

NORTH CAROLINA
WAKE COUNTY

BEFORE THE
GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE
OF THE
NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR
18G0721

IN THE MATTER OF)	
)	REPRIMAND
ALTON R. WILLIAMS,)	
ATTORNEY AT LAW)	

On April 25, 2019 the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar met and considered the grievance filed against you by L. 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 agreed to assist L. W. in resolving outstanding traffic tickets dating back to 1993 to 1999. Mr. W. paid you \$3,500.00 to handle those tickets. You told Mr. W. that you would resolve the cases as quickly as possible. In your response to this grievance, you stated that Mr. W. did not return timely a signed and notarized waiver of appearance, thus delaying resolution of the traffic cases.

A State Bar Deputy Counsel wrote you on November 9, 2018 and December 5, 2018 with additional questions regarding this grievance. You did not respond to those questions. After speaking with you by telephone, deputy counsel was able to get her questions to you and you responded to them by letter dated March 15, 2019. In your March 15 supplemental response, you stated that you reviewed your file and spam folders and found a copy of the waiver executed by Mr. W. You also stated in your March 15 letter that all traffic matters had been disposed of and you notified Mr. W. by text message.

The Grievance Committee found that you neglected Mr. W.'s matter in violation of Rule 1.3. You also failed to promptly communicate with Mr. W. about the status of his cases in violation of Rule 1.4(a)(3). The Grievance Committee also determined that you did not give a full and fair disclosure surrounding the allegations of this grievance when you indicated in your response that Mr. W. did not timely return a signed and notarized waiver of appearance. You later discovered that Mr. W. sent you the waiver. Your failure to provide a full and fair disclosure of the circumstances surrounding the grievance violates Rule 8.1(b) and 8.4(d). Finally, your failure to respond promptly to the follow-up questions posed by the State Bar's deputy counsel violated Rule 8.1(b) and 8.4.

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 14th day of May, 2019.

A. Todd Brown Sr
A. Todd Brown, Sr., Chair
Grievance Committee

ATB/lb