

NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY

BEFORE THE  
GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE  
OF THE  
NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR  
18G1215

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IN THE MATTER OF	)	
	)	REPRIMAND
THOMAS C. GOOLSBY,	)	
ATTORNEY AT LAW	)	

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On July 18, 2019 the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar met and considered the grievance filed against you by S. W. The grievance was assigned to a Subcommittee, which thoroughly reviewed the results of the State Bar staff's investigation of this matter.

Pursuant to Section .0113(a) of the Discipline and Disability Rules of the North Carolina State Bar, the Grievance Subcommittee conducted a preliminary hearing. After considering the information available to it, including your response to the letter of notice, the Grievance Subcommittee 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 represented S.W. in a personal injury matter from January 2016 until November 2018. Over the course of the representation, your firm procrastinated and did very little work on her case. You also regularly failed to respond to her requests for information or to meet with you. Finally, when S.W. expressed frustration at your firm's lack of work on her case, you terminated the representation right before the end of the statute of limitations. As the comments of Rule 1.3 note, "Perhaps no professional shortcoming is more widely resented than procrastination. A client's interests often can be adversely affected by the passage of time or the

change of conditions. In extreme instances, as when a lawyer overlooks a statute of limitations, the client's legal position may be destroyed." By failing to provide the services for which you were retained and failing to promptly work on S.W.'s case, you failed to act with reasonable diligence in violation of Rule 1.3. By failing to communicate with S.W. regarding the status of her case or respond to her requests for meetings, you violated Rule 1.4(a) and (b). And by failing to take steps to protect your client's interests upon termination of the representation, you violated Rule 1.16(d).

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 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 reprimand by the Grievance Committee, an administrative fee in the amount of \$350.00 is hereby taxed to you.

Done and ordered, this the 7<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2019.

A. Todd Brown Sr

A. Todd Brown, Sr., Chair  
Grievance Committee

ATB/lb