



The Voice of Ethics Podcast Transcript

September 2026 Episode

We've Heard it All: Our Favorite Stories, Guests, & Groaners

Susan:

Hello ethical people. I'm Susan Willeke of the Ohio Ethics Commission, welcoming you to the Voice of Ethics, the podcast where we dive into stories about ethics in government. So today's episode is one of my favorite kind of episodes because I'm not alone today.

Nick:

laughs Hello ethical people!

Susan:

Anybody know who that is? If you've been with us for the past year, you might know who that voice is already. Who are you?

Nick:

I'm Nick with the Ohio Ethics Commission, Nick Rohrbaugh.

Susan:

So the reason that we're both here today is because we did hit a milestone. We hit one year of producing and airing this podcast.

Nick:

Amazing. What do you think of that, Susan? One year.

Susan:

It has been a ton of fun. It's been a really fun way to connect with people. Nick, what's been your experience this past year with the podcast?

Nick:

I would say that this has exceeded my expectations overall.

Susan:

Yeah. So what we thought we would do is, we're not going to do a recap. For those of you who have heard them all, you don't necessarily want to hear them again. Even for those of you who are new, feel free to go back and listen to some of the ones that you think look the most interesting.

But what Nick and I thought we could at least do was kind of do a year in review of some of our favorites. Where do we want to start, Nick? We have a couple categories that you and I kind of were opining about.

Nick:

Alright, well, let's start with this: we are a true crime podcast, right? So, Susan, what is your favorite ethics true crime story that we've shared on the podcast this year?

Susan:

You know, one of my faults as a human being is that I have a hard time sometimes making decisions, which why it's probably a good thing that I never did become a lawyer. I think sometimes I feel like I play one on TV because of my job at the Ethics Commission, but I have a hard time narrowing it down.

So can I, can I kind of have more than one?

Nick:

Well, let's hear it. Let's see. I'll edit it out if I don't like it.

Susan:

Okay! Okay! One was an interview that I conducted with my boss, our executive director, Paul Nick, sat down with me. He was such a good sport because he actually had an experience in his years as a law school student. I mean, he was interning and he had a supervisor who was pressuring people to become part of that whole multi-level marketing world.

Nick:

I love that story, I love that interview for two reasons, one, the fact that it was on a cassette tape, just like was so funny, but the other thing is, just in retrospect, just imagining the subject of Paul's story, thinking, "I did THAT to the Executive Director of the Ohio Ethics Commission!"

Susan:

Later became, exactly! I wonder if he ever runs into that former boss, like in the streets of Ohio somewhere.

If you haven't listened to that episode and you want to, we called it MLM mentor. And then the other one, Nick, I just have to mention is, the very first episode of 2026 of this year was all about bourbon.

Nick:

Oh yeah.

Susan:

And it's hard to picture how could people in public service use their public position to somehow get bourbon involved? And somehow people found a way, right? Whether it's access to buying things first, etc.. So that was probably my other favorite one.

Nick:

Yeah, that's a really good one. And that one gets a really good kind of response in doing live presentations. I use that example a lot.

Susan:

Yeah. What's yours? What's yours, Nick?

Nick:

All right, so mine, okay. My favorite story is actually from our very, very first episode about weddings.

Susan:

Oh yeah!

Nick:

I love that story where you were planning your niece's wedding, or were helping plan your niece's wedding and came across the fiscal, fiscal clerk or whatever on Facebook saying, hey, I need a DJ and I'll pay you in exposure because I'm the fiscal clerk. And you'll get all the township's events. **Susan laughing** And - this part kills me, too - I go to conferences all the time, and I will advertise your DJing business to people at the conferences, like, give me a break.

Susan:

I had almost forgotten that story, it makes me laugh all over again!

Nick:

Too funny.

Susan:

You know, I've always said, in my generation, I made mistakes like everybody else. But I didn't post my mistakes on the internet for time and all eternity to be found!

Nick:

Yup yup yup.

Susan:

Okay, Nick. Next category: your favorite interview. So one of, one of our favorite things, I think is when it's not just you or me on the podcast, when we actually have a guest star, if you will.

Nick:

Yeah, it always make is more engaging or more entertaining.

Susan:

What's been your favorite?

Nick:

My favorite has got to be Andrea Williams from the City of Columbus in that "Et Tu, Vendor?" the star gift episode.

Susan:

She literally was a guest star!

Nick:

She was a guest star and she is an absolute star. It was awesome to hear you two. You're both awesome training people, awesome personalities, and getting the two of you together.

Susan:

She is amazing and that's, everybody, that's one of the episodes that we did say names and locations because it was a very positive, wonderful story.

Nick:

Thankfully, Andrea, it was herself.

Susan:

Yes!

Nick:

She was given the gift of a star named after her of all goofy things.

Susan:

Like literally a star in the sky, in the heavens.

Nick:

Don't ask me how that works!

Susan:

Yeah! Who owns the stars in order to be able to sell them? That cracks me up. So, Andrea, if you're listening to this episode, thanks again. That was the most fun. If anybody ever names, like, an ocean after you could you please call us? Because we want to do round, we want to do a sequel on that episode.

Nick:

Keep the stories coming. Andrea. We need yearly episodes with you!

Susan:

Right, right~

Nick:

Okay, so now your favorite interview.

Susan:

So my favorite one. It probably wasn't quite as funny as the Andrea one, but I think my favorite one was when we did in April this year. We called it "Smooth Asphalt, Slippery Ethics"

Nick:

Oh yeah, that was good.

Susan:

Yeah! It was all about a township administrator who had a vendor, a sales rep, keep coming repeatedly to his own front door in his home. You guys –

Nick:

You gotta love that!

Susan:

I mean, I feel like all of us listening to this podcast we're all pretty dedicated to our years of public service. But I don't want people coming to my front door, ringing my doorbell and asking for ethics guidance, right?

Nick:

I don't want ANYone ringing the doorbell ever.

Susan:

Ever?

Nick:

Ever!

Susan:

Even Girl Scout cookies? That I make an exception for.

Nick:

I don't.... *sigh*

Susan:

Aw, Nick you hard-hearted dude! You won't buy Girl Scout cookies?

Nick:

I got, I got two dogs, they're at the door raising a ruckus.

Susan:

Yeah. Yeah.

Nick:

It's just such a hassle to open the door.

Susan:

This township administrator can see your dogs and raise you a, "I've heard you're the township administrator and that your township has a big, like, infrastructure budget. So if you make sure I get the contract with your township, I'll get you a free driveway."

Nick:

Yeah.

Susan:

I think that was my favorite one, because I grant you, first off, we're getting into the bribery world there, beyond even the Ethics Law. I completely get that. But A) I loved it because I think this guy held his cool and kept his professional demeanor in place in a situation I might have gotten a little more salty, right?

Nick laughs

But secondly, the other reason I really liked it is that was one of the stories that he came to me. He was a podcast listener and had been an attendee of some ethics trainings that you and I have done across the state and said, "Hey, if you don't use my name and location, I've got a really cool story."

So that one was when I was very grateful for because I wouldn't have known about this story. It never rose to level of investigation, but I was really, really grateful for that story.

Nick:

Yeah, I love the opportunity to talk about stories like the Andrea story, like this one here where people do the right thing and don't end up investigated, don't end up in the newspaper.

Susan:

Yes. Yeah. Because, you know, in fairness, most of our stories surround people who made really poor decisions. And to be fair, they often make really great stories, I grant you.

Nick:

Yeah.

Susan:

But I don't think it represents the majority of us in public service.

Nick:

Oh absolutely!

Susan:

Yeah. Okay.

Nick:

All right. So, getting a little silly here. One thing that I am always trying to contribute is a little, uh, zaniness. **laughs** A little humor. Susan, what is your favorite sound effect gag that I've done?

Susan:

I think it was way back in September of 25. That was, that was our first month of doing the podcast,

Nick:

Oh yeah, it was!

Susan:

that we did a story about things that can happen in public school districts. And we were talking about like,

even this one was sort of the “Hey, if you ever are wondering about as a school teacher, can you stay in your classroom and tutor afterwards?”

And we use music lessons as an example. And you use this trumpet **dun dun duun** thing several times that was just hysterical.

Nick:

That worked out so well! I got really lucky. Well, first off, I have to use, like, what do you call it, completely royalty free sound effects, like public domain sound effects. And in one of those libraries, somebody thankfully uploaded these trumpet fanfares that like go off the rails, where the person plays it poorly. So it worked out really well.

Susan:

Yeah, yeah. Okay, so that's mine. I love the trumpet one for the school. What was your favorite?

Nick:

Okay, my favorite one goes back to that Broadway episode.

Susan:

Mmm, yeah!

Nick:

And you're talking about the school administrators that - talk about villains, right? The school administrators who had kind of just stolen Hamilton tickets from underprivileged kids and used the tickets for themselves or whatever.

And the sound effect gag. so I had the idea to use that sort of, uh, Looney Tunes, the opera tragedy sound effect used in memes.

Susan:

Yeah, yeah.

Nick:

So I have to Google that. And up comes Pavarotti singing “Vesti la Guibba.” Right?

Susan:

Mmm, okay.

Nick:

And so I listen to it and I'm like, “Okay, this is it.” But - not only is this it, “WOW, Pavarotti can sing!” I text my wife, “Man, Pavarotti can really sing! What a voice!”

Susan:

laughing I'm gonna text my husband later is saying, “Wow, LeBron James can really play basketball!”

Okay, so here's our next category, Nick. Ready? If somebody, maybe a new listener and they've not listened this past year and they're saying, all right, just to get more interested and more involved, there's one episode I got time to listen to one for the past year. Which one do you pick?

Nick:

Ok, one episode? Get in there, get that 12 NBA tickets of Christmas and Other Illegal Gifts. I love a gift episode,

Susan:

Yeah, yeah.

Nick:

Gifts is a fun topic to talk about because it's easier to kind of put yourself into some of those positions or whatever, but that one has just banger after banger, four stories in it.

All four of them are great. There's the NBA tickets, the casino, the casino food stuff, Kee Campbell with parasailing,

Susan:

Hawaii!

Nick:

Hawaii. But the topper on that episode is that Mary Fox from Pennsylvania interview, where she's talking about that Pennsylvania public servant accepting a trip to England with just the most unbelievable twist ending. I absolutely love it. I'm not even going to spoil it. Go listen to it.

Susan:

Yeah, listen to that one!

Nick:

So, Susan. All right. Desert Island episode. What - for you, Susan, what is it?

Susan:

I hate making decisions because I have two. All right, so I'll just say real quickly here. We did one in February of this year about nepotism that I think is really worth listening to, especially if you're in local government.

And that's not because local governments are bad people. It's because, I get it, everybody knows everybody in some communities, people are related to one another. That would be one. And if you don't mind, the other one, too, and you referenced this one already, Nick. And that was the wedding episode because you referenced the the DJ and the Facebook situation.

But the reason I do like that one, kind of similar to you, that you said that the episode you picked has four different scenarios. That wedding episode has four different ways that people found to engage in conflicts of interest.

Nick:

It's amazing what people will come up with.

Susan:

Very creative ways to to act on our conflict of interest.

I like that one because it gives such a broad spectrum of the kind of mischief people can find themselves and and while all the while justifying it in their brains that, you know, I judge myself by my intentions and I forget the world's going to judge me by my actions.

So I like that one just because it gives a breadth of examples.

Nick:

Yeah. Very good, very good. Yeah. Gotta love a nepotism episode.

Susan:

Yeah. It's still a problem.

Nick:

Exactly.

Susan:

It's still a problem where we've tried really hard to get the word out there. So just - public service announcement folks - don't get involved. If your family members are applying for public jobs, don't get involved.

Nick:

All right. We're coming to the end of the episode, which means it's corny joke time. Susan's favorite part.

Susan claps and laughs

Susan:

This become the favorite part of my job, you guys. Why else would I be allowed to spend a good 90 seconds a month Googling "dad jokes," you know, "Lake Erie" or something, right? And what's really fun is because we end every episode with a clean but really groaner bad dad joke I have people in my life now who collect dad jokes and send them to me.

Nick:

Woaaaaow!

Susan:

I - true story! Yesterday! Yesterday, a friend of, a couple friend that my husband and I hang out with. He yesterday sent me a text saying, "I don't know if you can use this, but: How do you get an astronaut's baby to go to sleep?"

Nick:

Boy, I have no idea.

Susan:

"Rocket!"

Nick:

Jeeeeeeeeez **Susan claps and laughs**

Susan:

There, did you hear that? Nick is a dad and he just groaned. So that's a dad joke.

Nick:

Yeah, come out, you're putting us out of work here. Okay, so what is your favorite end joke?

Susan:

I had a really hard time choosing.

Nick:

I bet. I bet you did.

Susan:

I had a really hard time choosing because it was so funny. I think my favorite one. Because in fairness, it's a great episode altogether. We did a whole episode about cemeteries.

Nick:

laughs Fun!

Susan:

Yay!

Nick:

That was, that was another really fun sound effect when that had the **dunuduu – Toccata and Fugue in D minor**

Susan:

I think he had a couple ghost things in there too.

Nick:

Oh, that was a, I put way too much work into that. There were so many sound effects layered. There's like a bat flying by from left to right in the stereo.

Susan:

And it was also a real, I had a really good time, I interviewed one of our investigative attorneys here from our office, Molly Bruns.

Nick:

Molly!

Susan:

Molly! She's been in a couple of episodes so far, and she had a really fun story about cemeteries and nepotism. To be fair, that was a nepotism episode as well.

But I think I think my favorite bad joke, my dad joke there was, hey, Nick, see if you remember the punchline.

Nick:

Oh, believe me, I do. I've listened to every single one of these episodes 20 times, Susan!

Susan:

Okay, okay. Where do mummies go on vacation?

Nick:

finger on desk drumroll The Dead Sea.

Susan:

Yay! The Dead Sea. So that's my favorite, I had a hard time choosing but that, that was probably the one I'll pick.

Okay. Now you.

Nick:

Okay. I gotta go with the Valentine's episode. Do you remember the Valentine's episode from February?

Again, nepotism, Nepotism is Not a Love Language

Susan:

Reigns supreme

Nick:

And it was just good, clean fun. What does one octopus say to the other on Valentine's Day?

Susan:

chuckling What does he say?

Nick:

Can I hold your hand hand hand hand hand hand hand hand?

Susan:

Oh, I should make you sing that! Does everybody want to hear Nick sing the Beatles?

Nick:

laughs I think we'd get slapped with a lawsuit.

Susan:

Oh. Good point. Good point. We don't want to break one law talking about another law.

Nick:

Yeah.

Susan:

So. All right, so those are our favorite jokes of the past year. Any listeners you got any good dad jokes for us?

Nick:

Send them our way. If you had someone come and offer you a little gift or whatever. Tell us your brave story of how you overcame the temptation to break the law.

Susan:

Yes, we actually have plenty of material, to be fair, but it's so much fun when listeners want to come and actually share with us.

Nick:

Absolutely! More interesting for everybody.

Susan:

It's way more fun to have other people's stories. And again, folks don't feel like we're going to out you in terms of where you work and where you live. And we've done them completely anonymously.

So wrap up the year. Nick, what's what's been like the first time us being involved in a podcast?

Nick:

It's been a lot of fun. Like I said, it has exceeded my expectations. This does give me a lot of stuff to talk about in my live speeches. It gets me more familiar with the law. It prepares me to interact with my fellow public servants and help them understand the law better. Very useful.

Susan:

Right. And the goal all along, as much fun as we have with it, and I hope nobody thinks the goal here has just been to reiterate stories and just have some fun though we definitely have had a lot of fun reiterating these stories, but the goal of all of our training actually is to get people asking questions. That the whole idea is if they hear a story about, you know, "Oh my goodness, how did that happen? That this person, the Chicago Cubs and trying to get free tickets to this and that," you know, all these episodes. The idea is that they might recognize either at that moment and say "Huh, that's something that's, you know, being

discussed right now” or in the future that someone through the normal, you know, part of their day comes across some situation or a question that arises that in the past made it straight through thinking “Ah, that’s no big deal.” And hopefully if someone stops and says, “Wait a minute, I remember that episode they talked about this, maybe I should ask questions before this person accepts the fees that they charge for conducting weddings as mayor. I mean, I heard that episode. Maybe I should, like, ask some questions.”

That’s always our goal is to get people to stop, ask questions. So hopefully we can avoid investigations and instead, be able to offer more of the free legal advice that our office does every day.

Nick:

Yeah, we love the proactive education and advice much more than the investigations.

Susan:

Absolutely. And trust me, you all will too. You’d much prefer getting free advice than getting a free investigation. It’s way more fun, right? Yeah. So. All right, parting words of wisdom?

Nick:

Stay in touch. Don’t be a stranger.

Susan:

Check out our website, look at our show notes all the time and join us again in two weeks for another episode of The Voice of Ethics. Take care. Be ethical

In unison:

Bye.