

# LAWYERS WEEKLY USA

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## LAWYERS OF THE YEAR

### Small-Firm Lawyer Goes National With Crusade Against Automotive Lemons

**VINCENT MEGNA JR.**  
**Waukesha, Wis.**

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It takes a lot of perseverance to tackle the mammoth car manufacturing industry when a consumer's car fails, if the individual is even willing to try. And it takes even more stamina and a bit of creativity to actually win when the automaker decides to play hardball.



But no threat from the likes of Ford, General Motors or Daimler-Chrysler intimidates attorney Vincent Megna Jr., who has built his law practice out of representing the "average Joe" next door with a car defect.

"You really have to push [the manufacturers] to treat people fairly," said Megna, who practices in the nine-lawyer firm, Jastroch & LaBarge, in Waukesha, Wis.

This year, Megna has expanded his crusade even further with the publication of his first book "Bring on Goliath: Lemon Law Justice in America," published by Ken Press. The book uses personal experience and entertaining anecdotes to teach consumers that no matter how big the auto industry may seem, no one should be stuck with a lemon.

"No defect [is] too small," Megna proclaims in his book, reminding consumers - and their attorneys that even the smallest of defects, including defective turn signals, paint jobs and rattling noises should be challenged.

"Trunks shouldn't leak. Mirrors shouldn't vibrate. Doors shouldn't rattle. Heated seats should heat," writes Megna, a graduate of Marquette University Law School.

And the list goes on. "Remote Keyless Entry systems should work. Dashboards should stay in place. Paint should shine. Radios should play. Blinkers should turn off automatically," he says. "And when they don't, we go to court. It's that simple."

The simplicity of Megna's message and his ability to tell it like it is has led him on a countrywide media tour, from Bloomberg TV to CNN to The Washington Post, among many other television and radio venues - much to his surprise.

"It's great. I really didn't expect to get this much press this quickly," said Megna, who has had at least one television station introduce him as the "leading authority on lemon law in the nation."

Megna, 55, who has been focusing on lemon law and car warranty cases since 1994, hopes that his book will increase awareness about lemon law and encourage more attorneys to get involved in lemon law cases.

The problem, he said, is that in some states, the lemon laws don't provide attorney fees, but lawyers often don't realize they can recover big attorney fees awards even in small cases under the old federal Magnuson-Moss Act, 15 U.S.C. §2301, which requires car manufacturers to repair malfunctions or defects to conform to a warranty "within a reasonable amount of time."

In May, Megna proved that this is true when he won a \$100,000 attorney fee award in a breach-of-warranty case that involved only a \$10,000 jury award and a car - which belonged to Megna's father - that was worth \$20,000.

Now, more lawyers need to take this case as a clue and jump on the bandwagon, he stated.

"Consumers have tremendous difficulty bringing cases against these manufacturers, especially without representation," Megna said.

**- Reni Gertner**