

NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY

BEFORE THE  
GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE  
OF THE  
NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR  
18G1035

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|                     |   |           |
|---------------------|---|-----------|
| IN THE MATTER OF    | ) |           |
|                     | ) | REPRIMAND |
| GEORGE COOPER BELL, | ) |           |
| 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 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.

You represented D.T., a defendant charged with DWI in Mecklenburg County. In February 2015, D.T. pled guilty to DWI and was sentenced to a term of imprisonment of 12 to 36 months, suspended for 24 months of supervised probation with the following special probation condition, among others: that D.T. serve 120 days in the county jail. In October 2015, you presented the district court with an order to transfer probation from supervised to unsupervised. The court entered the order granting the transfer from supervised to unsupervised probation based on your representation to the court that D.T.: 1) had served several weekends, approximately 40 days in

jail; and 2) had been on supervised probation for 9 months and was in good standing. In fact, D.T. had not served all the jail time as stated in the order and was not in good standing with his probation. Seven days after entering the order, the court set it aside. The same day that the order was set aside, a probation violation report was filed against D.T. citing five violations including D.T. being charged with DWLR and speeding while on probation, testing positive for marijuana on October 5, 2015, and being late in his report to jail to serve his weekends. On November 13, 2015, the court entered an order finding D.T. in willful violation of his probation.

You failed to consult with D.T.'s probation officer prior to seeking modification of probation, and therefore, were unaware of D.T.'s mounting probation violations. By representing to the Court that D.T. was in good standing with his probation, you made a false statement of material fact to the tribunal in violation of Rule 3.3(a)(1), engaged in conduct involving misrepresentation in violation of Rule 8.4(c), and engaged in conduct that was prejudicial to the administration of justice in violation of Rule 8.4(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