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FOCUS

President's Message

Ray Stefanski



Dear Northeast Ohio Chapter Members:

I imagine letters like this one are being written all over the world and they all echo the same sentiment: 2020 was one heck of a wild ride.

We lost so many loved and cherished personalities this year. So many, in fact, that it hurts to think about.

We realized how much more we need to work on our humanity. We talk effusively about diversity + inclusion initiatives, but do we consciously employ them in our day-to-day interactions? This year told us loudly and clearly: *No*.

We came face-to-face with our health and wellness. We worried for our families and loved ones. We donned face masks, bought hand sanitizer by the gallon, and quickly discovered how alienating social distancing could be.

We saw unemployment rates rise and everyone braced for the worst recession since 2008.

Yes, 2020 was a bummer. However, we should take a breath and appreciate what we all have been able to achieve—both professionally and personally—during this time.

This year has reminded us to have hope and be the change we want to see. We have new leadership taking office in January 2021. We have reconnected with our families and finally gotten around to fixing that leaky faucet. We appreciate how lucky we were to have been contemporaries of Justice Ginsburg, Alex Trebek, Kobe Bryant and everyone else we lost.

Despite the challenges the pandemic has given us, our Chapter still had a busy and event-filled 2020, which ended on a positive note with a fantastic virtual social, sponsored by Littler.

I want to thank my predecessor, Bruce Martino, for his leadership and engagement as our Chapter President. He will remain an active member of our Executive Committee as the Chapter Secretary. I also wish to thank Kelly Albin for her financial stewardship as our Treasurer; and K. Vesna Mijic-Barisic who served as last year's Secretary and is this year's President Elect.

Lastly, thank you to our many sponsors for their continued support; and, most importantly, our members, without whom none of the rest would matter.

Regards,

Ray Stefanski

2020 - 2021 Chapter President

Recognitions

We'd like to thank our 2020 sponsors for supporting our Chapter's educational and social programming:

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More Than Coffee and Hoagies

By Joshua H. Shields

When Michael Eckhardt joined Wawa in 2005 from a law firm, the firm's partners teased him that he would soon get bored being an in-house lawyer for a coffee-and-hoagie shop. Fifteen years later, he can confidently say they couldn't have been more wrong.

Now Wawa's senior vice president – chief risk officer, general counsel, and secretary, Eckhardt has helped the iconic mid-Atlantic convenience store chain navigate class action lawsuits, restructure from a C corporation to an S corporation, and expand into the new market of Florida, which included designing and financing a tug-barge to bring gasoline from refiners in the Gulf.

He has worked on table top exercises on the company's key operational risks, and is now part of a team handling the evolving COVID crisis. He's anything but bored.

Associates are essential

Wawa, which has more than 36,000 associates in 900 stores across six states and Washington, DC, was declared an essential provider from the outset of the pandemic. Eckhardt and his team responded to a mix of local and state safety protocols and regulations while also adjusting to changing business demand.

The company, already known for its clean and tidy stores, implemented a "clean force" that sanitized customer touchpoints. It installed plexiglass immediately and instituted a company-wide mask and glove mandate by mid-April.

A PTO relief plan was rolled out to ensure every associate had two weeks of coverage in case they or a family member were exposed to the virus. That policy provided the flexibility to close a store if a case was confirmed in that store. "We close minute one," Eckhardt says, explaining that the stores undergo a deep clean and contact tracing for potential exposure before reopening.



Each Wawa store has prominent signage, including on the company's ubiquitous digital displays, that remind customers about local mask ordinances. Associates are taught to de-escalate a situation if a customer does not comply, Eckhardt noted that industry groups strongly prefer the de-escalation method, which has been part of the Wawa training since 2018.

Eckhardt knows that the backbone of Wawa is its associates — in fact, associates own 40 percent of the privately-held, US\$10 billion company. "Corporate is there to support our store teams," he explains. Associates are automatically enrolled in an ESOP, or employee stock ownership plan, after they work for Wawa for one year, reach 1,000 hours of work, and are over age 18.

"When you walk into a Wawa, you're often talking to an owner," Eckhardt points out. Eight to 12 percent of an associate's wage is invested in the ESOP, leading to a long tenured workforce that provides opportunities that don't exist at other companies (and a chance for many associates to retire early).

When Wawa first expanded beyond the mid-Atlantic to Florida, the company moved whole store management teams, some with managers with over 20 years of experience, to open the new stores.

Embracing change while balancing short- and long-term risk

The company has not permitted recent operational challenges to detract from

the company's focus on strategic risks. "As a management team, we're trying to balance the short-term goals of running the business and being there for our community today, while also preparing for our future and constantly innovating," Eckhardt explains.

He notes that Wawa has teamed up with Tesla to install electric charging stations at certain Wawa stores as electric cars gain market share. With travel plans and commutes disrupted by the pandemic, Wawa is looking at non-fuel stores that have opened in metro centers like Washington, DC, Philadelphia, and Vienna, VA, to compete with fast-casual chains. The company is piloting a drive-through concept that will require a reworked menu to get customers through the line in the industry-gold standard of four minutes.

The company is embracing change in other areas as well, from meal delivery to digital connections with their customers.

Eckhardt credits Senior Legal Counsel Tara Gibbons for coordinating the legal review with the delivery app companies like Uber Eats and DoorDash to bring the chain's hoagies to customers. The option existed in about a third of stores before the pandemic, but Gibbons worked quickly to enable the Company's digital team to expand the option and answer other questions, such as how to deliver alcohol in jurisdictions where it's permitted.

continued on page 3

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The company can never rest on its laurels because of its competition. At breakfast, Wawa spars with McDonald's for breakfast sandwiches and Dunkin' and Starbucks in the coffee market. At lunch, it's up against Subway or Chick-fil-a. And it's also competing for customers in the convenience store space with 7/11 and other regional brands.

Data protection is another area where the chain needs to carefully evaluate risk. Kathy Dickinson, Wawa's associate general counsel, works very closely with the marketing department to understand what technology is available for gathering and protecting data, while also being mindful that there is an "ick" factor to harvesting too much data.

In December 2019, Wawa announced a security incident that affected customer payment card information at its stores after discovering malware on Wawa's systems. Wawa made the announcement

to its customers nine days after discovering the malware, removing it from Wawa's system, and notifying regulators.

The legal team has always needed to move swiftly to support innovation, which is a key pillar of Wawa's corporate ethos. What started as a convenience store and grocery in New Jersey morphed into a gasoline hoagie shop hybrid and is now becoming more focused on healthier food and products. The legal department will continue to support the business as it evolves.

Being prepared for "the bread truck"

Eckhardt draws on the tenure of his legal department — his direct reports have 44 years of Wawa experience amongst them, showing that it's not only the store associates who tend to stick around for a long time. He knows that his team can

step up if he's "hit by the bread truck" as they say around headquarters.

Eckhardt has always been familiar with Wawa; he grew up in Philadelphia, and moved to nearby Bucks County, PA, for high school, where Wawa stores seem to be on every other block. After becoming disillusioned by politics while an undergrad in Washington, DC, at American University, he had a conversation with an older friend who was pursuing law school. "It was one that made you think about your life and where I wanted to end up," he reflects.

Knowing that he wanted to be near his large family, which was back in Philadelphia, he decided going to law school in the City of Brotherly Love would give him the best shot at landing a job close to home after graduation.

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After earning his degree from Temple, he worked at firms in Philadelphia until a fateful January day when the head of the labor and employment group walked into his office and shut the door. Instead of delivering bad news as Eckhardt expected, the partner urged him to apply for a position with Wawa.

After starting his in-house role in 2005, he was promoted to general counsel in 2011. His role has expanded over the years. Wawa CEO Chris Gheysens promoted him to the company's 10-person management team in 2014 and created a legal and risk department, which includes quality assurance, risk management, safety, loss prevention, internal audit — "all the stuff nobody seems to want," Eckhardt jokes. It's a job he relishes, and one that keeps him

occupied with much more than coffee and hoagies.

Getting to know... Michael Eckhardt

Is there one thing that you miss from before COVID, and is there one thing that you don't miss?

As a family, we miss traveling terribly. We love seeing different parts of the country and different parts of the world. As baseball fans, we have attended games at all but five of the major league stadiums. We were planning to knock Toronto, Detroit, Cincinnati, and Cleveland off the list this summer. Hopefully this is a possibility next year.

I feel conflicted about my commute — while it's 35 minutes of driving through

horse country, that is 70 minutes I get back every day. At the same time, I do miss it because it gave me the ability to plan for the day on the way in and decompress on the drive home. Now, because everyone thinks everyone is always working, you are getting texts at 6 am when you are trying to ride the Peloton for 30 minutes in the morning.

Do you have any free time right now?

My free time is in the morning. I will read the *Wall Street Journal* and ride on my spin bike. We're walking more as a family now and spending quality time together. There is always a positive side of any situation — we just need to look for it and we try to remind our two teenagers of that daily.

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NEO CHAPTER NEWS

We ♥ WEBINARS!

Departing Employees, Trade Secrets and Data Loss in the Age of COVID-19

On September 1, two forensic and trade secret theft experts from FTI Consulting presented a virtual CLE on *Departing Employees, Trade Secrets and Data Loss in the Age of COVID-19*. The hour-long program focused on how transitioning to remote work during the pandemic has made employers' data less secure and more vulnerable to compromise, and shared techniques for developing a proactive and prepared stance to face them.

Annual Chapter Meeting

On September 16, we hosted our Annual Chapter Meeting to approve the 2021 Board of Directors' slate. Immediately after successfully approving our Chapter's new leadership, we held a virtual presentation workshop led by Amy Westrup from ComedySportz Milwaukee. (Fun fact: Amy's day job is being the Executive Director of the Wisconsin ACC Chapter.)

Round Table

Jackson Lewis hosted a RoundTable on October 8 that started with an update on COVID-19's impact on labor + employment from the firm's attorneys. We then opened up the discussion to talk about specific challenges corporate legal departments have been struggling with the most and offered possible solutions that might help.

Frantz Ward hosts a Three-part CLE Series

Over three days in October and November, Frantz Ward hosted a series of hour-long CLEs.

The first one, *Business Acquisitions/Divestitures and Contract Implications in the Age of COVID-19* was held on Tuesday, October 27. This program covered the pandemic's impact on transactions and standard contract terms, including business contracts; PPP loans and forgiveness complications; loan covenants; and COVID-19 as a material adverse effect.

On Thursday, October 29, the firm hosted its second CLE, *COVID-19's Impact on the Real Estate Market Landscape and Estate Planning*, which covered the pandemic's impact in two areas: First, a panel of attorneys examined the challenges faced by commercial landlords whose tenants may be requesting special considerations to an existing lease, and what landlords should consider when negotiating new leases.

For the second half of the program, the speakers discussed how COVID-19 has created increased awareness of the need for estate planning and the challenges of executing documents during the pandemic.

The last CLE in Frantz Ward's series, *The Aftermath Panel Discussion: The Impact on Health Care, Bankruptcy Filings and Domestic Relations*, was held on Thursday, November 5.

The speakers explored the pandemic's impact on these three areas:

- **Health care:** The presenters discussed the status of enterprise liability for businesses with respect to COVID-19 infections across the country; and who and what are covered by Ohio House Bill 606.
- **Bankruptcy:** Filings have increased since the beginning of the pandemic and as a result, changes were made to the Bankruptcy Code that expand the ability of small businesses to file Chapter 11. The speakers presented practical steps that businesses can take to better protect themselves both before and after a filing by a customer or supplier.
- **Domestic relations:** Working and schooling from home have led to an increase in issues with regards to parenting, spousal/child support, asset valuations, litigation and mediation. The presenters walked through how to navigate these challenges.

Welcome New (and Recently Renewed) Members!

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Clearing Up CBD Confusion

By Joe Muha



Image courtesy of Erin Stone on pixabay.com

There is a lot of confusion over CBD products and what is permitted for sale both federally and in the state of Ohio. Hopefully, this article will assist you in making some sense of the chaos by answering some of the most common questions I see in my practice.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

The 2018 Farm Bill changed the status of hemp. Hemp is no longer a federally regulated Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Schedule I substance. A DEA Schedule I substance is a drug or substance for which there is no currently accepted medical use in the United States. Some examples include heroin, marijuana, ecstasy, and peyote.

Note that thirty-four states, including Ohio in 2016, have made marijuana available for medicinal purposes. Others, like Michigan and twelve others, have made it available for medicinal purposes (Michigan in 2008) and recreational purposes (Michigan in 2018). Federal rules still classify marijuana as a Schedule I substance, so these states are permitting activities which are unlawful under federal law. As attorneys, you know that federal law trumps state law when there is a conflict under the United States Constitution Article VI, Paragraph 2 – the “Supremacy Clause.”

Also note that when there is not a conflict, the more strict law prevails. So while the federal government has currently turned a blind eye toward medical and recreational marijuana in these states, it is still illegal. States are not enforcing federal law and the federal government is presently not going into these states to crack down on the growers, dispensaries, and patients. The federal government could make the decision to enforce federal marijuana laws at any time but at present, it has not shown an inclination to do so.

Relative to our discussion, note that [hemp is not marijuana](#).

Hemp and marijuana are both from the cannabis plant. Hemp contains less than 0.3% THC by dry weight and marijuana contains 0.3% THC or more by dry weight under the federal law. Some marijuana has been sampled and tested at over 30% THC by dry weight. Both contain CBD. Hemp became legal federally after the signing of the 2018 Farm Bill while marijuana remains illegal on the federal level.

In Ohio, hemp remained illegal outside of medical marijuana dispensaries until Governor DeWine signed Ohio Senate Bill 57 in 2019.

Upon signing the bill into law, Ohio became the 46th state to permit the farming of hemp. So while the federal government made hemp legal in 2018, Ohio had a more strict law that kept hemp illegal in the state until 2019 and the signing of Senate Bill 57. Now, Ohio farmers can cultivate and process hemp. Hemp can be used for a variety of purposes and its seed and fiber have commercial applications, too.

It is reported that in 2019, American Farmers were licensed to grow over 511 thousand acres of hemp. This was up from under 10 thousand acres in 2016, 26 thousand acres in 2017, and 78 thousand

| CBD | vs. | THC |
|---|-----|--|
| CBD is an abbreviation for cannabidiol, one of many active compounds in the cannabis plant. | | THC is an abbreviation for tetrahydrocannabinol, an active compound in the cannabis plant. |
| CBD is not psychoactive and will not make a person feel high. | | THC is psychoactive. |
| <i>Epidiolex</i> is an FDA-approved prescription drug with CBD that is used to reduce seizures. | | <i>Marinol</i> is an FDA-approved prescription drug made with synthetic THC. Legal in all states, the drug is used to treat nausea, vomiting and loss of appetite. |

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acres in 2018. Of course, not all of those licensed acres were used to grow hemp, but this is directionally correct and helps to give us an idea of where the market is going. The hemp business is indeed growing (pun intended).

WHAT IS CBD?

CBD is an abbreviation for cannabidiol. CBD is one of many active compounds in the cannabis plant. CBD is not psychoactive. CBD will not make a person feel “high.” There is an FDA approved prescription drug with CBD used to reduce seizures. That drug is known as Epidiolex. Hemp-derived CBD is legal if it contains less than 0.3% THC under federal law and Ohio law. Hemp-derived CBD is illegal if it contains 0.3% or more THC under federal law and Ohio law. CBD derived from marijuana is illegal under federal law and Ohio law.

WHAT IS THC?

THC is an abbreviation for tetrahydrocannabinol. THC is another one of the active compounds in the cannabis plant. THC is psychoactive and this is what makes a person feel “high.” There is an FDA approved prescription drug made with synthetic THC known as Marinol available with a prescription in the United States. Marinol is used to treat nausea, loss of appetite, and reduce vomiting. It has a role in the treatment of patients in modern pharmacology and medicine. Prescriptions are written and dispensed for this product in every state. This prescription product is legal in all states.

HOW CAN CONSUMERS OBTAIN CBD PRODUCTS?

This can be different for folks and can vary by state, medical condition, and the medical care they receive.

A patient who has access to a medical marijuana dispensary and placed on the registry for medical marijuana by their prescriber may obtain CBD and THC from such a dispensary in Ohio. Remember, marijuana is still illegal federally. From a dispensary, these



The Buckeye State weighs in:
Hemp-derived CBD is illegal if it contains 0.3% or more THC under federal law and Ohio law.

CBD derived from marijuana is illegal under federal law and Ohio law.

Graphic courtesy of www.flaticon.com

products are available in a variety of forms including ingestible and topical products. Note that under the medical marijuana program in Ohio, smoking medical marijuana (or any marijuana) remains illegal under both state and federal laws.

For non-dispensary patients, many retailers in many states are selling CBD containing products. Some retailers may be getting the relevant rules regarding CBD products wrong. The rules are not as permissive as some believe.

The Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has been very clear on what is permissible. The FDA has the statutory authority to regulate these products. In fact, the FDA made this statement, “Food, including dietary supplements, is regulated differently, but with the same overarching goal of protecting consumers.

Among other things, it is currently illegal to put into interstate commerce a food to which CBD has been added, or to market CBD as, or in, a dietary supplement. Essentially, the relevant statutory provisions prohibit these uses of CBD because CBD was the subject of substantial clinical investigations into its potential medical uses before it was added to foods (including dietary supplements),

and, separately, because CBD is the active ingredient in Epidiolex, an FDA-approved prescription drug product to treat rare, severe forms of epilepsy.” From this, it is apparent that ingestible products are not permitted.

No CBD product, other than Epidiolex, can make a health claim (the product is intended to have a therapeutic effect) related to CBD at this time. Making a health claim for CBD would cause it to be regulated as a drug, and presently only Epidiolex is approved as a CBD drug in the United States. Topical products with CBD derived from hemp with less than 0.3% THC and not making health claims associated with the CBD appear to be permissible. Note that topical CBD can be absorbed into the human body.

Additionally, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has the statutory authority to investigate false and deceptive practices. Many believe that the FTC will begin enforcing their rules as it relates to unsubstantiated medical claims related to CBD products. FTC action is often met with a 20-year consent decree and one would likely suspect that most manufacturers would not wish to bear that additional burden.

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WHAT IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN?

There are already estimates that the United States' CBD market will exceed \$1.615 Billion in 2021. There is mounting political pressure for the FDA to approve a non-drug ingestible pathway for CBD products.

Many consumer product goods companies have invested significant sums of money in developing products with CBD. InBev has invested over \$50MM, Coca-Cola has invested over \$60MM, and Constellation Wines is said to have invested \$4B in this space. It is likely that many of the smaller CBD companies will be absorbed by or squeezed out of the market when this pathway is approved. These larger companies have good reason to be more risk averse than their smaller competitors.

Once the government establishes some clear rules, it is expected that these larger companies will bring to market their products for consumers. The larger companies are ready to claim their share of the pie. Energy drinks, beer, wine, and food products with CBD would all appear in the market in a rapid fashion.

Even if the pathway takes a long time to be approved, CBD will likely be added to many products that are used topically in the short term. The health claims must be associated with their other ingredients unless CBD gets approved as an over the counter drug.

Alternatively, manufacturers could add CBD to cosmetic or beauty products with no health claim made. Imagine your favorite dandruff shampoo, soap, toothpaste (not ingested as we are to expectorate toothpaste), lotion, make-up, salve, or lip balm with CBD. It would likely sit on the shelf at your local drug store right next to the non-CBD version with which you are already familiar. Manufacturers call this a line extension. Some retailers call it "sku proliferation."

Even in a large store, a retailer has to make decisions as an agent of the customer, to carry those items that sell well over those that sell poorly. A retailer cannot carry everything, so the smaller manufacturer may not get the space it would like to have to sell its products at your local drugstore, supermarket, supercenter, or warehouse club. No one carries every item, except perhaps Amazon.

CBD will likely become a ubiquitous addition to many of the products with which customers are already familiar. Some unknowns remain that will have to be answered with time and experience. For example, what is an appropriate amount of CBD for a person to consume over a given time frame? How does CBD interact with prescription or over the counter medications? What medical conditions alter the human body's ability to process CBD? We do not know the answers to all of these questions today. Scientific testing and FDA oversight may likely help health care professionals and consumers best answer them.

Author:

Joseph Muha is Corporate Counsel for Discount Drug Mart in Medina, Ohio and an ACC NEO board member. He is also a Pharmacist with an MBA and an LLM in intellectual property law.

ACC NEO Raises the Bar as an ACC Gold Chapter of Distinction

At ACC's Virtual Annual Meeting in October, ACC NEO was recognized as a 2020 Gold Chapter of Distinction.

The ACC Chapter Award Program recognizes chapters that demonstrate a commitment to promoting member involvement, meeting their members' needs, demonstrating leadership and association best practices, as well as furthering ACC's strategic plan.

Highest-rated chapters received a Gold Chapter of Distinction designation and second-tier chapters were awarded a Silver Accomplished Chapter Distinction. See below our signature for the complete list of recipients.

The awards are based the results of ACC's annual chapter activities survey, which incorporates a sliding scale according to each chapter's size. Points are based on our answers to questions that address several areas of chapter business, including the number of CLE programs offered and variety therein; our student outreach efforts; our pro bono and charity work; social, professional development and non-CLE programs; Board engagement; new member onboarding; events/programming focused on certain demographics (e.g., new to in-house, women); and our diversity programming and/or initiatives.

Our Chapter leaders believe that this recognition is a strong indication that our chapter's endeavors are consistent with the goals of the national organization. Thank you all for your contributions to helping us earn this award. We look forward to working together in 2021!



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Save the date for these 2021 programs + events

March 11

CLE, presented by Fisher Phillips

April 22

CLE, presented by Jackson Lewis

June 17

Spring Social, sponsored by
Jackson Lewis

July TBD

CLE, presented by Littler

August 19

CLE, presented by Frantz Ward

September 2

CLE, presented by
Dinsmore & Shohl

September 15

Annual Chapter Meeting

September 23

Volunteer event with Jackson Lewis
at Cleveland Food Bank

October 7

RoundTable, hosted by
Jackson Lewis

October 19-21

Annual ACC Meeting (virtual)

October 28

CLE, presented by Blakes

November 4

RoundTable, hosted by Frantz Ward

December 3

Winter Social, sponsored by Littler

For the most up-to-date
information on upcoming programs
and events, please visit the
Chapter's web page here:

[www.acc.com/chapters-networks/
chapters/northeast-ohio](http://www.acc.com/chapters-networks/chapters/northeast-ohio)

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