

NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY

BEFORE  
THE GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE  
OF  
THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR  
23G1146

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IN THE MATTER OF )  
 )  
WALTER T. RAMSEY, JR., ) CENSURE  
ATTORNEY AT LAW )

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On January 18, 2024, the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar met and considered the grievance filed against you by the North Carolina State Bar. 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.

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 chair of the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar, it is now my duty to issue this censure.

In July 2023, while employed as an assistant district attorney, you dismissed a speeding citation that was pending against your mother in the prosecutorial district where you were employed. You were aware that your office had a clear policy to notify the elected district attorney if a family member was charged with a matter that would be prosecuted by the office. You did not notify the district attorney when you learned of the citation and did not disclose your dismissal of the citation until you were confronted about the dismissal two months later.

In your response, you stated that your conduct did not involve a conflict of interest. Your failure to recognize the clear conflict of interest that exists in this grievance is remarkable. Your client was the State of North Carolina, and your representation of the State of North Carolina was

materially limited by a personal interest in violation of Rule 1.7. Moreover, the public's confidence in the criminal justice system is seriously undermined by the appearance of favoritism displayed by a prosecutor dismissing a citation for a close family member. As noted in 2019 FEO 3, criminal cases require heightened scrutiny in evaluating potential conflicts of interest resulting from personal relationships to preserve the integrity of the criminal justice system. The potential impact of your conduct on the integrity of the criminal justice system is prejudicial to the administration of justice in violation of Rule 8.4(d).

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 1<sup>st</sup> day of March, 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kevin G. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Kevin G. Williams, Chair  
Grievance Committee

KGW/lb