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NORTH CAROLINA
WAKE COUNTY

BEFORE THE
GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE
OF THE
NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR
05G0486

IN THE MATTER OF)

Ronnie P. King,)
Attorney At Law)

REPRIMAND

On October 20, 2005 the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar met and considered the grievances filed against you by the North Carolina State Bar.

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, and I am certain that you will understand fully the spirit in which this duty is performed.

You formerly represented Brenda J. in a domestic matter, for which she paid you a \$5,000 retainer. Ultimately, Ms. J. became dissatisfied with your services and discharged you. She asked you to provide her with an itemized statement of the work you had done and to refund the

unearned portion of the retainer. When you did neither, she initiated a fee dispute proceeding with the State Bar.

Although you were properly notified of Ms. J's fee dispute and directed to respond, you failed to do so. On April 20, 2005, the N.C. State Bar opened a grievance file against you, based upon your failure to participate in the fee dispute process. You were served with the letter of notice on June 14, 2005 and were directed to respond in writing no later than June 29, 2005. You did not request or receive any extensions of time in which to respond to the Bar.

On July 19, you sent a letter to the Bar in which you stated only that Ms. J. had "withdrawn" her complaint. On that same day, bar counsel wrote to you and advised that you would still need to respond to the Bar's grievance. When you did not file a response, bar counsel sent you a reminder letter on Aug. 29. It was not until Sept. 29, 2005 that you finally submitted a substantive response to the complaint.

Your failure to participate in the fee dispute process in good faith violated Rule 1.5(f). Your failure to respond in a timely fashion to the State Bar's letter of notice violated Rule 8.1 of the Revised Rules of Professional Conduct.

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 8 day of Nov, 2005


Henry Babb, Chair
Grievance Committee

HB/lr