

In The Spotlight with: Attorney Russell Buzzelli

By Kate Feeks

Attorney Russ Buzzelli will be on *Law Talk* with host John Celebrezze to discuss capital punishment as it currently exists in Ohio. This show will run throughout the month of October on Wadsworth Cable (WCTV) public access Channel 15, Brunswick Area Television (BAT) public access Channel 21, and Armstrong Cable Access Channel 37 in Medina County along with Clear Picture Channels 21 & 22 in Wooster and Massillon.

Capital punishment, or the death penalty, is a legal process whereby a person is put to death by the state as punishment for a crime. Crimes that can result in a death penalty are known as capital crimes, or capital offenses.

Crimes committed in Ohio that carry the death penalty fall under the statutes ORC 2929.04 (A)(1-10). “There are different examples of each one of those statutes. The first step is the aggravated murder charge, and once past that charge you have what is called a specification. That specification is what makes you ‘death eligible’ meaning you can receive the death penalty. Some examples of this specification are where you kill witnesses against you, killing someone who has already testified against you, or if you kill minor children, just to name a few.” Buzzelli said.

Juries are selected in a death penalty case by individual *voir dire*. “We go through a selection process where we talk to each one of the jurors. The reason we do this is to challenge for cause. What we are trying to do is get someone on that jury that we feel is going to be fair and impartial. We want someone who will be able to vote with their personal moral conscience. A person can not get on that jury if they are opposed to the death penalty or are completely for it. If you have a preconceived notion one way or the other, you are not going to be selected.” explained Buzzelli.

In Ohio, attorneys need to be qualified and registered by the Ohio Supreme Court to try capital cases. They must have prior experience, and special training before they can represent a death penalty defendant. The life span of an aggravated murder case with a death specification case can last up to a year. “That entire time you are working that case everyday.” Buzzelli said.

Although these cases can take years to end, according to Buzzelli they are what he went to law school to do. “It is what everyone who does criminal work aspires to. You are at the top of your game.” noted Buzzelli.

Russ Buzzelli graduated from Cal Poly College in San Luis Obispo California and from The University of Akron Law School. He started his career as an Akron city assistant prosecutor then became a Summit County assistant prosecutor. Buzzelli later practiced at Roetzel and Andress. He also served as a Medina County probate and juvenile magistrate.

Today, Buzzelli owns a private practice located in Wadsworth, Ohio. He is married to Gail Buzzelli and is a proud father of seven children.

To learn more about capital punishment watch the interview with Attorney Russ Buzzelli and John Celebrezze throughout the month of October on *Law Talk*.