

The Rights Guard

What floats franchise attorney Joel Buckberg's boat after hours

By Steven Pease

When he's not answering clients' phone calls, Baker Donelson attorney Joel Buckberg will likely be answering the call of another kind—the auxiliary U.S. Coast Guard. “I've been an avid boater for a long time, and even though I'm currently boat-less, I wanted to give something back,” Buckberg says.

He joined up following “a significant number” of boating fatalities on area lakes around Nashville last summer. Buckberg believed they could have been prevented by better boater education, training, and more patrols. “I wanted to make a difference there,” he says.

While he still has another 20 hours of training to go before he's allowed out on flotilla patrols, he does have the uniform. More importantly, Buckberg has his Coast Guard captain's license, and has spent countless hours at sea.

Once his training is complete, Capt. Buckberg will join other volunteer Coast Guardsmen in the 11-02 8th Coast Guard district a few nights a week, conducting requested vessel safety inspections, and serving as “force-extendors” to active-duty regulars.

In Peacetime, the Coast Guard is a division of the Homeland Security Department. In times of war, it is officially part of the Department of Defense. However, the 30,000 auxiliary U.S. Coast Guardsmen would more likely be helping with communications during a disaster, or hooking a man-overboard, than manning a .50-caliber deck gun.

Buckberg sees a number of parallels between franchising and the auxiliary.

“It's a volunteer organization, at the unit level, made up of individual flotillas, or groups of people working together—each with its own finances and elected leader,” he explains. “Then the flotillas join at a sub-regional level called a division, and then at a district level. There



Capt. Joel Buckberg keeps watch at the edge of the flooded Cumberland River in Nashville, Tennessee. Buckberg volunteers in the Coast Guard Auxiliary, helping to keep the waterways safe.

are manuals, training, and we serve the public. There are tremendous parallels.”

No, you won't see him diving over the side of a speeding boat (auxiliary members aren't allowed to leave the boat). And no, you won't see his name splashed across the headlines for unlawful search-and-seizures (they're not allowed to make arrests). For Buckberg, his auxiliary service is more about having a release from his work in transactional and regulatory compliance law, while volunteering in a field he knows well. However, Buckberg says boating is a different type of “pastime.”

“Whenever you're on the water, you have to pay complete attention,” Buckberg says. “That's one of the things that attracted me to it in the

first place. Unlike golf, where between shots you can think about your next deal, when you're boating, bad things can happen when you're not paying attention.”

Technically, there are physical training requirements auxiliary Coast Guardsmen must meet before hitting the water—which shouldn't be much of a problem for Buckberg, who works out four times a week. He also teaches boater's safety classes.

The responsibility of manning a boat isn't to be taken lightly. “I always tell people when you get on a boat you always know something's going to happen—but you don't always know what it is,” he says. **FT**

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