

NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY

BEFORE THE  
GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE  
OF THE  
NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR  
06G0931

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IN THE MATTER OF	)	
	)	
Donald H. Barton	)	REPRIMAND
Attorney At Law	)	
	)	

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On July 12, 2007 the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar met and considered the grievances filed against you by T. M. L.

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 to the respondent attorney.

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

The Grievance Committee was of the opinion that a censure is not required in this case and issues this reprimand to you. As chairman of the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar, it is now my duty to issue this reprimand.

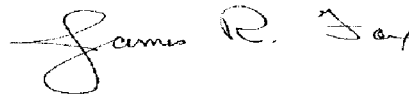
You appeared before a judge and obtained an ex parte order in a custody matter without joining all necessary parties and without providing notice to counsel for the opposing party. This conduct violated Rule 3.5(a)(3). By submitting a proposed order to the court which mistakenly asserted that sole custody was awarded to the child's grandparents when it was not you violated Rule 3.3(d). If you had provided notice to the opposing counsel of your ex parte communication,

the additional hearings to correct this matter would not have been necessary and the improper order would have been avoided. The problems caused by this conduct affected the parties to this litigation as well as the judge and opposing counsel

You are hereby reprimanded by the North Carolina State Bar for your professional misconduct. The Grievance Committee trusts that you will heed this reprimand, that it will be remembered by you, that it will be beneficial to you, and that you will never again allow yourself to depart from adherence to the high ethical standards of the legal profession.

In accordance with the policy adopted October 15, 1981 by the Council of the North Carolina State Bar regarding the taxing of the administrative and investigative costs to any attorney issued a reprimand by the Grievance Committee, the costs of this action in the amount of \$50.00 are hereby taxed to you.

Done and ordered, this the 12<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2007

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "James R. Fox".

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James R. Fox, Chair  
Grievance Committee

JRF/lr