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## JUDICIAL ACTIONS

To read the entire public sanctions, go to [scjc.texas.gov](http://scjc.texas.gov).

On March 18, 2020, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct issued a public admonition and order of additional education to **Rosie Speedlin Gonzalez**, judge of County Court at Law No. 13, San Antonio, Bexar County.

On March 19, 2020, the Special Court of Review issued its opinion on a matter appealed from the State Commission on Judicial Conduct proceedings; Special Court of Review Opinion, Docket No. 19-0005, In Re Inquiry Concerning the Honorable **Gena Slaughter**.

## REINSTATEMENT

**Joe Valle** [#20435450], 62, of Harlingen,

filed a petition in the 107th Judicial District Court of Cameron County, Cause No. 2020-DCL-01586 for reinstatement as a member of the State Bar of Texas.

## DISBARMENTS

On February 26, 2020, **Arturo A. Guzman** [#08654525], 56, of San Marcos, was disbarred. The District 15 Grievance Committee found that Guzman failed to keep the client reasonably informed, failed to safeguard the client's funds, and failed to respond to the grievance in a timely manner.

Guzman violated Rules 1.03(a), 1.14(a), 1.14(b), and 8.04(a)(8). He was ordered to pay \$46,097.12 in restitution and \$4,738.36 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On February 18, 2020, **Joe Jesse Ponce III** [#24014329], 61, of San Antonio, was

disbarred. The 285th Civil District Court of Bexar County found that Ponce violated Rules 1.03(a) and 1.03(b) [communication with a client], 1.08(b) [business transaction with a client], 1.15(d) [protect client interest upon withdrawal], and 8.04(a)(3) [conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation]. Ponce was ordered to pay \$872.42 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On February 5, 2020, **Damon Dean Robertson** [#24005285], 45, of Austin, was disbarred by an evidentiary panel of the District 9 Grievance Committee related to two disciplinary matters. In the first case, the panel found that Robertson was hired to represent a client in a divorce matter. A divorce decree was signed wherein the client was awarded funds from the sale of property as well as from a 401(k). The awarded funds were transferred to Robertson to be held in trust. Robertson failed to deliver the funds to his client, failed to hold the funds separate from his own property, and disbursed funds to persons who were not entitled to receive them. He further neglected the legal matter, failed to carry out the obligations he owed to his client, committed a criminal act, and engaged in dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation.

In the second case, Robertson was hired to represent a client in two business litigation matters. The panel found that Robertson neglected these matters by failing to respond to discovery and motions and failing to attend hearings. Robertson further failed to carry out the obligations owed to his client, failed to communicate with his client, and failed to explain the matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit his client to make informed decisions. Robertson also failed to file written responses to these two disciplinary matters as directed.

Robertson violated Rules 1.01(b)(1), 1.01(b)(2), 1.03(a), 1.14(a), 1.14(b), 1.14(c), 8.04(a)(2), 8.04(a)(3), and 8.04(a)(8). He was ordered to pay \$55,981.56 in restitution and \$4,046.75 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

## SUSPENSIONS

On February 26, 2020, **Sean Michael**

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**Cohen** [#24101637], 32, of San Antonio, agreed to a six-month partially probated suspension effective March 1, 2020, with the first six months actively served and the remainder probated. An evidentiary panel of the District 10 Grievance Committee found that Cohen neglected the client's matters, failed to communicate with clients, and failed to respond to grievances in a timely manner.

Cohen violated Rules 1.01(b)(1), 1.03(a), and 8.04(a)(8). He agreed to pay \$800 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On March 13, 2020, **Rochelle Dianne Davis** [#24099669], 30, of Houston, received a one-year fully probated suspension effective May 1, 2020, through April 30, 2021. An investigatory panel of the District 4 Grievance Committee found that Davis neglected a legal matter entrusted to her, failed to keep her client reasonably informed about the status of the client's legal matter, and failed to promptly comply with her reasonable requests for information about the case. Davis also failed to withdraw from representing her client when Davis' physical or mental condition materially impaired her fitness to represent her client, and upon termination of representation, Davis failed to refund advance payments of fees that had not been earned.

Davis violated Rules 1.01(b)(1), 1.03(a), 1.15(a)(2), and 1.15(d). She was ordered to pay \$3,000 in restitution.

On March 13, 2020, **Rochelle Dianne Davis** [#24099669], 30, of Houston, received a one-year fully probated suspension effective May 1, 2020, through April 30, 2021. An investigatory panel of the District 4 Grievance Committee found that Davis neglected a legal matter entrusted to her, failed to keep her client reasonably informed about the status of the client's legal matter, and failed to promptly comply with his reasonable requests for information about the case. Davis also failed to withdraw from representing her client when Davis' physical or mental condition materially impaired her fitness to represent her client, and upon termination of representation, Davis failed to refund advance payments of fees that had not been earned.

Davis violated Rules 1.01(b)(1), 1.03(a), 1.15(a)(2), and 1.15(d). She was ordered to pay \$3,500 in restitution.

On March 13, 2020, **Rochelle Dianne Davis** [#24099669], 30, of Houston, received a one-year fully probated suspension effective May 1, 2020, through April 30, 2021. An investigatory panel of the District 4 Grievance Committee found that Davis neglected a legal matter entrusted to her, failed to keep her client reasonably informed about the status of the client's legal matter, and failed to promptly comply with her reasonable requests for information about the case. Davis also failed to withdraw from representing her client when Davis' physical or mental condition materially impaired her fitness to represent her client, and upon termination of representation, Davis failed to refund advance payments of fees that had not been earned.

Davis violated Rules 1.01(b)(1), 1.03(a), 1.15(a)(2), and 1.15(d). She was ordered to pay \$3,000 in restitution.

On February 12, 2020, **Claude Robert Graham** [#24064208], 70, of Chesapeake,

Virginia, received a one-year partially probated suspension [six months active and six months probated] from an evidentiary panel of the District 9 Grievance Committee. The panel found that Graham was suspended from the practice of law in the state of Texas, from November 6, 2014, to October 31, 2017, and failed to inform in writing any of his clients, opposing attorneys, and all courts, in which he had pending cases, of his suspension. As a result, Graham violated the terms of his prior disciplinary judgment of suspension signed on October 24, 2014.

Graham violated Rule 8.04(a)(7) and was ordered to pay \$23,662.50 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On March 12, 2020, **Paul Steven Jacobs** [#10520600], 60, of Houston, accepted a 25-month partially probated suspension effective March 20, 2020, with the first six months actively suspended and the remainder probated. An evidentiary panel of the District 4 Grievance Com-

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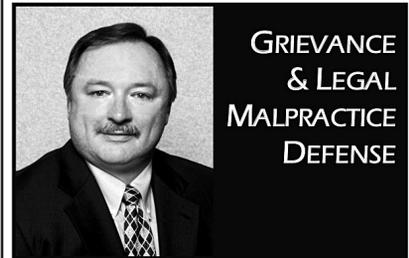
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## DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

mittee found that Jacobs twice 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.

Jacobs violated Rule 8.04(a)(8). He was ordered to pay \$2,500 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On March 4, 2020, **James Keith Mayo** [#00794251], 51, of Tyler, agreed to a 12-month fully probated suspension effective December 1, 2019, and ending on November 30, 2020. An investigatory panel of the District 2 Grievance Committee found that Mayo was hired by beneficiaries of an estate for representation in a probate matter pending in Madison County. The matter settled and the proceeds from the settlement were paid to Mayo for distribution to the beneficiaries. The settlement checks that Mayo issued to beneficiaries from his IOLTA were returned for insufficient funds. Mayo failed to appropriately safeguard the settlement funds

that belonged to the beneficiaries. Mayo failed to promptly deliver to the beneficiaries the settlement funds they were entitled to receive. Mayo also failed to timely furnish a response to the grievance.

Mayo violated Rules 1.14(a), 1.14(d), and 8.04(a)(8). He was ordered to pay \$2,737.16 in restitution and \$1,000 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On March 9, 2020, **Charles Wesley Skinner** [#24068425], 41, of Waxahachie, received a four-month fully probated suspension effective February 15, 2020. An investigatory panel of the District 7 Grievance Committee found that in or about May 2017, the complainant hired Skinner to probate her deceased father's estate. Skinner failed to hold the estate funds that were in Skinner's possession in connection with the representation separate from Skinner's own property and Skinner failed to keep complete records of the estate's funds and other estate property. Skinner failed to promptly

deliver to the complainant the estate funds and other estate property that the complainant was entitled to receive. Upon request by the complainant, Skinner failed to promptly render a full accounting regarding such funds and property. Skinner failed to keep the estate funds separate from his own property until there is an accounting and severance of their interest. Upon termination of representation, Skinner failed to surrender the estate funds and property to which the complainant was entitled to receive.

Skinner violated Rules 1.14(a), 1.14(b), 1.14(c), and 1.15(d). He was ordered to pay \$1,000 in attorneys' fees and costs.

On December 17, 2019, **Andrew Christopher Smith** [#24063859], 42, of Houston, received a three-year fully probated suspension effective January 1, 2020, and ending on January 1, 2023. An evidentiary panel of the District 4 Grievance Committee found that Smith failed to keep his client reasonably informed about the status of the matter and failed to promptly comply with reasonable requests for information from his client. Smith also 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 and engaged in the practice of law when he was on inactive status or when his right to practice had been suspended or terminated.

Smith violated Rules 1.03(a), 8.04(a)(8), and 8.04(a)(11).

On March 4, 2020, **Marc Elliot Villarreal**, [#00791856], 51, of Corpus Christi, agreed to a five-year partially probated suspension effective May 14, 2020, with the first 12 months actively served and the remainder probated. The 148th District Court of Nueces County found that Villarreal violated Rules 1.14(a) and 1.14(b) [hold funds related to a representation separate from his own property] and [failed to deliver funds to parties entitled to receive the funds promptly].

Villarreal was ordered to pay \$14,000 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

### PUBLIC REPRIMANDS

On March 2, 2020, **Oscar L. Cantu Jr.** [#03767448], 56, of San Antonio, accepted a public reprimand. An evidentiary panel of the District 10 Grievance

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Committee found that his representation of a client against former clients created conflicts of interest.

Cantu violated Rules 1.06(d), 1.07(a)(1), 1.07(b), 1.07(c), 1.09(a)(2), and 1.09(a)(3). He agreed to pay \$1,250 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

On March 4, 2020, **Richard Abram Roman** [#00789595], 56, of El Paso, accepted a public reprimand. An investigatory panel of the District 17 Grievance Committee found that Roman neglected a client's matter.

Roman violated Rules 1.01(b)(1). He agreed to pay \$375 in restitution and \$800 in attorneys' fees and direct expenses.

**PRIVATE REPRIMANDS**

Listed here is a breakdown of Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct violations for eight 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)—for neglecting a legal matter entrusted to the lawyer (3).

1.01(b)(2)—for failing to carry out completely the obligations owed to a client (1).

1.02(a)(1)—Subject to paragraphs (b), (c), (d), and (e), (f), and (g), a lawyer shall abide by a client's decisions concerning the objectives and general methods of representation (1).

1.02(b)—A lawyer may limit the scope, objectives, and general methods of the representation if the client consents after consultation (1).

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).

1.03(b)—for failing to explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding representation (2).

1.04(a)—For entering into an arrangement for, charging, or collecting an illegal fee

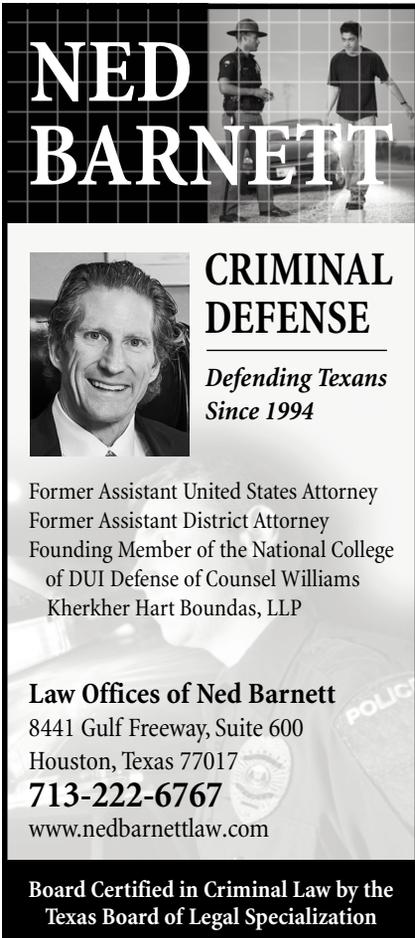
or unconscionable fee (1).

1.14(a)—For 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).

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, or surrender papers and property which belongs to the client (1).

5.03(a)—With respect to a nonlawyer employed or retained by or associated with a lawyer: A lawyer having direct supervisory authority over the nonlawyer shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the person'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**



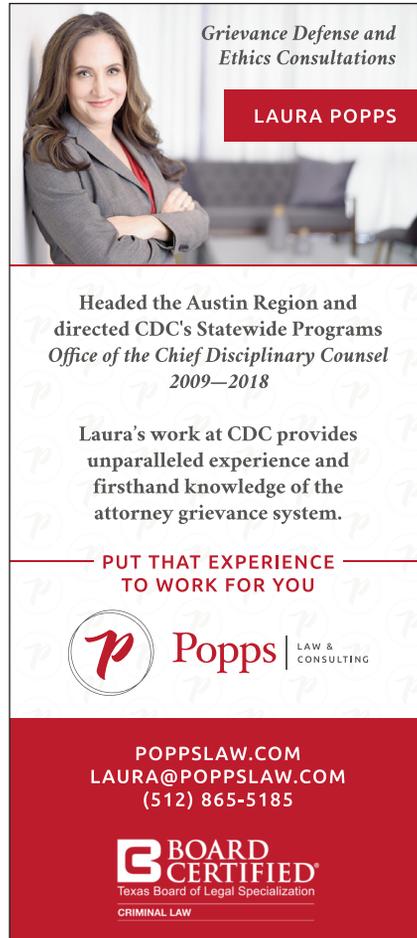
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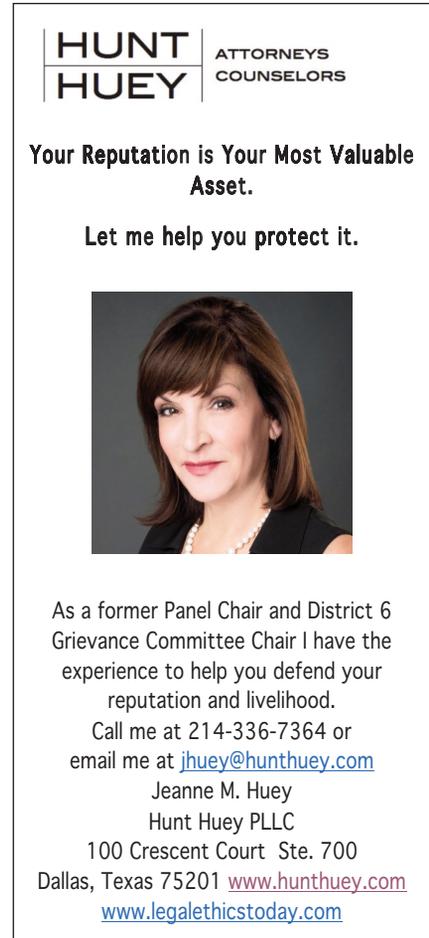
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