

VIRGINIA:

BEFORE THE FOURTH DISTRICT SECTION I SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR

IN THE MATTER OF
JOHN EDWARD WILLIAMS

VS B Docket No. 24-041-129498

SUBCOMMITTEE DETERMINATION
PUBLIC REPRIMAND WITHOUT TERMS

On January 17, 2024 and February 14, 2024, a meeting in this matter was held before a duly convened Fourth District, Section I Subcommittee consisting of Robert T. Hicks, Chair, Dusty S. Reed, member, and Roxan Ordal, lay member. During the meetings, the Subcommittee voted to approve an agreed disposition for a Public Reprimand without Terms pursuant to Part 6, § IV, ¶ 13-15.B.4 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia. The agreed disposition was entered into by the Virginia State Bar, by Richard W. Johnson, Jr., Assistant Bar Counsel, and John Edward Williams, Respondent, pro se.

WHEREFORE, the Fourth District Section I Subcommittee of the Virginia State Bar hereby serves upon the respondent John Edward Williams ("Respondent"), the following Public Reprimand Without Terms:

I. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Respondent was admitted the Virginia State Bar ("VSB") in 1974. At all relevant times, Respondent was a member of the VSB.
2. John Edward Williams ("Respondent") was the respondent in a bar complaint previously filed by his former client, M.H. ("Complainant"). The engagement agreement between the parties reflected Complainant retained Respondent for "tax advice on your tax returns, tax liabilities, tax compliance and related matters."
3. On March 30, 2023, Respondent sent an invoice to Complainant which charged him \$1,890 for time spent responding the bar complaint. On April 10, 2023, Respondent filed a Warrant in Debt in Prince William County General District Court ("Court"). On June 6, 2023, the

Court granted default judgment to Respondent in the amount of \$3906.25, including the \$1890 for responding to the bar complaint.

4. On July 24, 2023, Complainant filed the instant bar complaint.
5. On September 5, 2023, Respondent sought guidance from the Virginia State Bar Ethics hotline whether charging for time spent responding to a bar complaint was reasonable. The Bar advised Respondent that “it is not appropriate to bill a client to respond to a disciplinary complaint, whether substantive or not.” The Bar did not respond to Respondent’s request for authorities for that Bar’s opinion.
6. Complainant retained counsel and moved to set aside the default judgment. On November 13, 2023, the Court granted Respondent’s Motion to Vacate the default judgment. On December 4, 2023, Respondent filed a new Warrant in Debt which did not include the charges for responding to the bar complaint.

II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT

Such conduct by Respondent constitutes misconduct in violation of the following provisions of the Rules of Professional Conduct:

Rule 1.5 (Fees)

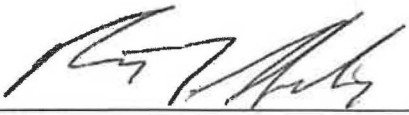
(a) A lawyer’s fee shall be reasonable. The factors to be considered in determining the reasonableness of a fee include the following:

- (1) the time and labor required, the novelty and difficulty of the questions involved, and the skill requisite to perform the legal service properly;
- (2) the likelihood, if apparent to the client, that the acceptance of the particular employment will preclude other employment by the lawyer;
- (3) the fee customarily charged in the locality for similar legal services;
- (4) the amount involved and the results obtained;
- (5) the time limitations imposed by the client or by the circumstances;
- (6) the nature and length of the professional relationship with the client;
- (7) the experience, reputation, and ability of the lawyer or lawyers performing the services; and
- (8) whether the fee is fixed or contingent.

III. PUBLIC REPRIMAND WITHOUT TERMS

Accordingly, it is the decision of the subcommittee to impose a Public Reprimand Without Terms and John Edward Williams is hereby so reprimanded. Pursuant to Part 6, § IV, ¶ 13-9.E of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, the Clerk of the Disciplinary System shall assess costs.

FOURTH DISTRICT SECTION I SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR

By: 
Robert Thomas Hicks
Subcommittee Chair

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I certify that on February 20 2024, a true and complete copy of the Subcommittee Determination (Public Reprimand without Terms) was emailed to jwillia1968@gmail.com, and sent by certified mail to John Edward Williams, Respondent, at 3213 Duke St. Suite 601, Alexandria, VA 22314, Respondent's last address of record with the Virginia State Bar.



Richard W. Johnson Jr.
Assistant Bar Counsel

VIRGINIA:

BEFORE THE FOURTH DISTRICT, SECTION I SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR

IN THE MATTER OF
JOHN EDWARD WILLIAMS

VSB Docket No. 24-041-129498

AGREED DISPOSITION
PUBLIC REPRIMAND WITHOUT TERMS

Pursuant to the Rules of Supreme Court of Virginia, Part 6, § IV, ¶ 13-15.B.4, the Virginia State Bar, by Richard W. Johnson Jr., Assistant Bar Counsel, and John Edward Williams, Respondent, pro se, hereby enter into the following agreed disposition arising out of this matter.

I. STIPULATIONS OF FACT

1. Respondent was admitted the Virginia State Bar ("VSB") in 1974. At all relevant times, Respondent was a member of the VSB.
2. John Edward Williams ("Respondent") was the respondent in a bar complaint previously filed by his former client, M.H. ("Complainant"). The engagement agreement between the parties reflected Complainant retained Respondent for "tax advice on your tax returns, tax liabilities, tax compliance and related matters."
3. On March 30, 2023, Respondent sent an invoice to Complainant which charged him \$1,890 for time spent responding the bar complaint. On April 10, 2023, Respondent filed a Warrant in Debt in Prince William County General District Court ("Court"). On June 6, 2023, the Court granted default judgment to Respondent in the amount of \$3906.25, including the \$1890 for responding to the bar complaint.
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II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT

Such conduct by Respondent constitutes misconduct in violation of the following provisions of the Rules of Professional Conduct:

Rule 1.5 (Fees)

(a) A lawyer's fee shall be reasonable. The factors to be considered in determining the reasonableness of a fee include the following:

- (1) the time and labor required, the novelty and difficulty of the questions involved, and the skill requisite to perform the legal service properly;
- (2) the likelihood, if apparent to the client, that the acceptance of the particular employment will preclude other employment by the lawyer;
- (3) the fee customarily charged in the locality for similar legal services;
- (4) the amount involved and the results obtained;
- (5) the time limitations imposed by the client or by the circumstances;
- (6) the nature and length of the professional relationship with the client;
- (7) the experience, reputation, and ability of the lawyer or lawyers performing the services; and
- (8) whether the fee is fixed or contingent.

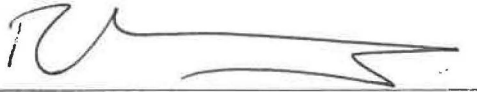
III. PROPOSED DISPOSITION

Accordingly, Assistant Bar Counsel and Respondent tender to a subcommittee of the Fourth District Section I Committee for its approval the agreed disposition of a Public Reprimand without Terms as representing an appropriate sanction if this matter were to be heard through an evidentiary hearing by the Fourth District, Section I Committee.

If the agreed disposition is approved, the Clerk of the Disciplinary System shall assess costs.

Pursuant to Part 6, § IV, ¶ 13-30.B of the Rules of Supreme Court of Virginia, Respondent's prior disciplinary record shall be furnished to the subcommittee considering this agreed disposition.

THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR



Richard Johnson
Assistant Bar Counsel



John Edward Williams
Respondent