

'A stunning win for the defense': Experts react to Karen Read verdict

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The not-guilty verdicts in the retrial of [Karen Read](#) on Wednesday can be described as nothing short of a massive victory for Read and her defense team, legal experts say.

Read was acquitted of the three most serious charges she faced: second-degree murder, manslaughter while operating under the influence and leaving the scene of an accident causing injury or death. The seven women and five men picked as deliberating jurors convicted Read only of operating under the influence, a misdemeanor for which she will serve one year of probation.

Jack Lu, a retired Superior Court judge who followed the trial, said the verdict was a "rejection of the quality of the investigation of homicide cases by the Massachusetts State Police."

"It's a stunning win for the defense," he said.

Dan Conley, a former Suffolk County district attorney and now a partner at Mintz, echoed Lu.

It's "very clear that today was a very clear and decisive victory for the defense," he said Wednesday evening.

While it's impossible to know what was going through jurors' minds, Conley speculated that prosecutors simply failed to meet the high burden of proving their case beyond a reasonable doubt.

He said the prosecution had a "tough case," noting the lack of eyewitnesses. Conley praised the performance of Hank Brennan, the special prosecutor hired by the Norfolk district attorney's office for the retrial, and Read's defense team.

"Both sides tried it well," he said.

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George Price, a partner at Casner and Edwards, who worked as a special prosecutor for the Middlesex district attorney's office, said the verdict returned by the jury was the right one based on the evidence.

"It was the prosecution's job to explain to the jury what caused John's ... death, and they failed miserably," he said.

Payal Salsburg, a partner at the firm Laredo & Smith, called the retrial "the most expensive, longest battled jury trial on an OUI case."

Indeed, Brennan, the special prosecutor, earned more than \$220,000 to prosecute Read as of Jan. 25, 2025, alone, according to the most recent bills provided by the district attorney's office in response to a MassLive public records request. Significant funds were devoted to security, as well, with Massachusetts State Police troopers and Dedham Police officers patrolling the streets surrounding the Dedham courthouse.

Read sank millions into her defense, and faces an ongoing legal fight in a civil wrongful death suit filed by the O'Keefe family. Still, she is free from the looming specter of a potential life sentence.

"I'm still in a dream," she told reporters from the SUV whisking her away from the courthouse on Wednesday.