



**BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY
OF THE
SUPREME COURT OF TENNESSEE**

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RELEASE OF INFORMATION
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March 24, 2009

COOKEVILLE ATTORNEY DISBARRED

William E. Gibson, a Cookeville attorney, was disbarred by Order of the Tennessee Supreme Court entered March 20, 2009. By Judgment filed January 15, 2009, a three (3) member Hearing Panel found that Gibson, the former District Attorney for the 13th Judicial District, engaged in intentional conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation that seriously adversely reflected on his fitness to practice law.

The Hearing Panel further found that Gibson, as an elected official holding a governmental position, knowingly misused and abused his position with the intent to obtain a significant benefit for another, and caused serious injury to the integrity of the legal process. The Hearing Panel found that while Gibson was the District Attorney, Gibson improperly communicated with Christopher Adams who was incarcerated and charged with first degree murder and other serious felonies. Additionally, the Panel found that Gibson as a District Attorney influenced the outcome of the Adams prosecution, while misrepresenting the strength of the State's case to the family of the victim.

The Board of Professional Responsibility also charged Mr. Gibson with engaging in a conflict of interest in improperly assisting Tina Sweat in obtaining post-conviction relief. The Hearing Panel found that Gibson intentionally deceived the Court in the handling of the Tina Sweat Petition for Post-Conviction Relief and submission of an Order granting her request by making misrepresentations, improperly withholding material information, and causing a significant adverse effect on the legal proceeding.

The Hearing Panel found Gibson violated Rule of Professional Conduct 1.3 in Gibson's prosecution of Christopher Adams for first degree murder and by failing to act with reasonable diligence in representing the State of Tennessee in response to Tina Sweat's Petition for Post-Conviction Relief. Gibson violated Rule 1.6 by breaching confidentiality during Gibson's ongoing personal relationship with Adams and by Gibson's actions in Tina Sweat's Petition for Post-Conviction Relief. Gibson violated Rule 1.7 by engaging in a conflict of interest regarding the prosecution and post-conviction petition of Adams and the post-conviction of Sweat. Gibson violated Rule 3.5 in his ex parte communications with Judge Sells and Judge Turnbull regarding the Sweat Petition for Post-Conviction Relief. Gibson violated Rule 4.1 by making dishonest and deceitful communications with the Court in the Sweat Petition for Post-Conviction Relief. Gibson violated Rule 4.2 by communicating with Christopher Adams and Tina Sweat, both of whom were represented by counsel. Gibson violated Rule 8.1 by misrepresenting the nature of his relationship with Tina Sweat to the Board of Professional Responsibility. Gibson violated Rule 8.4 by engaging in deceitful conduct in the Adams case and engaging in conduct in the Sweat case which was a misrepresentation to the Court and in both cases was prejudicial to the administration of justice.

On September 25, 2006, the Tennessee Supreme Court temporarily suspended Gibson's law license for posing a threat of substantial harm to the public based upon reports by Judge Leon Burns and attorney John Parsons concerning Gibson's actions in the Adams case. Gibson has remained temporarily suspended since the Supreme Court's September 25, 2006 Order.

Neither Gibson nor the Board of Professional Responsibility appealed the Hearing Panel's Judgment and by Order entered March 20, 2009, the Supreme Court accepted and adopted the Hearing Panel's Judgment disbarring Mr. Gibson.

Gibson 1653-4 rel.doc

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