

**Jo-Ann Wallace, Esq.**  
**CEO and President**  
**NLADA Mutual Insurance Co., A Risk Retention Group**

Ms. Wallace is a lifelong equal justice advocate and an advocate for justice and equity within the insurance industry. She firmly believes that business can be a force for good and must play a key role to achieve true equity in America.

Ms. Wallace is the immediate past President and CEO of the National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLADA), where she spent more than 20 years in leadership roles working with the national equal justice community to raise awareness of the public defense and civil legal aid crisis, increase resources for underfunded systems and expand access to quality legal assistance for people facing life-altering circumstances. From 1994 -2000 she served as the Director of the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia (PDS), having previously held positions with the agency as a Staff Attorney and Deputy Director of the Appellate Division. During her tenure as Director, PDS's budget and staff more than doubled as the agency challenged the efficacy of separating criminal and civil legal aid and expanded its holistic approach to client representation.

Ms. Wallace's people-centered style guides her ability to foster consensus and utilize cross-sector, collaborative approaches to challenge a status quo in which the quality of justice too often is determined by financial resources. Carrying her vision of integrated justice systems to NLADA, Ms. Wallace and the NLADA team advanced successive initiatives bringing together government, nonprofit, and private sector entities to position chief defenders as co-leaders of the administration of justice, elevate access to counsel as an essential part of effective human services systems, expand leadership roles for client and community advocates, and rally hundreds of major corporations to support legal assistance for people who can't afford counsel. These efforts helped to generate hundreds of millions of dollars in additional funding for legal assistance and change delivery systems while creating new collaborative models for reform.

Ms. Wallace attributes her passion for justice in part to the obstacles and injustices she and her family members experienced as they integrated formerly white institutions and communities. She honors the women who have supported her leadership journey by paying it forward. Throughout her four decades of service, she has mentored and encouraged women and people of color to see themselves as leaders and pursue leadership roles and guided the creation of initiatives such as the Black Public Defender Association, National Defender Leadership Institute, and the Equal Justice Leadership Institute to develop the next generation of social justice leaders.

She has received many honors for her advocacy including recognition from the Obama Administration as a White House "Champion of Change for Innovative Equal Justice Leadership" and the Women's Bar Association of the District of Columbia's 2023 WBA Woman Lawyer of the Year.