gives Hansen plenty of time to go into depth and frame a show however he wants. He did a whole hour with a law professor who is an authority on how immigrants can legally become U.S. citizens through asylum or other means, and he took many listener questions. Hansen did another hour on what to expect when you're called for jury duty. Most of it is very consumer-oriented, he says.

"It's a lot of things that are going to help our listeners. That's WGN's bread-and-butter. We meet them where they are," he says. "When do most people end up talking with a lawyer? It's estate planning, taxes, personal injury." Hansen loves constitutional law, but he sets aside his own interests if they're not what everyone wants.

## Workers' compensation

The three name partners from St. Charles-based Theriault Booth have appeared on the show several times for deep dives into their practice area, workers' compensation. Ryan Theriault, current president of the Illinois Bar Foundation, says he, his brother and partner Jeff, and fellow partner Gregory Booth became aware of the show through their involvement with the ISBA.

"It's important to us to get that proper, factual information out to the community," he says. "That community consists of all the listeners, as well as other

attorneys who might tune into the show, who maybe didn't understand our practice area, or haven't had much experience with it—or those who have been injured and don't know where to turn for answers. We see it as an important service that the ISBA and WGN partnership provides."

The firm's first episode covered the basics of workers' compensation—what types of claims there can be and what benefits you're entitled to. More recent episodes have delved into greater detail, Booth says. "As we go along, it's getting a little bit more in-depth," he says. "And the response from the audience, as well, has been a little more focused on specific issues."

## Criminal defense and juvenile law

Audrey Anderson of Wheaton-based Anderson Attorneys and Advisers practices criminal defense law for adults and juveniles and provides representation in Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) abuse and neglect matters. But on Let's Get Legal, which she's appeared on "at least monthly" for nearly two years, she mostly talks about juvenile law.

"A lot of what I've spoken about on the show concerns juveniles being charged with a crime, and the parents' responsibilities, as well as DCFS issues," she says. "If there's news that breaks, like the SAFE-T Act and bail reform, we're talking about that, too."

WGN reached out to her about appearing on the show to talk about various areas of criminal law, Anderson says. "I thought it would be very interesting to get the information out," she says. "There's not that much [easily accessible] information with regard to juvenile law, or DCFS. I'm educating kids and their parents and guardians about that. DCFS is a huge monstrosity, and it can be confusing and overwhelming when you're being investigated by them."

Anderson has talked about the so-called "teen turnouts" in downtown

Let's Get Legal, a live call-in show sponsored by the ISBA, appears every Saturday from 1 to 3 p.m. on WGN Radio 720 AM in the Chicago metropolitan area and on WGNradio.com.

For more information about the ISBA-sponsored Let's Get Legal, including how to appear on the show, visit [isba.org/letsgetlegal](http://isba.org/letsgetlegal) or contact Kevin McDonough at 312-222-5005 or [kmcdonough@wgnradio.com](mailto:kmcdonough@wgnradio.com).

Past episodes are available on [WGNradio.com/lets-get-legal](http://WGNradio.com/lets-get-legal).

**“[WGN HOST JON HANSEN] IS EDUCATED ON THE TOPICS YOU’RE TALKING ABOUT. YOU NEVER HAVE TO WORRY THAT IT’S GOING TO BE AWKWARD. THERE’S GREAT DIALOGUE. HE COMES UP WITH GREAT QUESTIONS. IT’S A VERY PLEASANT EXPERIENCE. I WOULD HIGHLY RECOMMEND IT.”**

—Audrey Anderson, Wheaton-based Anderson Attorneys and Advisers

Chicago and surrounding suburbs, which have sometimes turned violent. “We educate parents about what to do and what not to do when the police come knocking on the door,” she says.

### Personal injury

Personal injury attorney Michael Kopsick of The Law Offices of Michael Kopsick in Waukegan appeared on Let’s Get Legal in August for the first time and talked about personal injury cases stemming from rideshare drivers, looking at when the rideshare company’s insurance does and does not come into play, he says. “When you’re injured in a rideshare accident, whether you’re a passenger or, more commonly, a pedestrian, when an Uber driver causes an accident, there are multiple factors that designate what type of insurance is used—whether the app is on, whether the driver is engaged with a rider, and whether they’ve accepted the ride.”

Kopsick started his own firm last year, so at the outset the discussion concerned him and his work. “I was looking for marketing opportunities. I knew through the ISBA that this program existed,” he says. “I saw some attorneys I recognized on the program in the past and figured it would be a good way to get my firm’s name out there.”

### The guest experience

Appearing on the show has been a great experience, Booth says. “Jon does a really, really good job of directing the flow and keeping things moving,” he says. “We were a little concerned about whether or not we would have enough material to discuss, and it just seems like the hour flies by when we’re on there. We take phone calls from people and texts from listeners. We try to go in with a plan of what we want to talk about that month, or that episode, and give the information that we think is most relevant.”

Although he’s not an attorney, Hansen knows the law well and asks outstanding questions, says Jeff Theriault. “He’s getting to the heart of the matter, cutting through some of the fluff,” he says. “He really understands how different types of practice interweave with each other. It makes you more comfortable sitting there, knowing that 600,000 people are listening to you.”

“Or at least our parents,” quips Ryan Theriault, who, on a more serious note, agrees that Hansen and his producers are consummate professionals. “They have an ease about their approach that makes you really, really comfortable sitting down on the chair, and just getting going,” he says. “And their ability to direct the show to get the right content out is really great.”

Anderson agrees that appearing on Let’s Get Legal has been a “fantastic” experience, and adds that Hansen, his producers, and everyone at WGN make guests feel comfortable. “Jon’s so personable,” she says. “He is educated on the topics you’re talking about. You never have to worry that it’s going to be awkward. There’s great dialogue. He comes up with great questions. It’s a very pleasant experience. I would highly recommend it.”

Hansen and his producer are very responsive via email beforehand if a guest has questions about the format, topics, and questions, Anderson says. “You can always reach out to them,” she says. “They usually very much prepare you. They get you very much involved in, specifically, what they’re going to be discussing. The week prior, Jon



Photo courtesy of WGN.

WGN Radio’s Let’s Get Legal host Jon Hansen.

does a promo. They go through the scripts and send you the link so you can hear the promo before it goes out.”

Kopsick agrees with others about the experience. “I thought it was a lot of fun,” he says. “Jon did a fantastic job creating a conversation around this area of law. I thought the production team, and [account executive] Kevin McDonough, were very helpful in explaining how everything works, and getting me all the information about my radio ads. It was a positive experience. I had a lot of support from family and friends who were listening.”

### Preparation vs. spontaneity

Hansen plans about half of his questions in advance based on evergreen topics related to the area of practice a given lawyer guest handles, then focuses during the week leading up to the show on what’s happening in the news that’s related to the practice area.

“What’s the story everybody’s talking about in the legal world—whether it’s recent indictments of certain people, or a local story like the SAFE-T Act?” he says. “And then I ask, what’s the story no one has heard of, and is not getting enough attention?” The story about the favorable ruling for teenage Montana environmental activists fits the latter bill, he adds, although he tends to focus on news closer to home.



ISBA Past President Anna Krolikowska (right) joining WGN Radio host Jon Hansen on Let's Get Legal in July 2021.

Because he asks attorneys questions about what they do every day, Hansen says guests do not need to prepare much before appearing on the show, aside from perhaps reading recent news stories related to one's practice area. He might ask an estate attorney about a breaking item like the late soul singer Aretha Franklin leaving her will in her sofa, for example. "I don't like when someone is too prepared," he says. "A lot of our show is driven by listener questions. One thing I've learned at WGN is that there is no way to prepare for listener questions. That's great. That's what makes live radio fun."

Given that the show is aimed at a general audience, Hansen warns against using technical legal language. "I'm the acronym police. If I ever hear an acronym people would only use in legal circles, I stop the interview and ask what that acronym is," he says. "One of my favorite things to say to a guest is, 'That was great, but stop and explain it to me like I'm 10.' Not that our listeners are dumb, but most of us didn't go to law school. If a person says something I don't understand, I've lost all qualms about interrupting a guest."

### Advice from ISBA guests

Booth says he and his partners are very conscientious about their audience, "keeping it on a simple enough level so that the general public can understand. We try not to use too many legal terms."

Jeff Theriault suggests that those considering making an appearance commit to regular appearances over time. "Not just, 'Oh, I'll do one-and-done,' and market it to everybody," he says. "That might look a little bit disingenuous."

Ryan Theriault sees Let's Get Legal as a combination of marketing and community service. "Jon and his team make it easy to jump in and start talking about what interests people—and allowing questions to be phoned in makes for a truly participatory experience on both ends."

Anderson counsels those appearing for the first time not to be nervous. "Jon really is engaging in conversation," she says. "I never worry that I don't have enough material. He always preps you. In a couple of the news breaks, he'll say, 'What do you think about this question? What if I ask you this?' He's never putting you on the spot. It's your choice whether you want people to call in or just do text messages."

It's not a bad idea for guests to have ideas for topics they want to discuss, although Hansen and his producers always have plenty, Anderson says. "If it's current in the news, if you have some specific area you think is newsworthy, let the producers know," she says. "Or else Jon can come up with something. Even if he doesn't know the topic, he does a lot of research, and he's very prepared."

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—Jon Hansen, WGN 720 AM host of Let's Get Legal

Kopsick says he drafted a "cheat sheet" with bullet points that he sent to the production team beforehand to ensure his ideas sounded good. "I maybe over-prepared a little bit," he says. "We went off script more than I expected. It's probably better advice to expect the unknown. Be an attorney and be prepared to move on your feet. Jon is good at getting out of you what you need to do to sell your firm. Be prepared to react accordingly."

### Marketing opportunity

No matter how community-service-oriented it may be, Let's Get Legal provides an excellent marketing opportunity that builds a lawyer's name recognition and reputation.

"We've had a lot of really good feedback," Booth says. "We've had random people reaching out saying, 'Hey, we heard you on the radio.' Clients have heard us, which obviously lends some credibility as well to our firm and what we do, and that we're recognized as leaders in this type of law."

Jeff Theriault notes that lawyers are trained as practitioners of the law, not as marketers, but WGN has been doing marketing for a century. "So why are we trying to reinvent the wheel?" he says. "Everybody does podcasts, podcasts, and they're into different types of social media. But radio has been around forever. It's a proven arrow in the quiver, as

far as marketing is concerned.”

Ryan Theriault cautions that you’re not going to suddenly find your phone ringing and 100 new clients pouring in. “I don’t think it’s that type of situation,” he says. “You get on the radio, share some information, develop your credibility, and people get to know you and your firm. And then, perhaps when there’s a need, you’re going to be top of mind.”

Appearing on the radio also enables clients to get to know attorneys on a different level, Jeff Theriault says. “On the radio, in context, we can be ourselves and goof around a little bit,” he says. “They see you more as a human than just as a [billboard]: ‘In an accident, call us here.’ Anytime you can get in front of people, there’s a chance to market yourself.”

Attorneys in other practice areas who listen to the show are another potential target market, Booth says. “It’s being recognized as understanding this area of law, being the law firm that people can turn to. We’ve seen some of that, in terms of recognition from the legal community.”

Ryan Theriault expects the exposure will pay off with new clients over the medium- to long-term. “Our ability to reinvest in the community and provide that information gives people a level of comfort that, perhaps as they’re choosing amongst

firms, we get the extra nod,” he says. But “if you’re looking for solid [short-term] cases, and the phone to ring, a TV commercial might be a better option. If you’re looking to develop a partnership, both with the community and potential clients, this type of partnership [makes sense].”

Anderson believes her appearances have served a marketing purpose, in part because the segment is recorded and then posted on the WGN website—and because the guest lawyers are sent podcast files to post on their firm’s website.

“It gives you great social media presence,” she says. “I always give every client a ‘how they came to us’ [survey], whether through a friend, another client, online. If they say online, I prod a little further. Sometimes, people will just volunteer, ‘Hey, I heard you on the radio. I have a question about . . .’”

Kopsick received three phone calls in the first week after his first appearance, although none turned out to be cases he’s going to take. “It’s only been a little while,” he says. “My ads are still on this month. I’m not 100 percent sure how it’s going to pan out as far as getting direct calls. I’m going to need to do the show a few more times and get my name out there more consistently.”

## WGN’s “guiding light”

While protecting client confidentiality, Hansen loves to hear anecdotes that help listeners understand what an attorney is getting at. “It’s important to hear examples of situations lawyers dealt with that are difficult, that are trending,” he says. “What’s a question that everybody is asking you these days? That’s a great way to relate, immediately, with listeners. If they’ve got clients worried about ‘XYZ,’ 10 to 20 listeners, if not more, are going to have that same question.”

Hansen mixes in fun, light stories with more serious topics. For example, he did a segment about the trademark battle between Taco Bell and Taco John’s as to who owns the rights to the phrase “Taco Tuesday.”

“We recognize that it’s a Saturday afternoon. We recognize that consumers are going about their day,” he says. “It’s a law show, but we do it in a WGN way. I don’t want the show to sound boring. We get a lot of calls from people who say, ‘I didn’t think I was into law, and here I am, listening to all two hours, and calling in.’ And we help people out. Every decision we make comes around to, ‘Is there a listener out there who could be affected by this or helped out by this?’ That’s our guiding light.” 