

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

► Contact the Office of Chief Disciplinary Counsel at 512-453-5535, the Board of Disciplinary Appeals at 512-475-1578 or txboda.org, or the State Commission on Judicial Conduct at 512-463-5533.

REINSTATEMENTS

William D. Beard [#01978760], 59, filed a petition in the 14th District Court in Dallas County for reinstatement as a member of the State Bar of Texas.

Robert A. Heard [#00795413], 57, has filed a petition in the 95th District Court in Dallas County for reinstatement as a member of the State Bar of Texas.

JUDICIAL ACTIONS

To read the entire public sanctions, go to scjc.texas.gov.

On August 20, 2019, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct issued an order of suspension without pay to **Betty Velez**, justice of the peace, Precinct 4, Van Horn, Culberson County.

On August 8, 2019, the State Commis-

sion on Judicial Conduct issued a public warning and order of additional education to **Kim Baggett**, municipal court judge for the city of Breckenridge, Stephens County.

On August 8, 2019, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct issued a public admonition to **Michael Crouch**, former justice of the peace, Precinct 5, Timpson, Shelby County.

On August 8, 2019, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct issued a public admonition to **John Lipscombe**, judge of Travis County Court at Law No. 3, Austin, Travis County.

On August 26, 2019, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct issued a public admonition and order of additional education to **Beatrice “Bebe” Rocha**, justice of the peace, Precinct 1, Horseshoe Bay, Llano County.

DISBARMENT

On June 26, 2019, **Daniel Armando Sandoval** [#24075521], 38, of Helotes, was disbarred. An evidentiary panel of the District 10 Grievance Committee found that Sandoval failed to maintain a client's funds in a trust account, failed to deliver funds to the party entitled to receive them, and engaged in conduct involving dishonesty, misrepresentation, or deceit.

Sandoval violated Rules 1.14(a), 1.14(b), and 8.04(a)(3). He was ordered to pay \$35,000 in restitution and \$5,921.85 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

RESIGNATIONS

On August 23, 2019, the Supreme Court of Texas accepted the resignation, in lieu of discipline, of **Anne Elizabeth Ohlrich** [#24005254], 49, of San Antonio. At the time of her resignation, Ohlrich had four grievances pending alleging Ohlrich accepted legal matters beyond her competence, failed to keep a client informed, misappropriated client funds, and engaged in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation.

Ohlrich violated Rules 1.01(a)(1), 1.03(a), 1.14(a), 1.14(b), and 8.04(a)(3).

On August 23, 2019, the Supreme Court of Texas accepted the resignation, in lieu of discipline, of **Daniella Nicole Tiller** [#24073601], 37, of Houston. At the time of Tiller's resignation, she had two pending grievances. In one matter, upon termination of representation, Tiller failed to surrender papers and property to which her client was entitled. In the second matter, while representing her client, Tiller neglected the legal matter entrusted to her and failed to explain the legal matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit her client to make informed decisions regarding the representation. In both matters, Tiller failed to timely furnish to the Office of Chief Disciplinary Counsel a response or other information as required by the Texas Rules of Disciplinary Procedure.

Tiller violated Rules 1.01(b)(1), 1.03(b), 1.15(d), and 8.04(a)(8).

SUSPENSIONS

On June 28, 2019, **Roland M. Ferguson Jr.** [#00786425], 64, of Sulphur Springs, received a four-year partially probated suspension effective July 15, 2019, with the first two years actively suspended and the remainder probated. An evidentiary panel of the District 1 Grievance Committee found that Ferguson neglected the legal matter entrusted to him by failing to file a petition in a family law matter, failed to keep his clients reasonably informed about the status of their family law matter and failed to promptly comply with reasonable requests for information from his clients, failed to hold funds belonging to his clients separate from his own property, and failed to keep said funds in a separate trust account. Upon termination of representation, Ferguson failed to refund advance payments of fees that had not been earned.

Ferguson violated Rules 1.01(b)(1), 1.03(a), 1.14(a), and 1.15(d). He was ordered to pay \$2,400 in restitution and \$2,145.50 in attorneys' fees.

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STATEWIDE REPRESENTATION

On August 14, 2019, **Esteban Gonzales** [#24028747], 46, of San Benito, agreed to a four-year fully probated suspension effective August 1, 2019. An evidentiary panel of the District 12 Grievance Committee found that Gonzales failed to keep a client reasonably informed and failed to provide a full accounting of funds.

Gonzales violated Rules 1.03(a) and 1.14(b). He was ordered to pay \$3,100 in restitution and \$800 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On December 21, 2018, **Eric Kevin Gormly** [#24071309], 64, of Dallas received a 12-month fully probated suspension. The 162nd District Court of Dallas County found that Gormly committed professional misconduct by violating Texas Rules of Professional Conduct Rule 8.04(a)(8) [A lawyer shall not fail to timely furnish to the Office of Chief Disciplinary Counsel or a district grievance committee a response or other information as required by the Texas Rules of Disciplinary Procedure, unless he or she in good faith timely asserts a privilege or other legal ground for failure to do so].

Gormly was ordered to pay \$2,400 in attorneys' fees.

On December 18, 2018, **Eric Kevin Gormly** [#24071309], 64, of Dallas, received a 24-month partially probated suspension, with the first six months actively suspended and the remainder probated. The 101st District Court of Dallas County found that Gormly committed professional misconduct by violating Texas Rules of Professional Conduct Rules 1.15(a)(3) [A lawyer shall decline to represent a client or, where representation has commenced, shall withdraw, except as stated in paragraph (c), from the representation of a client, if the lawyer is discharged, with or without good cause] and 8.04(a)(11) [A lawyer shall not engage in the practice of law when the lawyer is on inactive status or when the lawyer's right to practice has been suspended or terminated including but not limited to situations where a lawyer's right to practice has been administratively suspended for

failure to timely pay required fees or assessments or for failure to comply with Article XII of the State Bar Rules relating to mandatory continuing legal education].

Gormly was ordered to pay \$3,600 in attorneys' fees.

On August 14, 2019, **Douglas Matthew McMaster** [#13786020], 56, of Brownsville, agreed to an eight-year partially probated suspension effective August 15, 2019, with the first four years actively served and the remainder probated. An evidentiary panel of the District 12 Grievance Committee found that McMaster failed to respond to the grievance.

McMaster violated Rule 8.04(a)(8). He was ordered to pay \$800 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On August 14, 2019, **Douglas Matthew McMaster** [#13786020], 56, of Brownsville, agreed to an eight-year partially probated suspension effective August 15, 2019, with the first four years actively served and the remainder probated. An evidentiary panel of the District 12 Grievance Committee found McMaster neglected a client's matter, failed to keep a client reasonably informed, failed to return the unearned portion of a fee, and failed to respond to the grievance.


McMaster violated Rules 1.01(b)(1), 1.03(a), 1.15(d), and 8.04(a)(8). He was ordered to pay \$1,800 in restitution and \$800 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On July 10, 2019, **Laura Gayle Nelson** [#14903550], 60, of San Marcos, accepted a one-month active suspension effective August 1, 2019. The 274th Judicial District Court of Comal County found that Nelson committed professional misconduct by violating Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct Rules 1.01(b)(1) [neglecting a legal matter entrusted to the lawyer], 1.03(a) [failing to keep a client reasonably informed about the status of a matter and promptly comply with reasonable requests for information], 1.03(b) [failing to explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions], 1.14(a) [failing to hold funds and other property belonging in whole or

part to clients or third persons in a lawyer's possession separate from the lawyer's own property], 1.14(b) [failing, upon receiving funds or other property in which a client or third person has an interest, to promptly notify the client or third person and render a full accounting upon request], 1.15(d) [failing, upon termination of representation, to reasonably protect a client's interests], and 8.04(a)(8) [failing to respond to a grievance in a timely manner].


Nelson was ordered to pay \$3,000 in restitution and \$200 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On June 28, 2019, **Scott Patrick Ogle** [#00797170], 57, of Austin, received a one-year fully probated suspension effective July 1, 2019. An evidentiary panel of the District 9 Grievance Committee found that while representing himself in criminal matters, Ogle obtained discovery materials from the prosecuting attorney's office pursuant



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to the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure § 39.14, which prohibits disclosure of certain discovery materials produced in criminal cases. Ogle published the materials provided to him in violation of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Ogle violated Rule 8.04(a)(12). He was ordered to pay \$5,595 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On May 15, 2019, **Joe Jesse Ponce III** [#24014329], 61, of San Antonio, received a three-year partially probated suspension effective June 1, 2019, with the first four months actively served and the remainder probated. An evidentiary panel of the District 10 Grievance Committee found that Ponce knowingly revealed confidential information of a client and failed to render a full accounting.

Ponce violated Rules 1.05(b)(1)(ii) and 1.14(b). He was ordered to pay \$4,228.50 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

Ponce has filed an appeal.

On July 31, 2019, **Ross A. Rodriguez** [#24025756], 55, of San Antonio, accepted a three-year-and-eight-month fully probated suspension effective August 1, 2019. An evidentiary panel of the District 10 Grievance Committee found that Rodriguez failed to keep his client reasonably informed.

Rodriguez violated Rule 1.03(a). He was ordered to pay \$6,000 in restitution and \$800 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On August 6, 2019, **Aaron Christian Seymour** [#24094943], 34, of Waco, accepted a three-year fully probated suspension effective August 1, 2019. An evidentiary panel of the District 8 Grievance Committee found that while representing a client in a personal injury matter, Seymour failed to respond to discovery requests, failed to respond to a summary judgment motion filed by opposing counsel, and failed to keep his client informed about the case.

Seymour further failed to file a response to the grievance as required by the Texas Rules of Disciplinary Procedure.

Seymour violated Rules 1.01(b)(1), 1.03(a), and 8.04(a)(8). He was ordered to pay \$645 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On August 2, 2019, **Kimberly Dian Smith** [#24041944], 41, of Atlanta, received a two-year fully probated suspension effective August 15, 2019. An evidentiary panel of the District 1 Grievance Committee found that Smith failed to carry out completely the obligations that she owed to her client, failed to keep her client reasonably informed about the status of her case, and failed to promptly comply with reasonable requests for information from her client. Smith failed to timely furnish a response to the Office of Chief Disciplinary Counsel.

Smith violated Rules 1.01(b)(2), 1.03(a), and 8.04(a)(8). She was ordered to pay \$2,000 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On July 18, 2019, **Ronald T. Spriggs** [#00792853], 61, of Amarillo, received a 24-month partially probated suspension effective August 1, 2019, with the first three months actively suspended and the remainder probated. An evidentiary panel of the District 13 Grievance Committee found that Spriggs was hired to represent his client in a felony criminal matter. During the course of the representation, Spriggs failed to appear in court for his client's criminal trial. Spriggs also failed to keep his client reasonably informed about the status of the criminal matter and failed to promptly comply with the client's reasonable requests for case information. Upon termination of representation, Spriggs failed to refund his client's unearned fees.

Spriggs violated Rules 1.01(b)(1), 1.03(a), and 1.15(d). He was ordered to pay \$3,000 in restitution and \$4,000 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On July 3, 2019, **Craig A. Washington Sr.** [#20901000], 77, of Houston, received a five-year partially probated

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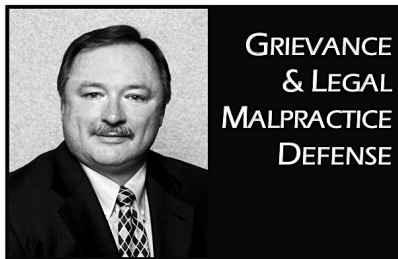
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suspension effective July 1, 2019. The 423rd District Court of Bastrop County found that Washington committed professional misconduct by violating Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct Rules 1.01(b)(1) [neglecting a legal matter entrusted to the lawyer], 1.03(a) [failing to keep a client reasonably informed about the status of a matter and promptly comply with reasonable requests for information], and 1.15(d) [upon termination of representation, a lawyer shall take steps to the extent reasonably practicable to protect a client's interests, such as giving reasonable notice to the client, allowing time for employment of other counsel, surrendering papers and property to which the client is entitled, and refunding any advance payments of fees that have not been earned].

Washington was ordered to pay \$10,000 in restitution.

PUBLIC REPRIMANDS

On July 5, 2019, **Jacques Lawrence De La Mota** [#24038857], 54, of Del Rio, accepted a public reprimand. The 83rd Judicial District Court of Val Verde County found that De La Mota committed professional misconduct by violating Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct Rule 1.15(d) [failing to refund any advance payments of fees that have not been earned].

De La Mota was ordered to pay \$1,000 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On July 24, 2019, **Ronald G. Greening** [#08402600], 73, of Austin, accepted a public reprimand. An evidentiary panel of the District 9 Grievance Committee found that on January 2, 2014, the complainant hired Greening to represent her in her capacity as trustee for her husband's trust. Over the course of the representation, the complainant paid Greening \$76,827.50, including an advanced fee paid in June 2015. On October 1, 2015, the complainant fired Greening via letter. In that letter she requested an accounting of the advanced fee and requested Greening to forward her file to new counsel. On January 13, 2016, the complainant sent

another letter to Greening, again requesting an accounting. The complainant did not receive an accounting, the unearned portion of the advanced fee, or her file until May 2016, after she filed a grievance. At that time, Greening refunded \$400 in unearned fees to the complainant.

Greening violated Rule 1.14(b) and 1.15(d). He was ordered to pay \$8,614.49 in attorneys' fees and expenses.

On August 2, 2019, **Kevin F. Kurtz** [#11770500], 72, of Dallas, entered into an agreed judgment of public reprimand. An investigatory panel of the District 6 Grievance Committee found that Kurtz accepted employment in a legal matter in which Kurtz knew or should have known was beyond his competence. Kurtz failed to keep his client reasonably informed about the status of his legal matter and failed to promptly comply with reasonable requests for information. Kurtz had

direct supervisory authority over a typing service and failed to make reasonable efforts to ensure that the typing service's conduct was compatible with the professional obligations of Kurtz.

Kurtz violated Rules 1.01(a), 1.03(a), and 5.03(a). He was ordered to pay \$500 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On July 22, 2019, **Carlos A. Ryerson** [#17492500], 70, of Houston, accepted a judgment of public reprimand. The 11th Judicial District Court, Harris County, found that Ryerson misused his IOLTA account for non-client funds.

Ryerson violated Rule 1.14(a). He was ordered to pay \$250 in attorneys' fees.

On July 18, 2019, **Adjua Rochelle Umoja-Justice** [#20377000], 60, of Houston, accepted a public reprimand. The 80th Judicial District Court of Harris County found that Umoja-Jus-

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tice failed to ensure that the conduct of a non-lawyer under her direct supervision was compatible with the professional obligations of a lawyer, and she permitted the conduct involved.

Umoja-Justice violated Rules 5.03(a) and 5.03(b)(1). She was ordered to pay \$250 in attorneys' fees.

PRIVATE REPRIMANDS

Listed here is a breakdown of Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct violations for 10 attorneys,

with the number in parentheses indicating the frequency of the violation. Please note that an attorney may be reprimanded for more than one rule violation.

1.01(b)(1)—In representing a client, a lawyer shall not neglect a legal matter entrusted to the lawyer (2).

1.03(a)—for failing to keep a client reasonably informed about the status of a matter and promptly comply with reasonable requests for information (5).

1.14(b)—for failing, upon receiving funds or other property in which a client or third person has an interest, to promptly notify the client or third person and render a full accounting upon request (1).

1.15(d)—for failing, upon termination of representation, to reasonably protect a client's interests, give notice to the client to seek other counsel, surrender papers and property which belong to the client, or refund any advance payments of fees that have not been earned (5).

5.03(a)—for failing to make reasonable efforts to ensure that the non-lawyer's conduct is compatible with the professional obligations of the lawyer (1).

8.04(a)(8)—for failing to timely furnish to a district grievance committee a response or other information as required unless he or she timely asserts a privilege or other legal ground for failure to do so (1). **TBJ**

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