

## Billboard Turns Heads in Chicago

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**AP** Associated Press

**CHICAGO - May 7, 2007 -- An all-female law firm in Chicago is turning heads in the Windy City with a new billboard and a blunt message: "Life's Short. Get a Divorce."**

The billboard, sponsored by Fetman, Garland & Associates, Ltd., a firm that specializes in divorce cases, features the six-pack abs of a headless male torso and tanned female cleavage heaving forth from a black lace bra.

The ad is the brainchild of Corri Fetman, who told ABC News' Law & Justice Unit, "Law firm advertising is boring&Everything's always the same. It's lawyers in libraries with a suit on and the law books behind them. They don't say anything. What, I should hire you because you have a law degree? C'mon. So we wanted to try something different."

Reaction from those who work in and around Chicago's divorce courts has been less than enthusiastic.

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Advertisement



"It's grotesque," said John Ducanto, past president of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. "It's totally undignified and offensive."

"It trivializes divorce and I think it's absolutely disgusting," Rick Tivers, a clinical social worker at the Center for Divorce Recovery in Chicago, told ABC News. "Divorce is traumatic enough without this kind of [advertising]. We try and help people go through the divorce process with as much integrity as possible. A lot of my work is helping people grieve the loss of a divorce, and their own sense of betrayal. This makes divorce seem like it's not a big deal, and it's a huge deal for many people."

Ducanto called on the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Committee of Supreme Court of Illinois to sanction Fetman. "I don't think they'll just let this pass," said Ducanto, who seemed genuinely hurt by the ad. "I have been in practice for 52 years, and I've worked my ass off to change the image of this particular area of the legal practice, and to see some punk try and pervert the whole image in the interest of lucre. & Sure, she's got a lot of attention, but it's like a guy who spits on a table you got the attention, sure, but what kind of attention is it?"

But the ARDC's deputy administrator James Grogan told ABC News that traditionally Illinois has been reluctant to sanction lawyers for anything short of false or misleading advertising.

Recently, Grogan said, the commission took action against a lawyer who was advertising on local ethnic radio.

"The radio spot had the sounds of jungle noises and then a voiceover in Polish saying, 'I am the lion of the courtroom!'" Complaints began to flood in when potential clients realized the truth behind the lion's roar.

"The guy had never tried a case in court before," Grogan said.

One of the genuine lions of the American divorce courts -- New York's Raoul Felder -- said the ad was a new low for the profession.

"This has to be the Academy Award of bad taste," Felder told ABC News. Fetman is "not your run-of-the-mill Perry Mason lawyer," he opined. "Hell, that's not even 'L.A. Law.' It's bizarre," he said. "I don't think anybody walks away from that ad thinking more of the legal profession that they did before they saw it."

Karen Enright, president-elect of the Women's Bar of Illinois, shared similar feelings. "It's actually a disappointment to the profession and to the institution of marriage, which is something our community holds as sacred," she said. "Our profession, and lawyers in general, have been under attack for advertisements similar to this and I think," she said, pausing. "I think that it's not in good taste."

But Fetman defends the billboard, almost gleefully. Recycling popular catch phrases seems to come naturally to her. "Lawyers don't cause divorces. People cause divorces," she said. "If you think somebody's going to look at a billboard and go out and get a divorce as a result, you're insulting the intelligence of people. If that's the case, our next billboard is going to read, 'Gimme Your Money.'"

But the placement of the billboard -- first reported by the Chicago Sun-Times -- does cause one to wonder about its target audience. It peers down into an area of Rush Street known as the "Viagra Triangle" for its three, trendy singles bars in an affluent section of Chicago known as the "Gold Coast."

"Everybody's got a pretty good sense of humor in this neighborhood," said Greg Horan, director of operations for Gibson's Steakhouse, one of the three restaurant/bars in the triangle. The billboard is perched on a parking garage behind the restaurant. "We don't endorse it or anything, but sure, people will look up and get a chuckle out of it."

As far as Fetman is concerned, it's a lighthearted splash of color in an otherwise dreary area of legal advertisement. "It promotes happiness," she said. "It promotes happiness and personal integrity."

And happiness may be something that Fetman, a divorcee, is seeking herself. "By the way, the male body on the billboard? That's my personal trainer, Chuck Sanow," Fetman told ABC News, her girlish voice rising just so. "He's a Chicago firefighter and he owns a gym."

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