



# THOMAS J. OLSON

PARTNER

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## Practice Areas

- Arbitration
- Commercial Lines (Premises Liability)
- Construction Defect Litigation
- Contract Disputes
- Dram Shop Litigation
- Environmental Liability
- Excess Liability Claims
- Mediation
- Personal Lines (Premises Liability)
- Products Liability
- Retail and Restaurant (Premises Liability)
- Toxic Tort Defense
- Transportation Defense
- UM/UIM
- Wrongful Death Defense

Thomas J. "T.J." Olson focuses his practice on personal injury, trucking/commercial transportation litigation, premises liability, and product liability, contractual disputes, coverage disputes, dram shop matters and UM/UIM claims. He also handles cases ranging from large loss property damages to personal injury claims, including wrongful death.

Practicing law since 2002, T.J. has been successful in numerous jury trials in multiple counties and often settles cases for considerably less than his clients have set aside in reserves. T.J. approaches each case with an aggressive, yet professional disposition and places an emphasis on providing his clients with the best and strongest defense, while strategizing to resolve cases at the least expense.

When he is not advocating for his clients, T.J. volunteers his legal services pro bono to the non-profit organization "It's A Pittie Rescue" based out of Peotone, Illinois, which rescues, rehabilitates, and re-homes pit bull breeds. In a recent case, he assisted a pet owner's dog that was involved in an altercation with another dog. T.J. reviewed the Animal Control Ordinance and worked with the owners of both dogs, as well as the Village prosecutors

over the course of months and multiple court appearances to reach an agreement vacating the order of euthanasia, resulting in “Teddy” being released from Animal Control and reuniting with his family. Additionally, he has raised more than \$25,000 for the organization by participating in various events including the Chicago Triathlon, Alcatraz Swim, Savage Race, and the 100-mile Tri State Bicycle Tour.

## **Memberships**

- Chicago Bar Association
- CBA Judicial Evaluation Committee

## **Trial and Case Highlights**

### **Motor Vehicle Cases**

- *Eitel v. Turner*, 2008 L 009954 (Cook County, Illinois) – Plaintiff was only 16 years old when she was catastrophically injured due to a collision with the defendant’s vehicle that was turning left in front of the plaintiff. The plaintiff suffered a severe brain injury, ultimately leading to a stroke and permanent loss of use of her left hand and significant loss of use of her right leg such that she testified at trial in a chair in the center of the room because she could not ascend the small step up to the witness stand. With medical specials in excess of \$500,000 and significant future medical expenses, in addition to the non-economic damages of loss of normal life, permanency, and pain and suffering, there was not enough in the \$1,250,000 policy to cover the loss. T.J. secured several witnesses who testified that the plaintiff ran a red light, which had changed to red several seconds prior to the collision that sent the defendant’s SUV spinning into the air. A letter of protection was issued to the defendant by her insurer, and the case went to trial. The jury returned a full defense verdict.
- *Mitkal v. Tonk*, 2009 L 005271 (Cook County, Illinois) – Plaintiff, Defendant, and two commercial trucks were involved in a collision on a major highway in winter conditions. Plaintiff settled with the two commercial vehicles, leaving only T.J.’s client on the verdict form, in accordance with Illinois’ Joint and Several Liability Law, against whom the jury could assess fault and damages. Plaintiff suffered a fractured hip, which underwent an unsuccessful surgical repair before being replaced entirely, leading to more than \$225,000 in medical bills. T.J.’s witness examinations showed that his client was the only one to not lose control of her vehicle due to weather conditions or prior to being struck by another vehicle. Plaintiff requested \$700,000 to \$800,000 in damages, but the jury returned a defense verdict.

### **Commercial/Trucking Transportation Cases**

- *Owens and Gomez v. Michaelangelo Foods*, 2011 6869 (Cook County, Illinois) – The defendant was operating his box truck when he rear-ended the plaintiffs. The defendant testified that the plaintiff vehicle changed lanes twice to stay in front of him, and then stopped suddenly for no reason. One plaintiff claimed only soft tissue injuries, but the other claimed a torn pectoral muscle which was surgically repaired. Combined, the plaintiffs requested more than \$380,000 from the jury. T.J.'s cross examination of the witnesses and doctors revealed that the torn pectoral muscle was not diagnosed until several months after the accident, and he utilized the plaintiff's vehicle photographs to corroborate his client's testimony that the plaintiff vehicle stopped as opposed to the plaintiffs' testimony that they were moving when struck by the Defendant. The jury returned a defense verdict.
- *Mitchell v. ZWW Trucking, Inc.*, 2017 L 03099 (Cook County, Illinois) – Plaintiff was a passenger in a vehicle that was part of a funeral procession and, in accordance with Illinois law, proceeded through a red light as part of the procession. T.J.'s client was a tractor-trailer that proceeded through a green light and T-boned the plaintiff vehicle, resulting in a fractured orbital bone and lost teeth. Several vehicles in front of the plaintiff passed through the intersection on the red light as T.J.'s client approached, and traffic opposite T.J.'s client remained stopped. T.J. argued that a gap developed in front of the plaintiff vehicle, however, and that the sole proximate cause of the accident was the driver of the plaintiff vehicle. The plaintiff had medical bills of approximately \$40,000 and requested \$240,000 from the jury, who awarded Plaintiff just \$66,000 total.

### **Premises Liability Cases**

- *Glorioso-Tihlarik v. The Crimson Lion, Inc.*, 2007 L 000994 (Cook County, Illinois) – This matter, after discovery was closed, was transferred to T.J. for trial in Cook County, Illinois. Plaintiff slipped and fell in Defendant's pub and claimed permanent injuries as a result. Post-accident photographs showed loose and dislodged tiles in the establishment, providing Plaintiff with proof that the pub itself had defective flooring that caused her fall. T.J.'s defense, centered on cross examination of the plaintiff, led to a verdict that was less than the claimed medical and wage loss specials, and did not include any award for non-economic damages of pain and suffering, disability, or disfigurement (scarring). Plaintiff rose from her chair and left the courtroom after the judge read the verdict, but prior to the judge thanking the jury and dismissing them from the jury box.
- *Goldberg v. The Grill Company*, 2009 L 601 (Lake County, Illinois) – After discovery had been completed and closed, this case was transferred to T.J. for trial – with less than one week prior to the trial date. Plaintiff fell while riding her bicycle in front of Defendant's restaurant while Defendant was using a hose, stretched across the sidewalk, to clean an outdoor dining space. Plaintiff claimed that Defendant moved the hose which caught her tire and caused her to fall from her bike, and she

suffered a clavicle fracture in three places with permanent residual loss of function that would require future medical treatment. The jury returned a defense verdict.

- *Zilka v. Chef's Inn, Ltd.*, 2010 L 000522 (Cook County, Illinois) – Plaintiff fell at Defendant's buffet-style restaurant, suffering a fractured hip that required surgical repair with medical bills in excess of \$100,000. On the day of trial, Plaintiff disclosed two additional fact witnesses who were allowed, over objection, to testify. T.J.'s cross examination of the Plaintiff and the witnesses that were originally disclosed as well as the two new witnesses exposed differing versions of how the accident occurred. The jury returned a defense verdict.
- In a premises liability case, the plaintiff suffered multiple injuries when he was assaulted by other patrons at the defendant's establishment. Plaintiff claimed that Defendant provided inadequate security, failed to intervene when the perpetrators were threatening him, and then grabbed and held Plaintiff, preventing him from protecting himself, when he was being assaulted. T.J.'s cross examination of Plaintiff and his friends exposed them as having different versions of the events, and Plaintiff admitted that he was intoxicated as well as an instigator of the altercation. The jury returned a defense verdict.

### **Large Loss Property Damage**

- *Higgins Bros., Inc. and Illinois Emcasco Ins. v. Associated Services, Inc.*, 2012 L 12341 (Cook County) – Plaintiff's warehouse and its contents were destroyed by a fire that was ignited by Defendant's welding activities, and losses claimed were more than \$1,000,000 and in excess of the Defendant's policy limits. The welding was performed in a paint spray booth, and the dried paint overspray that had accumulated there, ignited after welding arcs smoldered within for nearly 12 hours. T.J.'s cross examination of Plaintiff's expert elicited agreement that the fire started within the paint spray booth, and the jury agreed that Plaintiff was more responsible for the fire due to its failure to clean its booth. The jury returned a defense verdict.

### **Admissions**

- Illinois
- Indiana
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois

### **Education**

- DePaul University College of Law, J.D.
- University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, B.S.