

INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF TRIAL LAWYERS



STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF TRIAL LAWYERS

WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS

The International Academy of Trial Lawyers (IATL) expresses its concern at the incidence of wrongful convictions in the United States.

Apart altogether from the irreparable damage done to the person wrongfully convicted and the victims of the crime for which the true perpetrators have not been brought to justice, the damage done to public confidence in the criminal justice system and its participants (the judiciary, the police and the prosecuting authorities), is immense.

The problem is greatly exacerbated by the incarceration of those not yet convicted. It is also exacerbated by long periods on remand while awaiting trial, by inadequate defence by Counsel at trial, by delays in the hearing of appeals in criminal cases, and by delays (sometimes lasting decades) in the vindication of those wrongfully convicted. Black Americans are disproportionately affected. Many may never be vindicated or may have died in prison or been wrongly executed.

The Academy recognises the great work being done by organizations such as the Innocence Project and the attorneys involved in giving their time and services *pro bono*. Many of these attorneys are Fellows of this Academy. But the problem needs to be tackled at its root and the Academy calls for more recognition to be paid to this issue by lawyers, law schools and government; for those who design our systems of criminal justice and administer it not to behave as if the system is infallible; and for more work to be done to ensure that the risks and consequences of wrongful convictions for individuals and their families are minimised.

The International Academy of Trial Lawyers is an invitation only group of the best trial lawyers in the world dedicated to civility in the practice of law and upholding and promoting the Rule of Law.

Paul Sreenan
IATL President