



From the President
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Passing the torch

THE LEGACY OF OCTLA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JANET THORNTON

The Summer Olympics kick off this month in beautiful Paris, France. A spectacle of competition, teamwork and national pride captivates the world for three weeks as world-class athletes display their talents to the world and compete for Olympic glory. Years of practice, dedication, sacrifice and commitment come together and culminate, in some instances, in fewer than 10 seconds of competition to determine a world champion. The pressure the athletes endure is unimaginable and the exhilaration of Olympic succession enviable. The Olympic spirit is inspirational and contagious. My personal favorites are track and field and swimming.

Of course, before the games begin the Olympic torch is carried from city to city until it reaches the host city's opening ceremony venue, where it will burn 24 hours a day throughout the duration of the Olympic games. Past Olympic champions, dignitaries, philanthropists and world leaders carry the torch honoring the Olympic tradition of excellence.

Similarly, a monumental moment has quietly transpired at OCTLA as Executive Director Janet Thornton passed the torch to her protégé Jennifer Lopez, who assumed the position of executive director for the Orange County Trial Lawyers Association on July 1, 2024.

Janet served as Executive Director of the Orange County Trial Lawyers Association for 24 years and left a legacy to be admired and revered. She set the bar high. Very high. She left OCTLA in a position light years ahead of where it was when she arrived. Her lasting impact on OCTLA will be felt for generations to come. Her dedication

over multiple decades embodies and exemplifies the spirit of OCTLA.

Her unwavering dedication to OCTLA since 2000 is astonishing. To put into perspective how long she has faithfully led this organization, I reflect on some of the monumental moments and events that have occurred since then. In 2000, I was in the eighth grade. Bill Clinton was president (1993-2001). Kobe Bryant had just won his first NBA championship (June 2000). U2 had just won record of the year and song of the year "Beautiful Day" (2000). Gladiator won best picture (2000). September 11th and the subsequent Iraq war hadn't happened (2001). Disney California Adventure wasn't built (2001). Xbox had not been invented (2001). Wikipedia didn't exist (2001). Apple hadn't invented the iPod (2001) or the iPhone (2007). There was no True Religion (2002) or Tory Burch (2004). Hurricane Katrina hadn't happened (2004). Facebook didn't exist (2004). Nor Twitter (2006). Nor Netflix (2007). The real estate and stock markets hadn't yet crashed (2008). Instagram didn't exist (2010).

Through more than 24 years, Janet never once missed a board of directors meeting or executive committee meeting. But it wasn't just her commitment of time that made such a lasting impact on the organization. It was her vision for this organization that has allowed it to flourish from a fledgling organization to the well-oiled machine it is now. The OCTLA that exists today with its numerous educational and social events – Installation and Awards Ceremony, Top Gun Gala, Golf Tournament, mixers, MCLE events, Palm Springs Seminar – either didn't exist or didn't exist to the

magnitude that they do today, all in large part due to Janet Thornton.

And yet, the time has now come for Janet to pass the torch to her protégé Jennifer Lopez. For many years, Janet searched for a successor, not wanting to leave OCTLA in the lurch as a result of her retirement. Janet was the solution to the organization's problems in 2000. She became irreplaceable. And it wasn't until she hired Jennifer that she believed she had found someone who could lead OCTLA for years to come and succeed her as the next executive director of OCTLA. Jennifer demonstrated the same desire to grow the organization and the same dedication and commitment to OCTLA that Janet had. For the past two years, Jennifer has worked alongside Janet, learning the ins and outs of all aspects of OCTLA, planning events and MCLE seminars, working with members and vendors, and taking on administrative responsibilities. The fact that OCTLA runs so smoothly is because Janet, and now Jennifer too, have been working tirelessly to ensure that every detail is tended to and nothing is overlooked.

With the passing of this torch comes a myriad of emotions of nostalgia, sadness, anxiety and fear. But it also comes with excitement, anticipation, gratitude and wonder for what the future brings to OCTLA.

From all of us at OCTLA, thank you, Janet Thornton, for your unwavering dedication and commitment to this organization. May your next 24 years be filled with much fun, peace, all that you desire and fond memories of a job well done and a journey well traveled with OCTLA. Please do visit us from time to time. You will be missed but never forgotten! 📍