



DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

General questions regarding attorney discipline should be directed to the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's Office, toll-free (877)953-5535 or (512)453-5535. The Board of Disciplinary Appeals may be reached at (512)475-1578. Information and copies of actual orders are available at www.txboda.org. The State Commission on Judicial Conduct may be contacted toll-free, (877)228-5750 or (512)463-5533. Please note that persons disciplined by the Commission on Judicial Conduct are not necessarily licensed attorneys.

JUDICIAL ACTIONS

On Dec. 31, 2009, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct accepted the resignation, in lieu of disciplinary action by the Commission, of the Hon. **Martha Brennon-Nease**, formerly judge of the Tenaha Municipal Court of Shelby County. The Commission found that two complaints were filed with the Commission, alleging that Brennon-Nease engaged in various instances of inappropriate and unethical conduct. Brennon-Nease resigned from

office for reasons unrelated to the above-described complaints in June 2009.

On March 30, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct issued a public reprimand and an order of additional education against the Hon. **Joe Henry Garza**, justice of the peace, Precinct 2 of Hidalgo County in La Joya. The Commission found that Garza (1) found numerous individuals in contempt of court without any legal authority for doing so and ordered them arrested and incarcerated without first issuing a written finding of contempt and/or a written commitment order; (2) required defendants to post "cash only" bonds, in violation of Article 17.02 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure; (3) dismissed citations without a written motion from the prosecutor; (4) failed to reduce orders of deferred disposition and other orders and judgments to writing; (5) ordered the arrest of and incarceration of defendants for contempt of court orders that were issued when the defendants were 16 years old, in violation of Article 45.050 of the Code of Criminal Procedure; (6) ordered truancy defendants to relinquish their cell phones to the court as a condition of deferred disposition, without legal authority for doing so, and thereafter retained them for a period in excess of 180 days; (7) held contempt hearings in truancy cases at the request of parents, with prior notice to the truancy defendants and/or without any documentation of school attendance from the school district; (8) issued emergency protective orders containing directives outside the scope of the judge's legal authority; (9) directed defendants to attend anger management courses at an institute of the judge's choosing; (10)

presided over two matters involving family members, who were the sons of his immediate supervisor, in which he gave them favorable treatment; and (11) engaged in sloppy and inadequate recordkeeping procedures. Garza violated Canons 2A and B and 3B(1), B(2), and 3B(5) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct, and Article V, Section I-a(6)A of the Texas Constitution.

On March 30, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct issued a public admonition against the Hon. **W. Jeanne Meurer** [#13985500], formerly judge of the 98th Judicial District Court of Travis County in Austin. On Aug. 26, 2008, an initial detention hearing took place before Meurer at the Gardner-Betts Juvenile Detention Center, in a case involving E.Y., a juvenile who had been arrested the night before for allegedly assaulting her mother. After a brief discussion with E.Y., Meurer sent the juvenile out of the courtroom and began questioning the remaining participants about their recommendations. Initially, caseworkers discussed the pros and cons of a variety of options but appeared to believe detention was the more viable option until treatment services could be arranged and E.Y.'s psychological and medical needs could be evaluated. The caseworkers also indicated that they needed additional time to formulate a family safety plan for E.Y.'s eventual return home.

According to numerous witnesses, as the caseworkers attempted to explain their concerns and recommendations, Meurer became visibly angry and motioned for the court reporter to start recording the proceedings. Meurer further registered her disapproval of the rec-

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ommendation to detain E.Y. by ordering the caseworkers and E.Y.'s mother to be detained in a locked cell for 20 minutes.

Meurer violated Canons 2A and 3B(4) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct, and Article V, Section 1-a(6)A of the Texas Constitution.

On March 26, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct issued a public admonition against the Hon. **Monica Guerrero** [#00790801], judge of the Bexar County Court at Law No. 7 in San Antonio. In 2008, the Commission received and investigated a complaint from an anonymous source that alleged numerous incidents of misconduct against Judge Guerrero. Among the allegations were claims that Guerrero received stolen Southwest Airline travel vouchers from her bailiff; accepted free tickets to San Antonio Spurs basketball games from lawyers and/or bail bondsmen; accepted a patio built at her residence as a gift from two attorneys; and made a false loan application to obtain a construction loan for \$15,000, but used the proceeds for personal expenses and a vacation instead of paying for the patio construction.

Guerrero violated Canons 2A, 2B, 4A, and 4D(4) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct and Article V, Section 1-a(6)A of the Texas Constitution.

RESIGNATIONS

On March 15, the Supreme Court of Texas accepted the resignation, in lieu of discipline, of **Deborah Glover Means** [#13887600], 48, of Plano. Means, a managing shareholder in her firm, created fictitious client expense requests and requested firm checks to purchase cashier's checks for the fictitious expenses. She then took the firm checks to the firm's bank and instructed the bank to issue cashier's checks made payable to parties to whom Means and/or her family owed money. Further, in numerous instances, clients were billed for fictitious expenses. Means then misappropriated

the fictitious expense funds for her own use. Means has since made full restitution to the law firm.

Means violated Rules 8.04(a)(2) and (a)(3).

On March 15, the Supreme Court of Texas accepted the resignation, in lieu of discipline, of **Kevin S. Williams** [#24042165], 35, of Burleson. At the time of Williams' resignation, there was one pending disciplinary matter against him alleging that he used a judge's signature stamp without authorization on a fictitious document relating to a non-existent file. Further, Williams failed to file a written response to the complaint.

Williams violated Rules 3.03(a)(1) and a(5) and 8.04(a)(2), (a)(3), and (a)(8).

On March 24, the Supreme Court of Texas accepted the resignation, in lieu of discipline, of **Mark Lawrence** [#12049650], 45, of Miami, Fla. The Court found that on March 5, 2009, an order and unconditional guilty plea and disbarment on consent were entered in the Supreme Court of Florida in a matter, styled Case No. SC09-310, Lower Tribunal No(s.): 2009-70, 308(11N), *The Florida Bar v. Mark Lawrence*, disbarring Lawrence from the practice of law in Florida. As a result of the disbarment by the Supreme Court of Florida, Lawrence would be subject to reciprocal discipline under Part IX of the Rules.

On March 24, the Supreme Court of Texas accepted the resignation, in lieu of discipline, of **Linda Jane McCue** [#24034563], 36, of Mansfield. In July 2006, the complainant hired McCue to represent him in connection with various legal matters. In August 2006, the complainant obtained a check from an insurance company in settlement of an auto accident claim on behalf of the complainant's minor stepson. The settlement check was made payable to the complainant and the insured. Thereafter,

McCue failed to hold the funds belonging in whole or in part to the complainant or a third person that were in McCue's possession in connection with the representation separate from McCue's own property. McCue failed to promptly deliver the funds to those persons entitled to receive them. McCue subsequently failed to keep the funds separate until there was an accounting and severance of each person's interest. McCue engaged in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation.

McCue violated Rules 1.14(a), (b), and (c) and 8.04(a)(3). She was ordered to pay \$3,324.45 in restitution.

On March 24, the Supreme Court of Texas accepted the resignation, in

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lieu of discipline, of **Nelda J. Ortiz** [#15324250], 54, of Boerne. At the time of Ortiz's resignation, there were six disciplinary matters pending against her. In all matters, Ortiz failed to keep settlement money in her IOLTA account. In three matters, Ortiz failed to disburse settlement money to clients.

Ortiz violated Rules 1.02(a)(2); 1.03(a); 1.14(a), (b), and (c); and 8.04(a)(2) and (a)(3). She was ordered to pay \$144,080.97 in restitution.

SUSPENSIONS

On Feb. 18, **David Lashford** [#11966850], 59, of Texarkana, received a one-year, partially probated suspension effective April 1, with the first two months actively suspended and the

remainder probated. In representing the complainant, Lashford neglected the legal matter entrusted to him. Lashford failed to keep the complainant reasonably informed about the status of the matter; failed to promptly comply with reasonable requests for information; and, upon termination of representation, Lashford failed to refund advance payments of the fee that had not been earned. Lashford failed to timely furnish to the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office a response or other information as required by the Texas Rules of Disciplinary Procedure.

Lashford violated Rules 1.01(b)(1), 1.03(a), 1.15(d), and 8.04(a)(8). He was ordered to pay \$1,337.60 in attorney's fees and expenses and \$750 in restitution.

On Feb. 9, **Michael Joseph Williams** [#24025717], 50, of Dallas, received a one-year, partially probated suspension effective Feb. 17 with the first three months actively served and the remainder probated. An evidentiary panel of the District 6 Grievance Committee found that Williams neglected the legal matter entrusted to him by the complainant. Williams failed to keep the complainant reasonably informed about the status of his case and failed to comply with reasonable requests for information. Williams failed to timely furnish to the Chief Disciplinary Counsels' office a response to the complaint.

Williams violated Rules 1.01(b)(1), 1.03(a), and 8.04(a)(8). He was ordered to pay \$1,649.02 in attorney's fees and expenses.

On March 5, **V. Antonio Aninao** [#01264500], 56, of Houston, received a three-year, partially probated suspension, effective April 1, with the first six months actively served and the remainder probated. An evidentiary panel of the District 4-A Grievance Committee found that in two separate cases, Aninao neglected the legal matters entrusted to

him and failed to keep his clients reasonably informed about the status of their cases. Aninao also failed to comply with reasonable requests for information from both of his clients.

Aninao violated Rules 1.01(b)(1) and 1.03(a). He was ordered to pay \$2,085 in attorney's fees and \$570 in expenses.

On Feb. 17, **Stephen T. Leas** [#12095255], 55, of McAllen, received a five-year, partially probated suspension effective upon the conclusion of his appeal, with the first six months actively served and the remainder probated. The 332nd District Court of Hidalgo County found Leas, upon receiving funds in which his client had an interest, failed to promptly render a full accounting upon request.

Leas violated Rule 1.14(b). He was ordered to pay \$23,050 in attorney's fees and expenses.

On March 12, **John David Townsend** [#20165850], 46, of Fort Worth, received a two-year, partially probated suspension effective March 3, with the first six months actively served and the remainder probated. An evidentiary panel of the District 7 Grievance Committee found that Townsend failed to promptly deliver to his client funds that the client was entitled to receive. Upon request by the client, Townsend failed to promptly render a full accounting regarding such funds. Upon termination of representation, Townsend failed to refund advance payments of the fee that had not been earned.

Townsend violated Rules 1.14(b) and 1.15(d). Townsend was ordered to pay \$2,169.99 in attorney's fees and costs and \$1,500 in restitution.

On March 8, **Aaron Rene Ramirez** [#24027644], 39, of Dallas, received a 10-year, partially probated suspension effective March 15, with the first three years actively suspended and the remainder probated. An evidentiary panel of

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the District 6-C1 Grievance Committee found that, in connection with a bankruptcy proceeding, Ramirez knowingly made a false statement of material fact or law to a tribunal. Ramirez engaged in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation.

Ramirez violated Rules 3.03(a)(1) and 8.04(a)(3). He was ordered to pay \$6,286.41 in attorney's fees and expenses.

On Jan. 12, **Scott A. Scher** [#17743500], 50, of Prosper, received a two-year, active suspension effective Feb. 1. The 116th Judicial District Court found that Scher was hired by two clients to pursue civil claims. In representing both clients, Scher neglected the legal matters entrusted to him. Scher failed to keep the clients reasonably informed about the status of their real estate and collection matters and failed to promptly comply with reasonable requests for information from the clients. After termination of representation, Scher failed to refund advance payments of fees that had not been earned and failed to surrender papers and property to which the clients were entitled. Scher failed to timely furnish to the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office a response or other information as required by the Texas Rules of Disciplinary Procedure. Scher did not in good faith timely assert a privilege or other legal ground for failure to do so.

Scher violated Rules 1.01(b)(1), 1.03(a), 1.15(d), and 8.04(a)(8). He was ordered to pay \$12,457.44 in attorney's fees and costs and \$35,000 in restitution.

Scher has filed an appeal.

On March 11, **Hollie Vesla Greene** [#24006564], 34, of Ocala, Fla., received a two-year, partially probated suspension effective June 13, with the first year actively suspended and the remainder probated. In connection with a district court lawsuit, Greene failed to disclose a fact to a tribunal when disclo-

sure was necessary to avoid assisting a criminal or fraudulent act. Greene violated a disciplinary judgment and engaged in the practice of law when her right to practice had been suspended.

Greene violated Rules 3.03(a)(2) and 8.04(a)(7) and (a)(11). She was ordered to pay \$2,000 in attorney's fees and expenses.

REPRIMANDS

On March 12, **Conswella Edwards** [#24027305], 51, of Arlington, received a public reprimand. An evidentiary panel of the District 7 Grievance Committee found that the complainant and her husband hired Edwards to represent them in an adoption. Upon request by the complainant, Edwards failed to promptly render a full accounting of the retainer paid. Upon termination of representation, Edwards failed to surrender papers and property to which the complainant was entitled.

Edwards violated Rules 1.14(b) and 1.15(d). She was ordered to pay \$250.83 in expenses.

Edwards did not file an appeal.

On March 18, **Leland A. Reinhard** [#16756700], 59, of Cleburne, received a public reprimand. The 18th Judicial District Court found that in September 2002, Reinhard agreed to represent the complainant and his wife in a contingency fee matter. Reinhard failed to obtain a signed written contingency fee agreement from the complainant's wife in the matter. In addition, Reinhard neglected the matter and failed to promptly disburse funds to a medical provider.

Reinhard violated Rules 1.01(b)(1), 1.04(d), and 1.14(b). He was ordered to pay attorney's fees in the sum of \$2,520.

On Dec. 29, 2009, **Joe Marr Wilson** [#21697700], 45, of Amarillo, received a public reprimand. An evidentiary panel of the District 13 Grievance Committee

found that Wilson disbursed trust account funds, belonging to his client, to himself when he was not entitled to them by virtue of the representation or by law.

Wilson violated Rule 1.14(c). He was ordered to pay \$1,550.65 in attorney's fees and expenses and \$5,677.86 in restitution.

Wilson filed an appeal on April 1. ❖

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