



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

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**RELEASE OF INFORMATION**  
**RE: RUSSELL LEE LEONARD, #014191**  
**CONTACT: EILEEN BURKHALTER SMITH**  
**BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY**  
**615-361-7500**

October 10, 2019

**FRANKLIN COUNTY LAWYER CENSURED**

On October 10, 2019, Russell Lee Leonard, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Mr. Leonard represented three clients in a dispute against a man they alleged was acting as a real estate agent without a license. In December 2014, the civil matter was settled and Mr. Leonard's clients signed a settlement agreement and release. In January 2015, Mr. Leonard filed a written complaint with the Tennessee Real Estate Commission against the civil defendant, but he did so in the names of his three clients, including their affidavits and not including his own name or signature. Mr. Leonard sent a cover letter stating that his clients had asked him to file this complaint. In reality, Mr. Leonard's clients were not aware he had filed the complaint and did not authorize him to do so.

The civil defendant was assessed a fine by the Real Estate Commission for his conduct. Thereafter, he filed a civil lawsuit against Mr. Leonard and the three clients individually, alleging that the filing of the real estate disciplinary complaint was in violation of the settlement agreement and release the clients had executed in December 2014. The trial court found in favor of the plaintiff, and entered a judgment against Mr. Leonard and his clients, jointly and severally, in the amount of \$20,000, for the fine the plaintiff had to pay to the Real Estate Commission and for his attorney fees. The judgment was affirmed on appeal and remanded for additional attorney fees on appeal.

Mr. Leonard's conduct in filing a disciplinary complaint with the Real Estate Commission against a former adverse party in the name of his clients with their affidavits only and not his own when the clients did not authorize him to do so, is in violation of Rule of Professional Conduct 1.2 (scope of representation) and 8.4(d) (prejudice to the administration of justice) and resulted in significant harm to his clients. Mr. Leonard is hereby publicly censured for this conduct.

A Public Censure is a rebuke and warning to the attorney, but it does not affect the attorney's ability to practice law.