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## Disciplinary Actions

The following orders have been edited. Administrative language has been removed to make the opinions more readable.

Respondent's Name	Address of Record (City/County)	Action	Effective Date	Page
<u>Circuit Court</u>				
Oliver Stuart Chalifoux	Glen Allen	5 Year Suspension	December 19, 2004	n/a
Eli S. Chovitz	Norfolk	Revocation	November 9, 2004	n/a
Barry L. Flora	Roanoke	Public Reprimand w/Terms	October 12, 2004	22
Kenneth R. Weiner	Fairfax	Public Reprimand	October 6, 2004	23
<u>Disciplinary Board</u>				
Curtis Tyrone Brown*	Norfolk	One Year Suspension	November 22, 2004	24
William Harold Butterfield	Washington, DC	30 Day Suspension	October 22, 2004	28
Charles Everett Malone	Norfolk	2 Year Suspension, w/Terms	December 10, 2004	29
Denise Ann Maniscalco	Washington, DC	3 Year Suspension	October 19, 2004	n/a
Richard Charles Scalise	Reston	Revocation	November 29, 2004	n/a
John R. Willett	Alexandria	Revocation	November 22, 2004	32
<u>District Committees</u>				
Jon Ian Davey	Danville	Public Reprimand w/Terms	November 15, 2004	36
Wilber Thurston Harville	Virginia Beach	Public Reprimand	October 29, 2004	37
Lawrence Raymond Morton	Dumfries	Public Reprimand	November 4, 2004	39

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## Other Actions

Respondent's Name	Address of Record	Jurisdiction	Effective Date	Page
<u>Disability Suspensions</u>				
Steven Edgar Bennett	Williamsburg	Disciplinary Board	November 19, 2004	n/a
David Michael Shapiro	Richmond	Disciplinary Board	October 22, 2004	n/a
<u>Cost Suspensions</u>				
Mac Andres Chambers	Roanoke	Disciplinary Board	November 3, 2004	n/a
Mac Andres Chambers	Roanoke	Disciplinary Board	November 2, 2004	n/a
Robert Spencer Lewis	Martinsville	Disciplinary Board	October 20, 2004	n/a
Steven Jeffrey Riggs	Santa Ana, CA	Disciplinary Board	October 21, 2004	n/a
Linda Wiser Sadler	Richmond	Disciplinary Board	December 7, 2004	n/a
<u>Interim Suspensions</u>				
Gary Blane Vanover	Clintwood	Failure to Comply w/Subpoena	November 16, 2004	n/a

\*Respondent has noted an appeal to the Supreme Court of Virginia.

**Circuit Court**

VIRGINIA:

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT  
FOR THE CITY OF ROANOKE

VIRGINIA STATE BAR, ex rel.  
EIGHTH DISTRICT COMMITTEE,  
v.

**BARRY L. FLORA, ESQUIRE**

Respondent

In Chancery No. 04-615

[VSB Docket No. 02-080-0636]

**ORDER**

This matter came before the Three-Judge Court empaneled on September 24, 2004, by designation of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia, pursuant to § 54.1-3935 of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended. A fully endorsed Agreed Disposition, dated the 7th day of October, 2004, was tendered by the parties, and was considered by the Three-Judge Court, consisting of the Honorable Barnard F. Jennings and Honorable William C. Fugate, retired Judges of the Nineteenth and Thirtieth Judicial Circuits, respectively, and by the Honorable Lydia C. Taylor, Judge of the Fourth Judicial Circuit and Chief Judge of the Three-Judge Court.

Having considered the Agreed Disposition, it is the decision of the Three-Judge Court that the Agreed Disposition be accepted, and said Court finds by clear and convincing evidence as follows:

1. At all times relevant hereto, Barry L. Flora, Esquire (hereafter "Respondent"), has been an attorney licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
2. During or about August of 1998 to August of 1999, the Complainant, Kimberly Michelle Boyer, worked for Respondent at his law practice. In August of 2001, when she filed her complaint with the Virginia State Bar, Ms. Boyer was a third-year law student at the University of Mississippi.
3. While employed at the office of the Respondent, Ms. Bayer's duties included the preparation of HUD-1 real estate settlement statements for which the Respondent calculated in advance the amount of the title insurance premium. Following a loan closing, the original title insurance premium calculated by the Respondent was sometimes in excess of the actual realized premium. If this matter were tried, the Respondent would testify that the reasons for such difference varied, but often the loan amount changed at closing or the insurer offered a re-issue rate. The corresponding title insurance company for each particular settlement with an overage would then send a check payable to the Respondent for the amount of the overpayment. Between September 16, 1998 and February 22, 2001, Virginia Title Center, LLC (hereafter "Virginia Title"), forwarded checks in the aggregate amount of \$4,657.69 to be refunded to seventy-six (76) of the Respondent's clients.
4. The refunds, ranging in amounts from \$20.00 to \$248.75, were not forwarded upon receipt by the Respondent to the clients involved. The last check issued by Virginia Title was dated February 22, 2001. The Respondent returned the monies to the seventy-six clients referenced on or about September 20, 2002.

5. Neither the checks nor any funds realized from negotiation of the checks from Virginia Title were deposited in the Respondent's trust account. The checks remained non-negotiated in the Respondent's office.
6. The complaint in this case was filed in August of 2001. The Virginia State Bar forwarded the complaint to the Respondent on September 19, 2001, requesting a written response within twenty-one (21) days. At some time believed to be shortly following the Bar's request for a response, William B. Hopkins, Jr., Esquire, filed a praecipe informing the Bar that he would be representing the Respondent. The Respondent filed a response on October 1, 2002.
7. In reaching its decision as to sanctions, the Court considered applicable aggravating and mitigating factors from the American Bar Association's Standards For Professional Discipline, as well as factors presented by the Virginia State Bar.

THE THREE-JUDGE COURT finds by clear and convincing evidence that such conduct on the part of the Respondent, Barry L. Flora, Esquire, constitutes a violation of the following Disciplinary Rules of the Virginia Code of Professional Responsibility and the Rules of Professional Conduct:

DR 6-101. Competence and Promptness

(B) \*\*\*

DR 9-102. Preserving Identity of Funds and Property of a Client.

(A) (1), (2) \*\*\*

(B) (1), (2), (3) (4) \*\*\*

RULE 1.3 Diligence

(a), (b) \*\*\*

RULE 1.15 Safekeeping Property

(a) (1), (2) \*\*\*

(c) (1), (2), (3), (4) \*\*\*

UPON CONSIDERATION WHEREOF, the Three-Judge Court hereby ORDERS that the Respondent shall receive a **PUBLIC REPRIMAND WITH TERMS**, subject to the imposition of the sanctions referred to below as alternative dispositions of this matter should Respondent fail to comply with the Terms referred to herein. The Terms which shall be met in accordance with the deadlines set forth below are:

1. Respondent shall accrue at least twelve (12) continuing legal education credit hours by enrolling in and attending Virginia State Bar approved Continuing Legal Education program(s) in either real estate and/or ethics prior to February 1, 2005; Respondent's Continuing Legal Education attendance obligation set forth in this paragraph shall *not* be applied toward Respondent's Mandatory Continuing Legal Education requirement in Virginia and any other jurisdictions in which he may be licensed to practice law. Respondent shall certify his compliance with the terms set forth in this paragraph by delivering a fully and properly

## disciplinary actions

executed Virginia MCLE Board Certification of Attendance Form (Form 2) to Marian L. Beckett, Assistant Bar Counsel, at 100 North Pitt Street, Suite 310, Alexandria, Virginia 22314, promptly following his attendance of such CLE program(s).

2. Respondent shall be placed on a period of probation for a term of one (1) year, with the said period of probation to begin on the date of entry of an Order including such provision.
3. Respondent shall engage in no professional misconduct as defined by the Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct during the probationary period.
4. Upon satisfactory proof furnished by Respondent to the Virginia State Bar that the above terms have been complied with, in full, a **PUBLIC REPRIMAND WITH TERMS** shall then be imposed. If, however, Respondent fails to comply with any of the terms set forth herein, as and when his obligation with respect to any such term has accrued, the provisions of paragraphs (5) through (8) below shall become effective.
5. Should Respondent fail to accrue at least twelve (12) continuing legal education credit hours by enrolling in and attending Virginia State Bar approved Continuing Legal Education program(s) in either real estate and or ethics prior to February 1, 2005 and provide proof thereof as set forth in paragraph 1, *supra*, this matter shall be certified to the Disciplinary Board for a determination of sanction(s).
6. Any final determination of misconduct determined by any District Committee of the Virginia State Bar, the Disciplinary Board, or a three-judge court to have occurred during the one (1) year probationary period will be deemed a violation of the terms and conditions of this Agreed Disposition and will result in the imposition of an alternative disposition/sanction of a one (1) year and eleven (11) months suspension of Respondent's license to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The alternative disposition of suspension shall not be imposed during any appeal period in which the Respondent is appealing any adverse decision which might result in a probation violation.
7. The imposition of the alternative disposition for misconduct during the period of probation will not require a hearing before a three-judge court or the Disciplinary Board on the underlying charges of misconduct stipulated herein if the Virginia State Bar discovers that the Respondent has violated any of the foregoing terms and conditions. Instead, the Virginia State Bar shall issue and serve upon the Respondent a Notice of Hearing to Show Cause why the alternative disposition of suspension should not be imposed.
8. The imposition of the alternative disposition of suspension shall be in addition to any other sanction(s) imposed for misconduct during the probationary period.

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ENTERED this 12th day of October, 2004  
FOR THE THREE-JUDGE COURT:

LYDIA C. TAYLOR  
Chief Judge of Three-Judge Court

BARNARD F. JENNINGS  
Judge

WILLIAM C. FUGATE  
Judge



VIRGINIA :  
BEFORE THE THREE-JUDGE COURT PRESIDING  
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR FAIRFAX COUNTY

VIRGINIA STATE BAR, ex rel.  
FIFTH DISTRICT COMMITTEE SECTION I,  
Complainant/Petitioner,  
v.  
KENNETH R. WEINER, ESQUIRE  
Respondent  
Case No. 22681

### ORDER

This matter came before the Three-Judge Court empaneled by designation of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia, pursuant to § 54.1-3935 of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended. An endorsed Agreed Disposition, dated the 16th day of September, 2004, was tendered by the parties, and was considered by the Three-Judge Court, consisting of the Honorable James E. Kulp and H. Selwyn Smith, retired Judges of the Fourteenth and Thirty-First Judicial Circuits, respectively, and by the Honorable Ann Hunter Simpson, Judge of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit and Chief Judge of the Three-Judge Court.

Having considered the Agreed Disposition, it is the decision of the Three-Judge Court that the Agreed Disposition be accepted, and said Court finds by clear and convincing evidence as follows:

1. At all times relevant hereto, Kenneth R. Weiner, Esquire (hereinafter the Respondent), has been an attorney licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
2. Sometime prior to May 22, 2000, Mr. Weiner met with a client who explained that she ("WIFE") and her husband ("HUSBAND") were contemplating divorce. She stated that she and her husband were agreed as to the distribution of their property. Mr. Weiner agreed to prepare a property settlement agreement (the "PSA") reflecting the distribution as stated by the wife, and told WIFE to furnish him with a list of property and directions for its distribution.
3. WIFE agreed to pay Mr. Weiner's entire fee, but Mr. Weiner told her she should not have to pay the entire fee; rather, it should be divided equally between her and her husband. Accordingly, Mr. Weiner gave WIFE a Retainer Agreement reciting that each would pay one thousand two hundred fifty dollars (\$1,250.00) towards his fee for preparing the PSA and for preparing a Will for each. The Retainer Agreement also identified WIFE and HUSBAND as Clients.

4. WIFE took the Retainer Agreement, presented it to HUSBAND, and each signed the Retainer Agreement on May 22, 2000. WIFE then returned the Retainer Agreement, along with a handwritten list for the distribution of property, to Mr. Weiner. Mr. Weiner countersigned the Retainer Agreement on May 23, 2000 and assigned the task of drafting the PSA to an associate attorney in his office. The associate attorney prepared the PSA, telephoned WIFE that it was ready, and WIFE came to the office to pick up the PSA.
5. WIFE and HUSBAND reviewed the PSA together and on June 6, 2000, drove to a local bank, where they signed the PSA before a Notary Public.
6. Mr. Weiner offered no advice to either WIFE or HUSBAND regarding the terms of the PSA. Mr. Weiner did not discuss with, or advise, HUSBAND of any potential conflict of interest that might exist by virtue of Mr. Weiner preparing the PSA.
7. Mr. Weiner also had one of his associates prepare wills for HUSBAND and WIFE which they signed at Mr. Weiner's office on June 16, 2000.
8. On August 8, 2000, HUSBAND, by counsel, filed a motion in the Circuit Court of Fairfax County, to have the property settlement agreement set aside. Following a hearing, the Court ruled that the Property Settlement Agreement was unconscionable and unenforceable.

THE THREE-JUDGE COURT finds by clear and convincing evidence that such conduct on the part of the Respondent, Kenneth R. Weiner, Esquire, constitutes a violation of the following Rule of Professional Conduct:

RULE 1.7 Conflict of Interest: General Rule

- (a) (1), (2) \*\*\*
- (b) (1), (2) \*\*\*

UPON CONSIDERATION WHEREOF, the Three-Judge Court hereby ORDERS that the Respondent shall receive a PUBLIC REPRIMAND.

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ENTERED this 6th day of October, 2004  
FOR THE THREE-JUDGE COURT:  
ANN HUNTER SIMPSON  
Chief Judge of Three-Judge Court



**Disciplinary Board**

VIRGINIA:  
BEFORE THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR  
DISCIPLINARY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF  
CURTIS TYRONE BROWN, ESQUIRE  
VSB DOCKET NO. 00-010-2346

**ORDER OF SUSPENSION**

THIS MATTER was certified to the Virginia State Bar Disciplinary Board by a Subcommittee of the First District Committee on September 30, 2003, and was heard on October 22, 2004, by a duly convened panel of the Disciplinary Board consisting of Karen A. Gould, Chair, James L. Banks, Jr., Robert E. Eicher, Dr. Theodore Smith, Lay Member, and William H. Monroe, Jr. The Respondent, Curtis Tyrone Brown and his counsel, Henry L. Marsh, III made a special appearance for purposes of challenging the jurisdiction of the Disciplinary Board to hear this matter and to reassert Respondent's previous request to have this matter heard before a three-judge panel pursuant to Virginia Code § 54.1-3935. Edward L. Davis, Assistant Bar Counsel, appeared as counsel for the Virginia State Bar (hereafter "VSB").

All required notices were properly sent by the Clerk of the Disciplinary System.

The Chair polled the panel members to determine whether any member had a personal or financial interest in this matter that might affect or reasonably be perceived to affect his or her ability to be impartial in this proceeding. Each member, including the Chair, responded in the negative.

**Jurisdiction of the Disciplinary Board**

Counsel for Respondent challenged the jurisdiction of the Disciplinary Board to hear this matter. In his argument, Respondent's counsel asserted the following:

1. That on September 30, 2003, a certification letter was mailed to the Respondent from John W. Jelich, III, Subcommittee Chair of the First District Committee wherein Respondent was advised of the Subcommittee Determination (Certification) of VSB No. 00-010-2346. In the certification letter Respondent was informed that "Pursuant to Section Six, Part IV, Paragraph 13.I.1.a of the Rules of the Virginia Supreme Court, you have 21 days from the date of certification of service on the enclosed Subcommittee Determination to either 1) file an answer or 2) demand that further proceedings be conducted before a three-judge panel in accordance with Virginia Code Section 54.1-3935. Your failure to file an answer or demand within 21 days will be deemed to be consent to the jurisdiction of the Disciplinary Board."
2. That on October 21, 2003, exactly 21 days after the certification of service on September 30, 2003, the Respondent demanded, by certified mail, a three-judge panel.
3. That the demand for a three-judge panel was timely made and therefore the Disciplinary Board lacked jurisdiction to hear the matter.

For its response, the VSB agreed that the demand for a three-judge panel was mailed via certified mail by the Respondent and postmarked on October 21, 2003. However, the demand for a three-judge panel was not received by the VSB until October 23, 2003. Accordingly, the request for a three-judge panel was not deemed filed until after the expiration of the twenty-one day period. Respondent argued that Part One of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, including

Rule 1:7, allow for the addition of three days to the time prescribed to take certain action when a document is served by mail.

The VSB argued that that the rules of service under Part One of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, including Rule 1:7, are inapplicable here. Part Six of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia provide that a matter is filed when received by the Clerk of the Disciplinary System, not when postmarked. Furthermore, the Board cannot waive the twenty-one day filing requirement and surrender jurisdiction to a three-judge panel because the Rules do not allow the Board to waive jurisdiction. The VSB maintains that in the absence of a timely filed answer or demand to the certification letter from the First District Subcommittee, the Respondent is deemed to have consented to the jurisdiction of the Disciplinary Board pursuant to Section Six, Part IV, Paragraph 13.I.1.a of the Rules of the Virginia Supreme Court. The VSB also cites as controlling authority the case of *Fails v. Virginia State Bar*, 265 Va. 3, 574 S.E.2d 530 (2003).

Having heard the argument of counsel and having considered the history of this matter, including the telephone conference of August 6, 2004 (a transcript of which was received into evidence and marked as VSB Exhibit 2), the Board found that no new argument had been presented that had not already been considered by the Board in the telephone conference of August 6, 2004. For this reason, the Board chose not to reconsider the Order previously entered by the past Disciplinary Board Chairman, Roscoe B. Stephenson, III, on August 30, 2004. Accordingly, Respondent's Motion to Challenge Jurisdiction of the Virginia State Bar Disciplinary Board was overruled.

#### Respondent's Motion for a Continuance

Respondent's counsel next moved to continue this matter. In support of his Motion for a Continuance, Respondent's counsel argued that he had not been consulted regarding the setting of the pre-hearing conference date of October 12, 2004, or the hearing date of October 22, 2004. Respondent's counsel further argued that the VSB would not reasonably consider the alternative dates provided by him in November and December, 2004. As additional grounds for the continuance, Respondent's counsel asserted that the Respondent had a matter which was being considered before the Supreme Court of the United States and the resolution of that matter may have a direct impact upon this disciplinary hearing.

For the VSB's response, it was noted that Respondent and Respondent's counsel each received notice of the pre-hearing conference date of October 12, 2004 via correspondence from the VSB dated September 21, 2004. Receipt of this notice by Respondent and Respondent's counsel was not disputed. Respondent and Respondent's counsel were also provided with a copy of the Order of August 16, 2004 from the Board setting this matter for hearing on October 22, 2004. Although the initial Order was evidently not received by Respondent's counsel upon its first mailing, another copy of the Order setting this matter for hearing was received by Respondent's counsel via correspondence from the VSB dated August 31, 2004. Respondent's receipt of the Order setting this matter for hearing on October 22, 2004 was also not disputed. The VSB argued that the alternative dates supplied by Respondent's counsel for purposes of setting the pre-hearing conference were unacceptable inasmuch as each of these dates would occur after the established hearing date of October 22, 2004.

The VSB also argued that Respondent's counsel was furnished with a questionnaire by the Board providing Respondent's Counsel with the opportunity to raise any issue he may have wished to raise before the Board at the pre-hearing conference in the event of his absence. No questionnaire was returned. On the day of the pre-hearing conference a call was placed by the VSB to the office of Respondent's counsel but attempts to reach him were unsuccessful.

In further support of the VSB's position, the VSB called as a witness, Ms. Bonnie Waldeck, Assistant Clerk of the Virginia State Bar Disciplinary System. In response to Bar Counsel's direct examination, Ms. Waldeck testified that she made several attempts to work with Respondent's counsel to obtain a mutually agreeable date for the pre-hearing conference. Specifically, Ms. Waldeck testified that a call was made to Respondent's counsel's office on September 15, 2004 wherein a representative of the office staff was advised of the VSB's request to set a pre-hearing conference date. The representative advised Ms. Waldeck that the message would be given to Respondent's counsel and the VSB should expect a return call later that day. Hearing no response from Respondent's counsel, another call was made by the VSB on September 16, 2004. During this call, a representative of the office staff of Respondent's counsel was advised by the VSB that in the absence of a return call from Respondent's counsel, a pre-hearing conference date of October 12, 2004, would be set. No return call was received from Respondent's counsel or any authorized office staff representative. Accordingly, the date for the pre-hearing conference was set for October 12, 2004 at 9:00 a.m. Ms. Waldeck further testified that on September 23, 2004 the order setting the hearing for October 12, 2004, was sent to Respondent's counsel's office. Another copy of the order was sent again to a representative of the office staff of Respondent's Counsel's office on September 24, 2004.

Respondent's counsel had no questions for Ms. Waldeck.

Having heard the arguments of counsel, the testimony of Ms. Bonnie Waldeck and having reviewed the history of this matter including correspondence and notice letters preceding the pre-hearing conference, the Board finds 1) that this matter arose from events going back to January, 2000; 2) that the hearing of this matter had previously been continued for good cause shown; 3) that reasonable efforts were made by the VSB to accommodate Respondent's counsel in setting a mutually agreeable date and time to conduct the pre-hearing conference; and 4) that the alternative dates for the pre-hearing conference suggested by Respondent's counsel were unreasonable in that none of the suggested dates would have occurred prior to the previously established hearing date of October 22, 2004. Accordingly, the Motion for a Continuance filed by the Respondent was denied<sup>1</sup> and the hearing of this matter was ordered to proceed.

#### FOOTNOTE \_\_\_\_\_

1 Respondent's counsel was specifically asked by the Chair to explain the potential impact of any currently pending matter before The Supreme Court of the United States and/or the Supreme Court of Virginia. Despite this request, no specific argument was advanced by Respondent's counsel that served to either identify the proceeding or its potential effect upon the instant matter. Additionally, it should be noted that the arguments presented in support of Respondent's Motion for a Continuance had been previously considered and ruled upon as set forth in the October 12, 2004, Order of Board Chair, Karen A. Gould.

Upon hearing the decision of the panel to deny Respondent's Motion for a Continuance, Respondent's counsel informed the Chair that they were not ready to participate in the hearing before the Board. Whereupon, Respondent and Respondent's counsel withdrew from the hearing choosing not to participate further.

By direction of the Chair, the VSB was asked to proceed with its case. The VSB then moved into evidence a binder containing fourteen pre-numbered exhibits and the entire binder of exhibits was admitted collectively as VSB Exhibit 1. The transcript of the telephone conference held on August 6, 2004, between Respondent's Counsel, Bar Counsel and the Acting Chairman of the Disciplinary Board was admitted into evidence and marked as VSB Exhibit 2.

**I. FINDINGS OF FACT**

Having considered the VSB Exhibits entered into evidence by Bar Counsel and having heard the testimony of the witnesses called to testify, the Board unanimously found by clear and convincing evidence as follows:

1. During all times relevant hereto, the Respondent, Curtis Tyrone Brown (hereinafter Respondent or Mr. Brown) was an attorney licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
2. On November 3, 1999, a grand jury sitting in the Circuit Court for the City of Norfolk indicted Germaine S. Doss for the capital murder for hire of James M. Webb on March 23, 1998, and related offenses. The alleged murderer for hire was Nathaniel McGee.
3. Mr. Doss had previously been arrested and indicted for the same crime in May 1998; however, the charges were nolle prossed.
4. For a brief time in April 1998, Joseph C. Lindsey, Esquire, represented Mr. McGee, and withdrew as counsel. Thereafter, attorney Jerrauld C. Jones was appointed by the court to represent McGee, and he did so until November 1998.
5. In December 1999, Mr. Doss hired the respondent, Curtis Tyrone Brown to represent him in the matter. Trial was scheduled to take place in February 2000 in the Norfolk Circuit Court.
6. On January 24, 2000, in the Norfolk Circuit Court, Mr. Brown endorsed and filed the following motion in the case of *Commonwealth of Virginia v. Jermaine S. Doss*:

**MOTION TO SUBPOENA  
COUNSEL OF CO-DEFENDANT, NATHANIEL MCGEE**

COMES NOW the Defendant, Jermaine S. Doss, by counsel, and moves this Honorable Court for permission to subpoena Joseph Lindsey, Esquire, and Jerrauld Jones, Esquire to testify:

- 1) That Norman Thomas Esquire contacted them for help in fabricating a case against the Defendant; and

- 2) That these conversations were made prior to the Defendant ever being indicated on charges relating to the murder of James Webb.

**NOTICE**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on February 3, 2000, at 10:00 a.m., or as soon thereafter as counsel may be heard, the Defendant, by counsel, will move this Honorable Court in accordance with the foregoing Motion.

7. Norman Thomas, Chief Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney for the City of Norfolk, was the prosecutor.
8. On January 31, 2000, Mr. Thomas filed a response to the motion, and a motion for sanctions, alleging that the grounds stated in the motion were groundless and false, that Mr. Brown had not talked to Mr. Lindsey until after he filed the motion, and that Mr. Lindsey had told Mr. Brown that he could not testify in support of the allegations.
9. On February 24, 2000, following an eight-day trial, a jury found Mr. Doss guilty of First Degree Murder, use of a firearm in the commission of a felony, statutory burglary, and conspiracy. It recommended a sentence of life plus 38 years.
10. On May 23, 2000, following a presentence report, the court imposed the sentence recommended by the jury.
11. On May 19, 2000, the court held an evidentiary hearing on Mr. Thomas' motion for sanctions against Mr. Brown.
12. Mr. Lindsey testified that Mr. Brown never communicated with him about the case prior to filing the motion, and that Mr. Thomas never asked him about fabricating a case against Mr. Doss. He testified further that Mr. Brown did speak to him after filing the motion, and told him to disregard a subpoena if he received one because his testimony was not necessary. Mr. Lindsey testified further that Mr. Brown told him words to the effect that he filed the motion to "either get Norman Thomas off balance or get under Norman Thomas' skin during the course of the prosecution of the case that was going on with Mr. Doss."
13. Likewise, Mr. Jones testified in the May 19, 2000, evidentiary hearing and in the hearing before the Board that Mr. Brown never communicated with him about the case prior to filing the motion, and that Mr. Thomas never asked him about fabricating a case against Mr. Doss.
14. The court made the specific finding that, before filing the motion, Mr. Brown did not speak to either Mr. Lindsey or Mr. Jones, that had Mr. Brown spoken to them he would have learned that Mr. Thomas never asked either of them to assist him in presenting false evidence in this case, that Mr. Brown did not care about the truth or falsity of his allegation, and that Mr. Lindsey's testimony established that Mr. Brown filed the motion to harass Mr. Thomas.
15. The court found further that the filing of the motion falsely accused Mr. Thomas of solicitation of perjury or attempting to suborn perjury, that it falsely accused Mr. Lindsey and

Mr. Jones of violations of Rules 3.3d and 8.3a of the Rules of Professional Conduct and misprision of felony, and that such conduct by a member of the bar was outrageous and intolerable.

16. The court also held that Mr. Brown's defense, that the word "fabricate" meant to "build," was disingenuous. It held that the court's conclusion that Mr. Brown's use of the word "fabricate" meant to create a falsehood was strengthened by excerpts from Mr. Brown's closing arguments to the jury in the underlying case, in which he accused police detectives of manufacturing a case against his client.
17. The court concluded by finding that Mr. Brown violated Code of Virginia Section 8.01-271.1 by filing the motion, and that his conduct warranted a sanction that both punished him and compensated the Commonwealth's Attorney's office. It imposed a \$4,000 sanction against Mr. Brown, payable at the rate of \$1,000 per month. The order provided further that if Mr. Brown appealed the decision, and the sanction was affirmed on appeal, that the first payment became due on the first business day of the first month after the decision became final and unappealable.
18. Mr. Brown appealed the court's decision to the Court of Appeals of Virginia, petitioned for a rehearing and petitioned for review en banc, all of which was denied. He then petitioned for appeal to the Supreme Court of Virginia, and petitioned for a rehearing, both of which were denied. He then filed for a writ of certiorari to the Supreme Court of the United States, which was denied on April 29, 2002.
19. On October 16, 2002, having found that Mr. Brown had not paid any of the sanction as previously ordered, the court issued a rule to show cause against Mr. Brown, ordering him to appear on November 15, 2002. Subsequently, Mr. Brown paid the sanction.
20. The imposition of a sanction by the Circuit Court does not serve to negate the potential penalties associated with the violation of the Virginia Professional Rules of Conduct. *Joseph D. Morrissey v. Virginia State Bar, Ex Rel. Third District Committee*, 260 Va. 472, 538 S.E.2d 677 (2000).

## II. MISCONDUCT

Following closing argument at the conclusion of the evidence regarding misconduct, the Board recessed to deliberate. The Board reviewed the foregoing findings of fact, the exhibit presented by Bar Counsel on behalf of the VSB as Exhibit 1 (tabbed documents 1-14) and the testimony of each witness called to testify at the hearing. After due deliberation the Board reconvened and stated its findings as follows:

The Board determined that the VSB failed to prove by clear and convincing evidence that the Respondent violated Rule 3.4 (d) of the Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct. Rule 3.4 (d) states:

**A lawyer shall not:**

**(d) \*\*\***

There was no evidence that the Respondent knowingly disobeyed or disregarded the ruling of the circuit court judge. Although there appeared to be some delay on the part of the Respondent in paying the monetary sanction imposed against him, the sanction was ultimately paid by the Respondent.

The Board determined that the VSB had proved by clear and convincing evidence that the Respondent violated each of the following Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct:

**1. RULE 3.3 Candor Toward The Tribunal**

**(a) A lawyer shall not knowingly:**

**(1) \*\*\***

In choosing to file his *Motion to Subpoena Counsel of Co-Defendant, Nathaniel McGee*, the Respondent clearly made false statements to the Court. Specifically, the Respondent filed his Motion stating, in pertinent part:

COMES NOW the Defendant, Jermaine S. Doss, by counsel, and moves this Honorable Court for permission to subpoena Joseph Lindsey, Esquire, and Jerrauld Jones, Esquire to testify:

- 1) That Norman Thomas Esquire contacted them for help in fabricating a case against the Defendant of misconduct on the part of the Prosecutor.

In testimony at the evidentiary hearing of May 19, 2000, and/or at the hearing of this matter, Attorneys Lindsey and Jones each stated that the Respondent never spoke to them prior to filing his Motion. Moreover, had the respondent chosen to do so, he would have been informed that the Prosecutor was not guilty of the conduct alleged in the Respondent's Motion. (VSB Exhibit 1, tab 12, pp. 16 and 17.)

**2. RULE 3.4 Fairness To Opposing Party And Counsel**

**A lawyer shall not:**

**(i) \*\*\***

The evidence presented by the VSB clearly shows that the conduct of the Respondent was done with an intent to harass or maliciously injure the reputation of the Prosecutor before the Court. Specifically, the testimony offered by attorney Lindsey to the Court in the evidentiary hearing of May 19, 2000, provided the following:

*Q. Was there a conversation with Mr. Brown with reference to the Motion later on?*

*A. At some point after that Motion was obviously filed, I ran into Mr. Brown in the Norfolk Juvenile Court lobby and he advised me that in the event I received a subpoena to come and testify in the Jeramine Doss case, to disregard it because my testimony wasn't necessary. [ ] He said he had filed a motion with the Circuit Court as a tactical means and that it was either—and I don't remember his exact words, but the tenor of it was either to get Norman Thomas off balance or get under Norman Thomas's*

*skin during the course of the prosecution of the case that was going on with Mr. Doss. (VSB Exhibit 1, tab 12, pp. 16 and 17).*

**3. RULE 4.1 Truthfulness In Statements To Others**

**In the course of representing a client a lawyer shall not knowingly:**

**(a) \*\*\***

In the testimony offered by the Respondent, Mr. Brown, at the evidentiary hearing of May 19, 2000, the Respondent admitted that he had not spoken with Mr. Lindsey prior to filing his Motion. (VSB Exhibit 1, tab 12, p.115, lines 11-16). Likewise, there was no conversation with Mr. Jones prior to filing the Motion. (VSB Exhibit 1, tab 12, p.116, lines 13-24).

**4. RULE 8.4 Misconduct**

**It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to:**

**(c)\*\*\***

In addition to the Respondent's complete failure to speak with counsel in an effort to properly investigate the allegations made against the Prosecutor in his Motion, the Respondent chose to dismiss his use of the word "fabricate" as a term simply meaning to build a case. This attempt on the part of the Respondent to dismiss his intentional use of such a term is particularly troubling. The Board agrees with the finding of the Circuit Court wherein the Court stated:

*Fabricate certainly has two meanings. If we were to have furniture manufactures and someone talking about fabricating, he's talking about building furniture. In the legal context, both Mr. Thomas and Mr. Jones testified and I think the clear meaning of that word in the legal proceedings is to make something up, to falsify. I think Mr. Brown's testimony that he intended it to mean build is disingenuous at best. (VSB Exhibit 1, Tab 12, p.162, lines 17-25).*

**III. DISPOSITION**

Thereafter, the Board received evidence of aggravation from Bar Counsel, i.e., Respondent's prior disciplinary record. The Board recessed to deliberate what sanction to impose upon its finding of misconduct by Respondent. After due deliberation, the Board reconvened to announce the sanction imposed. The Board recognizes that the zealous representation of a client is not only proper, it is required. However, when counsel in the course of representing their clients step across the line of zealousness and chose to make misrepresentations and false and uninvestigated allegations that have the effect of maligning and tarnishing the reputations of fellow members of the bar, this conduct is nothing less than outrageous and intolerable. The Chair announced the sanction as being a one (1) year license suspension.

Accordingly, it is ORDERED that the license of the Respondent, Curtis Tyrone Brown, to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia, be, and the same hereby is, suspended, effective November 22, 2004, for a period of one (1) year.

\*\*\*.

ENTERED this 24th day of November, 2004.  
VIRGINIA STATE BAR DISCIPLINARY BOARD  
BY: Karen A. Gould, Chair



VIRGINIA:  
BEFORE THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR  
DISCIPLINARY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF  
**WILLIAM HAROLD BUTTERFIELD**  
VSB DOCKET NUMBER 05-000-1513

**ORDER AND OPINION**

This matter came before the Virginia State Bar Disciplinary Board on November 19, 2004 upon an Agreed Disposition to impose Reciprocal Discipline, as a result of a Rule to Show Cause and Order of Suspension and Hearing entered on October 22, 2004. A duly convened panel of the Virginia State Bar Disciplinary Board consisting of Robert L. Freed, Esquire (1st Vice Chair), V. Max Beard (lay member), Bruce T. Clark, Esquire, Ann N. Kathan, Attorney at Law, and Russell W. Updike, Esquire, heard the matter. Paul D. Georgiadis, Assistant Bar Counsel, appeared as Counsel to the Virginia State Bar ("VSB"). The Respondent, having entered an appearance pro se and having received due notice, did not appear before the Board. This matter was recorded by Chandler & Halasz Court Reporters, P.O. Box 9349, Richmond, Virginia 23227, (804) 730-1222.

Having considered the Agreed Disposition to the imposition of Reciprocal Discipline, the Board finds by clear and convincing evidence as follows:

**STIPULATIONS OF FACTS**

1. At all times relevant hereto, the Respondent, William Harold Butterfield, Esquire (hereinafter Respondent) has been an attorney licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
2. On June 17, 2004, the District of Columbia Court of Appeals entered an order suspending the Respondent's license to practice law in the District of Columbia for a period of thirty days effective July 17, 2004. The order became final and Respondent was so suspended .
3. In entering its order, the District of Columbia Court of Appeals accepted the findings of the District of Columbia Board on Professional Responsibility ("D.C. Board") in finding that Respondent violated Rules 1.7(b)(1) and 1.7(b)(2) of the District of Columbia Rules of Professional Conduct when he failed to perform a conflicts check and failed to obtain written consents, or to withdraw, once he learned of a conflict of interest.
4. The D.C. Board found that Respondent refused to acknowledge and resolve a conflict requiring waivers from two affected clients when Respondent proceeded to represent a new client, Raytheon Corporation, in filing a bid

protest against a proposal by the Federal Aviation Administration to grant a sole source contract to Lockheed Systems Integration. Lockheed Systems Integration was an existing client of Respondent's firm. Lockheed lodged the ethics Complaint.

5. This Board hereby adopts the Joint Stipulation of Facts which incorporates by reference the findings of the D.C. Court of Appeals and the D.C. Board, attached hereto as Exhibits A-1 and A-2.

**STIPULATIONS OF MISCONDUCT**

The aforementioned conduct on the part of the Respondent constitutes a violation of the following Rule of Professional Conduct:

RULE 1.7 Conflict of Interest: General Rule

(b) (1), (2) \*\*\*

Upon consideration of the Agreement to Imposition of Reciprocal Discipline before this panel of the Disciplinary Board, it is hereby ORDERED that, pursuant to Part 6, § IV, ¶ 13(I)(7) of the *Rules of Virginia Supreme Court*, the license of Respondent, William Harold Butterfield, Esquire, to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia shall be, and is hereby, suspended for a period of thirty days, commencing October 22, 2004.

\*\*\*

SO ORDERED, this 19th day of November, 2004.  
By: Robert L. Freed, First Vice Chair



VIRGINIA:  
BEFORE THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR  
DISCIPLINARY BOARD  
IN THE MATTER OF  
**CHARLES EVERETT MALONE**  
VSB DOCKET NO. 04-010-0765  
04-010-1444

**ORDER OF SUSPENSION WITH TERMS**

This matter came to be heard on December 7, 2004, upon an Agreed Disposition between the Virginia State Bar and the Respondent, Charles Everett Malone.

A duly convened panel of the Virginia State Bar Disciplinary Board consisting of Janipher W. Robinson, Esquire, Robert E. Eicher, Esquire, Glen M. Hodge, Esquire, Werner Quasebarth, Lay Member, and James L. Banks, Jr., Esquire, Acting Chair, considered the matter by telephone conference. The Respondent, Charles Everett Malone, Esquire, appeared *pro se*. Edward L. Davis, Assistant Bar Counsel, appeared on behalf of the Virginia State Bar.

Upon due deliberation, it is the decision of the board to accept the Agreed Disposition, subject to an amendment to the term as set forth herein. The Stipulations of Fact, Disciplinary Rule Violations, and Disposition agreed to by the Virginia State

Bar and the Respondent, as modified, are incorporated herein as follows:

**I. STIPULATIONS OF FACT**

1. During all times relevant hereto, the Respondent, Charles Everett Malone (hereinafter Respondent or Mr. Malone) was an attorney licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**04-010-0765**

**Complainant: VSB/Trust Account**

2. On June 10, 2003, Zack Pippins sold a parcel of property to Arnold L. Shands and Eldret Watson. The settlement agent was Home Title & Escrow of Virginia Beach, Virginia. Mr. Malone received \$267.50 in attorney's fees from each of the parties, according to line 1107 of the settlement statement.
3. The settlement statement indicates on line 603 that cash to the seller (Mr. Pippins) was \$31,702.58.
4. Among the settlement documents was an escrow agreement between the buyers, sellers, and Mr. Malone as escrow agent containing the following paragraph:
  1. *Escrow Agent and Account: Charles E. Malone will serve as Escrow Agent to whom Buyers shall deposit, at settlement of the transfer in accordance with the Contract, the balance of the sale price of \$32,000.00. Charles E. Malone shall deposit and hold in his non-interest-bearing Trust Account the \$32,000.00 until June 29, 2003 on which date Escrow agent shall deliver a check to the seller for \$32,000.00*
5. On July 3, 2003, check number 3-19992 in the amount of \$31,702.58, drawn upon the account of Home Title & Escrow Insurance Agency, Inc., was paid "To the order of Charles Malone, in Trust for Zack Pippins."
6. On July 7, 2003, Mr. Malone deposited the check into his attorney trust account. Prior to the deposit, his trust account had a balance of one dollar.
7. On July 12, 2003, Mr. Malone disbursed check number 101, drawn on the same trust account, and payable to himself in the amount of \$5,000. He annotated "Pippins fee" on the check.
8. On July 15, 2003, the check cleared, resulting in a balance of \$26,702.58 in Mr. Malone's trust account. The balance remained under \$31,702.58 until August 6, 2003.
9. On August 6, 2003, Mr. Malone's trust account balance was \$195,707.58, resulting from a deposit on that day of \$169,005.00 in an unrelated matter. By August 8, 2003, the balance was \$170,525.08. On August 19, 2003, the balance was \$26,702.58.
10. On August 25, 2003, Mr. Malone wrote check number 1008 in the amount of \$31,702.58 from his trust account to Zack

Pippins, despite the fact that his trust account ledger showed only \$26,702.58 on account for Zack Pippins.

11. Mr. Pippins negotiated the check; however, when the check was presented to Mr. Malone's bank, there were insufficient funds to pay it. The bank paid the check nonetheless, causing a negative balance of \$1,374.80 in the trust account.
12. The bank reported the overdraft to the Virginia State Bar. Mr. Malone failed to respond to the bar's inquiry about the overdraft.
13. Mr. Malone advised the Virginia State Bar investigator that he recognized a possibility that there would not be enough funds in the account to cover the check when he presented the check to Mr. Pippins, but that he was hopeful some checks he had previously disbursed had not yet cleared, so there might be sufficient funds for Mr. Pippins' check to clear.
14. Mr. Malone's trust account continued to carry a negative balance until September 3, 2003, when he deposited \$1,060.
15. Zack Pippins advised the Virginia State Bar investigator that he never authorized Mr. Malone to disburse \$5,000 from the funds he held in trust, and never agreed to pay any legal fees to Mr. Malone above the \$267.50 he paid to him at the closing.
16. Mr. Malone explained that the \$5,000 represented fees for assisting Rev. Pippins in a dispute that developed with the sellers after closing over the grading of land. He said that he did not obtain Rev. Pippins' authorization to take the \$5,000, and did not discuss a fee with him.
17. Rev. Pippins said that Mr. Malone did not negotiate any settlement in the dispute, that the negotiations took place between him and the buyers, and that Mr. Malone played no part.
18. Rev. Pippins said that in July 2003, realizing that he had not received his money, he contacted Mr. Malone's office, but was told that he had to talk to Malone after he returned from out of town. He did not receive his funds until the end of the following month.

**II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT (04-010-0765)**

The parties agree that the foregoing facts give rise to violations of the following Rules of Professional Conduct:

**RULE 1.1 Competence**

\*\*\*

**RULE 1.3 Diligence**

(a) \*\*\*

**RULE 1.5 Fees**

(a) (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8) \*\*\*

**RULE 1.5 Fees**

(b) \*\*\*

**RULE 1.15 Safekeeping Property**

(a) (1), (2) \*\*\*

**RULE 1.15 Safekeeping Property**

(c) (3), (4) \*\*\*

**RULE 8.1 Bar Admission And Disciplinary Matters**

(c) \*\*\*

**RULE 8.4 Misconduct**

(b), (c) \*\*\*;

**I. STIPULATIONS OF FACT (Continued)**

**04-010-1444**

***Complainant: Mrs. Vivian L. Warren***

19. On February 26, 2002, the Circuit Court for Southampton County sentenced Elijah M. Warren to several years of incarceration on his convictions of burglary, grand larceny, armed robbery and use of a firearm during the commission of a robbery.
20. On March 18, 2002, Mr. Warren noted an appeal through his hired attorney, Dwayne B. Strothers.
21. On May 20, 2002, the court appointed Mr. Strothers to prosecute the appeal, Mr. Warren being unable to pay Mr. Strothers.
22. Mr. Strothers perfected the appeal, and the Court of Appeals denied it on August 21, 2002.
23. Meanwhile, during May 2002, Mr. Warren's Aunt, Vivian Warren, consulted with Mr. Malone about prosecuting her son's appeal in place of Mr. Strothers, and Mr. Malone agreed to do so.
24. On May 6, 2002, Mrs. Warren paid Mr. Malone \$560 for the purpose of reviewing the trial transcript and file. On June 3, 2002, she paid him \$1,500 cash as partial payment for the appeal. On June 21, 2002, she paid him an additional \$500 in cash and \$500 by check for the balance of the appeal fee.
25. On June 28, 2002, Mr. Malone filed a "Motion for Extension to File Petition for Appeal" with the Court of Appeals of Virginia.
26. In the motion, Mr. Malone acknowledged that the Court had already appointed Mr. Strothers for the appeal, but said that the Petitioner was not satisfied with Mr. Strothers' representation at trial and sentencing, and desired to have another lawyer represent him. He said further that the Petitioner's family, "after much solicitation," raised and delivered the necessary funds to Mr. Malone on June 21,

2002. He said that he did not have time to prepare, complete and file a petition for appeal by June 24, 2002. Finally, he said that the Petitioner's aunt had advised Mr. Strothers that he did not desire Mr. Strothers' services as they had hired Mr. Malone.

- 27. Despite the fact that he knew Mr. Strothers was counsel of record, Mr. Malone never filed a motion or order allowing him to substitute himself as counsel or allowing Mr. Strothers to withdraw.
- 28. By letter, dated June 28, 2002, the Court of Appeals responded to Mr. Malone's motion, stating that Mr. Malone had no standing to file his motion because Mr. Strothers was counsel of record, that Mr. Strothers had already timely filed a petition for appeal, and that the Court, accordingly, would take no action on Mr. Malone's motion.
- 29. Thereafter, Mr. Malone never entered the case, and never took any further action in the matter, although it was eventually concluded at the Supreme Court of Virginia.
- 30. Mr. Malone never advised Ms. Warren about the letter from the Court of Appeals, and Mrs. Warren never learned the outcome of the appeal until she wrote to the Court of Appeals herself.
- 31. Mr. Malone never refunded any of the \$3,060 advanced to him by Mrs. Warren, despite repeated requests by her, including a letter, dated March 1, 2004, and his advice to the Virginia State Bar investigator that he would do so.
- 32. A review of Mr. Malone's trust account records revealed that he never deposited Mrs. Warren's advanced fees into his attorney trust account, except possibly the \$560 in May 2002, and possibly a \$500 portion of the \$1,500 cash payment on June 10, 2002. Due to lack of records, however, he could not confirm if Ms. Warren's funds were the source of these deposits.
- 33. Mr. Malone acknowledged that he may not have deposited any of the funds into his attorney trust account, saying that there were problems with his trust account during that time period.
- 34. Further investigation revealed that he endorsed Ms. Warren's \$500 check to Arlene Malone, who deposited it into a non-trust account at the Chartway Federal Credit Union on June 22, 2002.
- 35. Mr. Malone did not respond to the bar complaint.

**II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT (04-010-1444)**

The parties agree that the foregoing facts give rise to violations of the following Rules of Professional Conduct:

**RULE 1.1 Competence**

\*\*\*

**RULE 1.3 Diligence**

(a), (b) \*\*\*

**RULE 1.4 Communication**

(a), (b), (c) \*\*\*

**RULE 1.15 Safekeeping Property**

(a) (1), (2) \*\*\*

**RULE 1.15 Safekeeping Property**

(c) (3), (4) \*\*\*

**RULE 1.16 Declining Or Terminating Representation**

(d) \*\*\*

**RULE 8.1 Bar Admission And Disciplinary Matters**

(c) \*\*\*

**RULE 8.4 Misconduct**

(b) \*\*\*

**III. DISPOSITION**

In accordance with the Agreed Disposition, Charles Everett Malone's license to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia is hereby Suspended for a period of two (2) years, effective December 10, 2004, subject to the following terms and conditions:

- 1. By June 10, 2005, The Respondent, Charles Everett Malone, will issue a refund in the amount of \$3,060 (three thousand and sixty dollars) to Vivian L. Warren. (The Respondent and the bar agreed during the telephone conference to amend the amount owed to \$3,060.)

Failure to comply with the foregoing term will result in the imposition of the alternate sanction, the Suspension of the Respondent's license to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia for an additional two-year period (an aggregate suspension of four years).

The imposition of the alternate sanction will not require a hearing before the Three-Judge Court or the Virginia State Bar Disciplinary Board on the underlying charges of misconduct stipulated to in this Agreed Disposition if the Virginia State Bar discovers that the Respondent has violated any of the foregoing terms and conditions. Instead, the Virginia State Bar shall issue and serve upon the Respondent a Notice of Hearing to Show Cause why the alternate sanction should not be imposed. The sole factual issue will be whether the Respondent has violated the terms of this Agreed Disposition without legal justification or excuse. The imposition of the alternate sanction shall be in addition to any other sanctions imposed for misconduct during the probationary period. All issues concerning the Respondent's

compliance with the terms of this Agreed Disposition shall be determined by the Virginia State Bar Disciplinary Board, unless the Respondent makes a timely request for hearing before a three-judge court.

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ENTERED THIS 7TH DAY OF DECEMBER, 2004  
THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR DISCIPLINARY BOARD  
By James L. Banks, Jr., Esquire  
Acting Chair



BEFORE THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR  
DISCIPLINARY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF  
JOHN R. WILLETT  
VSB DOCKET: 99-042-1438

**ORDER OF REVOCATION**

This matter came before a duly constituted Panel of the Virginia State Bar Disciplinary Board on October 21 and 22, 2004, pursuant to a certification of a Subcommittee of the Fourth District Disciplinary Committee, Section Two. The Panel consisted of Peter A. Dingman, Chairman, William C. Boyce, Jr., Glenn M. Hodge, David R. Schultz, and V. Max Beard, Lay Member. The Respondent, John R. Willett, appeared and was represented by Bernard J. DiMuro. The Bar was represented by Assistant Bar Counsel Seth M. Guggenheim.

Prior to the commencement of proceedings, the Chairman polled the members of the Board as to whether any of them were conscious of any personal or financial interest or bias which would prevent the member from fairly and impartially hearing the matter. Each member, including the Chairman, answered in the negative.

The hearing began with Mr. Willett's Motion to Dismiss alleging a due process violation and laches. The motion was denied.

**I. FINDINGS**

After hearing testimony presented by both parties and the receipt of numerous documents into evidence, the Board finds as follows:

At all times relevant to this proceeding, John R. Willett, has been licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

On November 26, 1997, Eugene Woodward was operating a motor vehicle which was involved in a crash. Mr. Woodward suffered severe and permanent injuries to his leg. His mother, Margaret Woodward, who was a passenger in the car, also sustained injuries. The crash was caused by the driver of a second car, Filomena Newton. Ms. Newton was insured by the Hartford Insurance Company.

In early December of 1997, Mr. Woodward and Mrs. Woodward met with a lawyer in Warrenton, Virginia, John Carter Morgan, Jr. Mr. Morgan agreed to represent Mr. Woodward but, out of a concern for potential conflicts of interest, referred Mrs. Woodward to other counsel. Mr. Woodward hired Mr. Morgan on January 5, 1998, and signed a fee agreement calling for, among other things, a one-third contingent fee.

That same day, Mr. Morgan sent a letter of representation to the Hartford Insurance Company.

On February 2, 1998, Mrs. Woodward met with Mr. Willett regarding her claim. She was accompanied by her son, Eugene Woodward. At this meeting Mr. Willett determined to represent to the implicated insurance companies that Mr. Woodward was his client as well as his mother, despite being aware of the fact that Mr. Woodward was already represented by counsel and despite being aware that there existed at least a potential conflict of interest between Mr. Woodward and his mother. Mr. Willett's decision to claim representation of Mr. Woodward is evidenced by a letter dated February 3, 1998, addressed to Mr. Woodward, in which Mr. Willett purported to confirm a fee agreement with Mr. Woodward. Mr. Willett testified that the date of February 3rd was a secretarial mistake, and that he actually began to represent Mr. Woodward on August 8, 1998, (the date Mr. Woodward actually signed the fee letter) after Mr. Woodward told Mr. Willett that he was dissatisfied with Mr. Morgan. Mr. Willett's testimony notwithstanding, he wrote a letter to the Hartford Insurance Company, also dated February 3, 1998, in which he notified the company that he was counsel for both Mrs. Woodward and Mr. Woodward. Again, Mr. Willett testified, and his counsel argued, that the date of February 3, 1998, on the initial letter to the Hartford Insurance Company was a "mistake". The Bar argued that the date of February 3, 1998, was, as evidenced by language in subsequent letters, an accurate reflection of the date upon which Mr. Willett began falsely asserting to others that he represented Mr. Woodward. The Bar pointed out that Mr. Willett wrote a subsequent letter on March 2, 1998, to the Omni Insurance Group, Mrs. Woodward's insurer (she owned the car her son was driving), in which Mr. Willett once again identified his clients as Margaret W. Woodward and Eugene F. Woodward. On August 10, 1998, Mr. Willett wrote a letter to Mr. Morgan in which he states "Please be advised Mr. Eugene F. Woodward came in to see me and he asked me, **several weeks ago**, to be his attorney in connection with his accident of November 26, 1997." [Emphasis added] Also on August 10, 1998, Mr. Willett wrote the Omni Insurance Group, once again identifying his clients as Margaret W. Woodward and Eugene F. Woodward. In this letter he wrote, "Reference is made to my letter of March 2, 1998. As I told you, I represent Mrs. Margaret W. Woodward and Eugene F. Woodward . . . ." Finally, on August 14, 1998, Mr. Willett wrote a letter to Pam Rolfe, Claims Adjuster with the Hartford Insurance Company, in which he states, "You acknowledged your company received notification from me in February, 1998, that I represent Eugene Woodward." Mr. Willett testified that all of the dates referenced in his letters, except the last three which were written after he was hired on August 8, 1998, were "mistakes" or "errors". The Bar pointed out that Mr. Willett wrote three letters subsequent to August 8, 1998 in which he references previous communications relating to his representation of Mr. Woodward.

The Board finds the Bar's argument to be compelling. It is difficult to believe that Mr. Willett wrote four letters in which he claimed to be counsel for Eugene Woodward which were dated in error. Furthermore, the Board cannot accept that Mr. Willett wrote a letter two days after Mr. Woodward actually hired him in which he refers to being hired "several weeks ago" unless that language is a continuation of the pattern of misrepresentation begun in February. Most revealing is Mr. Willett's letter of August 14, 1998, six days after he was hired by Mr. Woodward, in which he references his letter of repre-

sentation of February, 1998. Indeed, on September 14, 1999, in a letter to the Bar (submitted by Mr. Willett as his Exhibit #51), Mr. Willett himself stated, "my best recollection is that I started representing him [Mr. Woodward] on or about February 3, 1998." We find that Mr. Willett began a deceptive pattern of claiming to represent Mr. Woodward on February 2, 1998, despite Mr. Woodward being represented at that time by Mr. Morgan.

The Bar's evidence was that, as a result of his investigation of Mr. Woodward's case, Mr. Morgan determined that Mrs. Newton likely had few or no assets beyond her policy of liability insurance with the Hartford, that Mr. and Mrs. Woodward's under-insurance coverage did not exceed \$100,000.00, and that Mr. Woodward lacked the financial resources to fund a law suit.

Mr. Morgan testified that he discussed this with Mr. Woodward, explained that litigation would require Mr. Woodward to finance deposition costs and expert witness fees, and might result in a judgment against Mrs. Newton, but that the judgment would be of little value unless Mrs. Newton in fact owned real estate or other assets then undiscovered. According to Mr. Morgan, Mr. Woodward stated he did not want to take Mrs. Newton's house, and he authorized Mr. Morgan to settle his case for anything in excess of \$70,000.00.

On July 1, 1998, the Hartford indicated a willingness to tender the policy limits of \$100,000.00 in settlement of Mr. Woodward's claim if Mr. Morgan could substantiate the medical costs as outlined during their negotiations. Mr. Morgan called Mr. Woodward to inform him of the insurance company's position, and Mr. Woodward authorized Mr. Morgan to settle the case. On July 23, 1998, Mr. Morgan provided the demand package to the Hartford which was contained in a three-ring binder and was detailed and comprehensive.

After receipt of the demand package Ms. Rolfe of the Hartford informed Mr. Morgan that the company would settle the matter for the policy limits of \$100,000.00 and would mail a check.

During the period from February 3, 1998, to August 8, 1998, it was Mr. Woodward's practice to accompany his mother to her interviews with Mr. Willett. He would often sit in on these interviews. By Mr. Willett's own admission, he would occasionally question Mr. Woodward about the accident despite the fact that he was aware that Mr. Woodward was represented by Mr. Morgan. Mr. Willett attempted to justify his actions by pointing out that it was his responsibility to determine whether contributory negligence was an issue in the case. It was during one of these discussions that Mr. Willett learned that Mr. Morgan was in the process of settling Mr. Woodward's case for \$100,000.00. Mr. Willett told Mr. Woodward that he, Mr. Willett, could settle Mr. Woodward's case for a significantly greater sum than \$100,000.00 and, as a result, Mr. Woodward determined to terminate Mr. Morgan's representation and hire Mr. Willett. Mr. Woodward testified that, before making the switch of lawyers, he expressed to Mr. Willett concern about his existing fee obligation to Mr. Morgan, but Mr. Willett assured Mr. Woodward that "he would take care of it."

On August 10, 1998, Mr. Woodward officially relieved Mr. Morgan.

On August 11, 1998, Mr. Willett called Mr. Morgan to inform him that he had been hired by Mr. Woodward. The majority of the telephone conversation consisted of Mr. Willett telling Mr. Morgan of his great ability as a litigator, and of the large verdicts which he had won in the past. When Mr. Morgan told Mr. Willett that the matter was already settled for the amount of \$100,000.00 due to the fact that Mrs. Newton was indigent and there was no other coverage, Mr. Willett accused Mr. Morgan of withholding the file and hung up on Mr. Morgan.

On August 12, 1998, Mr. Morgan informed the Hartford that he no longer represented Mr. Woodward and asserted a lien for one-third of the \$100,000.00 settlement previously offered by the Hartford and accepted by Mr. Woodward.

On September 18, 1998, Ms. Rolfe of the Hartford sent Mr. Willett a check in the amount of \$100,000.00, payable to Mr. Woodward, Mr. Morgan, and Mr. Willett. Mr. Willett wrote Ms. Rolfe on September 28, 1998, acknowledging receipt of that check.

On September 24, 1998, Mr. Willett wrote Mr. Woodward and informed him that he would charge a flat fee of \$5,000.00 to defend Mr. Woodward against Mr. Morgan's lien.

Mr. Willett rejected the offer of \$100,000.00 on behalf of Mr. Woodward and on September 28, 1998, returned the check to the Hartford, claiming that he had already filed suit against Ms. Newton.

On September 29, 1998, Mr. Willett did file suit in the Circuit Court of Fauquier County on Mr. Woodward's behalf, naming Mrs. Newton and Mr. Morgan as defendants. In that pleading Mr. Willett made statements to the Court, claiming that Mr. Morgan's filing of the lien had precluded the Hartford from paying Mr. Woodward the policy limits. Mr. Willett also stated that despite numerous demands that he do so, Mr. Morgan had refused to escrow the amount of the lien. These statements were false or misleading when made.

In this litigation, a demurrer was filed on behalf of Mr. Morgan asserting that the fee dispute was not properly brought together with the personal injury action against Mrs. Newton. The Court disposed of the demurrer, after a hearing, by severing the two matters. A sketch order was entered by the Court after endorsement by Mr. Willett and counsel for Mr. Morgan. That order recites the basis for the ruling, including the following: ". . . that, Mr. Willett, as an officer of the Court, represented to this Court that no check for such amount [\$100,000] was received by his office . . ." As noted above, Mr. Willett in fact received that check in September, 1998.

Mr. Willett continued to prosecute this suit until August of 2000, approximately two years after Mr. Morgan had obtained a policy limits settlement of Mr. Woodward's case. Mr. Willett finally settled the same case for \$50,000.00 in cash, and \$561.11 per month in the form of an annuity for a period of ten years. Considering the annuity's present value, and Mr. Woodward's circumstances, this is a less favorable settlement than the one achieved by Mr. Morgan.

In a letter dated September 13, 2000, Mr. Willett asked the Hartford to make out the monthly annuity checks to both him and Mr. Woodward. Nevertheless, Mr. Willett wrote a letter to Mr. Woodward on September 13, 2000 in which he told Mr. Woodward that the Hartford had requested Mr. Woodward to

sign a letter authorizing the company to make the annuity checks payable to both Mr. Willett and Mr. Woodward. He also enclosed a Power of Attorney granting Mr. Willett authority to sign the checks for Mr. Woodward. Mr. Woodward declined to sign the Power of Attorney.

As a result of the suit filed by Mr. Willett naming Mr. Morgan as a defendant, Mr. Morgan hired local counsel, Jud Fischel, to represent him in the lien dispute. Through conversations and letters, Mr. Fischel capably argued that Mr. Willett's analysis of Mr. Morgan's entitlement was flawed and that Mr. Morgan was entitled to a large portion, if not all of the approximately \$33,333.00 which Mr. Fischel thought was in question. Both Mr. Fischel and Mr. Morgan believed at all times that the dispute was over how the one-third fee would be split. In fact, the word "split" was used in some of Mr. Fischel's correspondence. At all times during the negotiations, it was one of Mr. Morgan's primary concerns that Mr. Woodward not suffer as a result of this dispute. Eventually, Mr. Morgan settled for \$16,650.00, which he believed represented approximately one-half of the \$33,333.00 in dispute.

On January 3, 2001, Mr. Willett sent Mr. Woodward a letter and disbursement sheet. In the letter Mr. Willett informed Mr. Woodward that he was able to settle Mr. Morgan's claim for \$16,650.00, and Mr. Willett claimed "I saved you \$16,683.33". Mr. Willett went on to claim a full one-third of \$100,000.00 as his fee. In other words, he did not split the one-third with Mr. Morgan but claimed a full \$33,333.33. This claim actually represented an adjustment on Mr. Willett's part. In a letter dated August 4, 1998 to Mr. Woodward, and in correspondence with Mr. Fischel, Mr. Willett had interpreted his fee agreement with Mr. Woodward to entitle him to one-third of the total (\$117,333.20, as computed by Mr. Willett) of present and deferred payments to be received by Mr. Woodward. In addition, Mr. Willett listed all costs associated with the case, including \$5,000.00 for his handling of the fee dispute with Mr. Morgan. The total of costs was \$7,933.00. Mr. Willett informed Mr. Woodward that Mr. Woodward owed Mr. Willett \$41,233.66. Mr. Willett informed Mr. Woodward that he had applied the amount of \$31,790.71, the amount remaining in escrow after paying Mr. Morgan, to his fees and costs. Mr. Willett concluded by informing Mr. Woodward that he owed Mr. Willett an additional \$9,442.95. Mr. Woodward also remained responsible for his medical bills, none of which were paid out of the settlement. Mr. Willett did remind his client that he had the option of pursuing bankruptcy.

## II. MISCONDUCT

From the foregoing facts the Board finds by clear and convincing evidence that Mr. Willett has violated the following rules of professional conduct.

### DR 1-102. Misconduct.

(A) (3) \*\*\*

Mr. Willett violated this Rule by signing the sketch order which was presented to the Fauquier County Circuit Court in which it is recited that Mr. Willett never received a settlement check.

(4) \*\*\*

Mr. Willett violated this Rule as well by signing the order which was presented to the Fauquier County Circuit Court in which false statements were made. His initial pleadings in the case contained false and misleading statements. In addition, Mr. Willett was fraudulent and deceitful in his numerous letters to the insurance company in which he claimed to represent Mr. Woodward.

### DR 2-103. Recommendation or Solicitation of Professional Employment.

(A) (1) \*\*\*

Mr. Willett violated this Rule when he lured Mr. Woodward away from Mr. Morgan by telling Mr. Woodward that he could settle the case for more money than Mr. Morgan could.

(2) \*\*\*

Mr. Willett violated this Rule as well when he lured Mr. Woodward away from Mr. Morgan. Likewise, Mr. Willett's actions in persuading Mr. Woodward to hire Mr. Willett as his counsel contained unwarranted promises of benefits.

### DR 2-105. Fees.

(A) \*\*\*

Mr. Willett's fees were not adequately explained to Mr. Woodward. At no time did Mr. Willett explain to Mr. Woodward that hiring Mr. Willett might result in total fees in excess of one-third of the amount of settlement. He also neglected to inform Mr. Woodward that terminating Mr. Morgan might result in a demand for additional fees to defend Mr. Woodward against Mr. Morgan's claims.

(C) \*\*\*

Mr. Willett violated this Rule by failing to state in his fee agreement with Mr. Woodward the method by which the fee was to be determined. He simply informed Mr. Woodward of the method in his letter containing the disbursement sheet.

### DR 6-101. Competence and Promptness.

(A) (1) \*\*\*

Mr. Willett violated this Rule by failing to demonstrate requisite knowledge of rules relating to the stacking of policies of "underinsurance". In Mr. Willett's letter of August 26, 1998 to Mr. and Mrs. Woodward, Mr. Willett states ". . . you have a total of \$100,000.00 per person coverage under your underinsured provision, due to the fact that you have four vehicles. This was verified on August 26, 1998.

"Mr. Morgan had not even looked into this and would have let you settle. Now you have an opportunity to get a total of \$300,000.00; \$100,000.00 from the tortfeasor and \$200,000.00 from your insurance."

This letter demonstrates Mr. Willett's lack of knowledge or misunderstanding of the rules regarding stacking, in that the claimant cannot collect under a policy of underinsurance until the amount of underinsurance exceeds the settlement or award. In this case, the \$100,000.00 of coverage does not exceed the

amount of the settlement and therefore results in no additional coverage to the claimant.

DR 7-102. Representing a Client Within the Bounds of the Law.

(A) (3) \*\*\*

Mr. Willett violated this Rule by signing the Fauquier County Circuit Court Order.

(5) \*\*\*

Mr. Willett violated this Rule by his false and misleading letters to the insurance company, by his statements in his letter of August 26, 1998 in which he misstates the law of stacking and accuses Mr. Morgan of incompetence.

DR 7-103. Communicating with One of Adverse Interest.

(A) (1) \*\*\*

Mr. Willett violated this Rule by conversing with Mr. Woodward while Mr. Woodward was represented by Mr. Morgan. Mr. Willett acknowledged during his testimony that he did so in order to, among other reasons, determine whether contributory negligence existed on the part of Mr. Woodward. The Board fails to see how this explanation is mitigating. This is exactly the sort of discussion which should have occurred through Mr. Woodward's counsel.

RULE 1.1 Competence

\*\*\*

Mr. Willett violated this Rule by maintaining the lawsuit after the first of January, 2000. A competent lawyer would have known that \$100,000.00 was the most that could be collected in this case. By maintaining the lawsuit, the settlement was delayed for almost two years and additional costs were incurred.

RULE 1.3 Diligence

(a) \*\*\*

Mr. Willett should have determined the extent of underinsurance coverage through Mrs. Woodward's policy at the time that Mrs. Woodward hired. In fact, Mr. Willett waited until Mr. Woodward relieved Mr. Morgan. Even then, he continued the litigation another twenty months before settling the case on terms less favorable than available in September, 1998.

RULE 1.5 Fees

(a) A lawyer's fee shall be reasonable. The factors to be considered in determining the reasonableness of a fee include the following:

(1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7) and (8) \*\*\*

(c) \*\*\*.

Mr. Willett's fees were unreasonable. Despite a fee dispute of Mr. Willett's own making, and Mr. Morgan's settlement for approximately half of the disputed fee, Mr. Willett took an

entire one-third of the settlement as his fee. In addition, Mr. Willett charged Mr. Woodward \$5,000.00 to litigate the dispute. Additionally, Mr. Willett took one-third of \$100,000.00, despite the fact that only \$50,000.00 was received as a cash settlement.

RULE 4.1 Truthfulness in Statements to Others

(a) \*\*\*

Mr. Willett's letter to Mr. Woodward of August 26, 1998, asserted to Mr. Woodward that the Hartford required the Power of Attorney. This was false. It was actually Mr. Willett who desired the Power of Attorney.

RULE 8.4 Misconduct

(b) \*\*\*

Mr. Willett violated this Rule by his continuing fraud and by his letter to Mr. Woodward regarding the Power of Attorney.

(c) \*\*\*

The letter to Mr. Woodward regarding the Power of Attorney also violates this part of the Rule.

The Bar withdrew the following violations:

DR 7.104(A)  
DR 9.101(C)

The Board did not find that Mr. Willett violated the following Rules:

DR 6.101(A)(2)	DR 7-102(A)(6)
DR 6-101(B)	DR 7-102(A)(7)
DR 7-102(A)(1)	RULE 1.5(e)
DR 7-102(A)(2)	RULE 4.4
DR 7-102(A)(4)	

## II. SANCTION

The Board is of the opinion that this case is an example of lawyer greed to the detriment of the client. The Bar argued that Mr. Willett, as early as February 2, 1998, recognized the value of Mr. Woodward's claim and resolved that he would represent Mr. Woodward, not Mr. Morgan. Mr. Willett argued that his actions did not constitute a scheme to acquire Mr. Woodward as a client, but that the change in lawyers was occasioned solely by Mr. Woodward's dissatisfaction with Mr. Morgan's representation.

The Bar's position was supported by clear and convincing evidence. Mr. Willett placed great weight on an affidavit which was purportedly signed by Mr. Woodward in which he stated that he was dissatisfied with Mr. Morgan's handling of the case. Nevertheless, Mr. Woodward testified that he didn't remember signing the affidavit, and that his only reason for dissatisfaction was that Mr. Morgan was settling the case for policy limits and he believed Mr. Willett when Mr. Willett said that he could get more. The overwhelming weight of the evidence in this case indicates that Mr. Willett was motivated from the very start by a desire to make money. He attempted to assert control over Mr. Woodward's case long before he lured the client away from Mr. Morgan. Mr. Willett regularly discussed the case with Mr.

Woodward while the client was represented by Mr. Morgan. By the time Mr. Woodward was persuaded, by unwarranted promises of a larger recovery, to change lawyers, Mr. Morgan had done everything necessary to secure the maximum available relief for Mr. Woodward. Mr. Willett then proceeded to maintain litigation at Mr. Woodward's expense for another two years. To further that litigation, Mr. Willett made false and misleading statements.

Mr. Willett's misconduct, however, did not end with his solicitation of the case. He went on to take advantage of Mr. Woodward and deprive him of the settlement to which he was otherwise entitled and so desperately needed. Mr. Willett lied to and deceived his client, representatives of insurance companies, opposing counsel, and the Circuit Court for Fauquier County. He collected unreasonable fees for work lacking in competence and prosecuted with a lack of diligence.

The Board considered the following to be aggravating factors in Mr. Willett's case:

1. Mr. Willett has been disciplined on three prior occasions. All of the prior disciplinary matters involved unreasonable or inadequately explained fees. In one case, Mr. Willett was disciplined for billing a client for time spent in defending himself in a disciplinary case brought by the client. It is also significant to note that Mr. Willett's conduct in this case occurred while the prior disciplinary matters were in process.
2. We are of the opinion that Mr. Willett was acting out of a dishonest or selfish motive.
3. Mr. Willett refuses to acknowledge the wrongful nature of his conduct. His testimony to the Board lacked candor.
4. Mr. Willett's client was exceptionally vulnerable. Mr. Woodward is not a sophisticated man. He has a ninth grade education, and reads with difficulty. He is morbidly obese, and at the time of the settlement of this case was confined to bed. Perhaps most revealing is the fact that Mr. Woodward doesn't fully appreciate the extent of the abuse inflicted on him by Mr. Willett.
5. Mr. Willett has been practicing law for in excess of 50 years, a more than adequate time to be familiar with these Rules and the professional aspirations which they represent. Despite his years of practice, not a single witness spoke in support of Mr. Willett during the penalty phase of the hearing.

In mitigation, this case was not presented to the Board promptly. Nevertheless, the Bar's unexplained delay is insignificant compared to Mr. Willett's actions. Furthermore, it did not appear that Mr. Willett was prejudiced by the delay.

In summary, the Board finds Mr. Willett's conduct to be unconscionable. Mr. Willett took advantage of an uneducated, vulnerable client simply to make more money. In doing so, he harmed Mr. Morgan, perpetrated several frauds and brought discredit upon the legal profession. Mr. Willett's actions in this case are of the sort that reinforces the popular, but inaccurate, public stereotype of lawyers. The Board finds that only revocation is sufficient to protect the public from such reprehensible conduct by an unrepentant lawyer. It is so ordered effective November 22, 2004.

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ENTERED THIS 18TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2004  
VIRGINIA STATE BAR DISCIPLINARY BOARD  
By Peter A. Dingman, Chairman



### District Committees

VIRGINIA:  
BEFORE THE NINTH DISTRICT SUBCOMMITTEE  
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR

IN THE MATTER OF  
JON IAN DAVEY  
VSB Docket No. 04-090-1804

#### **SUBCOMMITTEE DETERMINATION (PUBLIC REPRIMAND WITH TERMS, PURSUANT TO AGREEMENT)**

On September 14, 2004, a meeting in this matter was held before a duly convened Ninth District Subcommittee consisting of Paul J. Feinman, Esquire, Chair presiding, Tyler E. Williams, Esquire and Langhorne S. Mauck, lay member. Pursuant to Virginia Supreme Court Rules of Court Part Six, Section IV, ¶ 13.G.1.c.(3), the Subcommittee hereby approves the Agreed Disposition entered into by Kathryn A. Ramey, Assistant Bar Counsel, and the Respondent, Jon Ian Davey ("Respondent"), for a Public Reprimand with Terms.

#### **I. FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. At all times relevant to this matter, Respondent was an attorney licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
2. Respondent has failed to perfect appeals from criminal convictions in three separate cases as follows:
  - On April 2, 2002, the Supreme Court of Virginia dismissed an appeal because Respondent failed to set forth assignments of error in the petition.
  - On June 11, 2002, a belated appeal to the Court of Appeals was granted due to Respondent's failure to timely file a petition for appeal.
  - On July 2, 2003, the Supreme Court dismissed a petition for appeal because Respondent failed to file a notice of appeal in the Court of Appeals, although he did timely file the petition for appeal.
3. Upon learning of the dismissals, Respondent prepared habeas corpus petitions for his clients in the first and third instances listed above.

#### **II. RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

Such conduct on the part of Respondent constitutes misconduct in violation of the following Rules of Professional Conduct:

##### **RULE 1.1 Competence**

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**RULE 1.3 Diligence**

(a) \*\*\*

**III. APPROVAL OF AGREED DISPOSITION FOR  
A PUBLIC REPRIMAND WITH TERMS**

Accordingly, the Subcommittee hereby approves the Agreed Disposition of a Public Reprimand with Terms. Respondent is hereby Reprimanded and must comply with the following Terms:

1. By **April 1, 2005**, Respondent shall certify to Assistant Bar Counsel Kathryn A. Ramey, or her designee, that he has completed six (6) hours of continuing legal education (CLE) in the areas of time management, law office management, or handling criminal appeals. The six (6) CLE hours shall be MCLE approved, but shall not count towards Respondent's annual MCLE requirement and Respondent shall not seek credit for the CLE hours.

If, however, Respondent fails to meet these terms within the time specified, the Ninth District Committee shall certify the case to the Virginia State Bar Disciplinary Board for Sanction Determination. If there is disagreement as to whether the Terms were fully and timely completed, the Ninth District Committee will conduct a hearing on the issue. At the hearing, the sole issue shall be whether Respondent fully completed the Terms within the time specified above. The Respondent shall have the burden of proof by clear and convincing evidence at the hearing.

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NINTH DISTRICT COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE  
VIRGINIA STATE BAR  
By: Paul J. Feinman, Chair Presiding



VIRGINIA:  
BEFORE THE SECOND DISTRICT COMMITTEE—  
SECTION I OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR

IN THE MATTERS OF  
**WILBER THURSTON HARVILLE**  
VSB Docket No. 04-021-1489 (Hunt)  
VSB DOCKET No. 04-021-0737 (Hill)

**DISTRICT COMMITTEE DETERMINATION  
(PUBLIC REPRIMAND)**

On October 14, 2004, a hearing in these matters was held before a duly convened panel from the Second District Committee—Section I, consisting of Croxton Gordon, Esquire, James Lang, Esquire, Mr. Kurt Rosenbach, (lay member), Donald Schultz, Esquire, S. Clark Daugherty, Esquire, Mr. Robert W. Carter, lay member, and Afshin Farashahi, Esquire, Chair presiding. The bar appeared by its Assistant Bar Counsel Paul D. Georgiadis. The Respondent, Wilber Thurston Harville, was present and was represented by Andrew A. Protogyrou.

Pursuant to Virginia Supreme Court Rules of Court Part Six, Section IV, Paragraph 13(H)(2)(l)(2)(d), the Second District Committee—Section I of the Virginia State Bar hereby serves upon the Respondent, Wilber Thurston Harville, the following Public Reprimand.

**VSB Docket No. 04-021-1489 (Hunt)**

I. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. On or about August 7, 2002, Wilber Thurston Harville, hereinafter Respondent, was retained by Richard Hunt to represent him in a dispute with a credit card company by filing suit against the company, following Respondent's initial review and initial informal action in this regard in June, 2001.
2. When Mr. Hunt retained Respondent, Mr. Hunt paid Respondent \$750.00 as an advance payment toward legal fees. Respondent indicated on his retainer agreement that the \$750.00 was accepted as a "deposit". Respondent did not deposit said \$750.00 into his escrow account, but rather deposited it into his operating account and spent it.
3. When Mr. Hunt retained Respondent on August 7, 2002, Respondent advised that he would complete the preparation of the Motion for Judgement within a few weeks. Notwithstanding this understanding, Respondent did not complete the drafting and filing of the Motion for Judgement until December 10, 2002.
4. After contacting Respondent several times during the ensuing months to learn the status of the matter, Mr. Hunt went to Respondent's office in early December, 2002 to meet with Respondent regarding the delay in the drafting and filing of the motion for judgement. Arriving at Respondent's office, Mr. Hunt found Respondent's office locked and dark, although it was during normal business hours. Returning to the office a few days later during business hours, Mr. Hunt found the office empty, with no signs of occupancy.
5. Respondent had moved over the weekend of Thanksgiving and had failed to notify Mr. Hunt of his move and of his new office address.
6. Mr. Hunt located Respondent by telephoning Respondent at his residence. Mr. Hunt advised Respondent that he was terminating Respondent. Respondent asked that he be given more time; Mr. Hunt agreed and Respondent thereafter filed a motion for judgement on December 10, 2002.
7. Upon Mr. Hunt's receipt of a copy of the motion for judgement on or about December 23, 2002, Mr. Hunt terminated Respondent.
8. During the approximately four months of the representation, all communications commenced from Mr. Hunts efforts. At no time did Respondent initiate communications with Mr. Hunt.
9. After terminating Respondent, Mr. Hunt telephoned Respondent and left a message requesting a partial refund of \$500.00, with Respondent keeping \$250.00 for his work

to-date. Respondent not only failed to issue any refund, but failed to respond in any fashion to Mr. Hunt's message, including failing to acknowledge it or provide any accounting of fees charged against the \$750.00 advance payment.

10. Thereafter, Mr. Hunt filed suit against Respondent for the return of his \$750.00 advance payment.
11. From January 27, 2003–April 18, 2003, Respondent repeatedly thwarted service of process by avoiding service attempts at his address of record by both the Sheriff's office and a private process server on over 16 instances, including failing to respond to written and voice-mail messages that the Sheriff and the process server were attempting to serve him. During this time, Respondent had notice of the outstanding warrant in debt. This resulted in Mr. Hunt having to dismiss his action and re-file the warrant in debt against Respondent.
12. On the return date of July 2, 2003, Respondent appeared in Chesapeake General District Court and offered to settle Mr. Hunt's claim for a refund in exchange for Mr. Hunt's dismissal of the pending action. Respondent drafted and executed a settlement agreement calling for Respondent to pay Mr. Hunt \$804.00 by August 2, 2003 and for Respondent to non-suit the pending circuit court action he had filed for Mr. Hunt on December 10, 2002.
13. Although Mr. Hunt dismissed the pending action against Respondent, Respondent did not pay Mr. Hunt. After agreeing to grant Respondent an additional two weeks to pay him, Mr. Hunt filed suit again against Respondent. On September 22, 2003, Mr. Hunt obtained a default judgment against Respondent.
14. After Mr. Hunt filed this instant bar complaint and after the subcommittee of the Second District Committee–Section I had referred this matter for a full district committee hearing, Respondent paid Hunt in full on or about June 4, 2004.
15. Respondent has not non-suited the Circuit Court action he filed on behalf of Mr. Hunt.

**II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT**

Such conduct on the part of Respondent constitutes misconduct in violation of the following Rules of the Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct:

**RULE 1.3 Diligence**

- (a) \*\*\*

**RULE 1.4 Communication**

- (a) \*\*\*

**RULE 1.15 Safekeeping Property**

- (a) (1), (2) \*\*\*  
 (c) (4) \*\*\*

**RULE 8.4 Misconduct**

- (b) \*\*\*

**VSB DOCKET No. 04-021-0737 (Hill)**

**III. FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. On or before July 23, 1998, Wilber Thurston Harville, hereinafter Respondent, was retained by Ruth Hill to represent her son Lloyd Hill on criminal charges pending in the Circuit Court of the City of Suffolk.
2. Following the entry of a guilty plea, Lloyd Hill was sentenced on August 20, 1999 to serve a prison term of 45 years. At the request of Lloyd Hill's mother, Mrs. Ruth E. Hill, Respondent thereafter agreed to appeal the matter.
3. On September 20, 1999, Respondent filed a Notice of Appeal. In the accompanying Certificate, Respondent stated that he had been appointed by the Court to represent the appellant, and therefore the filing fee for the appeal was waived. In fact, Respondent was never appointed on the appeal. Respondent did not accompany the Notice of Appeal with the required filing fee.
4. On October 21, 1999, Respondent filed a motion for extension of time to file the transcript in the appeal, one day after the deadline for requesting an extension had expired.
5. By order dated October 22, 1999, the Court of Appeals denied said motion for extension as not timely filed.
6. On December 14, 1999, the Clerk's Office of the Court of Appeals wrote Respondent advising that a filing fee of \$25.00 was due by December 27, 1999 or else the appeal would be dismissed.
7. On December 30, 1999, the Court of Appeals dismissed the appeal for Respondent's failure to file a filing fee as requested.
8. Respondent did not ever advise Lloyd Hill of the dismissal of his appeal by the Virginia Court of Appeals, although he contends—and Mrs. Ruth E. Hill denies, that he advised Mrs. Ruth E. Hill of the denial of the appeal.

**IV. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT**

Such conduct on the part of Respondent constitutes misconduct in violation of the following Rules of the Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct:

**RULE 1.3 Diligence**

- (a) \*\*\*

**RULE 1.4 Communication**

- (a) \*\*\*

Although the bar alleged a violation of Rule 1.16(c), the Committee found that the bar failed to present clear and convincing evidence of such and dismissed the Rule violation.

**V. IMPOSITION OF PUBLIC REPRIMAND**

Accordingly, it is the decision of the Committee to impose a Public Reprimand on the Respondent, Wilber Thurston Harville, and he is so reprimanded.

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SECOND DISTRICT COMMITTEE—SECTION I  
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR  
By: Afshin Farashahi  
Chair Presiding



VIRGINIA :  
BEFORE THE FIFTH DISTRICT--SECTION III  
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR  
IN THE MATTER OF  
**LAWRENCE RAYMOND MORTON, ESQ.**  
VSB Docket # 03-053-1264

**SUBCOMMITTEE DETERMINATION  
PUBLIC REPRIMAND**

On October 25, 2004, a meeting in this matter was held before a duly convened Fifth District—Section III Subcommittee consisting of E. Allen Newcomb, Esq., William Hanson, lay member,<sup>1</sup> and H. Jan Roltsch-Anoll, Esq., presiding.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, Part 6, § IV, ¶ 13(G), the Fifth District—Section III Subcommittee of the Virginia State Bar hereby serves upon the Respondent the following Public Reprimand, as set forth below:

**I. FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. At all times relevant hereto, Lawrence Raymond Morton, Esq. (hereafter "Respondent"), was an attorney licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
2. On or about March 6, 2002, Bert Eyler (hereafter "Complainant") retained the Respondent to represent him in a divorce matter that had been filed in the Fairfax County, Virginia, Circuit Court on February 5, 2002.
3. One of the objectives of the Complainant was to have an adjustment made in the level of child support he was to pay pursuant to the terms of a property settlement agreement which he had entered into with his wife prior to the time he had retained the Respondent.
4. The Respondent filed an Answer and Cross-Bill of Complaint on behalf of the Complainant on or about April 3, 2002. On Complainant's behalf, Respondent made the following averments in Paragraphs 12E and 12F of the Cross-Bill:

Defendant [Complainant in this disciplinary proceeding] does not agree to the child support provision of the purported agreement (Paragraph 5). To the knowledge of Defendant's counsel, there has been no attempt to do a calculation of the child support as would be recommended by the Virginia child support guidelines to be found at Virginia Code section 20-108.2.

Complainant [Complainant's wife] has not performed or satisfied, her obligations of financial disclosure as required by paragraph 31 of the purported agreement.

To Defendant this evinces intent by Complainant that she not be bound by the purported agreement, but that the tendrils of legal binding extend only in the direction of the Defendant. In addition, Complainant's lack of financial disclosure leaves counsel for Defendant unable to advise his client as to whether the amount of child support called for in the purported agreement is at all consistent with the Virginia child support guidelines.

5. The Respondent propounded no discovery on Complainant's behalf in the Circuit Court proceedings for the purpose of securing the financial information essential to the calculation of child support under the statutory schedules. Respondent also failed to file any motion and notice any hearing thereon at which Respondent would request the Court to set Complainant's child support obligations pursuant to the statutory schedules.
6. On September 23, 2002, following the Court's entry of an Order incorporating the aforesaid separation agreement on June 18, 2002, and the entry of a Final Decree of Divorce on August 15, 2002, the Complainant engaged new counsel, who reopened the case, filed a motion to modify child support, conducted discovery, and successfully negotiated a reduction of Complainant's child support obligation and other matters.
7. The Virginia State Bar opened a formal Complaint respecting the Respondent's aforesaid conduct. On November 8, 2002, Bar Counsel directed a letter of that date to Respondent, enclosing the Complaint, and stating, *inter alia*, in bold and underlined text, the following: "please review the complaint and provide this office with a written answer, including an original and one copy of your response and all attached exhibits, within twenty-one (21) days of the date of this letter." The Respondent failed to file a written response to the Complaint with the Bar as required by the said letter, either within twenty-one (21) days, or at any time thereafter.

**II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT**

The Subcommittee finds that the following Rules of Professional Conduct have been violated:

**RULE 1.1 Competence**

\* \* \*

**RULE 8.1 Bar Admission And Disciplinary Matters**

(c) \* \* \*

**III. PUBLIC REPRIMAND**

Accordingly, it is the decision of the Subcommittee to impose a PUBLIC REPRIMAND on Respondent, Lawrence Raymond Morton, Esquire, and he is so reprimanded.

\* \* \*

FIFTH DISTRICT—SECTION III SUBCOMMITTEE  
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR

By H. Jan Roltsch-Anoll  
Chair/Chair Designate



FOOTNOTE \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> Member, Fifth District—Section II Committee, serving as substitute for unavailable lay members of Fifth District—Section III Committee.