



**MONAST**  
LAW OFFICE

# Workers' COMPanion

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## SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

### *Separating Fact From Fiction in the Legal Profession This Opposite Day*

If you didn't already know, Jan. 25 is Opposite Day. As we celebrate the whimsically contradictory spirit of Opposite Day, I find it the perfect moment to peel back the curtain on some of the most common misconceptions about my profession — law. Contrary to popular belief, the life of a lawyer isn't all high-stakes courtroom drama and stern-faced seriousness. My path to becoming a lawyer was anything but a straight line drawn from an age-old legal family lineage or a childhood surrounded by law books and courtrooms.



First off, I come from an ordinary background. Unlike the families of Atticus Finch or the glamorous TV lawyers I remember growing up, my siblings mostly pursued nonprofessional paths: We've got truck drivers, a teacher, a soap-maker, a firefighter, and a school librarian in the mix, and not a single lawyer among them. (I have a nephew who's an attorney in Arkansas and whip-smart!) Growing up, these TV characters and their courtroom dramas painted an image of nobility and grandeur around the law profession. It made being a lawyer seem like the ultimate quest for justice — where the bad guys confess, and justice prevails in a dramatic courtroom showdown.

Let's get real, though. I was charmed by these portrayals and even flirted with the idea of politics — *dodged a bullet there, didn't I?* As a kid, my family

thought being a lawyer was a big deal, but I always admired them more for their dedication to their jobs, from firefighting to driving trucks. They were the real community heroes.

I didn't seriously consider law until the tail end of college. And here's a kicker: Law school doesn't teach you all the laws. It's more about learning to think critically, analyze problems from various angles, and not just memorize legal statutes. Contrary to popular belief, a lawyer cannot master every area of law. It's just too vast nowadays, unlike in the days of Abe Lincoln when it *might* have been possible. Depending on their legal questions, I often have to refer family and friends to specialists. I always tell them I wouldn't even draft my own will because that's not my niche!

Another common myth is that all lawyers are unapproachable or rolling in dough. Some might fit that bill, but many of us are just regular folks. I remember waiting tables back in school, overhearing one young lawyer who said he was chopping wood on the side to make ends meet. And no, we aren't all into golf or consider ourselves high-brow intellectuals. When my kids were growing up, I spent so much time working throughout the week that I'd rather spend my weekends with them than on a golf course.

There's this saying in law school: "A students become professors, B students become judges, and C students get rich." This goes to show just how different every lawyer is, not just in their specialties and aspirations, but their personalities and intellect. Honestly, the real measure of a lawyer, like any professional, is their commitment to serve and do their job well, whether defending a client in court or giving legal advice over coffee.

So, don't be intimidated by the suit and the law degree. We're here to help, just like your mechanic or dentist. In my office, I have a plaque that says, "A Lawyer Is Your Friend." Because at the end of the day, that's exactly what I aim to be — a friend and a helper, breaking down legal jargon and myths, one Opposite Day at a time.

*-Jim Monast*

# TCJA EXPIRING THIS YEAR?

## IF NOT, HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

While some people have benefited from lower tax payments due to recent legislation, much of that help may start decreasing soon. This upcoming year, many provisions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) of 2017, which included significant changes to our tax code, are due to expire. However, since the Republican party gained control of the House and Senate in November, it's likely the Act will be extended. Since we don't know yet, here is what you need to know about how potential changes may impact your income tax season.

### DEDUCTIONS

If the TCJA expires, married couples will be particularly impacted. For instance, the standard deduction for a married couple is set to be \$16,525 in 2026, but if the TCJA were still in effect, that deduction would be \$30,725. However, the personal exemption was eliminated through the TCJA and will be brought back if it expires. That means the personal exemption will go from \$0 in 2025 to \$5,275 in 2026. The child tax credit was doubled under the TCJA from \$1,000 to \$2,000 and would decrease to pre-2017 levels. The TCJA also set a \$10,000 cap on the maximum state and local taxes that could be deducted each year. If this expires, high-income taxpayers in certain states will benefit.

### MARGINAL TAX BRACKETS

For many taxpayers, their marginal tax bracket rate was heavily affected by the TCJA. Before 2017, the marginal tax bracket rates were 10%, 15%, 25%,



28%, 33%, 35%, and 39.6%. These were changed to 10%, 12%, 22%, 24%, 32%, 35%, and 37%, respectively, when the TCJA went into effect. If the TCJA expires, depending on your tax bracket, you may be paying anywhere from 3%–6% more every year. It is important to understand the full breadth of changes possibly coming your way and budget accordingly. Depending on what happens, you may end up paying more (or, fingers crossed, less) in taxes.

# Document Your Path to Recovery

## ESSENTIAL STEPS TO TAKE IMMEDIATELY AFTER A WORKPLACE INJURY

Fast action is essential to protect your legal rights during work accidents. The first step is to seek immediate medical attention to address any injuries. This serves as the first documentation of the incident, which is required for any workers' compensation claim. Whether it's a minor injury or something more serious, the treatment you receive forms the foundation of your claim.

### NOTIFY AND DOCUMENT

As soon as possible, inform your supervisor or employer about the incident. This notification should be in writing to provide a clear record of the incident and your prompt response. Documenting the exact time, date, and site of the accident, along with a detailed description of what happened, is critical. Gather the names and contact information of any witnesses — these accounts can verify your version of events and provide more insights into the accident.

### GATHER MEDICAL RECORDS

Follow all medical advice and keep detailed doctor visit and treatment records. Also, order copies of all medical reports, treatment plans, and bills. These documents are indispensable for confirming your claim and showing the extent of your injuries. Adhere to the prescribed treatment plans and attend every medical appointment; these aid your recovery and strengthen your claim by showing your commitment to healing.

### TAKE PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

Take pictures of the injury, the accident site, and any relevant factors contributing to the mishap. Even continue to take photos of your injury throughout the healing process. Visual evidence can powerfully support your claim and show the conditions that led to the injury and how it affected your life.

### TRACK ALL YOUR RELATED EXPENSES

Keep detailed records of all expenses related to the accident — medical bills, lost wages, transportation costs to medical appointments, and any other related expenses. This documentation is paramount for ensuring that all potential compensation is considered in your claim.

### SEEK PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE

Navigating the complexities of a workers' compensation claim can be confusing. If you've suffered a workplace injury, it's wise to consult with professionals who understand the ins and outs of the workers' compensation process. Monast Law Office specializes in helping workers like you secure the compensation you deserve. Contact us for comprehensive support throughout your workers' compensation claim process.

# A NEW LEASH ON LIFE

## HOW 2 UNWANTED DOGS BECAME IRREPLACEABLE FAMILY MEMBERS

In a delightful twist of fate at the Greenville Humane Society in South Carolina, two shelter dogs with very different stories found something special in each other — friendship. Boone is a majestic white dog who can understand sign language due to his deafness. His companion, Rellie, is a sweet soul with a shy streak, making her a bit of a wallflower. Despite their differences and lack of adoption, or maybe because of them, these two formed an inseparable bond.

Boone and Rellie spent their days side by side, their walks and play sessions at the shelter becoming the stuff of mini-adventures. “They played every day in the playgroup. They were the best of friends,” Emily Zheng, the marketing manager at the shelter, told *The Herald* in Rock Hill, S.C. Unfortunately, neither dog found their forever home and spent a combined 450 days at the shelter. Yet, their friendship blossomed so visibly that it caught the eye of a compassionate adopter who had been following their tales online.

This kind soul, touched by the dogs’ loyalty to each other and moved by their quirks, made the heartwarming decision to adopt Boone and Rellie together, ensuring their bond would last a lifetime. After meeting the duo, the adopter was convinced that their home had enough room for two more hearts.

Since moving to their new home, Boone and Rellie have been living the dream. The shelter’s Facebook page beams with pride: “Their new family

continues to update us and tells us that they’re both doing wonderfully and are settling in.

Our hearts are full. This is a reminder of why we do what we do and why we show up every day for the homeless pets in our community. Why we never give up.”

Their story is a sparkling example of the unexpected joys of giving shelter pets a second chance. So, if you’re ever thinking about bringing a pet into your life, let Boone and Rellie’s story inspire you. Who knows? Maybe you’ll find your own dynamic duo, ready to fill your home with double the love and double the fun. Remember, every shelter pet has a unique story waiting to unfold with you.



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ANSWER



EATS WITH ELLIE

## CITRUS-HERB PORK ROAST

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 boneless pork sirloin roast (3–4 pounds)
- 2 tsp dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp pepper
- 2 medium onions, cut into thin wedges
- 1 cup plus 3 tbsp orange juice, divided
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 1 tbsp grapefruit juice
- 1 tbsp steak sauce
- 1 tbsp reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tsp grated orange zest
- 1 tsp salt
- 3 tbsp cornstarch
- Egg noodles, cooked

### DIRECTIONS

1. Cut roast in half. In a small bowl, combine oregano, ginger, and pepper; rub over pork. In a large skillet coated with oil, brown roast on all sides. Transfer to a slow cooker; add onions.
2. In a small bowl, combine 1 cup orange juice, sugar, grapefruit juice, steak sauce, and soy sauce; pour over roast. Cover and cook on low for 4–5 hours or until meat is tender. Remove meat and onions to a platter.
3. Transfer cooking juices to a small saucepan. Add orange zest and salt. Bring to a boil. Combine cornstarch and remaining orange juice. Gradually stir into the pan for 2 minutes or until thickened. Serve with pork and noodles.

Inspired by TasteOfHome.com



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 The True Life of a Lawyer Beyond the Courtroom Drama
- 2 Big Tax Changes Coming in 2025  
Key Tips to Documenting Your Workplace Injury
- 3 2 Dogs Find Their Forever Family Together  
Citrus-Herb Pork Roast
- 4 The Power of Planning Something to Look Forward To

# THE HAPPINESS HACK

## WHY SMALL PLANS CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE



When life feels overwhelming, or you just aren't feeling your best, it can be difficult to find hope or joy. Sometimes, the best medicine is a little self-care in the form of simple activities and treats that you enjoy most. One of the best ways to boost your mood is by planning something to look forward to. Whether it's a favorite movie, a new painting class, or a tasty latte, prioritizing things that bring us happiness can empower us with hope. It's like adding a bright spot in the future, making the tough days more manageable.

### WHAT DO YOU LOVE?

Your plan doesn't have to be grand or complicated. Start by identifying activities that make you happy or interest you. Do you love comedy movies or enjoy going to concerts? You might sign up for an improv class or buy tickets to see a play. It can be anything that brings a smile to your face.

### PLAN IT.

Once you know the activity, start planning. Our busy lives sometimes lack time for the little things that make us feel good. Treat your happiness like a necessary appointment and get it on your calendar. Spending time with your loved ones and friends also has a wealth of benefits for your mental health, so decide whether you want someone to join you.

By planning to do things that bring you joy, you'll feel more hopeful, balanced, and better equipped to handle whatever life throws your way.