



BOARD NOTES

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GREETING FROM CHIEF SANDY GARRETT

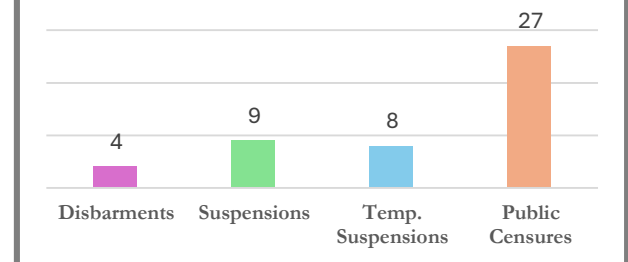
The Board of Professional Responsibility (the Board) is proud to celebrate 50 years of administering the attorney disciplinary process, protecting the public, and supporting lawyers. In 1976, the Tennessee Supreme Court created the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Tennessee, finding that the best efforts of volunteer bar associations were insufficient to perform attorney disciplinary functions. Over the past 50 years, the number of active attorneys licensed in Tennessee has increased from 7,004 in 1976 to 25,019 in 2026. The twelve volunteer members of the Board, assisted by staff and 221 volunteer hearing committee members, investigate and prosecute attorneys. In the last year, the Board investigated 1,418 complaints and filed 172 formal proceedings. The Board also assisted attorneys by providing 1,820 informal ethics opinions, issuing one formal ethics opinion, presenting 40 continuing legal education (CLE) programs, publishing a biannual newsletter, and offering two free CLEs on the Board's website. The Board served the public by reviewing 74 trust overdraft notifications on attorney trust accounts and responding to 1,952 requests for assistance submitted to the Board's Consumer Assistance Program.

The Board and staff continue to offer innovative ways to meet the needs of judges, attorneys, and the public. The Board's website provides online attorney registration and forms to submit complaints and requests for assistance. The website also includes frequently asked questions and responses for attorneys and the public, in addition to free CLEs on Proactive Management Based Regulation and Succession Planning. Electronic bar cards for attorneys are coming soon.

The leadership of Board Chairs and Supreme Court Liaisons, including the wisdom and vision currently provided by Tennessee Supreme Court Justice and Liaison Holly Kirby and Board Chair Culver Schmid, has assisted the Board in fulfilling its mission. I am honored to serve the Supreme Court of Tennessee, the Board, hearing committee members, and Tennessee attorneys.

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS AT A GLANCE

October 2025 - March 2026



WHAT'S INSIDE

(2) [Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of The Board of Professional Responsibility](#)

(6) Welcome New Board Members

(9) Article: The Provision of Pro Bono Legal Services

(20) The Board of Professional Responsibility's Succession Planning CLE

(21) The Board of Professional Responsibility's Trust Account Workshop

(22) Disciplinary and Licensure Actions
October 2025 – March 2026

(48) Tennessee Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection Payments

THE BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY



Years

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Jef Feibelman engages principally in the litigation, arbitration or mediation of complex commercial matters. He has litigated substantial claims involving fraud, breach of contract, misappropriation of trade secrets, breach of non-compete and confidentiality agreements, shareholder and partnership disputes, and business dissolution and valuation controversies. He has also been retained or appointed in numerous matters of public interest involving state and federal constitutional law and statutory interpretation.

Mr. Feibelman regularly counsels boards and governing bodies of corporations on fiduciary issues, director/officer liability, and corporate governance/ethics. An experienced trial lawyer with extensive jury and bench trial experience in both federal and state courts, from 2014 to 2016 he was the Tennessee State Chair of the American College of Trial Lawyers. He, with Joel Porter, served as lead counsel for the plaintiffs in one of the largest commercial recoveries in state history. He serves as Special Master by court appointment on pending litigation and as a special litigation committee in corporate disputes. He also regularly serves as a mediator or arbitrator in complex commercial and business disputes.

In 2006, he was awarded the Lawyer's Lawyer Award by the Memphis Bar Association, its highest honor. In 2016, Mr. Feibelman was selected by the [University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law Alumni Chapter as a Pillars of Excellence honoree](#). He is ranked by *Chambers USA: America's Leading Lawyers for Business* in Band 1 of General Commercial Litigators and Band 1 for Litigation: Mediators in Tennessee. Mr. Feibelman began his law practice in 1970 after a clerkship with Hon. Bailey Brown, U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee. He joined the firm as a member in 1977 and served as its managing partner from 2007-2010.

Named one of the Pillars of Excellence by the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law, Mr. Feibelman has also been recognized by distinguished organizations including Chambers, Super Lawyers and *Best Lawyers in America*®, including being named "Lawyer of the Year".

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Christopher Jay Ingram is an attorney and the managing partner of the Ingram Law Firm, PLLC, in Gallatin, Tennessee. He has been practicing law in the areas of criminal defense, domestic relations/family law, civil litigation, juvenile law, and probate for twenty-five plus years.

Jay was born in Quantico, VA, but raised in Gallatin, TN. Jay moved to Gallatin in 1976 when he was in kindergarten. He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville in 1994 and his Doctor of Jurisprudence from the Nashville School of Law in 2000.



Jay is a Rule 31 Listed Family Law Mediator. Jay is a 2016 graduate of the Tennessee Bar Association's Leadership Law program, and he was awarded the Larry Dean Wilk's Leadership Award for his 2016 class. Jay has been a volunteer Peer Monitor for the Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program (TLAP) throughout most of his law practice. Jay is also a 2017 graduate of Leadership Middle Tennessee, a 2004 graduate of Leadership Sumner, and is the former president of the following organizations: the Sumner County Bar Association (2011-2012), the Gallatin Lion's Club (2005-2006), Lion of the Year in 2003, the Gallatin Green Wave Quarterback Club (2003 & 2023-2024), Historic Downtown Gallatin (formerly Greater Gallatin, Inc. for three years), and Compass. Jay was voted Best Attorney in Sumner County in 2016 and 2017 in the Readers' Choice Awards of Main Street Media of Tennessee. Jay has served on the board of Ashley's Place, and has served as a fundraiser, and pro bono attorney for Ashley's Place.

While in college at UTK, Jay received the Stephen C. Boyd 110% Award from his college fraternity, Lambda Chi Alpha. In the fraternity, Jay served the High Iota or Risk Manager, and as the High Beta or Vice President. He also directed Homecoming, All Sign, and Carnicus during his time in Lambda Chi Alpha. He also served as Peer Mentor to fellow students at UTK.

Jay has been married to Julie Nix Ingram for over twenty-five years, and they have two children, Ben and Jennifer Kate. Jay's family means more to him than anything else in his life.

Jay spends his free time listening to music, following the Vols, Titans, and Gallatin Green Wave football teams, spending time on the lake, exercising and exploring the outdoors. Jay is also the color commentator for the Gallatin Green Wave football radios broadcasts on WHIN Radio, 1010 AM, 100.7 FM, and worldwide on www.whinradio.com.

The Provision of Pro Bono Legal Services

*By: Steven J. Christopher
Deputy Chief Disciplinary Counsel
The Board of Professional Responsibility*

The Tennessee Rules of Professional Conduct strongly encourage attorneys to provide pro bono legal services. The term “pro bono” is short for “pro bono publico,” a Latin phrase that means “for the public good.” In a legal context, pro bono representation refers to the provision of legal services without payment of a fee. This article will provide some suggestions about how Tennessee attorneys can incorporate pro bono legal services into their law practice in a manner that complies with their ethical responsibilities.

Pro Bono Work Is Encouraged but Not Required

The Tennessee Rules of Professional Conduct do not require lawyers to provide pro bono legal services, but pro bono work is strongly encouraged.¹ RPC 6.1 contains an aspirational rule urging Tennessee lawyers to provide at least fifty (50) hours of pro bono services per year.² As the rule is aspirational rather than a mandatory ethical duty, compliance with RPC 6.1 is not enforced through any disciplinary process.³

RPC 6.1(a) provides that a “substantial portion” of this fifty (50) hour yearly requirement should be provided to persons of limited means, or to charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, and educational organizations in matters designed primarily to address the needs of persons of limited means.⁴

The rule indicates that any “additional services” towards completion of an attorney’s pro bono requirement beyond the services identified at RPC 6.1(a) may be provided through delivery of legal services at no fee or a substantially reduced fee to individuals, groups, or organizations seeking to secure or protect civil rights, civil liberties, public rights, or charitable religious, civic, community, governmental, and educational organizations in matters in furtherance of their organizational purposes, where the payment of standard legal fees would significantly deplete the organization’s economic resources or would be otherwise inappropriate.⁵ Such additional services may also be provided through the delivery of legal services at a substantially reduced fee to persons of limited means, or participation in activities for improving the law,

provides that lawyers have an ethical responsibility to provide legal services to those unable to pay.

¹ TENN. SUP. CT. R. 8, 6.1. The Tennessee Rules of Professional Conduct, codified at Rule 8 of the Tennessee Supreme Court Rules, will be cited as RPC _._.

² *Id.* The importance of pro bono work is also emphasized at RPC 6.1, Comment [1], which

³ RPC 6.1, Comment [12].

⁴ RPC 6.1(a)(1)-(2).

⁵ RPC 6.1(b)(1).

the legal system, or the legal profession.⁶ Tennessee’s ethical rules additionally encourage lawyers to voluntarily contribute financial support to organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means.⁷

The importance of pro bono work codified in Tennessee’s RPC 6.1 mirrors the American Bar Association’s Model Rules and other state jurisdictions. Tennessee’s RPC 6.1 follows Model Rule 6.1 of the American Bar Association’s Model Rules of Professional Conduct.⁸ Model Rule 6.1 was codified in August 1983 with the original adoption of the ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct, reflecting a strong statement of the ABA’s position on the significance of pro bono work.⁹ The ABA Standing Committee on Lawyers’ Public Service Responsibility, in its 1993 Report to the House of Delegates, confirms that Model Rule 6.1 was intended to address

the ongoing crisis in unmet legal needs to the indigent.¹⁰

Most state jurisdictions follow Model Rule 6.1 or otherwise codify the importance of pro bono work in their ethical rules. Research revealed that in addition to Tennessee, thirty-seven (37) state jurisdictions have adopted Model 6.1 rule, either verbatim or with minor variations.¹¹ An additional sixteen (16) state jurisdictions have adopted a Rule 6.1 that generally affirms the importance of pro bono legal services without using language mirroring the Model Rule.¹² While pro bono work is encouraged in state jurisdictional rules, research did not reveal any state jurisdictions mandating pro bono work.¹³

⁶ RPC 6.1(b)(2)-(3).

⁷ RPC 6.1(c).

⁸ The American Bar Association’s Model Rules of Professional Conduct will be cited as Model Rule ___. While Tennessee follows Model Rule 6.1, there are several very minor variations between Model Rule 6.1 and Tennessee’s RPC 6.1. For example, the first sentence of Model Rule 6.1 states that “Every lawyer has a professional responsibility to provide legal services to those unable to pay.” Tennessee omits this sentence, but includes the following sentence with similar language in Comment [1] to its Rule 6.1: “Every lawyer, regardless of professional prominence or professional work load, as a responsibility to provide legal services for those unable to pay, and personal involvement in the problems of the disadvantaged can be one of the most rewarding experiences in the life of a lawyer.” This sentence is also included in Model Rule 6.1, Comment [1].

⁹ See ABA Formal Op. 470 (May 20, 2015).

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ See The American Bar Association Jurisdictional Rules Comparison Charts, located at https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/professional_responsibility/mrpc-6-1.pdf.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ There have been unsuccessful efforts made on a national level and in state jurisdictions to require pro bono work as a condition of law licensure. See Natalia C. Ortiz, The Justice Gap: Confronting Complicity in the Legal Profession to Better Reimagine Reform, 34 Geo. J. Legal Ethics 1167 (2021); David J. Dreyer, Culture, Structure, and Pro Bono Practice, 33 J. Legal Prof. 185 (2009); Daniel M. Taubman, Has the Time Come to Revise Our Pro Bono Rules?, 97 Denver L. Rev. 395 (2020).

Tennessee's Ethical Rules Apply Equally to Fee Generating and Pro Bono Representation

Attorneys that choose to incorporate a pro bono element to their law practice should proceed with the fundamental understanding that their ethical responsibilities are the same whether a case is taken on a fee generating basis or a pro bono basis. There may be a tendency to assume that when a case is taken without a fee, the attorney's ethical responsibilities are mitigated. For example, if an attorney agrees to accept a pro bono referral from a legal services organization, the attorney may assume that they are not required to act with the same diligence normally employed for their fee generating cases, or to respond to the client's communications in as timely a manner.

Contrary to this understanding, Tennessee's ethical rules do not recognize any distinction between an attorney's ethical responsibilities when handling fee generating or pro bono cases. Attorneys may likewise be subject to a legal malpractice claim or other civil exposure regardless of whether the case is taken for a fee. The fact that a legal matter is handled pro bono does not exempt attorneys from disciplinary action by the Board of Professional Responsibility.

Checking Conflicts of Interest

Tennessee's conflict of interest rules generally apply to pro bono representation, including concurrent conflicts,¹⁴ conflicts for

former clients,¹⁵ and imputed disqualification.¹⁶ On this basis, prior to undergoing a pro bono case, an attorney should apply their office's usual conflict of interest checking protocols. Attorneys should also be mindful of the protections afforded to prospective clients in any communication with a prospective pro bono client prior to deciding whether to undertake the representation.¹⁷

While Tennessee's conflict rules normally apply to pro bono representation, RPC 6.5 creates an exception for attorneys that provide limited scope pro bono legal services under the auspices of a program sponsored by a nonprofit organization or court. This rule is intended to encompass programs such as clinics for the provision of legal advice and completion of legal forms, legal advice hotlines, and similar programs where there is no further representation.¹⁸

Lawyers who participate in such programs are not required to employ their usual conflict of interest protocols. Instead, lawyers are only subject to RPC 1.7 (concurrent conflicts) and RPC 1.9(a)(conflicts involving former clients) where the lawyer knows that the representation of the client involves a conflict of interest.¹⁹ Imputed conflict pursuant to RPC 1.10 only applies if the lawyer knows that another lawyer associated with their firm is disqualified.²⁰ The inapplicability of Tennessee's conflict rules in this context is premised on the fact that the circumstances of these programs make it infeasible for a lawyer to engage in their usual conflicts screening

¹⁴ RPC 1.7

¹⁵ RPC 1.9

¹⁶ RPC 1.10. See also RPC 6.5, Comment [4].

¹⁷ RPC 1.18.

¹⁸ RPC 6.5, Comment [1].

¹⁹ RPC 6.5(a)(1).

²⁰ RPC 6.5(a)(2).

process, as well as the unlikelihood that a conflict will result with other matters being handled by the lawyer or their firm.²¹

There are circumstances where a lawyer providing legal advice at a pro bono clinic or similar services within the scope of RPC 6.5 chooses to provide ongoing representation for the client after the provision of the limited scope representation. For example, an attorney that provides advice to a client concerning their eligibility for social security disability at a clinic sponsored by a legal services program agrees to represent the client in pursuing their disability claim. If such ongoing representation is initiated, Tennessee's conflict rules will fully apply, even when the representation arises out of the limited scope services pursuant to RPC 6.5.²² In this circumstance, the attorney should run their usual conflicts checking protocol before agreeing to the ongoing representation.

The Duty to Provide Competent Representation

Attorneys that choose to undertake a pro bono case in a legal area where they have no prior experience should be particularly conscious of their obligation to provide competent representation, as required by RPC 1.1. Competent representation requires that the attorney demonstrate the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness, and preparation reasonably necessary to carry out the representation.²³

Attorneys that choose to incorporate pro bono services into their law practice may not have any prior experience in handling the legal matter(s) that will be undertaken. Consider an attorney that exclusively handles transactional matters for corporate entities that chooses to begin accepting referrals from a legal services organization. The legal services organization may not have any legal matters for referral that fall within the scope of the attorney's law practice, requiring the attorney to begin handling cases in an area where they have no prior experience.

There is nothing per se problematic for an attorney to begin taking pro bono cases in matters where they have no prior experience, in the same fashion that an attorney may establish a fee generating practice in an unfamiliar legal area. However, RPC 1.1 requires that lawyers undertaking a matter in an unfamiliar substantive area invest requisite time to become sufficiently knowledgeable about applicable law to ensure that they can proceed competently.²⁴ In addition to review of substantive law, the preparation required to comply with RPC 1.1 may require consultation with experienced practitioners. Prior to undertaking a pro bono matter in an unfamiliar area, attorneys should consider the anticipated time required to become sufficiently informed about the applicable law of the legal matter at issue, and the feasibility of investing this time considering their other responsibilities.

²¹ RPC 6.5, Comments [3]-[4].

²² RPC 6.5, Comment [5].

²³ RPC 1.1.

²⁴ RPC 1.1, Comment [2] confirms that "a lawyer need not necessarily have special training or prior experience to handle legal problems of a type with

which the lawyer is unfamiliar." Comment [2] further provides that "a lawyer can provide adequate representation in a wholly novel field through necessary study. Competent representation can also be provided through the association of a lawyer of established competence in a field in question.

Attorneys that are considering establishing a pro bono practice in an unfamiliar legal area might consider receiving referrals from their local legal services program or other nonprofit law firm rather than accepting pro bono cases independently. The referring organization may have training opportunities available, as well as opportunities to co-counsel with an experienced in-house practitioner employed by the organization or an experienced attorney in the private bar. Accepting referrals from a nonprofit organization will also help ensure that referred clients are vetted for purposes of establishing their financial need for pro bono services, and that the client has a meritorious basis to proceed.

Defining the Scope of Representation

Attorneys handling pro bono cases should give consideration to their obligation to define the scope of the representation of the client.²⁵ RPC 1.5(b) requires the attorney to establish the scope of the representation and the basis or rate of the fee at or soon after the commencement of the representation.

Clients that receive pro bono legal representation may be unfamiliar with the nature of pro bono representation as distinguished from representation in fee generating cases. The attorney should confirm with the client that no fee will be charged regardless of the results obtained. The client should be advised that the attorney's usual

ethical requirements are applicable despite the fact that the matter will be handled without payment of a fee.

The attorney should confirm the extent of the legal work that will be completed. If the matter is litigation based, the attorney should indicate whether the representation will include appeals or post-trial motions. If the representation involves a civil proceeding where a money judgment is sought, the attorney should confirm whether the scope of representation includes execution or enforcement of any judgment.

It is recommended that a written representation agreement be signed by the client, confirming that the matter will be undertaken on a pro bono basis with no fee charged, and specifying the legal work that will be completed.²⁶ A well-drafted representation agreement will mitigate client confusion and misunderstanding. A written agreement will additionally protect the attorney if a dispute arises about the nature and extent of the work agreed upon.

Distinguishing between the legal work that will be completed and the legal work that is outside the scope of representation is particularly crucial when representing indigent clients, due to the likelihood that the client will not have the resources to retain successor counsel from the private bar on a fee generating basis for any additional legal work that is needed. Consider the circumstance where an attorney agrees to provide pro bono

²⁵ RPC 1.5(b).

²⁶ RPC 1.5(b) recommends but does not require that the scope of representation be reduced to writing. See also RPC 1.5(b), Comment [2] (“in a new client-lawyer relationship, however, an understanding as to fees and expenses must be promptly established. Generally, it is desirable to furnish the client with at least a simple

memorandum or copy of the lawyer's customary fee arrangements that states the general nature of the legal services to be provided, the basis, rate or total amount of the fee and whether and to what extent the client will be responsible for any costs, expenses, or disbursements in the course of the representation.”)

representation to a client seeking money damages and injunctive relief. At the outset of the representation, the client will very likely not be cognizant of the distinction between obtaining a money judgment and the subsequent collection of the civil judgment, or the distinction between entry of an injunctive order and the mechanism for enforcement due to any noncompliance. If the scope of representation does not include collection of any money judgment or enforcement of an injunction obtained through litigation, a client that obtains a favorable outcome could be left in the position of having no means of execution or enforcement, due to the inability to retain successor counsel.

Pro bono clients should also be advised at the commencement of the representation of the circumstances that might result in the attorney seeking leave to withdraw from the representation, due to the difficulties involved in retainer successor counsel.²⁷ The pro bono client should be particularly advised of circumstances mandating or permitting withdrawal outside the client's control, such as where withdrawal is mandated by an attorney's incapacity²⁸ or where an unanticipated conflict of interest arises.²⁹ Absent legal assistance from a nonprofit law firm or financial assistance from a third-party, the indigent client would be in a position of being required to proceed pro se in the event of the attorney's withdrawal.

²⁷ The circumstances for an attorney's withdrawal are itemized at RPC 1.16. The grounds for mandatory withdrawal are found at RPC 1.16(a) and RPC 1.16(b) defines the circumstances for permissive withdrawal.

²⁸ An attorney is required to withdraw from the representation of a client if the attorney's physical or mental condition materially impairs their ability to represent the client. RPC 1.16(a)(2).

Payment of Litigation Expenses

When an attorney agrees to represent an indigent client in a pro bono matter where litigation expenses are anticipated, the attorney should consider how to best proceed regarding the payment of these expenses. This is particularly the case where litigation expenses are expected to be significant. However, even an expense as minimal as a filing fee may be beyond the financial capacity of an indigent client.

Attorneys normally have two options concerning the payment of litigation expenses. The first option is to advance the payment of court costs, the repayment of which may be contingent on the outcome of the matter.³⁰ This arrangement is typically employed by attorneys that handle matters on a contingency fee basis, pursuant to RPC 1.5(c). In the usual arrangement, the attorney recoups any prepaid expenses only if sufficient monetary recovery is obtained for the client through settlement or judgment. Otherwise, these expenses are incurred by the attorney. If this option is chosen, the fee agreement must clearly notify the client of any expenses for which the client will be liable.³¹ As a second option, attorneys may simply require the client to be responsible for any litigation expenses as they accrue.

Attorneys representing indigent clients have the additional option of paying any expenses in connection with pending or

²⁹ If a conflict of interest arises that is not waivable, this would require withdrawal, as continuing the representation would result in a violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct. RPC 1.16(a)(1).

³⁰ RPC 1.8(e)(1).

³¹ RPC 1.5(c).

prospective litigation without any context where the client will be required to repay.³² Payment may be made by the attorney or a referring organization or other third-party.

The term “indigency” is not defined in the Tennessee Rules of Professional Conduct, and the fact that the client is represented pro bono does not per se establish indigency. Indigency does not have a single legal definition and is instead conceptualized differently depending upon the legal context.

Attorneys seeking to interpret indigency for purposes of considering the applicability of RPC 1.8(e)(2) can look for guidance in other contexts where indigency is considered, such as for purposes of the Sixth Amendment right to counsel. The United States Supreme Court did not provide a definition of indigency in Gideon v. Wainright,³³ where the right to counsel was established, and no definition is found in Gideon’s progeny.³⁴ However, states interpreting Gideon’s requirement have created three main methods of determining

whether a criminal defendant is indigent: (1) whether the defendant receives public assistance; (2) whether the defendant’s liabilities exceed their assets; or (3) whether a defendant would be able to afford the cost of hiring private counsel.³⁵ For purposes of appointment of indigency counsel in criminal proceedings in Tennessee pursuant to TENN. CODE ANN. § 40-14-202, an indigent person is defined as “any person who does not possess sufficient means to pay reasonable compensation for the services of a competent attorney.”³⁶

If a pro bono case involving an indigent client is taken through referral from a legal services organization or other nonprofit law firm, the attorney should check with the organization to see if funding is available for litigation expenses. If such funding is unavailable through the organization, inquiry may be made with other potential sources of financial assistance.³⁷ If there are anticipated expenses where funding is not available, the attorney could choose to independently

³² RPC 1.8(e)(2). See also RPC 1.8, Comment [10].

³³ 372 U.S. 335 (1963).

³⁴ See Allison D. Kuhns, If You Cannot Afford An Attorney, Will One Be Appointed for You?, Iowa Law Rev. 1787, 1798-1799 (July 2012).

³⁵ See id. See also Wayne R. LaFave & Jerold H. Israel, CRIMINAL PROCEDURE § 11.3(g) at 544 (2d ed. 1992)(“[s]upreme Court opinions speak generally of the rights of an ‘indigent defendant’ without offering any specific definition of ‘indigency.’ ... The appellate courts agree that indigency is not a synonym for ‘destitute.’ ... Among the factors to be considered in evaluating the individual’s financial capacity are: (1) income from employment and such governmental programs as social security and unemployment

compensation; (2) real and personal property; (3) number of dependents; (4) outstanding debts; (5) seriousness of the charge (which suggests the likely fee of a retained attorney); and (6) other legal expenses (such as bail bond).”

³⁶ See State of Tennessee, Department of Children’s Services v. RDV, No. E2004-01216-COA-R3-PT, 2005 WL 623246, at *4 (Tenn. Ct. App. March 17, 2005).

³⁷ If funding for litigation expenses is sought from a third-party individual or entity other than a referring legal services organization or other nonprofit law firm, informed consent to waiver of the client’s confidentiality should be obtained from the client, as information relating to the representation of the client will be shared with the third-party. See RPC 1.6.

finance the expenses for an indigent client and not seek recoupment, or in the alternative, choose to exercise the option of requiring the client to repay these expenses to the attorney if sufficient monetary recovery is made through settlement or judgment, as permitted by RPC 1.8(e)(1).

If funding is not available through a referring organization or third-party entity or individual, and the attorney chooses not to independently finance or prepay case related expenses, the attorney should consider whether it is feasible for the representation to proceed. For example, if applicable law requires expert testimony to establish a standard of care and there are no viable means of retaining a credentialed expert, a decision would need to be made whether there are meritorious grounds to pursue the client's legal objectives.

Compliance with Managerial Obligations

When a pro bono element is incorporated into a law practice, attorneys with managerial responsibilities will be required to create and implement office protocols to ensure that the pro bono cases are handled in a manner consistent with the Tennessee Rules of Professional Conduct.³⁸ Among these managerial obligations is the need to create a case management process.

Depending upon the substantive legal matters already handled by the law office, it may be feasible to incorporate the pro bono cases into the law office's existing case

management practices. For example, if an attorney's present practice is litigation based, it may be feasible to incorporate pro bono litigation matters into the existing case management system, even if the area of law is different. In contrast, if an attorney's existing legal practice is transaction based and they wish to begin handling litigation based pro bono matters, utilizing the existing case management system for the pro bono cases could create confusion, resulting in delay and potential errors in the representation of the client. In this circumstance, it may be necessary to create a new case management system for the pro bono matters that will be undertaken.

The incorporation of a pro bono element into a law practice will also require the training of attorneys and support staff. In addition to training in the applicable law and procedure of any new substantive areas that are unfamiliar to attorney and non-attorney staff, confirmation will need to be provided to staff that their ethical responsibilities apply equally to pro bono and fee generating cases.

Further Inquiry

If you have questions about the content of this article, you may contact the author at schristopher@tbpr.org or (615) 361-7500, extension 203. Questions about the article may also be directed to the Board's Ethics Counsel, Laura Chastain, at lchastain@tbpr.org, or (615) 361-7500, extension 212.

³⁸ RPC 5.1 provides that attorneys in a firm that individually or collectively possess managerial authority shall make reasonable efforts to ensure

that the firm has in effect measures giving reasonable assurance that all lawyers in the firm conform to the Rules of Professional Conduct.

The Board of Professional Responsibility's Succession Planning CLE



The Board of Professional Responsibility has developed and made available on the [Board's website](#) a one-hour succession planning continuing legal education (CLE) presentation. Available to all attorneys at no cost, this one hour CLE, presented by Disciplinary Counsel Eileen Burkhalter Smith, addresses how an attorney protects their own interests as well as interests of their clients and the profession by proactively planning for the transition, closing, or selling of a law practice. The Board's CLE emphasizes the importance of planning ahead by designating in advance a receiver or successor attorney and provides checklists for closing one's own office or someone else's practice. John Dupree, a Knoxville attorney who has previously served as a receiver, outlines best practices for successfully closing a practice. This succession planning CLE joins the Board's Proactive Management Based Regulation (PMBR) self-assessment as the second online CLE offered on the Board's website at no charge to Tennessee attorneys. Attorneys completing the succession planning CLE will receive a confirmation email that the attorney submits to the Tennessee Commission on Continuing Legal Education and Specialization to receive one-hour dual credit.

Board of Professional Responsibility



Trust Account Workshop

Wednesday, June 3, 2026
9AM - 12:30PM (Central Time)
Nashville School of Law
4013 Armory Oaks Drive, Nashville, TN 37204
Purchase Tickets [here](#)

In person participation is limited to 50 participants. Remote participation by livestream is also available. The cost of attendance is \$50.

Steven Christopher, Deputy Chief Disciplinary Counsel of Investigations, and John Gilliland, Disciplinary Counsel in Investigations, will be presenting this CLE. The Board has received approval from the Tennessee Commission on Continuing Legal Education for attendees to receive 3 hours of dual CLE credit for completion of the workshop.

This CLE Program will cover the following topics:

- A summary of best practices for trust account management
- An analysis of the ethical rules governing trust accounts
- How to Prevent Trust Account Scams

Speaker Biographies

Steven J. Christopher is Deputy Chief Disciplinary Counsel of Investigations for the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Supreme Court of Tennessee. Steve earned his J.D. degree from Harvard Law School in 2002, and also holds a Master of Divinity degree from Vanderbilt University Divinity School. Prior to being hired at the Board in 2016, Steve was a Managing Attorney at the Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlands, a private non-profit law firm that provides free legal representation to indigent persons in civil and administrative legal matters. Steve handled a wide range of legal matters as a legal services attorney, including landlord tenant, domestic relations, and public benefits cases.

John E. Gilliland is an Investigations Disciplinary Counsel for the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Supreme Court of Tennessee. John earned his J.D. degree from the University of Memphis in 2001. Prior to being hired at the Board in 2025, John was a civilian attorney with the US Army then the US Air Force after retiring as a judge advocate from the US Air Force in 2020. He has extensive experience in government ethics, administrative law, and criminal law.

Disciplinary and Licensure Actions

(October 2025 – March 2026)

PERMANENT DISBARMENTS

JOEL DAVID RAGLAND, BPR NO. 012222 ***MONTGOMERY COUNTY***

Effective October 8, 2025, the Supreme Court of Tennessee permanently disbarred Joel David Ragland from the practice of law. Mr. Ragland delivered to the Board of Professional Responsibility his Declaration in support of Disbarment by Consent, in compliance with Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 23.1 and consented to disbarment because he could not successfully defend himself against charges detailed in pending disciplinary petition, No. 2024-3419-6-DB. Mr. Ragland misappropriated funds by writing unauthorized checks against his firm's trust account in violation of Rules of Professional Conduct 8.4 (misconduct).

Mr. Ragland must comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 28 (2024), regarding the obligations and responsibilities of disbarred attorneys and is not eligible for reinstatement to the practice of law in this state.

AMANDA HOWELL CASTILLO, BPR NO. 037519 ***MAURY COUNTY***

Effective January 7, 2026, the Supreme Court of Tennessee permanently disbarred Amanda Howell Castillo from the practice of law and ordered her to pay restitution to one former client and all costs incurred to the Board of Professional Responsibility ("Board"). The Board filed a Petition for Discipline and a Supplemental Petition for Discipline against Ms. Castillo, and the disciplinary matter was tried before a Hearing Panel on August 14, 2025.

In the first complaint, the Hearing Panel found that Ms. Castillo: (1) failed to represent her client in a diligent manner, (2) failed to expedite her client's litigation; (3) failed to reasonably communicate with her client, (4) abandoned her representation of her client without notice to the client or permission from the trial court, (5) failed to comply with an Order of summary suspension entered July 26, 2024, by the Tennessee Supreme Court, (6) failed to inform her client of her suspension from the practice of law and withdraw from her representation, and (7) failed to respond to the request of the Board for information related to the disciplinary complaint.

In the second complaint, the Hearing Panel found that Ms. Castillo: (1) failed to represent her client in a diligent matter, (2) failed to set her client's case for hearing and expedite her litigation, (3) failed to comply with an Order of summary suspension entered July 26, 2024, by the Tennessee Supreme Court, (4) failed to inform her client of her suspension from the practice of law and withdraw from her representation, (5) failed to reasonably communicate with her client, (6) failed to provide the professional services for which she had been retained resulting in her abandonment of the representation of her client and the collection of an unreasonable fee that

was not returned to the client, and (7) failed to respond to the request of the Board for information related to the disciplinary complaint.

The Hearing Panel found the conduct of Ms. Castillo violated Rules of Professional Conduct (RPC) 1.3 (diligence), 1.4 (communication), 1.16 (declining or terminating representation), 3.2 (expediting litigation), 3.4(c) (knowing violation of an obligation under the rules of a tribunal), 8.1(b) (bar admission and disciplinary matters), and 8.4(g) (misconduct).

Ms. Castillo must comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 28, regarding the obligations and responsibilities of disbarred attorneys.

JOCELYN DORIA MIMS, BPR NO. 023786
SUMNER COUNTY

Effective January 30, 2026, the Supreme Court of Tennessee permanently disbarred Jocelyn Doria Mims from the practice of law and ordered her to pay all costs incurred to the Board of Professional Responsibility.

After a hearing on the final discipline to be imposed, the Hearing Panel determined by a preponderance of the evidence that Ms. Mims's felony convictions for tampering with evidence, making false report, and intentional failure to report child sexual abuse constituted serious criminal conduct that was prejudicial to the administration of justice, reflected adversely on her honesty, trustworthiness, and fitness as a lawyer, and warranted disbarment.

The Panel found Ms. Mims's conduct violated Tennessee Rules of Professional Conduct 1.2(d) (scope of representation), 1.6(c) (confidentiality), 3.3(h) (candor toward tribunal), 3.4(a)-(b) (fairness to opposing party), 4.1(a) (truthfulness in statements), and 8.4(a), (b), (c), and (d) (misconduct) and warranted permanent disbarment.

DARREN VINCENT BERG, BPR NO. 023505
KNOX COUNTY

Effective February 17, 2026, the Supreme Court of Tennessee permanently disbarred attorney Darren Vincent Berg from the practice of law, ordered him to pay all costs and fees of the Board of Professional Responsibility, and further ordered him to pay restitution to former clients.

After a formal hearing upon the disciplinary petition, a Hearing Panel determined that in eleven (11) separate matters, Mr. Berg engaged in ethical misconduct that involved failure to provide competent representation, failure to act within the scope and authority communicated by clients, failure to act with reasonable diligence, failure to communicate with clients, charging of unreasonable fees, engaging in conflicts of interest, failure to properly terminate representation, knowing reliance upon non-meritorious claims, failure to expedite litigation, making of false statements to courts and parties, improper communication with represented parties, unauthorized practice of law after temporary suspension of his license, repeated abandonment of his clients and their cases, failure to provide legal services after accepting substantial fees, and multiple instances of conduct involving deceit or dishonesty and prejudice to the administration of justice.

The appointed Hearing Panel determined that Mr. Berg's actions and omissions violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.1 (competence), 1.2 (scope of representation and allocation of authority), 1.3 (diligence), 1.4 (communication), 1.5 (fees), 1.7 (conflict of interest), 1.16 (declining or terminating representation), 3.1 (meritorious claims), 3.2 (expediting litigation), 3.3 (candor towards the tribunal), 3.4 (fairness to opposing party and counsel), 3.5 (impartiality and decorum of the tribunal), 4.2 (communication with represented persons), 4.4 (respect for the rights of third persons), 5.5 (unauthorized practice of law), 8.1 (disciplinary matters), 8.4(b) (criminal misconduct), 8.4 (c) (misconduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation) and 8.4(d) (misconduct involving prejudice to the administration of justice), and recommended permanent disbarment.

Mr. Berg must comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 28, regarding the obligations and responsibilities of disbarred attorneys, pay all Board costs and fees, and make restitution to two (2) former clients in the sum amount of \$65,000.00.

SUSPENSIONS

MICHAEL LLOYD FREEMAN, BPR NO. 028698 DAVIDSON COUNTY

Effective October 9, 2025, the Supreme Court of Tennessee revoked Mr. Freeman's probation and suspended Michael Lloyd Freeman from the practice of law for three (3) years, less than one hundred and twelve (112) days that Mr. Freeman had been previously suspended.

On June 21, 2021, Mr. Freeman was suspended from the practice of law for three (3) years with three (3) months of active suspension and the remainder served on probation contingent upon Mr. Freeman incurring no new complaints of misconduct that relate to conduct occurring during the period of suspension and probation that result in the recommendation by the Board that discipline be imposed. Mr. Freeman violated his probationary condition when he was publicly censured by the Board for conduct occurring during his probationary period, and the Board authorized the filing of a Petition for Discipline for misconduct occurring during his probationary period. On March 11, 2024, the Board of Professional Responsibility filed a Petition to Revoke Probation, and a Panel revoked Mr. Freeman's probation and imposed a three (3) year suspension as originally ordered with credit of one hundred and twelve (112) days previously served.

Mr. Freeman must comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 30.4, regarding the obligations and responsibilities of suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

JEREMY RYAN DURHAM, BPR NO. 027776 WILLIAMSON COUNTY

On November 14, 2025, the Tennessee Supreme Court suspended Jeremy Ryan Durham from the practice of law until further orders of the Court pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 22.3. Mr. Durham was convicted of felony Reckless Endangerment which constitutes a serious crime as defined by Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 2. In addition, Mr. Durham was convicted of non-serious crimes including one (1) count of Driving Under the Influence, one (1) count of Driving Under the Influence Per Se, one (1) count of Resisting Arrest, and one (1) count of Possession of Drug Paraphernalia.

Pursuant to the Order of the Supreme Court, the matter has been referred to the Board to institute formal proceedings to determine the extent of the final discipline to be imposed upon Mr. Durham as a result of his conduct constituting a serious crime as defined by Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 2.

Mr. Durham must comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 30.4, regarding the obligations and responsibilities of suspended attorneys.

***ROBERT JOSEPH TURNER, BPR NO. 015107
DAVIDSON COUNTY***

Effective November 21, 2025, the Supreme Court of Tennessee suspended Robert Joseph Turner from the practice of law for one (1) year, with thirty (30) days to be served as an active suspension pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 12.2, and the remainder to be served on probation conditioned upon Mr. Turner's engagement of a practice monitor.

Mr. Turner was retained to represent a client in a civil matter against a general contractor. During the pendency of the litigation at least five (5) separate associates employed by Mr. Turner were assigned to handle the litigation, although Mr. Turner remained counsel of record. Over a four (4) year period, Mr. Turner, or an associate assigned to the matter who Mr. Turner was supervising, failed to appear for hearings on multiple occasions, missed multiple deadlines memorialized in a scheduling order, and failed to comply with court orders to contact the court. In dismissing the matter, the trial court cited as the basis for dismissal Mr. Turner's failure to properly represent his client and comply with court orders.

Mr. Turner executed a Conditional Guilty Plea acknowledging his conduct violated Tennessee Rules of Professional 1.3 (diligence) and 5.1 (responsibilities of supervisory lawyers).

Mr. Turner must comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 30.4, regarding the obligations and responsibilities of suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

***JAMES MICHAEL MARSHALL, BPR NO. 018784
MAURY COUNTY***

Effective November 21, 2025, the Supreme Court of Tennessee suspended James Michael Marshall from the practice of law for five (5) years, with two (2) years to be served as an active suspension pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 12.2, and the remainder to be served on probation.

Mr. Marshall, during the representation of a client, submitted a factually inaccurate pleading and then failed to correct the error and failed to reasonably communicate with his client regarding the error. Mr. Marshall executed a Conditional Guilty Plea acknowledging his conduct violated Tennessee Rules of Professional Conduct, 1.1 (competence), 1.3 (diligence), 1.4 (communication), 3.2 (expediting litigation), 8.1(b) (disciplinary matters), and 8.4(a) (misconduct).

Mr. Marshall must comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 30.4, regarding the obligations and responsibilities of suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

MICKIE SMITH DAUGHERTY, BPR NO. 022746
DAVIDSON COUNTY

Effective January 7, 2026, the Supreme Court of Tennessee suspended Mickie Smith Daugherty from the practice of law for six (6) years, retroactive to August 20, 2024, pursuant to Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 9, § 12.2, conditioned upon Ms. Daugherty's cooperation with the Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program (TLAP) and compliance with the terms and conditions imposed by the Circuit Court for Maury County in State v Mickie Smith Daugherty, Docket No. 31137.

On September 3, 2024, Ms. Daugherty pled guilty to one (1) count of Theft of Property and one (1) count of Forgery, both Class C felonies, and was ordered to pay restitution of \$35,000.00 to Culleoka Athletic Booster Club. Pursuant to T.C.A. §40-35-313, Ms. Daugherty received Judicial Diversion and was placed on probation for a period of four (4) years and six (6) months. Ms. Daugherty paid full restitution before she was sentenced.

Ms. Daugherty executed a Conditional Guilty Plea acknowledging her conduct violated Tennessee Rules of Professional 8.4(c) (misconduct).

Ms. Daugherty must comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 30.4, regarding the obligations and responsibilities of suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

SHEILA L. ROBINSON-BEASLEY, BPR NO. 013937
SHELBY COUNTY

Effective January 30, 2026, the Supreme Court of Tennessee suspended Sheila L. Robinson-Beasley from the practice of law for six (6) years, with five (5) years active suspension and the remainder served on probation conditioned upon employing a practice monitor at her expense for one (1) year following reinstatement, compliance with all the terms and conditions of the Order of Enforcement, compliance with all CLE requirements, payment of all registration fees and professional privileged taxes due and owing, attendance at the Board of Professional Responsibility's ethics workshop, payment of all Board costs assessed in this matter, and payment of all court costs taxed in this matter.

A Petition for Discipline containing one complaint was filed by the Board alleging that Ms. Robinson-Beasley did not follow proper protocol in the execution and use of a Durable Power of Attorney and Limited Power of Attorney that she prepared on behalf of an ill family member, and, following the death of the family member, she converted assets belonging to the deceased's estate and made false representations concerning the validity of the Durable Power of Attorney and Limited Power of Attorney to persons involved in the sale of the deceased's residence and persons at the deceased's bank.

Ms. Robinson-Beasley executed a Second Conditional Guilty Plea acknowledging her conduct violated Tennessee Rules of Professional Conduct 1.1 (competence), 1.3 (diligence), 1.15 (safekeeping property and funds), 4.1 (truthfulness in statements to others), and 8.4 (misconduct).

Ms. Robinson-Beasley must comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 30.4, regarding the obligations and responsibilities of suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

***WILLIAM ANTHONY PAXTON, BPR NO. 016976
TENNESSEE***

Effective February 17, 2025, William Anthony Paxton, a Loudon County Attorney, was suspended by Order of Reciprocal Discipline entered by the Supreme Court of Tennessee on February 17, 2026. Mr. Paxton was suspended from the practice of law for one (1) year with the entire suspension stayed on the condition that he refrain from further misconduct and comply with the Order of the Supreme Court of Ohio entered November 25, 2025. On January 7, 2026, the Supreme Court Tennessee entered a Notice of Reciprocal Discipline directing Mr. Paxton to demonstrate to the Court, within thirty (30) days of receipt of the Notice, why the discipline imposed by the Supreme Court of Ohio should not be imposed by the Supreme Court of Tennessee. Mr. Paxton failed to respond to the directive of the Court.

Mr. Paxton must comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 30.4, regarding the obligations and responsibilities of suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

***LORING EDWIN JUSTICE, BPR NO. 019446
KNOX COUNTY***

Effective February 19, 2026, the Supreme Court of Tennessee suspended Knoxville attorney Loring Edwin Justice from the practice of law for four (4) years, pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 12.2, with all four (4) years to be served as an active suspension. Mr. Justice must also make payment of all Board costs and expenses.

The Petition for Discipline filed in this matter alleged that Mr. Justice and his firm entered into a fee agreement without client authorization, charged excessive and unreasonable fees that were unsupported by billing records, abused the fiduciary relationship with the client, failed to reasonably communicate with or diligently represent a client, failed to protect his client's interests after withdrawal or termination, and engaged in misconduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation.

On December 3, 2025, Mr. Justice executed a Conditional Guilty Plea as to violations of Tennessee Rules of Professional Conduct ("RPC") 1.3 (diligence), 1.4 (communications), 1.5 (fees), 1.8 (conflict of interest: specific rules), 1.16 (declining or terminating representing), and 8.4(c) (misconduct).

Mr. Justice must comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 30.4, regarding the obligations and responsibilities of suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

***MICHAEL LLOYD FREEMAN, BPR NO. 028698
DAVIDSON COUNTY***

On February 27, 2026, the Supreme Court of Tennessee entered an order suspending Michael Lloyd Freeman from the practice of law for a period of six (6) years with four (4) years active suspension pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 12.2, and the remainder on probation pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 14.1. Additionally, Mr. Freeman shall obtain an evaluation with the Tennessee Lawyer's Assistance Program and pay restitution. During the period of any probation, Mr. Freeman shall engage the services of a Practice Monitor.

In a disciplinary Petition consisting of three complaints, a Hearing Panel found Mr. Freeman, during the representation of multiple clients, failed to act competently, failed to protect client funds, acted outside the scope of representation, failed to act diligently, failed to communicate with clients, and his actions were prejudicial to the administration of justice. Mr. Freeman violated Tennessee Rules of Professional Conduct 1.1 (Competence), 1.15 (Safekeeping Funds), 1.16 (Declining or Terminating Representation), 1.2 (Scope of Representation), 1.3 (Diligence), 1.4 (Communication), 3.2 (Expediting litigation), 3.4 (Fairness to Opposing Party and Counsel), and 8.4 (Misconduct)

Mr. Freeman must comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 30.4 regarding the obligations and responsibilities of suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

TEMPORARY SUSPENSIONS

EDWARD KENDALL WHITE, BPR NO. 032725 TENNESSEE

On November 12, 2025, the Supreme Court of Tennessee temporarily suspended Edward Kendall White, a resident of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, from the practice of law for failing to respond to the Board of Professional Responsibility concerning one (1) complaint of misconduct. Section 12.3 of Supreme Court Rule 9 provides for the immediate summary suspension of an attorney's license to practice law in cases of an attorney's failure to respond to a complaint of misconduct.

Mr. White is immediately precluded from accepting any new cases, and he must cease representing existing clients by December 12, 2025. After December 12, 2025, Mr. White shall not use any indicia of lawyer, legal assistant, or law clerk nor maintain a presence wherein the practice of law is conducted. Mr. White must notify all clients being represented in pending matters, as well as co-counsel and opposing counsel, of the Supreme Court's Order suspending his law license, and he is required to deliver to all clients any papers or property to which they are entitled.

Mr. White must comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 12.3(d), regarding the obligations and responsibilities of temporarily suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

This suspension remains in effect until dissolution or modification by the Supreme Court. Mr. White, for good cause, request dissolution or modification of the suspension by petition to the Supreme Court.

KERI ELIZABETH RULE, BPR NO. 036921 KNOX COUNTY

On December 5, 2025, the Supreme Court of Tennessee temporarily suspended Keri Elizabeth Rule from the practice of law upon finding that Ms. Rule failed to respond to the Board of Professional Responsibility concerning a complaint of misconduct.

Ms. Rule shall comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 12.3(d), regarding the obligations and responsibilities of temporarily suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

This suspension remains in effect until dissolution or modification by the Supreme Court. Ms. Rule may, for good cause, request dissolution or modification of the suspension by petition to the Supreme Court.

DALEN L. P. FARMER, BPR NO. 012629
RUTHERFORD COUNTY

On January 22, 2026, the Supreme Court of Tennessee temporarily suspended Dalen L. P. Farmer from the practice of law upon finding that Mr. Farmer failed to respond to the Board of Professional Responsibility concerning one (1) complaint of misconduct.

Mr. Farmer is immediately precluded from accepting any new cases, and he must cease representing existing clients by February 21, 2026. After February 21, 2026, Mr. Farmer shall not use any indicia of lawyer, legal assistant, or law clerk, nor maintain a presence where the practice of law is conducted.

Mr. Farmer shall notify all clients being represented in pending matters, as well as co-counsel and opposing counsel, of the Supreme Court's Order suspending his law license and shall deliver to all clients any papers or property to which they are entitled.

Mr. Farmer shall comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 12.3(d), regarding the obligations and responsibilities of temporarily suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

This suspension remains in effect until dissolution or modification by the Supreme Court. Mr. Farmer may, for good cause, request dissolution or modification of the suspension by petition to the Supreme Court.

RICKYA A. W. CURTIS, BPR NO. 019761
SULLIVAN COUNTY

On January 22, 2026, the Supreme Court of Tennessee temporarily suspended Ricky A. W. Curtis from the practice of law upon finding that Mr. Curtis failed to respond to the Board of Professional Responsibility concerning one (1) complaint of misconduct.

Mr. Curtis is immediately precluded from accepting any new cases, and he must cease representing existing clients February 21, 2026. After February 21, 2026, Mr. Curtis shall not use any indicia of lawyer, legal assistant, or law clerk nor maintain a presence where the practice of law is conducted. Mr. Curtis is immediately precluded from accessing current trust accounts or opening any new trust accounts until further direction of the Court.

Mr. Curtis must notify all clients being represented in pending matters, as well as co-counsel and opposing counsel of the Supreme Court's Order suspending his law license. Mr. Curtis is required to deliver to all clients any papers or property to which they are entitled.

Mr. Curtis shall comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 12.3(d), regarding the obligations and responsibilities of temporarily suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

This suspension remains in effect until dissolution or modification by the Supreme Court. Mr. Curtis may, for good cause, request dissolution or modification of the suspension by petition to the Supreme Court.

***STEPHANIE BRANAM JOHNSON, BPR NO. 030782
PUTNAM COUNTY***

On February 13, 2026, the Supreme Court of Tennessee temporarily suspended Stephanie Branam Johnson from the practice of law upon finding that Ms. Johnson failed to respond to the Board of Professional Responsibility concerning a complaint of misconduct.

Ms. Johnson is immediately precluded from accepting any new cases, and she must cease representing existing clients by March 15, 2026. After March 15, 2026, Ms. Johnson shall not use any indicia of lawyer, legal assistant, or law clerk nor maintain a presence where the practice of law is conducted.

Ms. Johnson must notify all clients being represented in pending matters, as well as co-counsel and opposing counsel, of the Supreme Court's Order suspending her law license. Ms. Johnson is required to deliver to all clients any papers or property to which they are entitled.

Ms. Johnson shall comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 12.3(d), regarding the obligations and responsibilities of temporarily suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

This suspension remains in effect until dissolution or modification by the Supreme Court. Ms. Johnson may, for good cause, request dissolution or modification of the suspension by petition to the Supreme Court.

***MARY R. RUDOLPH, BPR NO. 034815
SHELBY COUNTY***

On March 5, 2026, the Supreme Court of Tennessee temporarily suspended Mary R. Rudolph from the practice of law upon finding that Ms. Rudolph failed to respond to the Board of Professional Responsibility concerning a complaint of misconduct.

Ms. Rudolph is immediately precluded from accepting any new cases, and she must cease representing existing clients by April 4, 2026. After April 4, 2026, Ms. Rudolph shall not use any indicia of lawyer, legal assistant, or law clerk nor maintain a presence where the practice of law is conducted.

Ms. Rudolph must notify all clients being represented in pending matters, as well as co-counsel and opposing counsel, of the Supreme Court's Order suspending her law license. Ms. Rudolph is required to deliver to all clients any papers or property to which they are entitled.

Ms. Rudolph shall comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 12.3(d), regarding the obligations and responsibilities of temporarily suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

This suspension remains in effect until dissolution or modification by the Supreme Court. Ms. Rudolph may, for good cause, request dissolution or modification of the suspension by petition to the Supreme Court.

***HARVEY RANDOLPH FALLIN, BPR NO. 015127
JOHNSON COUNTY***

On March 9, 2026, the Supreme Court of Tennessee temporarily suspended Harvey Randolph Fallin from the practice of law upon finding that Mr. Fallin failed to respond to the Board of Professional Responsibility concerning a complaint of misconduct.

Mr. Fallin is immediately precluded from accepting any new cases, and he must cease representing existing clients by April 8, 2026. After April 8, 2026, Mr. Fallin shall not use any indicia of lawyer, legal assistant, or law clerk nor maintain a presence where the practice of law is conducted.

Mr. Fallin must notify all clients being represented in pending matters, as well as co-counsel and opposing counsel, of the Supreme Court's Order suspending his law license. Mr. Fallin is required to deliver to all clients any papers or property to which they are entitled.

Mr. Fallin shall comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 12.3(d), regarding the obligations and responsibilities of temporarily suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

This suspension remains in effect until dissolution or modification by the Supreme Court. Mr. Fallin may, for good cause, request dissolution or modification of the suspension by petition to the Supreme Court.

***JASON LEE HOLLY, BPR NO. 024279
CARTER COUNTY***

On March 23, 2026, the Supreme Court of Tennessee temporarily suspended Jason Lee Holly from the practice of law upon finding that Mr. Holly failed to respond to the Board of Professional Responsibility concerning two (2) complaints of misconduct.

Mr. Holly is immediately precluded from accepting any new cases and must cease representing existing clients by April 22, 2026. After April 22, 2026, Mr. Holly shall not use any indicia of lawyer, legal assistant, or law clerk nor maintain a presence where the practice of law is conducted.

Mr. Holly must notify all clients being represented in pending matters, as well as co-counsel and opposing counsel, of the Supreme Court's Order suspending his law license. Mr. Holly is required to withdraw from all representation and deliver to all clients any papers or property to which they are entitled.

Mr. Holly shall comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Sections 28 and 12.3(d), regarding the obligations and responsibilities of temporarily suspended attorneys and the procedure for reinstatement.

This suspension remains in effect until dissolution or modification by the Supreme Court. Mr. Holly may, for good cause, request dissolution or modification of the suspension by petition to the Supreme Court.

PUBLIC CENSURES

JOSEPH PAUL WEYANT, BPR NO. 022587 DAVIDSON COUNTY

On October 8, 2025, Joseph Paul Weyant, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Mr. Weyant was named the administrator of an estate. While he was serving as administrator of the estate, Mr. Weyant represented an heir of the estate in filing a petition for grandparent visitation against another heir of the estate. As administrator, Mr. Weyant took no court action in the estate for four years. Mr. Weyant delayed responding to the Internal Revenue Service about a refund for the estate for one year.

In a second matter, Mr. Weyant was representing a client in a probate matter in which sensitive client information was placed under seal by the trial court. In an appeal of that matter, Mr. Weyant filed an appellate brief without taking steps to protect the confidential information, resulting in the information being referenced in the court's opinion.

By these acts, Joseph Paul Weyant, has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.1 (competence), 1.3 (diligence), 1.7 (conflict of interest), and 8.4(d) (misconduct) and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

STACEY ALLEN TERRAL, BPR NO. 023054 RUTHERFORD COUNTY

On October 8, 2025, Stacey Allen Terral, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Mr. Terral represented a client in a custody matter in the Rutherford County Juvenile Court. In preparing to submit discovery responses, Mr. Terral advised his client that with permission, he could sign the discovery attestation on the client's behalf to save some time. Believing that he had his client's permission, Mr. Terral engaged the services of his wife, who is a Notary Public, to notarize the document. Mr. Terral told his wife that the client had approved the discovery answers and they were ready to be notarized. Mr. Terral showed his wife a copy of the client's driver's license and signed the verification, which his wife then notarized. In signing the document, Mr. Terral signed the client's name and did not indicate that the document was being signed by him with client's permission nor in any way indicate that the document was signed by anyone other than the client. Mr. Terral has been practicing law for over twenty (20) years and claims not to have known such action was improper.

By these acts, Mr. Terral has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.1 (competence), 1.2(d) (scope of representation and allocation of authority between client and lawyer), 3.4(b) (fairness to opposing party and counsel), 4.1(a) (truthfulness in statements to others), 5.3 (responsibilities regarding nonlawyer assistants), and 8.4(a), (c), and (d) (misconduct), and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

LESLIE ADKINS MILLER, BPR NO. 021608
FAYETTE COUNTY

On October 9, 2025, Leslie Adkins Miller, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Ms. Miller was representing a client in which her client's parental rights were terminated. Ms. Miller filed a Notice of Appeal with Tennessee Court of Appeals. Ms. Miller failed to file timely documents as required by the Court including a brief on behalf of her client. This resulted in her client's appeal being dismissed.

By these acts, Ms. Miller has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.3 (diligence), 3.2 (expediting litigation), 3.4 (fairness to opposing party and counsel), and 8.4(d) (misconduct), and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

KYLE BATES HECKMAN, BPR NO. 026363
WILSON COUNTY

On October 20, 2025, Kyle Bates Heckman, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

A client hired Mr. Heckman to probate her late husband's estate. Mr. Heckman filed a petition to probate the estate and then took no further action for five years despite statements to the client that he would do so. In another client matter, Mr. Heckman failed to take steps to probate a client's father's estate for five months, and he failed to respond to 17 emails and multiple voicemails from the client.

By these acts, Kyle Bates Heckman, has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.3 (diligence), 1.4 (communication), 3.2 (expediting litigation), 3.4 (fairness to opposing party), and 8.4(d) (prejudice to the administration of justice) and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

NICHOLAS LEE SURRATT, BPR NO. 035010
HARDIN COUNTY

On October 20, 2025, Nicholas Lee Surratt, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Mr. Surratt represented a criminal defendant in appealing a conviction. Mr. Surratt failed to file the trial court transcript within the time prescribed by applicable rules of court. Mr. Surratt failed to respond to notices from

the Court of Criminal Appeals regarding the failure to file the transcript, which resulted in a show cause proceeding where Mr. Surratt was found in willful contempt. Mr. Surratt also failed to comply with subsequent orders entered by the Court of Criminal Appeals establishing deadlines for the filing of his client's principal brief.

By these acts, Mr. Surratt has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.1 (*competence*), 1.3 (*diligence*), 3.2 (*expediting litigation*), 3.4(c) (*knowing violation of an obligation under the rules of a tribunal*), 8.4(d) (*conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice*), and 8.4(g) (*violation of a court order*) and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

***DANA C. HANSEN CHAVIS, BPR NO. 019098
ROANE COUNTY***

On October 28, 2025, Dana C. Hansen Chavis, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Supreme Court of Tennessee and was ordered to pay the costs and fees of the Board of Professional Responsibility.

While employed as a federal public defender with the Federal Defender Services of East Tennessee, Ms. Hansen was assigned to appear pro hac vice in a Virginia matter in order to represent a death row defendant in a post-conviction appellate matter. During these federal proceedings, Ms. Hansen failed to make reasonably diligent efforts to comply with a legally proper discovery request by an opposing party, and thereby negligently failed to disclose and produce material evidence responsive to a discovery request.

Ms. Hansen executed a conditional guilty plea acknowledging her conduct violated Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct 3.4(e) (fairness to opposing party or counsel).

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

***CHAD MICHAEL BUTLER, BPR NO. 027751
GIBSON COUNTY***

On November 14, 2025, Chad Michael Butler, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Mr. Butler was retained by a client to file an Emergency Custody Petition related to minor children in her care. Subsequently, Mr. Butler filed a Petition for Adoption and Termination of Parental Rights on behalf of his client. In court filings in both matters, Mr. Butler indicated that the Complainant pled guilty to sexual battery and assault and that the Complainant was a registered sex offender. Prior to both filings, Mr. Butler's client provided him with information claiming the Complainant had pled guilty to sexual battery and assault and was a registered sex offender. Mr. Butler included these statements in both filings, verified by his client's signature. However, Mr. Butler did not independently verify these statements, and the statements were false.

By these acts, Mr. Butler has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.3 (*diligence*) and 8.4 (*misconduct*) and is hereby Publicly Censured for this violation.

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

***MARK STEPHEN MOORE, BPR NO. 009582
RUTHERFORD COUNTY***

On November 21, 2025, Mark Stephen Moore, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Supreme Court of Tennessee and was ordered to pay the costs and fees of the Board of Professional Responsibility.

Mr. Moore entered the area of the Rutherford County Probate Court containing probate files and, without permission or authority from the clerk or Court, removed one file and a portion of a second file. While the file was in his possession, he also placed two documents in the file not properly filed with the court. When the clerk contacted him later the same day to inquire about the removed file and documents, Respondent Moore initially denied his conduct. However, the following day, Mr. Moore admitted his conduct and returned all probate files or related documents in his possession. Neither removal of the files nor adding material to the files had any impact on any probate proceedings.

Mr. Moore executed a conditional guilty plea acknowledging his conduct violated Rules of Professional Conduct 4.1 (truthfulness in statements to others) and 8.4(c) (misconduct involving dishonesty).

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

***JOHN MICHAEL BAILEY, BPR NO. 006941
SHELBY COUNTY***

On November 26, 2025, John Michael Bailey, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

A client hired Mr. Bailey for a personal injury matter. Mr. Bailey's law partner filed the complaint in federal court and included Mr. Bailey's name in the signature block. Mr. Bailey failed to file a motion for pro hac vice admission to federal court; he failed to attend the initial case management conference; and he failed to respond to an order to show cause on why the matter should not be dismissed.

By these acts, John Michael Bailey has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.3 (diligence), 3.2 (expediting litigation), 3.4 (fairness to opposing party and counsel), and 8.4(d) (prejudice to the administration of justice) and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

MARK ANTHONY LAMBERT, BPR NO. 022509
SHELBY COUNTY

On November 26, 2025, Mark Anthony Lambert, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

A client hired Mr. Lambert's law firm for a personal injury matter. Mr. Lambert filed a complaint in federal court and included his law partner's name when his law partner was not admitted to practice in the court. Mr. Lambert failed to file a motion for pro hac vice admission for his law partner; he failed to attend the initial case management conference; and he failed to respond to an order to show cause on why the matter should not be dismissed.

By these acts, Mark Anthony Lambert has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.3 (diligence), 3.2 (expediting litigation), 3.4 (fairness to opposing party), and 8.4(d) (prejudice to the administration of justice) and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

MATTHEW BRETT REEVES, BPR NO. 035871
MADISON COUNTY, ALABAMA

On December 15, 2025, Matthew Brett Reeves, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Mr. Reeves represented a client in Federal Court in Alabama. Mr. Reeves personally used Artificial Intelligence (AI) to add citations to two separate motions filed on behalf of his client. These citations were fabricated and Mr. Reeves took no action to check the accuracy of these citations. Mr. Reeves failed to act with diligence and caused a delay in his client's case. In addition, Mr. Reeves' conduct was prejudicial to the administration of justice

By these acts, Mr. Reeves has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.3 (diligence), 3.2 (expediting litigation), and 8.4 (misconduct), and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

WILLIAM JEFFERSON CRANFORD, III, BPR NO. 035492
MADISON COUNTY, ALABAMA

On December 16, 2025, William Jefferson Cranford, III, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Mr. Cranford represented a client in Federal Court in Alabama. Mr. Cranford drafted, signed, and personally filed two motions on behalf of his client which included fabricated citations that were generated by using Artificial Intelligence (AI). These citations were added by another attorney; however, Mr. Cranford had an obligation to check the citations before signing the motions and filing them with the court. Mr. Cranford failed

to act with diligence and caused a delay in his client's case. In addition, Mr. Cranford's conduct was prejudicial to the administration of justice.

By these acts, Mr. Cranford has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.3 (diligence), 3.2 (expediting litigation), and 8.4 (misconduct), and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

***JAMES RALPH HICKMAN, BPR NO. 020125
SEVIER COUNTY***

On December 23, 2025, the Tennessee Supreme Court issued James Ralph Hickman, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, a Public Censure conditioned upon payment of fees to the Board of Professional Responsibility.

Mr. Hickman engaged in the unauthorized practice of law on July 10, 2023, and July 13, 2023, when he appeared in court on behalf of two clients and counseled the clients regarding the entry of guilty pleas while his license to practice law was suspended. The Hearing Panel found his conduct violated Tennessee Rule of Professional Conduct 5.5 (unauthorized practice of law).

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

NICHOLAS LEE SURRATT, BPR NO. 035010

On January 6, 2026, Nicholas Lee Surratt, 035010, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Mr. Surratt agreed to represent a client in transmitting a demand letter in connection with a contract dispute. The client paid a \$350 fee for drafting and transmittal of the demand letter. Mr. Surratt never drafted the demand letter and took no other action for the client. Mr. Surratt also failed to respond to the client's inquiries about the status of the representation and never refunded the \$350 fee.

By these acts, Mr. Surratt has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.3 (diligence), 1.4 (communication), 1.15 (safekeeping property and funds), and 1.16(d) (protecting a client's interests following discharge) and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations. The Public Censure shall be conditioned on Mr. Surratt's payment of \$350 restitution to the client within sixty (60) days of the date of the Public Censure.

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

BRIAN WADE LYNN, BPR NO. 016796
SHELBY COUNTY

On January 6, 2026, Brian Wade Lynn, 016796, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Mr. Lynn's law license was administratively suspended on March 5, 2025, for non-payment of his professional privilege tax. Mr. Lynn has not sought reinstatement of his license. At the time of his administrative suspension, Mr. Lynn was counsel of record in fourteen (14) bankruptcy cases. After entry of the order of administrative suspension, Mr. Lynn filed two notices in one of his bankruptcy cases. Mr. Lynn also significantly delayed in providing notice to his clients of his administrative suspension, withdrawing as counsel of record, and complying with his other obligations defined at Section 28 of Rule 9 of the Tennessee Supreme Court Rules.

By these acts, Mr. Lynn has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.1 (competence), 1.3 (diligence), 1.4 (communication), 1.15 (safekeeping property and funds), 1.16(d) (protecting a client's interests following discharge), 3.4(c) (fairness to opposing party and counsel) and 8.4(d) (misconduct), and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

BRET PHILIP BRYCE, BPR NO. 029075
KNOX COUNTY

On January 7, 2026, Bret Philip Bryce, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Mr. Bryce failed to act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client and failed to communicate with his client about the representation. Additionally, Mr. Bryce failed to comply with a court order and his actions caused a delay in the case for over 9 months. Mr. Bryce's conduct was prejudicial to the administration of justice.

By these acts, Mr. Bryce has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.3 (diligence), 1.4 (communication), 3.2 (expediting litigation), and 8.4 (misconduct), and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

LEE WILSON MCDUGAL, BPR NO. 025557
SUMNER COUNTY

On January 7, 2026, Lee Wilson McDougal, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Mr. McDougal was appointed counsel to a parent in a dependency and neglect juvenile proceeding involving allegations of severe abuse. Following the adjudicatory hearing, Mr. McDougal complied with the client's

request to file a de novo appeal but thereafter failed to inform his client of the Court's adjudication and final disposition, failed for ten (10) months to consult with his client about the means to achieve his goals on appeal, failed to keep his client reasonably informed about the appeal status, and failed to comply with the client's reasonable, ongoing requests for copies of discovery, case information, and his client file. Upon being notified of the client's request that he withdraw his services, Mr. McDougal delayed his withdrawal from the case for at least four (4) months. There was substantial potential harm to the client in that a finding of severe abuse in a dependency and neglect case is a ground for terminating a parent's constitutional rights to their child, such that Mr. McDougal's ongoing failure to communicate during the de novo appeal potentially put his client's rights in jeopardy.

By these acts, Mr. McDougal has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.2 (scope of representation and allocation of authority between client and lawyer), 1.3 (diligence), 1.4 (communication), 1.15 (safekeeping property and funds), 1.16 (declining or terminating representation), and 8.4(d) (misconduct), and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

***JASON SCOTT MANGRUM, BPR NO. 018098
WILLIAMSON COUNTY***

On January 7, 2026, Jason Scott Mangrum, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Following the residential foreclosure of and service of a detainer warrant upon an individual, Mr. Mangrum represented the person in filing an action for wrongful foreclosure and breach of contract. In the complaint, Mr. Mangrum improperly included a claim that the opposing party's actions constituted deceptive business practices permitting treble damages under the Tennessee Consumer Protection Act (TCPA), which under Tennessee law does not apply in foreclosure proceedings. The claim had no merit and misrepresented to the client what recovery they might receive. In negotiations, Mr. Mangrum also suggested a settlement offer to his client that he then issued to opposing counsel but later asserted that the offer was grossly excessive in light of the facts and applicable law.

By these acts, Mr. Mangrum has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.1 (competence), 3.1 (meritorious claims and contentions), and 8.4(d) (prejudice to administration of justice), and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

***CURTIS DOUGLAS JOHNSON, BPR NO. 015518
SHELBY COUNTY***

On January 7, 2026, Curtis Douglas Johnson, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

In representing a client in a bankruptcy matter, Mr. Johnson failed to communicate with his client and failed to respond to multiple requests for information.

By these acts, Mr. Johnson has violated Rule of Professional Conduct 1.4 (communication) and is hereby Publicly Censured for this violation.

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

***TROY LEE BOWLIN, BPR NO. 025893
KNOX COUNTY***

On January 14, 2026, Troy Lee Bowlin, II, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Mr. Bowlin was hired by a Virginia resident for a potential dispute in Virginia, but he is not licensed in Virginia. Mr. Bowlin failed to respond to inquiries from the client. A few months later, Mr. Bowlin's office prepared a pro se pleading for the client to file in Virginia. Mr. Bowlin then called opposing counsel in that matter to ask for a continuance, and he gave the client advice about the Virginia filing.

By these acts, Troy Lee Bowlin, II, has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.3 (diligence), 1.4 (communication), 1.5 (fees), 1.16 (termination of representation) and 5.5 (unauthorized practice of law) and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

***CAROL ANN BARRON, BPR NO. 016580
RHEA COUNTY***

On January 14, 2026, Carrol Ann Barron, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Ms. Barron is a notary public, and she needed to notarize her client's signatures in a transfer of property. Ms. Barron's notary stamp was not in her office, but her assistant is also a notary. Ms. Barron received permission to use the assistant's notary stamp, and Ms. Barron then notarized the signatures of her clients by signing the assistant's name and using the assistant's notary stamp on a deed. Ms. Barron did not indicate that she was signing someone else's name "with permission."

By these acts, Carol Ann Barron has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 4.1 (truthfulness in statements to others) and 8.4(c) (conduct involving dishonesty) and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

ANTHONY MARVIN AVERY, BPR NO. 012925
UNION COUNTY

On March 2, 2026, Anthony Marvin Avery an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Mr. Avery represented a client in a partition action. During the representation Mr. Avery failed to provide his client with copies of some relevant pleadings and following termination, failed to provide the client with her file. Upon termination of services by the client, Mr. Avery delayed his withdrawal and additionally while still counsel of record attended litigation related matters and failed to protect the interests of his client.

By these acts, Mr. Avery has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.2 (scope of representation and allocation of authority between client and lawyer), 1.3 (diligence), 1.16 (declining or terminating representation), and 8.4(a) (misconduct), and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

HANDEL R. DURHAM JR., BPR NO. 010949
SHELBY COUNTY

On March 3, 2026, Handel R. Durham, Jr. an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

An existing client visited Mr. Durham at his office. The existing client, at the time, was jointly represented by Mr. Durham and another attorney. Mr. Durham and the other attorney's office were within the same office suite. During this visit the client advised Mr. Durham of a potential new cause of action. At the end of the conversation, Mr. Durham mistakenly believed that the client had retained both him and co-counsel for the new matter under the same arrangement as the existing representation. During this new representation, there was no written fee agreement executed, and Mr. Durham, along with co-counsel, improperly attempted to collect a contingency fee from the client in the amount of approximately 33.3%.

By the aforementioned acts, Handel R. Durham, Jr., has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.5(c) (fees), 7.1 (communications concerning lawyer's services), and 8.4(a) (misconduct) and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

KENNETH MICHAEL MARGOLIS, BPR NO. 022906
SHELBY COUNTY

On March 24, 2026, Kenneth Michael Margolis, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

An existing client visited Mr. Margolis at his office. Existing client was, at the time, jointly represented by Mr. Margolis and another attorney. Mr. Margolis and the other attorney shared office space. During this visit client

advised the other attorney of a potential new cause of action. At the conclusion of that conversation the other attorney wrongly believed that client hired both himself and Mr. Margolis for the new matter with the same arrangement as the already existing representation. The other attorney advised Mr. Margolis that they had been retained in the new matter, but Mr. Margolis failed to verify such with the existing client. During this new representation, there was no written fee agreement executed, and Mr. Margolis, along with co-counsel, improperly attempted to collect a contingency fee from client in the amount of approximately 33.3%. Mr. Margolis also utilized an existing medical authorization from the other representation to use in this new representation without prior permission from client.

By the aforementioned acts, Kenneth Michael Margolis, has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.5(c) (fees), 7.1 (communications concerning lawyer's services), and 8.4(a) (misconduct) and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

***J. STEPHEN HURST, BPR NO. 000547
CAMPBELL COUNTY***

Effective March 25, 2026, J. Stephen Hurst, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Supreme Court of Tennessee.

Mr. Hurst represented a client in a property boundary action. During the representation, Mr. Hurst improperly negotiated and settled the pending action without his client's knowledge or authorization and failed to inform the court when he announced the terms of the settlement that his client had not approved the settlement.

By these acts, Mr. Hurst violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.2 (allocation of authority between client and lawyer), 3.3 (candor toward the tribunal), and 8.4(d) (misconduct prejudicial to the administration of justice), and was publicly censured for these violations.

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

***MATTHEW WAYNE WILLIS, BPR NO. 024803
DYER COUNTY***

On March 30, 2026, Matthew Wayne Willis, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Mr. Willis was representing a client before the Armed Services Board of Contract Appeals. Mr. Willis personally used Artificial Intelligence (AI) to aid him in the preparation of a reply brief he filed with the Armed Services Board of Contract Appeals. The Court found that after reviewing the reply brief, over seventy percent of the citations were fictitious, and Mr. Willis took no action to check the accuracy of these citations. Mr. Willis stated that he believed a paralegal in his office performed a full citation check including verifying references to the technical record, transcript, and legal authorities. Mr. Willis failed to verify that his paralegal checked the citations before filing the reply brief.

Mr. Willis failed to act with diligence and his conduct was prejudicial to the administration of justice. Additionally, Mr. Willis failed to exercise managerial authority over his paralegal.

By these acts, Mr. Willis has violated Rules of Professional Conduct 1.3 (diligence), 5.3 (responsibilities regarding nonlawyer assistants), and 8.4 (misconduct) and is hereby Publicly Censured for these violations.

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

***CATHERINE ELIZABETH FEZELL, BPR NO. 039547
GREENE COUNTY***

On March 31, 2026, Catherine Elizabeth Fezell, an attorney licensed to practice law in Tennessee, received a Public Censure from the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

On May 14, 2024, Ms. Fezell was scheduled to appear for a court docket to represent clients in multiple matters. When Ms. Fezell failed to appear, she was contacted by court personnel inquiring about her whereabouts. Upon arrival at court, Ms. Fezell was observed by multiple witnesses, including court staff and colleagues, to appear to be under the influence. Due to her apparent condition, Ms. Fezell could not appear before the court, and the scheduled hearings had to be reset.

By these acts, Ms. Fezell has violated Rule of Professional Conduct 1.1 (competence), 1.3 (diligence), and 8.4(d) and is hereby Publicly Censured for this violation.

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

REINSTATEMENTS

***WILLIAM SHEA FORGETY, BPR NO. 034235
SUMNER COUNTY***

On October 6, 2025, the Supreme Court of Tennessee reinstated William Shea Fogerty to the active practice of law.

On September 9, 2025, Mr. Fogerty was temporarily suspended by the Supreme Court of Tennessee for failing to respond to the Board of Professional Responsibility concerning a complaint of misconduct. Mr. Fogerty filed a Petition for Dissolution pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 12.3 on September 24, 2025, demonstrating he had responded to the disciplinary complaint and complied with the conditions imposed by the Order of Temporary Suspension. The Board filed a response acknowledging the Petition was satisfactory and submitted an Order of Reinstatement to the Court.

TESHAUN DAVID MOORE, BPR NO. 027816
SHELBY COUNTY

By Order of the Tennessee Supreme Court entered October 17, 2025, TeShaun David Moore was reinstated to the active practice of law.

On December 11, 2020, TeShaun David Moore was suspended by the Supreme Court of Tennessee for six (6) years pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 12.2. On April 9, 2024, Mr. Moore filed a Petition for Reinstatement to the practice of law pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 30.4(d). After a final hearing on the merits, the Hearing Panel recommended that Mr. Moore's license to practice law be reinstated. The Panel determined specifically that Mr. Moore had demonstrated by clear and convincing evidence he had the moral qualifications, competency, and learning in law required for admission to practice in this state, and his resumption of the practice of law within the state would not be detrimental to the integrity and standing of the bar or the administration of justice, or subversive to the public interest.

Mr. Moore's reinstatement is conditioned upon his continuing compliance with, and timely satisfaction of, the conditions set forth in the Order of the Supreme Court entered October 17, 2025. Mr. Moore remains administratively suspended. Prior to Mr. Moore's return to active practice, Mr. Moore must obtain another order from the Tennessee Supreme Court reinstating him from his administrative suspension.

Accordingly, the Board of Professional Responsibility shall cause notice of this reinstatement to be published as required by Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 28.11.

JOHN EDWARD HUTSON, BPR NO. 034751
WHITE COUNTY

By Order of the Tennessee Supreme Court entered October 20, 2025, John Edward Hutson was reinstated to the active practice of law with conditions.

On January 14, 2025, Mr. Hutson was suspended by the Supreme Court of Tennessee for two (2) years with six (6) months active suspension and the remainder on probation. Mr. Hutson filed a Petition for Reinstatement to the practice of law pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 30.4(c) on October 13, 2025. The Board found the Petition was satisfactory and submitted an Order of Reinstatement to the Court.

Mr. Hutson's reinstatement to the active practice of law is conditioned upon contacting TLAP and engagement of a practice monitor during the first six months of the probationary period. Mr. Hutson is required to meet with his practice monitor each month who will review and assess his caseload, case management, timeliness of performing tasks, adequacy of communication with clients, and accounting procedures and provide monthly written reports to Disciplinary Counsel.

JAMES BRODERICK JOHNSON, BPR NO. 015509
DAVIDSON COUNTY

By Order of the Tennessee Supreme Court entered October 22, 2025, James Broderick Johnson was reinstated to the active practice of law.

On September 9, 2025, Mr. Johnson was suspended by the Supreme Court of Tennessee for three (3) months with thirty (30) days' active suspension and the remainder on probation. Mr. Johnson filed a Petition for Reinstatement to the practice of law pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 30.4(c) on October 9, 2025. The Board found the Petition was satisfactory and submitted an Order of Reinstatement to the Court.

Mr. Johnson's reinstatement to the active practice of law is conditioned upon his completion of an additional six (6) hours of continuing legal education ("CLE") on subjects related to client relations, the management of a law practice, and/or Rules of Professional Conduct regarding disciplinary action of the Board of Professional Responsibility.

***DARYL ANDRE GRAY, BPR NO. 027781
TENNESSEE***

By Order of the Tennessee Supreme Court entered October 27, 2025, Daryl Andre Gray was reinstated to the active practice of law.

On March 10, 2025, Mr. Gray was suspended by the Supreme Court of Tennessee for six (6) months with two (2) months active suspension and the remainder on probation. Mr. Gray filed a Petition for Reinstatement to the practice of law pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 30.4(c) on August 29, 2025. The Board found the Petition was satisfactory and submitted an Order of Reinstatement to the Court.

Mr. Gray's reinstatement to the active practice of law is conditioned upon his engagement with a practice monitor on a monthly basis for a period of four (4) months.

***EDWARD KENDALL WHITE, BPR NO. 032725
MONTGOMERY COUNTY***

By Order of the Tennessee Supreme Court entered November 20, 2025, Edward Kendall White, previously a resident of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, was reinstated to the active practice of law.

On November 12, 2025, Mr. White was temporarily suspended for failure to respond to the Board of Professional Responsibility. Mr. White provided an appropriate response to the Board and on November 17, 2025, filed a Petition to Dissolve the Temporary Suspension. The Board filed a response on November 19, 2025, noting no objection to Mr. White's Petition and submitted an Order of Reinstatement to the Court.

***CARLOS EUGENE MOORE, BPR NO. 028649
TENNESSEE***

By Order of the Tennessee Supreme Court entered January 5, 2026, Carlos Eugene Moore was reinstated to the active practice of law.

On March 27, 2025, Carlos Eugene Moore was suspended by the Supreme Court of Tennessee for one (1) year, retroactive to the date of suspension in Mississippi. Mr. Moore filed a Petition for Reinstatement to the practice of law pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 30.4(c) on November 21, 2025. The Board found the petition to be satisfactory and submitted an Order of Reinstatement to the Court.

Mr. Moore's reinstatement to the active practice of law is conditioned upon his continuing compliance with, and timely satisfaction of, the conditions set forth in the Opinion and Final Judgment of the Supreme Court of Mississippi entered December 31, 2024.

DALEN L. P. FARMER, BPR NO. 012629
RUTHERFORD COUNTY

On February 20, 2026, the Supreme Court of Tennessee reinstated Dalen L.P. Farmer to the active practice of law.

On January 22, 2026, Mr. Farmer was temporarily suspended by the Supreme Court of Tennessee for failing to respond to the Board of Professional Responsibility concerning a complaint of misconduct. Mr. Farmer filed a Petition for Dissolution pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 12.3 on February 12, 2026, demonstrating he had responded to the disciplinary complaint and complied with the conditions imposed by the Order of Temporary Suspension. The Board filed a response acknowledging the Petition was satisfactory and submitted an Order of Reinstatement to the Court.

RICKY A. W. CURTIS, BPR NO. 019761
SULLIVAN COUNTY

On February 24, 2026, the Supreme Court of Tennessee reinstated Ricky A.W. Curtis to the active practice of law.

On January 22, 2026, Mr. Curtis was temporarily suspended by the Supreme Court of Tennessee for failing to respond to the Board of Professional Responsibility concerning a complaint of misconduct. Mr. Curtis filed a Petition for Dissolution pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 12.3 on February 19, 2026, demonstrating he had responded to the disciplinary complaint and complied with the conditions imposed by the Order of Temporary Suspension. The Board filed a response acknowledging the Petition was satisfactory and submitted an Order of Reinstatement to the Court.

DISABILITY INACTIVE

JOHNNY D. HOUSTON, JR., BPR NO. 013834
HAMILTON COUNTY

By Order of the Tennessee Supreme Court entered March 9, 2026, the law license of Johnny D. Houston, Jr., was transferred to disability inactive status pursuant to Section 27.3 of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9.

Mr. Houston cannot practice law while on disability inactive status and shall comply with the requirements of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 28, regarding the obligations and responsibilities of attorneys transferred to disability inactive status. He may return to the practice of law after reinstatement by the Tennessee Supreme Court upon showing that his disability has been removed in accordance with Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 9, Section 27.7.

INACTIVE

***SORNAVIDYA SABA SANKAR, BPR NO. 037964
DAVIDSON COUNTY***

On March 6, 2026, the Tennessee Supreme Court issued an Order removing the disability inactive status of Sornavidya Saba Sankar. On August 8, 2025, the Supreme Court entered an Order transferring Ms. Sankar to disability inactive status.

Although the disability inactive status has been removed, the Court noted that Ms. Sankar shall remain on inactive status pending resolution of any disciplinary proceedings. Ms. Sankar is required to pay the expenses of her reinstatement proceeding, if any, to the Court.

TENNESSEE LAWYERS' FUND
for CLIENT PROTECTION

Tennessee Lawyer's Fund Payments

GARY LEE ANDERSON BPR NO. 004515
KNOX COUNTY

On June 16, 2025, the Tennessee Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection (Lawyers' Fund) paid a claim filed against Gary Lee Anderson, in the amount of \$3,500.00.

Lawyers' Fund, financed by Tennessee lawyers and judges, was established by the Tennessee Supreme Court to reimburse individuals for losses caused by the rare instances of dishonest conduct by attorneys. The Tennessee Supreme Court appoints a Lawyers' Fund Board, consisting of six lawyers and three non-attorney members, who serve without compensation in considering and paying claims pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 25.

Mr. Anderson is required to reimburse Lawyers' Fund for the amount paid to any claimant pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 25 Section 16 and/or the Order of Enforcement entered by the Supreme Court of Tennessee.

ANGELA JOY HOPSON BPR NO. 022500
MADISON COUNTY

On April 11, 2025, the Tennessee Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection (Lawyers' Fund) paid a claim filed against Angela Joy Hopson, in the amount of \$2,022.00.

Lawyers' Fund, financed by Tennessee lawyers and judges, was established by the Tennessee Supreme Court to reimburse individuals for losses caused by the rare instances of dishonest conduct by attorneys. The Tennessee Supreme Court appoints a Lawyers' Fund Board, consisting of six lawyers and three non-attorney members, who serve without compensation in considering and paying claims pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 25.

Ms. Hopson is required to reimburse Lawyers' Fund for the amount paid to any claimant pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 25 Section 16 and/or the Order of Enforcement entered by the Supreme Court of Tennessee.

GEORGE SKOUTERIS, JR. BPR NO. 013417
SHELBY COUNTY

On June 16, 2025, the Tennessee Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection (Lawyers' Fund) paid a claim filed against George Skouteris, Jr., in the amount of \$17,609.40.

Lawyers' Fund, financed by Tennessee lawyers and judges, was established by the Tennessee Supreme Court to reimburse individuals for losses caused by the rare instances of dishonest conduct by attorneys. The

Tennessee Supreme Court appoints a Lawyers' Fund Board, consisting of six lawyers and three non-attorney members, who serve without compensation in considering and paying claims pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 25.

Mr. Skouteris is required to reimburse Lawyers' Fund for the amount paid to any claimant pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 25 Section 16 and/or the Order of Enforcement entered by the Supreme Court of Tennessee.

***DOUGLAS A. TRANT BPR NO. 006871
KNOX COUNTY***

On April 11, 2025, the Tennessee Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection (Lawyers' Fund) paid a claim filed against Douglas A. Trant, in the amount of \$7,500.00.

Lawyers' Fund, financed by Tennessee lawyers and judges, was established by the Tennessee Supreme Court to reimburse individuals for losses caused by the rare instances of dishonest conduct by attorneys. The Tennessee Supreme Court appoints a Lawyers' Fund Board, consisting of six lawyers and three non-attorney members, who serve without compensation in considering and paying claims pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 25.

Mr. Trant is required to reimburse Lawyers' Fund for the amount paid to any claimant pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 25 Section 16 and/or the Order of Enforcement entered by the Supreme Court of Tennessee.

***MELVIN JACOB WERNER BPR #015909
KNOX COUNTY***

On May 29, 2025, the Tennessee Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection (Lawyers' Fund) paid a claim filed against Melvin Jacob Werner, in the amount of \$100,000.00.

Lawyers' Fund, financed by Tennessee lawyers and judges, was established by the Tennessee Supreme Court to reimburse individuals for losses caused by the rare instances of dishonest conduct by attorneys. The Tennessee Supreme Court appoints a Lawyers' Fund Board, consisting of six lawyers and three non-attorney members, who serve without compensation in considering and paying claims pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 25.

Mr. Werner is required to reimburse Lawyers' Fund for the amount paid to any claimant pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 25 Section 16 and/or the Order of Enforcement entered by the Supreme Court of Tennessee.

***SAMUEL ERVIN WHITE BPR NO. 029973
SULLIVAN COUNTY***

On September 2, 2025, the Tennessee Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection (Lawyers' Fund) paid a claim filed against Samuel Ervin White, in the amount of \$1,100.00.

Lawyers' Fund, financed by Tennessee lawyers and judges, was established by the Tennessee Supreme Court to reimburse individuals for losses caused by the rare instances of dishonest conduct by attorneys. The

Tennessee Supreme Court appoints a Lawyers' Fund Board, consisting of six lawyers and three non-attorney members, who serve without compensation in considering and paying claims pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 25.

Mr. White is required to reimburse Lawyers' Fund for the amount paid to any claimant pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 25 Section 16 and/or the Order of Enforcement entered by the Supreme Court of Tennessee.