

About

Leslie T. Thornton, J.D. & LL.M National Security Law



Leslie T. Thornton has been a Washington, D.C.-based attorney for over 30 years. After growing up in Philadelphia with a twin sister and two older brothers, she began her legal career as a D.C. Public Defender. There, she tried armed rape, murder, and conspiracy cases, among others. Later, Thornton spent eight years as a senior executive in the Clinton Administration. Among other things, Thornton was her agency's representative for the Continuity of Operations of Government plan. Holding a top-secret clearance, Thornton received classified national security briefings at "undisclosed locations," and that is all she can say about that! Thornton worked closely with President Clinton on education and political matters as chief of staff to the education secretary, and was Deputy Advisor for the 1996 Presidential Debates.

Thornton's has received numerous legal awards over her career, but she is perhaps proudest of her recognition from the U.S. Secret Service for work in creating a permanent partnership between the USSS and the U.S. Department of Education on threat assessment for U.S. schools. Thornton has been a law partner in two top D.C. law firms, and general counsel for a multi-billion-dollar energy company in charge of nation state actor cyber security for critical infrastructure in Washington, D.C., among other responsibilities. The seriousness of this responsibility led her to return to Georgetown Law for her LL.M in National Security Law.

In addition to her legal career, Thornton has served as the only Black woman on the corporate boards of two multi-billion-dollar public companies. Over the years, her opinion pieces have appeared in such publications as *The Wall Street Journal*, *National Journal/Legal Times*, *The American Lawyer*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Times*, and *The Daily Oklahoman*, among others. When she was just 15 years old, Thornton's uncle—an original Tuskegee Airman—taught her how to fly. Or tried to. She had a little trouble with her s-turns. In 1995, Thornton took personal leave for her Administration position and was a volunteer with Miami Dade Search & Rescue at the Oklahoma City Bomb Site. The experience changed her life.

In the early 2000s, Thornton threw a letter-high strike as the opening pitch at a Nationals game—from the mound. Two years ago, Ms. Thornton participated in a sting with the U.S. Secret Service. And that's all she can say about that!

Ms. Thornton is a long-time and always will be a service volunteer and she has provided financial support to many important causes. She is especially grateful to have been a major donor for the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. a gift she made in honor of her parents. She has been a volunteer cook for The Welcome Table, a free full hot breakfast service for D.C.'s un-housed population every third and fifth Sunday for more than twenty years. At the start of the pandemic, Thornton began food distribution work with ALIVE! in Alexandria, VA where she also continues to volunteer.