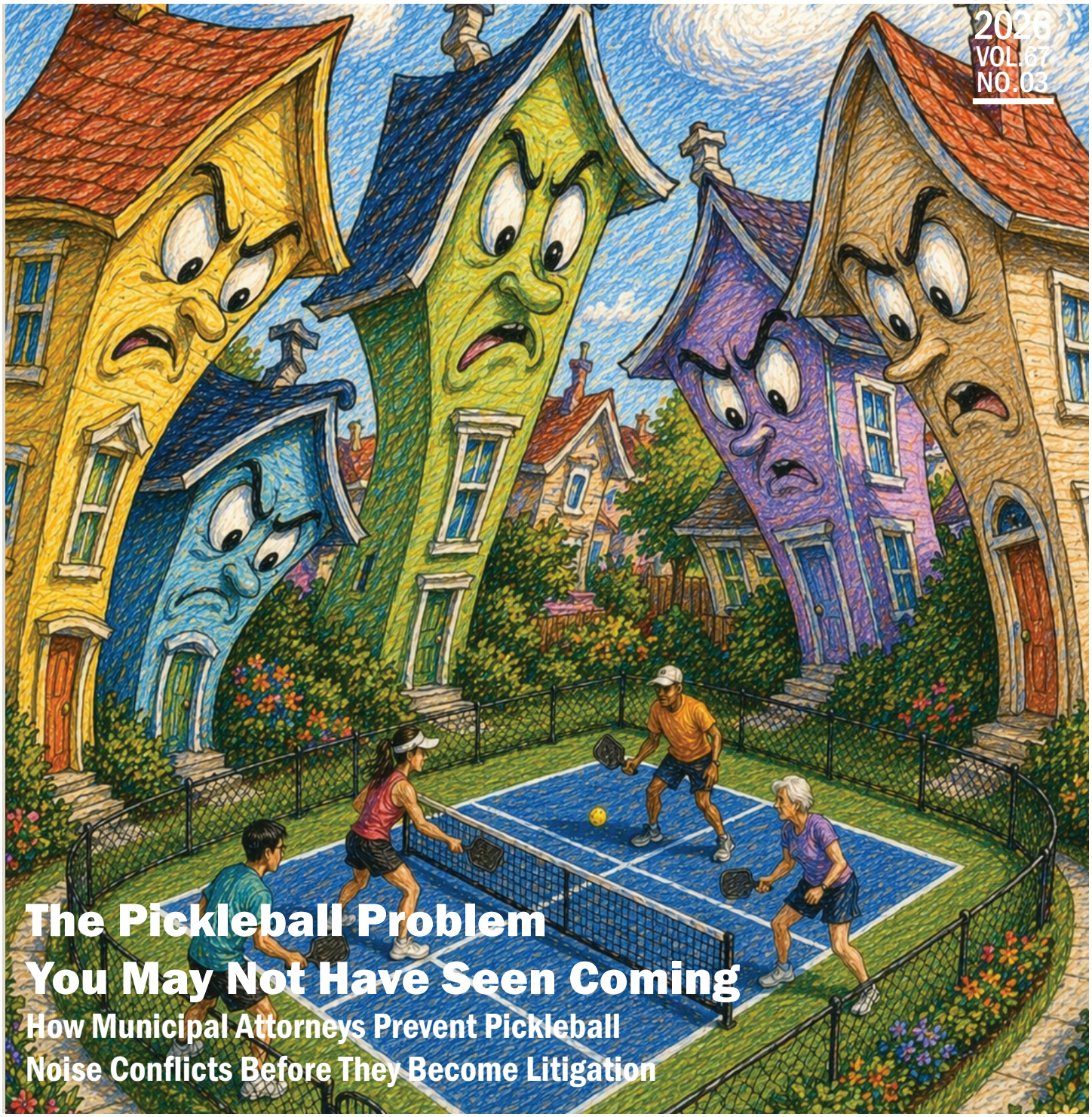
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Municipal Lawyer

THE JOURNAL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT LAW

MAY JUN 2026
VOL.67 NO.03



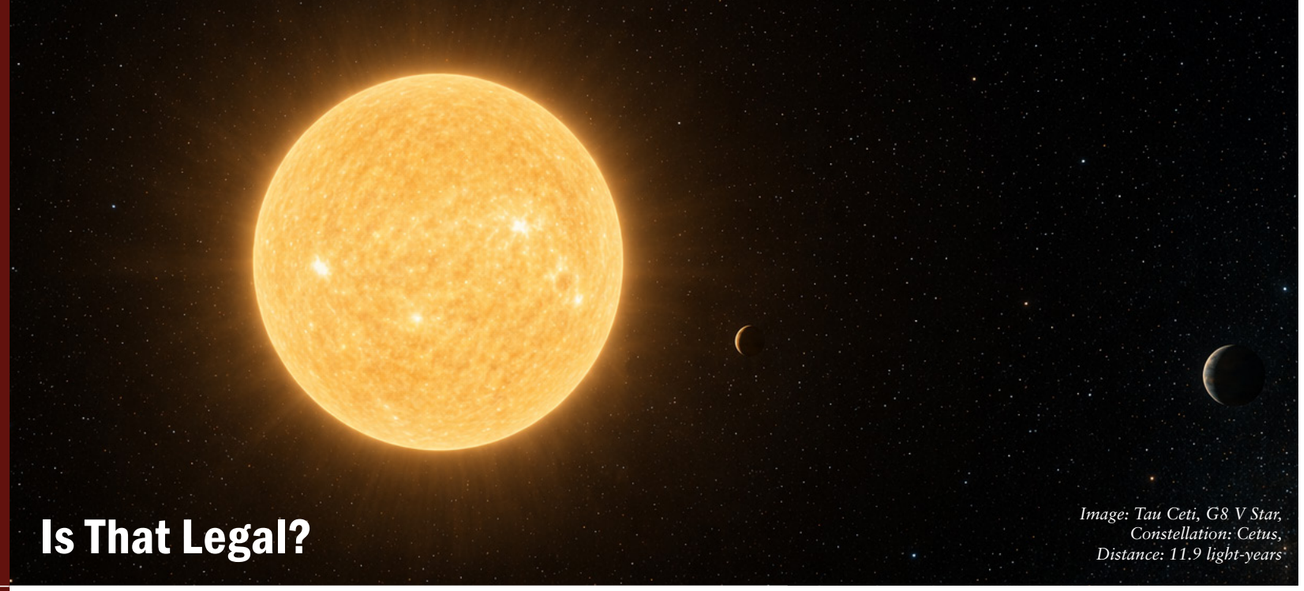
The Pickleball Problem You May Not Have Seen Coming

How Municipal Attorneys Prevent Pickleball Noise Conflicts Before They Become Litigation



MOVIE REVIEW

Contributed by
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Upper Arlington, OH



Is That Legal?

Image: Tau Ceti, G8 V Star, Constellation: Cetus, Distance: 11.9 light-years

Project Hail Mary

Project Hail Mary is based on a 2021 book of the same name by Andy Weir. I enjoyed the book immensely (Weir also wrote *The Martian*), but I considered it impossible to turn into a movie. Unlike *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*, Weir writes hard science fiction that tries to be as scientifically accurate as possible. The scientific processes in the book were fun to read about, but I didn't see how a movie could make them interesting. I guess I should have remembered how good *The Martian* movie was, because *Project Hail Mary* is surprisingly good.

Project Hail Mary shouldn't work as a movie. First, it's basically about a guy stuck alone on a ship working through science problems. Ryland Grace wakes up alone on a spaceship with amnesia, needing to figure out who he is and how to save Earth from astrophage[1] eating the sun. This doesn't seem like a great role for Ryan Gosling, as I just can't see him as a scientist. It turns out that his awkward charm brought a lot to the role, and the prop glasses he wore did just enough work to sell his brainpower. Gosling pleasantly surprised me, but the movie also wastes no time in bringing in its secret weapon – an alien named Rocky. His appearance is less of a surprise in the movie (he's in all the promotional materials), and he is the engine that makes this movie go. While Gosling's performance proved surprisingly effective, Rocky is the film's true accomplishment. I'm still wondering how the filmmakers gave a ball of rock so much personality and emotion.

Even with a cool alien, *Project Hail Mary* is basically about scientific problem-solving. The movie sidesteps a lot of the tedium of experimentation by condensing the process. While the book's story beats are there, the movie strips out much of the scientific explanation and speeds things up. For example, the book spends a lot of time describing how Grace and Rocky learn to communicate with each other. In the movie, it is reduced to 'a computer helps them talk to each other.'

Fans of the book will enjoy the movie. Those who haven't read the book might be somewhat confused by some of the glossed-over science and plot explanations. I recommend reading the book first to truly appreciate how well the movie adapts the original material, but you do not need to have read it to enjoy the movie. If you read the book first, you will already know the biggest plot point of the movie's climax, which is the subject of this review's legal analysis, so if you want to avoid spoilers, stop reading now.

MAJOR MOVIE ALTERING SPOILER AHEAD **THIS IS YOUR FINAL WARNING!**

Grace's memories come back slowly as the movie progresses. *Project Hail Mary*'s major twist is the fact that Grace isn't actually a hero. Flashbacks reveal that after problems arise with the crew, only Grace is fit to take their place on the one-way mission to space (the book does a better job of explaining this). While he's the only one who can save humanity, he chickens out and refuses to go. As a result, the government basically conscripts him, gives him amnesia, and forces him onto the ship against his will. This got me wondering, can they do that?

Under the Fourth Amendment, people have the right to be "secure in their persons…against unreasonable ...seizures."[2] Assuming Grace had access to a legal system, would he have any recourse?

Selective Service System. Could the government use the Selective Service System to draft Grace? Under our current system, males over the age of 18 are required to register with the Selective Service System. In a national emergency, the system will use the registry "to provide personnel to the Department of War and alternative service for conscientious objectors, if authorized by the President and Congress."[3]

Authority for the draft is derived from the Constitution, which grants Congress the power to "declare War," "raise and support Armies," and "provide and maintain a Navy."[4] While the Constitution itself does not use the word 'draft,' the Supreme Court has upheld it, noting "mind cannot conceive of an army without the men to compose it…the objection that [the Constitution] does not give power to provide for such men would seem to be too frivolous for further notice."[5]

The power to raise and support armies is not limited to time of war. Congress has the power to compel military service of a citizen in peacetime or wartime, whenever it declares that it is necessary or that an emergency exists requiring the raising of an army.[6]

So, could this body of law apply to snatching poor Ryland Grace, injecting him with space coma/amnesia juice, and rocketing him into the cosmos to save the world? Space bugs eating the sun would seem to qualify as a national emergency. However, NASA is a "civil space program" and not part of the military.[7] As such, I have doubts that the Constitutional provisions underpinning the right to draft people would apply to a space mission.

But only this guy can save the world! In *Star Trek II, The Wrath of Khan*, Spock said: "Logic clearly dictates that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few." This sounds legit, especially since a Vulcan said it and Vulcans are super logical[9] - but is there precedent in our legal system using that philosophy to force someone to go on a one-way trip to space to save everyone else?

The Supreme Court of Tennessee had a chance to examine this philosophy but decided to take a pass:

"The [appellee] would have us base our interpretation …on the idea that 'the good of the many outweighs the good of the few.'[8] We decline to engage in this sort of delicate philosophical balancing…"[10]

Ok, that's not particularly helpful, so let's look at emergency powers.

Declaration of Emergency

Given the dire situation facing the planet, could a declaration of emergency support sending Grace to space against his will? There are many cases involving emergency powers.[11] While many examples involve some impact on people, the typical use of emergency declarations is to suspend regulations or processes that would "prevent, hinder, or delay the mitigation of the effects of the emergency."[12] The Hawaii Supreme Court held that it would not disturb an emergency proclamation when it is related to the health, safety, and welfare of the public and the action is necessary to address the emergency.[13]

Trying to prevent the planet from freezing over seems to be related to the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Arguably, sending poor Mr. Grace into space was necessary to address that emergency. Even taking into account that many emergency actions seem to be a bit of a stretch, I tend to think selecting a particular person to go on a one-way trip to space, not to mention the drug-induced coma and amnesia, would fall outside the government's emergency authority.

Conclusion: Had Grace been able to get in front of a judge before takeoff, I think there's a decent chance he could have blocked the order sending him to space. This would have resulted in a worse movie (not to mention the end of the world), so I guess the ends justify the means in this case.[14]

Score: A-

Darren Shulman is the city attorney for Upper Arlington, Ohio. A graduate of Northwestern University and Harvard Law School, Darren previously served as the City Attorney for Delaware Ohio, Associate Legal Counsel for the Ohio Department of Administrative Services, and as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney for the Montgomery County Prosecutor's Office. When Darren was the Delaware City Attorney, he co-hosted a movie review show called *Through the Lens* on local radio, which is now a podcast. Writing movie reviews through a legal lens allows Darren to combine his love of movies with his profession.

ENDNOTES

[1] Basically space bugs.

[2] U.S. Const., 4th Amendment.

[3] Selective Service System, http://www.sss.gov

[4] U.S. Const., Art. 1, § 8.

[5] Arver v. U.S., 245 U.S. 366, 377 (1918). This case, which combined six suits challenging the Selective Draft Law of May 18, 1917 is also known under the general caption of "Selective Draft Law Cases."

[6] U.S. v. Richmond, 274 F.Supp. 43 (1967).

[7] National Aeronautics and Space Administration, http://www.nasa.gov/organization/

[8] *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* (Paramount Pictures 1982).

[9] For those reluctant to quote Star Trek, this is also consistent with Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian thesis: "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." Zimmerman v. Norfolk Southern, 706 F.3d 170, 204 (3rd Cir. 2013)

[10] Estate of Bell v. Shelby Count Health Care Corp., 318 S.W.3d 823 (Tenn. 2010).

[11] Examples include COVID-19 declarations (too numerous to cite); tariffs, Learning Res., Inc. v. Trump, 146 S.Ct.628 (2026)); prison overcrowding, Cal. Corr. Peace Officers Ass'n. v. Schwarzenegger, 163 Cal. App.4th 802 (Cal. Ct. App. 3rd Dist. 2008); suspending laws and establishing emergency rules to expedite affording housing project approval and constriction, Nakoa v. Governor, 156 Haw. 416 (Haw, 2025); and gun violence and drug use (Amdor v. Grisham, 578 P.3d 971 (N.M. 2025).

[12] *Schwarzenegger* at 811.

[13] *Id.* at 424.

[14] No one wants to watch a movie where the judge has to explain to an angry mob that, yeah the world is turning into an ice ball, but at least we upheld our legal principles. If you are a movie producer who thinks people *do* want to watch this movie, hit me up and we can work on a script.