

NORTH CAROLINA
WAKE COUNTY

BEFORE THE
GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE
OF THE
NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR
12G0963

IN THE MATTER OF

Ronnie P. King,
ATTORNEY AT LAW

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CENSURE

On April 18, 2013, the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar met and considered the grievance filed against you by L. O.

Pursuant to section .0113(a) of the Discipline and Disability Rules of the North Carolina State Bar, the Grievance Committee conducted a preliminary hearing. After considering the information available to it, including your response to the letter of notice, the Grievance Committee found probable cause. Probable cause is defined in the rules as "reasonable cause to believe that a member of the North Carolina State Bar is guilty of misconduct justifying disciplinary action."

The rules provide that after a finding of probable cause, the Grievance Committee may determine that the filing of a complaint and a hearing before the Disciplinary Hearing Commission are not required and the Grievance Committee may issue various levels of discipline depending upon the misconduct, the actual or potential injury caused, and any aggravating or mitigating factors. The Grievance Committee may issue an admonition, a reprimand, or a censure.

A censure is a written form of discipline more serious than a reprimand, issued in cases in which an attorney has violated one or more provisions of the Rules of Professional Conduct and has caused significant harm or potential significant harm to a client, the administration of justice, the profession or a member of the public, but the misconduct does not require suspension of the attorney's license.

The Grievance Committee believes that a hearing before the Disciplinary Hearing Commission is not required in this case and issues this censure to you. As chairman of the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar, it is now my duty to issue this censure.

L. O. was injured in a car accident in July 2006 (hereafter, first car accident). She retained you in early 2007 to represent her in the first accident case. You were served with the opposing party's first set of interrogatories and request for production of documents on February 5, 2008. You did not respond to that discovery on Ms. O.'s behalf. Although you had some health problems in March and October 2008, you did not seek additional time to respond to the discovery from the opposing counsel, who later filed a motion to compel discovery.

The court entered an order compelling Ms. O. to respond to the discovery. You did not respond to the discovery as a result of the court's order compelling discovery. The court sanctioned Ms. O. by requiring her to pay \$300.00 in attorney's fees for the opposing party. You never told Ms. O. about the

discovery, your failure to respond to the discovery, and the sanctions that the court ordered against her for her failure to respond to discovery. You did pay the sanctions out of your own pocket.

By letter dated December 19, 2011, the opposing counsel sent you a letter asking you to respond to the discovery. You did not respond to the opposing counsel's December 19 letter and you did not provide the discovery as requested.

In early 2012, opposing counsel filed a motion to dismiss Ms. O.'s first accident case. In January 2012, you took a voluntary dismissal, in large part because of the opposing party's motion to dismiss.

You then refiled the personal injury case from the first accident in superior court. You filed the lawsuit in superior court eight months after you took the voluntary dismissal. You could not explain why it took you eight months to file essentially the same complaint that you filed in 2007.

Ms. O. fired you in October 2012. As of February 19, 2013, you had not moved to withdraw from the first accident or the second accident case in which Ms. O. asked you for assistance.

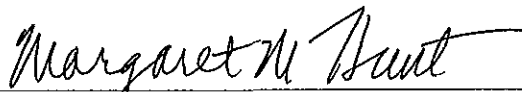
Your failure to respond to the discovery from the opposing party violated Rule 1.3 and Rule 8.4(d). Your failure to advise Ms. O. that she needed to respond to discovery violated Rule 1.4(a)(3). Your failure to advise Ms. O. that the opposing party had filed a motion to compel discovery and that the court had entered sanctions against her violated Rule 1.4(a)(3) and (b). Your failure to withdraw promptly from Ms. O.'s cases violated Rule 1.16(c).

The Grievance Committee also found that you were less than forthcoming in your response to the Grievance Committee when you did not mention the full history of Ms. O.'s first car accident case. You never told the Grievance Committee that you failed to respond to discovery requests and that Ms. O. was sanctioned for failure to respond to those requests. You did not advise the Grievance Committee that the opposing counsel moved to dismiss Ms. O.'s case for failure to respond to the discovery. The Grievance Committee found that your failure to give a full and fair disclosure of the circumstances surrounding this grievance violated Rule 8.4(d) of the Rules of Professional Conduct. You are reminded of your obligation, per Rule .0112(c) of the North Carolina State Bar's Discipline and Disability Rules, to give a full and fair disclosure of all facts and circumstances pertaining to the alleged misconduct.

You are hereby censured by the North Carolina State Bar for your violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct. The Grievance Committee trusts that you will ponder this censure, recognize the error that you have made, and that you will never again allow yourself to depart from adherence to the high ethical standards of the legal profession. This censure should serve as a strong reminder and inducement for you to weigh carefully in the future your responsibility to the public, your clients, your fellow attorneys and the courts, to the end that you demean yourself as a respected member of the legal profession whose conduct may be relied upon without question.

In accordance with the policy adopted July 23, 2010 by the Council of the North Carolina State Bar regarding the taxing of administrative fees and investigative costs to any attorney issued a censure by the Grievance Committee, an administrative fee in the amount of \$350.00 is hereby taxed to you.

Done and ordered, this 6th day of May, 2013.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Margaret M. Hunt". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Margaret M. Hunt, Chair
Grievance Committee
The North Carolina State Bar