

## Debra L. Thomas

Senior Attorney, Director of CLE & Professional Development  
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### Practice Areas

Civil Rights & Police Misconduct  
Wrongful Death

### Education & Certifications

- M.Ed., Elementary Education, DePaul University
- J.D., Chicago-Kent College of Law
- B.A., University of Michigan

### Jurisdictions Admitted to Practice

Illinois  
Northern District of Illinois

As a third-generation lawyer, Debra L. Thomas knew from a young age that she wanted to carry on the family tradition of practicing law. With a background in the fields of criminal defense and civil litigation, she is now a Senior Attorney and the Director of Continuing Legal Education (CLE) and Professional Development with Romanucci & Blandin.

Debra has played a significant role in securing numerous record-breaking multi-million-dollar verdicts and settlements on behalf of clients who have been harmed as a result of wrongful conduct. She most recently played an integral role as team member involved with the representation on behalf of the family of George Floyd, which resulted in a settlement with the City of Minneapolis for \$27 million. In 2017, she served on the police misconduct trial team that secured a \$44.7 million verdict at trial against the City of Chicago in a case where an off-duty police officer shot his friend in the head leaving him paralyzed. This was the largest verdict in Illinois and one of the largest in the country for a police misconduct case. In 2019, Debra helped secure a \$21.3 million verdict at trial on behalf of the family of a mother of five young children who was killed in a car accident arising from a wrongful police chase. She also played an integral role in obtaining a \$12.35 million settlement at the beginning of trial on behalf of the family of a young mother of three children in a medical malpractice case; the settlement was the largest recorded in Illinois for a misdiagnosis of breast cancer.

In addition to serving as an attorney for more than 15 years handling criminal defense and civil litigation matters, Debra earned a master's degree in elementary education from DePaul University.

Debra's unique background as an educator and significant experience in CLE coordination with the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA) proves invaluable as the firm prepares for trial, and as we continue to develop and grow an in-house CLE program at Romanucci & Blandin.

### Experience

\$4,250,000 Settlement – Police Misconduct

\$4,500,000 Settlement – Trucking Accident

\$742,500 Verdict – Police Shooting

\$1,450,000 Settlement – Motorcycle Accident

\$900,000 Settlement – Title IX, Wrongful Death

\$12,350,000 Settlement – Cancer Misdiagnoses

\$2,250,000 Settlement – Premises Liability

\$1,850,000 Settlement – Motor Vehicle Accident

\$21,300,000 Verdict – Police Chase

\$44,700,000 Verdict – Police Misconduct

## Awards & Recognition

- Chicago-Kent College of Law, Bar & Gavel Society Award, 2002

## Legal Activities & Leadership

- American Association for Justice (AAJ), Member
- Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA)
  - Chair ISBA Solo & Small firm, Conference Planning Committee
- Illinois Trial Lawyers Association (ITLA), Member

## Notable Cases

- *Family of George Floyd v. City of Minneapolis and officers involved in Mr. Floyd's death*, March 2021, civil rights, \$27M settlement
- Confidential, February 2020, medical malpractice, \$12.35M settlement
- *Carreon v. City of Chicago*, April 2019, police chase, \$21.3M verdict
- *LaPorta v. City of Chicago*, October 2017, civil rights, \$44.7M verdict

## In the News

Jury finds Chicago police liable in 2014 killing of man, awards \$742,000  
*Chicago Daily Law Bulletin*, March 29, 2022

Jury awards \$742K to family of dad killed by cops while having mental health crisis  
*Chicago Sun-Times*, March 25, 2022

Indemnizan con más de \$700,000 a hijos de Héctor Hernández, muerto por 13 tiros de policías de Chicago  
*Univision Chicago*, March 25, 2022

Before off-duty police shooting, Chicago officer had long complaint record. Should the city pay?  
*Washington Post*, September 22, 2021

## Blog Posts

Leading and Learning by Furthering Education at Romanucci & Blandin  
*Romanucci & Blandin Blog*, March 9, 2021

## Events

Romanucci & Blandin Presents: Representing Challenging Clients CLE  
321 N. Clark Ave., 24th Floor, Chicago, IL 60654 - 3:30-4:30pm, April 19, 2023

## Speaking Engagements

- Panelist, *Careers in Law*, University of Illinois Chicago College of Law, Chicago, IL, March 2023
- Panelist, *Women in Law*, UIC Women's Law Caucus and the Justinian Society of Lawyers, Chicago, IL, February 2023