

## Government Guru

Anthony Garganese is so good at his job, four cities hired him as their lawyer



Garganese is right at home at city hall.

**The nation's founding fathers likely** never became embroiled in adult-entertainment litigation, but Anthony Garganese—who has—maintains great admiration for them. And that's not just because most of them were lawyers.

"Governance—and how government is set up—is one of my interests," says Garganese. "Reading about how [James] Madison worked on the Constitution, and the ideas that he had for balancing power in the United States, is just truly amazing. Those guys were of incredible intellect; scholars. It's just amazing that they were

all living at the same time."

Garganese grew up in New England, surrounded by the history of the American Revolution. His grandparents, who worked in the textile mills of Woonsocket, R.I., and as common laborers, landed on Ellis Island in the early 1900s, coming from Italy without money or an education. "They worked extremely hard in this country, and there's not a day that goes by that I don't think about that," says Garganese, 46. "I feel whatever positive things I may accomplish in the practice of law, I owe, in large part, to my parents and grandparents."

Given Garganese's passion for the internal workings of government, it comes as no surprise that he focuses on municipal law at Brown, Garganese, Weiss & D'Agresta in Orlando. "Municipal lawyers are the last of the true general practice legal practitioners," he says. But that wasn't enough government involvement for Garganese. Seventeen years ago, he took the job of assistant city attorney for the city of Cocoa. Today, in addition to serving as managing partner of his firm, he is the city attorney for Cape Canaveral, Cocoa, Winter Springs and the town of Orchid.

In 2007, The Florida League of Cities named Garganese City Attorney of the Year, for his public service and efforts to improve the quality of life in his cities.

Garganese takes those responsibilities to heart. "Working through solutions that have immediate impact on local communities," he says, "is very satisfying. You get an opportunity to positively affect a lot of people."

He applies that philosophy to the breadth of issues he deals with, whether mundane or provocative. "From A to Z," he says. "Adult entertainment to zoning and everything in between. On any given day, I could be working on complex constitutional issues involving the First Amendment and equal protection, and [also] working on issues involving a sewer line. It's that eclectic. And that's very, very challenging." As a sign of the times, he recently completed work on an ordinance for Cocoa requiring lenders to register their foreclosure holdings so the city can monitor vacant and foreclosed properties, which often are a nuisance to neighborhoods.

Each community has its own character and set of priorities, says Garganese. Take Cape Canaveral, on the Space Coast. "Maintaining that small hometown feel and preserving the environment and the beaches, and supporting the space industry, is high on the priority list for that city." In contrast, Winter Springs, where Garganese lives, is a bedroom community; its leaders are trying to expand the city's tax base through commercial development.

Garganese doesn't mind having his hands full. "It's truly amazing and inspirational to me," he says, "to know that, every day that I practice as a city attorney, I get to apply and preserve the meaning of the legal principles of self-government that were created and handed down by the founding fathers in the 1700s."

—Adrienne Schofhauser