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## **Law School News: Olin W. Thompson, III: Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa 05-08-2020**

Roger Williams University School of Law

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May 8, 2020

# ***Law School News***

## **Olin W. Thompson, III: Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa**

"Olin is not only a great advocate; he is a truly wonderful person and colleague — honest, tenacious, kind, generous, funny and always helpful. This honor is so richly deserved."

May 8, 2020



Olin Thompson, Assistant Federal Defender, District of Rhode Island, RWU Law Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa.

On Friday, May 15, 2020,

Olin W. Thompson, III

Assistant Federal Public Defender, District of Rhode Island

will be presented by Roger Williams University School of Law with the degree of *Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa*.

B.A. Vassar College

J.D. Duke University School of Law

Olin Thompson was an Assistant Federal Defender for the District of Rhode Island for 14 years. He took a particular interest in criminal justice reform issues, serving on Governor Raimondo's Working Group on Criminal Justice Reinvestment, helping to institute and later serve on the federal H.O.P.E (Helping Offenders Prepare for re-Entry) Court, and managing numerous federal sentence reduction projects.

Thompson served as a state or federal public defender for the vast majority of his 25-year legal career. He was a longtime member and onetime President of the Rhode Island Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, served on numerous bench-bar committees, enjoyed judging middle- and high-school mock trial competitions, and was chairman of the East Greenwich juvenile hearing board.

Thompson is married with three sons. He was diagnosed with ALS in 2018. During a fundraiser given in his honor last summer, one of Thompson's close friends told the *Providence Journal*, "Even with his diagnosis, he's been squeezing every moment out of life."

At the same event, an assistant attorney general was asked to describe Thompson as an opponent. He did it in one word: "Formidable." But, he added that Thompson always displayed mutual respect for the prosecution and other parties who were "trying to make the right things happen." Another called Thompson "a fiercely loyal friend."

Rhode Island Attorney General Peter Neronha stated, "I count him as a friend," and called Thompson "one of the best adversaries I've ever met and enjoyed the experience."

"Simply put, Olin has contributed more to the cause of justice and fairness than any other member of the bar of the federal court during my 18 years on the bench," said Judge William E. Smith of the United States District Court for the District of Rhode Island. "But he is not only a great advocate; he is a truly wonderful person and colleague — honest, tenacious, kind, generous, funny and always helpful. I am so proud that he is receiving this honor. It is so richly deserved."