

UPCOMING TRAININGS & CONFERENCES

A full list of NDA's virtual learning sessions is available at ndaa.org/training-courses/.

NDA's Mastering Masking Digital Course/ On Demand Training (CLE Available)
ndaa.org/training/mastering-masking-2/

NDA's Human Trafficking and the Impact on Commercial Driver's Licenses/On Demand Training
ndaa.org/training/human-trafficking-and-the-impact-on-commercial-drivers-licenses/

NDA's Prosecuting DUI Cases Online Course/ On Demand Training (CLE Available)
ndaa.org/training/prosecuting-dui-cases/

NDA's Investigation and Prosecution of Drug-Impaired Driving Cases Online Course/On Demand Training (CLE Available)
ndaa.org/training/on-demand-learning-investigation-and-prosecution-of-drug-impaired-driving-cases/

RESOURCES

Impaired Driving Resources
ndaa.org/programs/ntlc/

CDL-Related Resources
ndaa.org/programs/ntlc/commercial-drivers-license/

NDA STAFF

Executive Director Nelson O. Bunn, Jr.
Chief Operating Officer Christine Mica

Vice President, Education & Engagement
 Lorena Vollrath-Bueno

THE NATIONAL TRAFFIC LAW CENTER

Director
 Joanne E. Thomka jthomka@ndaajustice.org

Senior Attorneys
 M. Kimberly Brown mkbrown@ndaajustice.org
 Jim Camp jcamp@ndaajustice.org

Staff Attorneys
 Erin Inman erinman@ndaajustice.org
 Bella Truong btruong@ndaajustice.org

Coordinator, Education & Engagement
 Hannah Dickmyer hdickmyer@ndaajustice.org

The National Traffic Law Center is a division of the National District Attorneys Association. This newsletter is usually prepared under Cooperative Agreement Number 693JJ91950010 from the U.S. Department of Transportation National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, however, no NHTSA funds were used for this edition. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of the Department of Transportation or the National District Attorneys Association.



SPECIAL EDITION | Volume 32, Issue 3.5 | March 2024



NDA Bids a Fond Farewell to NTLC Director Joanne Thomka

As she embarks on this exciting new chapter of her life, it is with both joy and a tinge of sadness that we bid Joanne Thomka farewell. After 15 years with the National District Attorneys Association (NDA) as the Director of the National Traffic Law Center (NTLC), Joanne is retiring; her last day will be March 29. While this marks the end of an era for all of us here at the NDA, it also heralds the beginning of a well-deserved period of relaxation, exploration, and new adventures for Joanne and her husband, Wayde.

Prior to joining NDA, Joanne was a Senior Assistant District Attorney for the Onondaga County District Attorney's Office in Syracuse, New York, where she was the Bureau Chief of the DWI Unit, the Unit responsible for the prosecution of all alcohol-related crimes and vehicular fatalities. While at the Onondaga County DA's Office, Joanne also served as a member of both the Special Victims and Violent Felony Bureaus. Her passion and zeal for justice and victims'

NDAAs Bids a Fond Farewell to NTLC Director Joanne Thomka

rights were obvious from the start. As a prosecutor, she was tireless both in and out of the courtroom in her resolve to champion the rights of vehicular crime victims and to make our highways safer.

With the same tenacity and determination Joanne used to serve and protect the citizens of Syracuse, she delivered at the national level when she joined NDAA in 2006.¹ Her tenure as the Director of the NTLC showcased her deep expertise in traffic safety. She exemplified NTLC's mission "to improve the quality of justice in traffic safety adjudications by increasing the awareness of highway safety issues through the compilation, creation and dissemination of legal and technical information, and by providing training and reference services." Joanne provided instrumental and essential legal resources for vehicular crimes prosecutors and law enforcement officers across the country. During her career, Joanne continued to teach prosecutors, law enforcement, and other traffic safety personnel on issues pertaining to impaired driving, trial advocacy, and other highway safety issues. She spearheaded the planning and publication of numerous monographs and helpful manuals, including



Joanne and Wayde Thomka

on such topics as cannabis-impaired driving, drug toxicology, constitutional law, and issues important to commercial driver's licenses. She additionally expanded the training courses NTLC offered and developed new curricula on topics including drug-impaired driving, human trafficking, and masking.

She personally shared her knowledge with traffic safety professionals in nearly every state. Over the years, she enjoyed close relationships with numerous Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutors and helped train and educate thousands of prosecutors, law enforcement officers, and judges from across the country on a variety of issues connected to highway safety. As an instructor Joanne is famous for her



Joanne and Erin Inman

passion, skill, and practical advice. She is a true leader, motivating all who listen to her. All students became better, more dedicated, and effective practitioners as a result of Joanne's lessons and counsel.

With her vast experience in the traffic safety community, Joanne also participated in and was a member of several traffic safety-related committees, including work with the Transportation Research Board's (TRB) Traffic Law Enforcement Committee, the National Sheriffs' Association's (NSA) Traffic Safety Committee, the Traffic Injury Research Foundation's DWI Working Group, and the National Alliance to Stop Impaired Driving (NASID) to name but a few. Joanne's contributions and dedication to traffic safety were recognized with prestigious awards which include the 2013 J. Stannard Baker Award, presented by the National Sheriff's Association and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in recognition for Outstanding Achievement in Highway



Joanne and Jim Camp

¹ From 2015 to 2018, during her sabbatical from NDAA, Joanne served as a Program Counsel at the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG). NAAG staff works to help attorneys general respond effectively—individually and collectively—to emerging state and federal issues. In her role as Program Counsel, Joanne was the staff liaison to the attorney general community for traffic safety, substance abuse, and elder issues.

NDAAs Bids a Fond Farewell to NTLC Director Joanne Thomka

Safety and a 2016 Public Service Award from NHTSA for protecting communities and enhancing traffic safety through legal information and training to the Nation's criminal justice community.

Beyond her professional achievements, Joanne's true impact lies in her ability to unite people. She made use of her genuine empathy, enthusiasm, and communication skills to effortlessly bring people from diverse backgrounds together, fostering inclusivity and shared purpose. Whether facilitating teamwork between a local law enforcement agency and a prosecutor's office or recruiting national subject matter experts to work together on a project, Joanne's leadership inspired collaboration that will leave a positive and enduring mark on everyone in the traffic safety community. Joanne is passionate about highway safety and this passion is most evident in protecting and representing victims of violent traffic crashes. She inspires countless criminal justice professionals to go the extra mile in treating victims and their families with persistence, compassion, and respect. She makes a difference because she truly believes in the cause and she believes lives can be saved.



Bella Truong and Joanne



Kim Brown and Joanne

Reflecting on her time with NTLC, we are grateful to Joanne for her leadership, guidance, and unwavering dedication. To those of us at the NTLC, she has been more than just a boss; she has been a mentor, a friend, and an inspiration. Her wisdom, integrity, and authenticity impacted each of us. Her belief in our potential empowered us to reach far beyond anything that we would have without her. NDAAs Executive Director Nelson Bunn said, "Joanne's tireless dedication to saving lives on our nation's roadways through her work both at NDAA and in the broader traffic safety community is a hallmark of her career that deserves tremendous gratitude and respect. Her retirement is bittersweet for us at NDAA

and a loss to the traffic safety community that will leave big shoes to fill. We wish her the absolute best, and know that she will always be part of our NDAA family."

As she closes this chapter and opens a new one, we want her to know that her legacy will continue to live on within the NTLC, NDAA, and the greater traffic safety community. Her leadership set a standard of excellence that we will strive to uphold, and her kindness and generosity have left an imprint on our hearts that time cannot fade. While we will miss her daily presence, we take comfort in knowing that retirement will bring her the joy, relaxation, and fulfillment she so richly deserves. Joanne, please accept our heartfelt thanks for everything you have done for us, and know that you will always hold a special place in our hearts. We wish you all the happiness in the world as you embrace retirement with open arms.



(l to r) Jim Camp, Hannah Dickmyer, Joanne, Erin Inman, Bella Truong, and Kim Brown

Jim, Kim, Erin, Bella, and Hannah