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THIS MONTH'S FEATURE

Your Legal Rights

HOSTED BY CHUCK FINNEY

Your Legal Rights is a weekly, live, call-in program, on Wednesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:00 PM Pacific California time. The program deals with legal topics, as the program is funded by the California Board of Legal Specialization of the State Bar of California, legal Sections of the State Bar, by the National Board of Trial Advocacy, by the California Applicant Attorneys Association (re: Workers Compensation Law), by the San Francisco Bar Association., and by the San Mateo County Bar Association. It is recorded live in the San Francisco Bay area, is featured live on the Internet at www.kalw.org, and recently, is available live on ContentDepot.

About the Creator:

Chuck Finney has been a consumer law broadcaster for 31 years, a San Mateo County Deputy District Attorney in the Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit for 30 years, and a California attorney for 50 years.

He has been a producer/host of public radio programs produced in San Francisco for 35 years. In 1984, when Chuck was the Director of News & Informational Programming at KQED-FM, in San Francisco, he began producing and hosting the program on the satellite to public radio in California.



Q & A

SHOWCase spoke with *Your Legal Rights* creator Chuck Finney.

Can you tell us how *Your Legal Rights* came to life?

As a California attorney, and as the KQED-FM Director of News & Informational Programming, I decided it was important to educate the public radio audience in California about their legal rights and obligations and to give a live audience call-in access to on-air guests of the program on a weekly basis to help consumers to get acquainted with various laws in order to avoid legal problems.

I also wanted a forum if callers had legal problems, to inform and educate them as to how they might deal with the problems in the California legal system, including how low-income consumers could get legal help from non-profit legal organizations.

We produce the show from KALW Public Radio, which is owned by the San Francisco School District. KALW is 77 years old, the oldest, non-commercial radio station this side of the Mississippi River. The station itself is located at Burton High School in San Francisco and is named after two members of the United States Congress, Phil Burton and Sala Burton.



When did you begin putting this show together?

1984, as a public radio project exclusively funded by the State Bar of California.

Describe the listener that will appreciate this kind of show.

The average lay person who is, or should be, interested in learning basic legal rights and obligations in a broad range of legal areas and how they may be able to avoid legal problems and/or deal with legal problems in their respective states by learning how Californians can deal with similar problems.

In general, how much cross-over is there between legal issues in California and in

other states?



I have found, having been an attorney for 50 years and a public radio broadcaster based in San Francisco for 36 years, that although specific laws may differ somewhat from state to state, the legal issues that the public or that consumers face in everyday life throughout the United States are similar.

Unless people are in the top one percent of society, they have legal problems that confront them as part of just living, no matter in which state they live.

California is often thought of as a harbinger for issues, such as environmental policy. Would you say this also applies to legal issues?

Yes, I would say that the members of the California legislature continually work to make California a forerunner of legal protections for the public.



And don't forget, although many of the programs involve California law, the legal principles of California law are also basic in the laws of other states. We cover federal legal areas including bankruptcy law, federal Income tax laws, immigration and nationality laws, Social Security disability laws, and now that the National Board of Trial Advocacy (NBTA) has become a funder of the program, NBTA attorneys throughout the United States will be frequent guests on the program to discuss legal specialties that are practiced by NBTA

attorneys throughout the United States.

Can you give an overview on one particular show that you thought was especially good?

Recently, the immediate past president of the State Bar of California, Luis J. Rodriguez, and J. Antonio Nierras, a specialist in immigration and nationality law who is certified by the California Board of Legal Specialization of the State Bar of California, did a *Your Legal Rights* program discussing current immigration and nationality law issues.

The intent of the program was to update listeners on the current status of the law, the hurdles that immigrants are facing, and what sources are available to help those who want to become legal citizens of the United States. Both guests are very strong advocates of helping immigrants to get through the federal immigration law system. This was not a debate but was a conversation to educate listeners about the current status of the law and that there is hope for those who are struggling with Immigration.

Does your show typically consist of callers with legal problems of their own like a legal Car Talk or instead calls from people who want to discuss policy issues?



This is a program designed to help people solve their legal problems, not discuss policy issues. Ultimately, it's a program to help listeners avoid legal problems if possible, but if there is already a legal problem, what sources of help are available to resolve the legal problem.

Our listeners typically are calling in with their problems and are looking for some direction to try to resolve them. Although my guests are attorney members of the State Bar of California, and the State Bar does not permit my guests to give specific legal advice to any listener, the approach my guests and I take is to discuss the problem and give the listeners direction of what their legal rights and obligations are and where they can go for legal help whether it may be private-pay or a non-profit legal agency where legal help may be available with no fee or very legal fee.

What kinds of feedback have you received from listeners of the show?

I think we're getting very good feedback, because the audience understands that the program is here to help them get through legal problems. Otherwise, listeners who cannot afford current private lawyers' fees of \$200 to \$400 per hour would not be able to learn what help may be out there for them without having to pay those fees. This, of course, does not apply to people injured in accidents due to negligence, since personal injury attorneys charge on a contingent fee basis, not an hourly basis, if the injured person wins a lawsuit or has a successful settlement of the accident case.

What are some topics or issues you plan to address in future episodes?

On November 18, from 7:00 to 8:00 PM California Pacific time, we will do a program on year-end tax tips for preparing 2015 federal income tax returns. There are things which taxpayers can do legally if they do some planning before the end of the tax year. My guest will be a California State Bar Certified Specialist in Taxation Law (federal).



Also, as a regular thing, usually on the 4th Wednesday of the month, from 7:00 to 8:00 PM California Pacific time, we have "CALL A LAWYER NIGHT". While I am doing the live, on-air, call-in program, we will have several attorneys in a variety of legal areas in the KALW Conference Room who will take listeners' calls off the air at 800-525-9917. This will include workers' compensation law, criminal law, legal malpractice law, family law, landlord/tenant Law, employment law, tax law, real estate law, and patent and copyright law. Also, on the following morning, Thursday, from 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM California Pacific time, Leon Bayer, a California State Bar Certified Specialist in federal bankruptcy law takes calls from individuals seeking guidance.

All of these attorneys are serving the listening public, and there is no obligation on the part of the listeners who call in. We have been doing this as a very important public service for many years. And everyone is welcome to call in wherever they live.

And coming up, we will be taking close looks at the following issues:

- (1) Estate planning - should you transfer title to your property into a trust and taxation issues;
- (2) Family law issues and using mediation to help couples deal with divorce problems;
- (3) Mediation of employment law disputes;
- (4) The rights of same-sex marriage couples;

- (5) The death penalty;
- (6) Family law - the visitation rights of grandparents to visit their grandchildren;
- (7) The value of alternative dispute resolution including mediation in order to avoid the cost and length of time involved in litigation;
- (8) The legal rights of persons injured in accidents;
- (9) Wrongful death laws; and
- (10) Landlord/tenant laws and issues.

These are just a few of the topics/issues that will be addressed in future programs.



CONTACT INFORMATION



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