

NORTH CAROLINA
WAKE COUNTY

BEFORE THE
GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE
OF THE
NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR
21G0467

IN THE MATTER OF)
)
STEVEN L. GOURLEY,) REPRIMAND
ATTORNEY AT LAW)

On April 21, 2022 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 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.


After you prosecuted several domestic violence charges in which L.P. was a complaining witness/victim, you dated L.P. Although your relationship with L.P. did not occur during a time when you were actively prosecuting any cases in which L.P. was the victim/complaining witness, given the history of repeated DV charges and DVPO violations by L.P.'s abuser (C.P.) it was reasonably likely that the DA's Office would be reviewing C.P.'s compliance with probation and/or seeking to revoke his bond. In addition, the DA's Office was prosecuting additional charges against C.P. while you were dating L.P. Accordingly, you should have reported the relationship

to your superiors so you could be screened from any matter involving L.P. or C.P. and the DA's Office could demonstrate that your personal conflict of interest did not affect the State's handling of cases against C.P. Your failure to properly and openly address the fact that you were dating the victim of crimes being prosecuted by the DA's Office was prejudicial to the administration of justice in violation of Rule 8.4(d), in that it cast doubt on the integrity of the criminal process, formed the basis for MARs seeking to set aside several of C.P.'s convictions, and limited the State's options in prosecuting C.P.

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 31st day of May, 2022.



Matthew W. Smith, Chair
Grievance Committee

MWS/lb