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15 Years, Countless Wins

Building a Life That Matters

I moved into a new office a few years ago, more than doubling the cramped space that first housed my fledgling law practice here in Minnesota. I gained more room for a standing desk plus my regular desk, seating for my clients and kids during visits, and space for the books I love to give away.

On the 15th anniversary of starting my firm, my expanded office reflects the progress I've made in all facets of my life. I'm struck by how my life has evolved and grown, from my business and client relationships to my bonds with our three growing children. On all fronts, I enjoy helping the next generation lay the groundwork to grow and thrive in the future.

In my estate planning practice, I strive to help families gain clarity and peace of mind about their legacy. Many come to my office feeling burdened and intimidated, thinking estate planning requires slogging through confusing, 150-page documents. I take a weight off their shoulders by showing them it doesn't have to be complicated. It's great to see them take a deep breath as that sense of overwhelm goes away. And after 15 years of this work, some clients send their kids to me to do estate plans as they assume adult responsibilities. I love seeing the way these families grow.

Many of my business law clients are thriving, too. I tell business owners that my real goal for them is for them to outgrow me. I want

them to become so big that I can't handle all their legal work and I have to hand them off to a full-service law firm, or bring in another attorney to help with areas outside my expertise. It's been great to see some of my clients achieve that goal.

Others come to me at the beginning with an idea for a new business. I share their excitement, saying, "Great! Let's sit down and figure that out." It's rewarding to help them lay the groundwork for growth and take off.

My three kids, too, are hitting their stride. Just five years ago, we were all emerging from the stifling effects of the pandemic. They've long since returned to in-person learning, and each of their unique talents and preferences is emerging. Our oldest, who is 15, is finding her lane in life. She enjoys dance and is involved in STEM programs at school. For our older son, 13, it's all baseball all the time. And our youngest, who is 10, loves tennis. It's fun to see them get into sports I also enjoy.

Spending more time with my family was a primary goal when I left a large law firm 15 years ago, and I'm appreciating the flexibility I gained more than ever. My kids are increasingly curious about what I do at work. They like visiting my office, digging through drawers to figure out what toys I have. When they found a box of tech gadgets I'm not using, they dived in, asking, "Hey, can I take this home and use it?" To me, they're just old keyboards or old mice. But to their fresh eyes, those tools are brand-new.

Seeing the world through my kids' eyes has added a new dimension to life. As regular readers know, I do periodic book giveaways. When I saw a little Halloween storybook on a wholesaler's website that my kids loved when they were little, I bought a stack of them to send out. With the whole world going digital, it's fun to keep books moving in the world.

As I look back, I'm grateful for the opportunities I've had to support the growth of others, for both my kids and my clients. For the next 15 years? Continuing on this path will be enough!

- Andrew M. Ayers



Deepfakes Are Here

AND THE LAW IS RACING TO CATCH UP



Is it real, or is it AI?

Years ago, the idea of artificial intelligence (AI) creating convincing videos of real people sounded like science fiction. Today, it's reality. With just a few clicks, sophisticated AI tools can generate images, voices, or videos that look so authentic they can fool even careful viewers.

While this technology can be used for harmless fun or creative projects, it also raises serious concerns. Deepfakes can be used to impersonate, spread misinformation, damage reputations, or create explicit images without consent. As the technology advances, lawmakers across the United States are moving quickly to put guardrails in place.

Federal Laws Addressing Deepfakes

Deepfake legislation is evolving rapidly to keep pace with advances in AI. The primary goal is to prevent misuse while still allowing for legitimate innovation. However, there are countless risks involved, including:

- Financial scams
- Defamation and misinformation
- Election interference
- Non-consensual explicit imagery

As lawmakers define when synthetic media crosses the line from creative expression into deception or harm, we get closer to protecting both people and institutions.

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The TAKE IT DOWN Act

One of the most significant federal measures to address deepfakes arrived in 2025 with the passage of the TAKE IT DOWN Act. This legislation directly targets non-consensual intimate imagery, including AI-generated images or videos of an individual designed to appear real. Under the law, distributing or threatening to distribute manipulated intimate media without permission is considered a criminal offense.

The law also requires online platforms to respond quickly when victims report this type of content. Once notified, a platform must remove the material within 48 hours and take steps to prevent further circulation. Individuals who violate the law may face substantial penalties, including potential prison sentences.

Consumer Fraud and the FTC Act

The Federal Trade Commission Act (FTC Act) prohibits unfair or misleading business practices. If a company exaggerates what its AI technology can do or uses synthetic media to trick consumers, the Federal Trade Commission may step in. Deepfake scams are already becoming more sophisticated. In some reported cases, criminals have used AI-generated audio or video that imitates a trusted colleague or executive to convince someone to transfer large sums of money. When synthetic media is used to trick people for financial gain, it may fall under the purview of fraud enforcement.

Why These Laws Matter

The rapid rise of AI has opened the door to remarkable innovation, but it has also created new avenues for harm. Deepfakes can be used to manipulate public opinion, commit fraud, or damage someone's personal or professional reputation. As we establish clearer rules around consent, deception, and digital manipulation, lawmakers are beginning to define how AI-generated media should be handled in the legal system.

Next Steps

Additional laws at both the federal and state levels are expected to address rising challenges such as political deepfakes, identity theft, and intellectual property concerns. For individuals and businesses alike, staying informed about these changes is becoming increasingly important. Synthetic media may be new territory, but the legal system is quickly catching up and working to ensure that powerful technology is used responsibly and never at the expense of someone's well-being.

TAKE A *BREAK*



COCONUT SHRIMP CURRY



Ingredients

- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 1/2 lbs jumbo shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp yellow curry powder
- 1 (13.5 oz) can coconut milk
- 2 tbsp honey, plus more to taste
- 1/4 tsp kosher salt, plus more to taste
- Juice of 1 lime
- 12 basil leaves, chopped, plus more for serving
- Hot sauce (optional)
- Cooked basmati rice, for serving

Directions

1. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, melt butter.
2. Cook shrimp 2–3 minutes, turning halfway, then transfer to a plate.
3. Add onion and garlic to the skillet and cook for 2 minutes, then stir in curry powder and cook 2 minutes more.
4. Reduce heat to medium-low and stir in coconut milk, honey, salt, and lime juice, and cook until gently bubbling.
5. Return shrimp to the skillet and simmer 2–3 minutes to thicken slightly. Stir in basil and add hot sauce if desired.
6. Serve over rice with extra basil.



For years, parents have relied on one classic trick. You say the opposite of what you mean, hoping your child takes the bait. “I bet you can’t eat all your broccoli ...” Cue the determined chomping and, ideally, an empty plate.

But if that strategy suddenly stopped working and your child is now giving you the “Nice try” stare, you’re not alone. According to parenting coach and Montessori expert Ankit B. Chandak, there’s a good reason your clever tactics are falling flat.

Around age 8, many children begin developing what’s called “*theory of mind*.” In simple terms, they become skilled at picking up on other people’s intentions. Meaning they learn exactly what you’re doing. When you casually suggest they definitely shouldn’t tidy up, they can see the strings attached. And instead of feeling motivated, they may feel underestimated.

So, what works better once your child catches on? Chandak suggests shifting from mind games to meaningful communication.

To start, focus on clarity. Instead of hinting, try being direct. Explain the expectation and invite them to think it through. “You have a test next week and need to study. What’s your plan?” That simple question turns a command into a conversation.

Next, invite collaboration. Giving children some ownership, like choosing whether to tackle homework before or after dinner, offers autonomy without sacrificing structure. You’re still guiding the outcome, but they get a say in how it unfolds.

Finally, ask for ideas. When mornings feel chaotic or bedtime drags on, bring them into the problem-solving process. Children are often more cooperative when they feel heard. Asking “How can we make this smoother?” goes much further than a frustrated reminder.

The magic is mutual respect, not manipulation. When parents acknowledge their child’s growing awareness and intelligence, it builds trust. Kids develop stronger decision-making skills, feel valued, and are more likely to follow through.

And there’s a bonus here as well. **When you stop trying to outwit your child, they stop trying to outmaneuver you.** What replaces the power struggle is partnership. It turns out that the smartest move in parenting isn’t being one step ahead; it’s walking alongside your kids.



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CANINE VS. TAX CODE

One Woman's Quest to Get Her Dog Recognized as a Dependent

Finnegan Mary Reynolds, an 8-year-old golden retriever, might be the first dog to officially qualify for tax breaks. Her owner, Amanda Reynolds of New York City, recently filed a lawsuit against the IRS, arguing that her pup should get the same tax breaks as a human child.

Before you scoff, this claim is far more convincing than you might assume. According to Reynolds, Finnegan is more than just property. She is a fully dependent family member, with annual care costs topping \$5,000. From food and grooming to vet visits, daycare, and even transportation, Reynolds handles it all.

And under Section 152 of the tax code, she contends, Finnegan already ticks every "dependent" box, including being financially reliant, living in the same home, and earning zero income. The only hiccup? The IRS hasn't updated the definition to include four-legged furballs.

The lawsuit also leans on heavy-hitting constitutional arguments, citing the Equal Protection Clause and the Fifth Amendment's Takings Clause. Reynolds argues that excluding pets from tax relief is unfair and essentially penalizes responsible pet owners. She points out the quirky inconsistency: Service animals can qualify for deductions as medical expenses, but beloved companion animals (who can incur similar costs) get nothing.

As a New York state-licensed lawyer, Reynolds is representing herself in the case and not holding back. She argues, "For all intents and purposes, Finnegan is like a daughter, and is definitely a 'dependent.'" While the IRS hasn't responded yet, the case is already sparking debates about modern families, legal definitions, and how far our tax code should go to acknowledge furry family members.

Whether Finnegan walks away with a tax deduction or just more belly rubs, one thing's clear: Americans' relationships with pets are evolving, and maybe it's time our laws caught up. After all, someone has to pay for all those vet bills, gourmet treats, and squeaky toys.

