

LEGAL AND JUDICIAL ETHICS

SHREVEPORT BAR ASSOCIATION

October 15, 2026

SCOTT J. CRICHTON
Scott J. Crichton Law, LLC

MARTHA THIBAUT
Associate Professor, Loyola University College of Law
Jones Walker Distinguished Professor of Law

ABOUT THE PRESENTER:

SCOTT CRICHTON

Having completed a ten-year term as Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court, Scott Crichton is Of Counsel for the Law Offices of Mary Watson Smith, LLC, a firm focused on appellate advocacy in complex areas of civil law and legal ethics, judicial ethics, discipline and other professional matters. Further, he serves clients through Scott J. Crichton Law, LLC, operating offices in Shreveport and New Orleans. Finally, he is both a mediator and arbitrator with Perry Dampf Dispute Solutions.

While on the State's high court, Scott chaired the Executive Committee as well as the Louisiana Judicial College; he was also the Court's statutory designee to the Louisiana Sheriffs' Executive Management Institute Board. He is the recipient of the 2022 Judge Benjamin Jones Judges in the Classroom Award, and the 2024 President's Award from the Louisiana Judicial College Board of Governors in recognition of his years of service to judicial education.

For five years, as an adjunct faculty member at Tulane Law School, he taught two 3L courses, Advanced Appellate Advocacy and Contemporary Issues in Legal Ethics, publishing coursebooks on each subject. He has also served on the faculty of the LSU Law Center Trial Advocacy Program.

Prior to his election to the Supreme Court, Scott served 24 years as a judge with the First Judicial District Court (Shreveport/Caddo Parish), presiding in both civil and criminal divisions. From 1980-1990, Scott had an extensive civil and criminal litigation practice.

Scott credits his parents, Tom (owner, hardware store/cattle rancher) and Mary (homemaker and life master, bridge), with teaching and instilling virtues of humility, education, and a commitment of service to community, all of which have guided him throughout life. Scott, age 72, and his wife, Susie, have two sons (both of whom are lawyers) and twin granddaughters!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES AND COMMITMENTS

Lawyer's Oath	1
Judge's Oath	1
Louisiana Supreme Court Mission Statement	1

PART 1: RECENT AMENDMENTS TO RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT and SUPREME COURT RULES

Amendment to Canon 7F of the Code of Judicial Conduct	2
Amendment to Canon 4B of the Code of Judicial Conduct.....	2
Amendment to Canon 3 of the Code of Judicial Conduct.....	2
Amendment to Canon 2B of the Code of Judicial Conduct.....	2
Amendment to Canon 7E of the Code of Judicial Conduct.....	3
Amendment of Louisiana Supreme Court Rule IX	3
Amendment of Louisiana Supreme Court Rule X	3
Amendment of Louisiana Supreme Court Rule XXXVI	3

PART II: RECENT LAWYER DISCIPLINE CASES

RULE I: CLIENT-LAWYER RELATIONSHIP

<i>In re: Louviere</i> , 2026-00036 (La. 3/18/26), 431 So.3d 314.....	4
<i>In re: MMA Law Firm, PLLC</i> , 2026-00161 (La. 6/29/26), 2026 WL 1862008.....	5
<i>Spears v Hall</i> , 2025-00195 (La. 3/6/26), 2026 WL 636698	5
<i>In re: Benjamin John Barrow Klein</i> , 2025-00927 (La. 09/16/25), 418 So.3d 885	6
<i>In re: Barzare</i> , 2025-01343 (La. 01/21/26)	7
<i>In re: Knox</i> , 2025-01422 (La. 01/28/26), 2026 WL 220791)	8
<i>In re: Steel</i> , 24-1471 (La. 6/3/25), 410 So.3d 755	8
<i>In re: Leavoy</i> , 24-1444 (La. 6/3/25), 410 So.3d 769	9
<i>In re: Williams</i> , 25-0200 (La. 4/23/25), 406 So.3d 1151	9
<i>In re: Hjortsberg</i> , 24-0149 (La. 6/28/24), 388 So.3d 382	10
<i>In re: Fields</i> , 23-0343 (La. 11/17/23), 374 So.3d 95	10

RULE 2: COUNSELOR

<i>In re: Casey</i> , 2026-00374 (La. 5/27/26), 2026 WL 1480811.....	11
<i>In re: Christiansen</i> , 2025-00602 (La. 06/17/25), 411 So.3d 625.....	11
<i>In re: Pierson</i> , 22-B-1439 (La. 5/5/23), 362 So.3d 371	12

RULE 3: ADVOCATE

<i>In re: Burns</i> , 2026-001666 (La. 4/9/26), 431 So.3d 366	12
<i>In re: Randazzo</i> , 2025-00772 (La. 09/10/25), 418 So.3d 348	13
<i>In re: Perricone</i> , 18-B-1233 (La. 12/5/18), 263 So.3d 309	13

RULE 5: LAW FIRMS AND ASSOCIATIONS	
<i>In re: Gbalazeh</i> , 2025-00684 (La. 10/01/25), 420 So.3d 15 (<i>Gbalazeh II</i>)	14
<i>In re: Walsh</i> , 24-0026 (La. 3/5/24), 379 So.3d 1251	15
RULE 7: INFORMATION ABOUT LEGAL SERVICES	
<i>In re: Hall</i> , 23-0935 (La. 12/5/23), 373 So.3d 692	16
<i>In re: Eugene P. Redmann</i> , 21-0955 (La. 10/5/21), 325 So.3d 366; <i>In re: John W. Redmann</i> , 21- (La. 10/5/21), 325 So.3d 364	16
RULE 8: MAINTAINING THE INTEGRITY OF THE PROFESSION	
<i>In re: Neal</i> , 23-0344 (La. 11/17/23) 374 So.3d 125	17
<i>In re: Soileau</i> , 22-1764 (La. 3/7/23), 356 So.3d 1012	17
Rule 8.4(b) – Special Section on DWIs	
<i>In re: Baer</i> , 09-B-1795 (La. 11/20/09), 21 So.3d 941	18
<i>In re: Wilson</i> , 2020-1488 (La. 5/13/21), 320 So.3d 1064	18
DWI – First Offense	
<i>In re: Bensabat</i> , 23-0620 (La. 12/8/23), 381 So.3d 36	19
<i>In re: Fontenot</i> , 23-0759 (La. 9/19/23), 370 So.3d 450	19
<i>In re: Crawford</i> , 20-0691 (La. 7/2/20), 297 So.3d 732	19
DWI – Multiple Offenses	
<i>In re: Meche</i> , 2024-0262 (La. 6/28/24), 388 So.3d 325	19
<i>In re: Radziewicz</i> , 20-0641 (La. 8/5/20), 300 So.3d 840	20
<i>In re: Bopp</i> , 20-0070 (La. 2/26/20), 290 So.3d 172	20
<i>In re: Chadwick</i> , 18-0691 (La. 6/15/18), 245 So.3d 1041	20
Rule 8.4(c) Conduct Involving Dishonesty, Fraud, Deceit or Misrepresentation	
Rule 8.4(d) Conduct Prejudicial to the Administration of Justice	
<i>In re: Meche</i> , 25-0229 (La. 4/29/25), 407 So.3d 611 (<i>Meche II</i>)	20
RECENT JUDICIAL DISCIPLINE CASES	
<i>In re: Reeves</i> , 2025-01587 (La. 5/1/26), 432 So.3d 137	21
<i>In re: Sims</i> , 2025-1499 (La. 03/06/26), 2026 WL 632413	21
<i>In re: Judge Eboni Johnson Rose</i> , 2025-00390 (La. 4/23/25), 406 So.3d 1163	22
<i>In re: Judge Vercell Fiffie</i> , 2024-O-0976 (La. 10/25/24), 395 So.3d 738	23
<i>In re: Judge Donald “Chick” Foret</i> , 2025-O-320 (La. 10/15/25)	24
<i>In re: Judge Jennifer M. Medley</i> , 2025-O-879 (La. 10/24/25)	25
American Bar Association (Lawyer-Mediation)	26
A Shared Dream, Now a Memory-And a Tribute to a Colleague.....	27
PRAYER TO ST. THOMAS MORE	30

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES AND COMMITMENTS

Lawyer's Oath

I solemnly swear (or affirm) I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Louisiana;

I will maintain the respect due to courts of justice and judicial officers;

I will not counsel or maintain any suit or proceeding which shall appear to me to be unjust nor any defense except such as I believe to be honestly debatable under the law of the land;

I will employ for the purpose of maintaining the causes confided to me such means only as are consistent with truth and honor and will never seek to mislead the judge or jury by any artifice or false statement of fact or law;

I will maintain the confidence and preserve inviolate the secrets of my client and will accept no compensation in connection with a client's business except from the client or with the client's knowledge and approval;

To opposing parties and their counsel, I pledge fairness, integrity, and civility, not only in court, but also in all written and oral communications;

I will abstain from all offensive personality and advance no fact prejudicial to the honor or reputation of a party or witness unless required by the justice of the cause with which I am charged;

I will never reject from any consideration personal to myself the cause of the defenseless or oppressed or delay any person's cause for lucre or malice.

So help me God.

Judge's Oath

I, _____, do solemnly swear that I will support the constitution and laws of the United States and the constitution and laws of this state and that I will faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent on me as Judge: _____, according to the best of my ability and understanding, so help me God.

Louisiana Supreme Court Mission Statement

To preserve the integrity of the judiciary, to build and maintain public trust, to provide effective and efficient administration of justice in the Supreme Court, to ensure proper administration and performance of all courts under Supreme Court authority, and to ensure the highest professional conduct, integrity, and competence of the bench and bar.

PART I: RECENT AMENDMENTS TO RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT and SUPREME COURT RULES

Amendment to

Canon 7F of the code of Judicial Conduct:

By order dated June 22, 2026, the Court amended Canon 7F to clarify that a judge may engage in partisan political activity if it is “campaign and other political activity not prohibited by this Code.”

Amendment to Canon 4B of the Code of Judicial Conduct:

By order dated June 22, 2026, the Court amended Canon 4B to expand and clarify the types of authorized activities a judge may participate in with respect to public hearings before an executive or legislative body.

Amendment to Canon 3 of the Code of Judicial Conduct:

By order dated June 22, 2026, the Court amended Canon 3A(9), related to media and broadcast dissemination, to provide that a judge may conduct court proceedings by teleconference, video link, or other visual remote technology if authorized by the Code of Judicial Conduct or Court order. Courts may adopt and implement local rules not in conflict with the Code or Court order.

The Court amended Canon 3B(5) to add rules related to candor and cooperation in judicial disciplinary matters and to prohibit retaliation against a person known or suspected to have filed or assisted in filing the complaint.

The Court amended Canon 3C to omit that a judge should disqualify himself or herself if the judge’s impartiality “might be reasonably questioned,” but maintaining that a judge must recuse when disqualification is required by law and that “[i]n all other instances, a judge should not recuse himself or herself.”

Amendment to Canon 2B of the Code of Judicial Conduct:

By order dated June 22, 2026, the Court amended Canon 2B to provide a judge may use court letterhead if there is no likelihood that the use would be “perceived as an attempt to exert pressure by reason of judicial office” and to omit the proviso that a “judge shall not initiate the communication of information in any court or disciplinary proceeding, but may provide such information for the record in response to a formal request by a court or disciplinary agency official.”

Amendment to Canon 7E of the Code of Judicial Conduct:

By order dated March 12, 2025, the Court amended Canon 7E of the Code of Judicial Conduct to increase the campaign contribution retention limits (given the recent increase in campaign contribution limits by the Legislature), to make clear that the campaign contribution retention limit for any Major Office subject to multiple party primary elections is applied as a separate limit for the party primary and the general election, to make clear that the funds loaned by a candidate to his/her campaign committee are not subject to the retention limits, and to make the definitions of "Major office" and "District office" consistent with the definitions of those terms (as they pertain to judicial officers) in the Election Code.

Amendment of Louisiana Supreme Court Rule IX:

Effective June 1, 2024, the Court amended LASC Rule IX, Section 1, to explicitly provide for the filing of an opposition to an application for rehearing. Under the revised rule, such oppositions

must be filed within seven (7) days of the date of the acknowledgement letter issued by the Court regarding the filing of the rehearing application, and no extensions of the deadline will be granted.

Amendment of Louisiana Supreme Court Rule X:

Effective April 1, 2024, the Court amended LASC Rule X, Section 6 to extend the deadline for filing an opposition to a writ application from fifteen (15) days to thirty (30) days, but with the conditions that extensions of time will only be granted for truly exceptional circumstances where the party can demonstrate through clear and convincing evidence that the inability to file the opposition timely was due to circumstances beyond the party's control.

Amendment of Louisiana Supreme Court Rule XXXVI:

By Order dated September 14, 2023, with an effective date of October 1, 2023, the Court amended LASC Rule XXXVI to align the rule with the recusal requirements of Louisiana Code of Civil Procedure article 153(C) and Louisiana Code of Criminal Procedure article 672(B) and to clarify that the procedure also applies to justices of the Louisiana Supreme Court and judges of limited jurisdiction courts. When recusing oneself, the rule now requires justices, judges of courts of appeal, and judges of district, family, juvenile, parish, city, traffic, and municipal courts, to contemporaneously file into the record of the proceeding an order of recusal and written reasons for recusal and provide copies of the same to the judicial administrator of the Louisiana Supreme Court.

PART II: RECENT LAWYER DISCIPLINE CASES

Opinions are available on the day they are released on the Louisiana Supreme Court website.

RULE 1: CLIENT-LAWYER RELATIONSHIP

1.1, Competence

1.3, Diligence

1.4, Communication

1.5, Fees

1.7 and 1.8, Conflict of Interest: Current Clients

1.15, Safekeeping Property

1.16, Obligations Following Termination of Representation

***In re Louviere*, 2026-00036 (La. 3/18/26), 431 So. 3d 314**

This matter involved several client representations occurring during the same general period as the misconduct addressed in *Louviere I*. In the *Mason* matter, respondent ignored discovery, missed hearings on a motion to compel and a motion for contempt, failed to obey a discovery order, and allowed the clients' suit to be dismissed. Even after dismissal, he visited the client with old discovery requests without revealing that the case was over and instead said the parties were close to settlement. In the *Armstead* matter, respondent accepted \$4,200 toward a \$5,000 fee for post-conviction representation but filed no pleadings, made no appearances, did not visit the client in jail as promised, and did not return the fee when asked. In the *Starr* and *Thornton* matters, respondent accepted \$10,000, failed to comply with discovery, stipulated to the validity of a will without client consent, failed to disclose the resulting amended judgment, and did not provide an accounting or refund unearned fees. In the *Hebert* matter, respondent accepted \$15,000 for a criminal case but never enrolled or appeared and did not provide an accounting or refund after termination. That representation was obtained through Legal Match, a for-profit service for which respondent paid \$895 per month. Respondent also repeatedly failed to cooperate with the ODC. (Rules 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5(f)(5), 1.7, 1.16(a) and (d), 3.2, 3.4(c), 7.2(c)(13), 8.1(c), 8.4(a), 8.4(c), and 8.4(d)).

Action: The Court disbarred respondent. Because the misconduct occurred during the same period as the conduct addressed in *Louviere I*, the Court applied *Louisiana State Bar Ass'n v. Chatelain* and assessed the discipline as though both proceedings had been before the Court together. The Court stated, "Without question, disbarment is the appropriate sanction for the combined misconduct." Before seeking readmission, respondent must participate in fee dispute arbitration in the *Armstead*, *Starr* and *Thornton*, and *Hebert* matters and refund any unearned fees determined by the arbitrator.

In re MMA Law Firm, PLLC, 2026-00161 (La. 6/29/26), 2026 WL 1862008

This case arose from certified questions concerning an attorney's ability to recover fees and costs under a contingent fee contract after the representation ends early. McClenny Moseley & Associates, PLLC ("MMA"), a Houston based law firm, entered contingent fee contracts with thousands of Louisiana residents after Hurricane Ida. Multiple courts later stayed MMA matters or sanctioned attorneys associated with the firm, and the Louisiana Supreme Court suspended MMA's lead Louisiana attorney and stayed the firm's Louisiana state court cases. MMA filed for bankruptcy protection in 2024 and withdrew or was discharged from virtually all remaining Louisiana matters. Successor firms resolved many of the claims, and MMA pursued fees and costs from certain successor firms. The federal district court certified five questions of Louisiana law. The Louisiana Supreme Court stressed that no factual findings had been made concerning the allegations of misconduct and answered the certified questions on the hypothetical assumption that unethical or illegal conduct occurred. The opinion addresses Rules 1.5, 1.16, 5.4(a), 5.5(a), 7.2(c)(13), and 7.4(a).

Action: The Court held that a contingent fee contract obtained through unethical or illegal conduct is null and that the responsible attorney cannot recover fees or costs for work performed under that agreement. A successor firm may assert the predecessor lawyer's misconduct as a basis for challenging the validity of the fee contract. Citing *Spears v. Hall*, discussed *infra*, the Court reiterated that the Rules of Professional Conduct have "the force and effect of substantive law and permeate all facets of the practice of law." If a valid contingent fee contract is formed before the misconduct occurs, the later misconduct may support dissolution rather than absolute nullity. In that situation, the *Saucier* and *O'Rourke* framework governs allocation of fees and costs and permits a reduction or complete denial depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. The Court also held that recordation of the contingent fee contract is not required to pursue a claim against a successor attorney, although the former attorney must provide timely notice before the contingent fee is paid. The same fee allocation framework applies whether the representation ends through discharge or withdrawal.

Spears v. Hall, 2025-00195 (La. 3/6/26), 2026 WL 636698

In this case, attorneys Ike Spears and William Hall submitted several joint contingency fee proposals to the Port of Orleans to represent the Port in its Hurricane Katrina-related insurance claims. Six months later, a Port executive met with Hall and offered to retain Hall and Spears on an hourly basis. Hall agreed, but Spears "stated he had no interest in working on an hourly fee basis." Hall worked with another lawyer to represent the Port, later signing a contingency fee contract. The case settled, and Hall was awarded millions of dollars pursuant to his contingency fee. Spears sued Hall for "breach of a joint venture agreement and seeking one half of the contingency fee earned by Mr. Hall." Hall asserted that "Mr. Spears was barred from claiming half of the contingency fee earned by Mr. Hall on the grounds that the parties' oral agreement, as well as Mr. Spears' complete lack of work on the Port's Katrina-related insurance claims violated the

RPC” (Rules 7.2(c)(13) and 1.5(e)). The district court ruled in Spears’ favor. The court of appeal affirmed and did not address the RPC issue.

The Court framed the question presented as “whether the [RPC] apply when attorneys purport to form a joint venture to provide legal services” and answered, “unequivocally,” yes. The court reversed the appellate court decision, finding that “non-compliance with Rule 1.5(e) precludes any division of fees between Mr. Spears and Mr. Hall.”

The Court held that the RPC have the “force and effect of substantive law.” Therefore, “any cases upholding agreements that do not comply with Rule 1.5, including oral agreements between attorneys of different firms for the joint legal representation of a client without the client’s written agreement, are expressly overruled.”

The Court clarified that “the RPC permeates all facets of the practice of law, including the relationship between lawyers and their representation of clients. The lower courts committed reversible legal error by failing to recognize the direct interplay between the RPC and the facts of this case, and by failing to apply the rules that govern representation by attorneys from different firms.”

“In the instant matter, the only valid retention agreement for legal services was between the Port and Mr. Hall. The record contains no evidence that the requirements of Rule 1.5(e) were met; namely, that the Port agreed in writing ‘to the representation by all of the lawyers involved’ and was advised in writing ‘as to the share of the fees that each lawyer [would] receive.’ Mr. Spears thus failed to demonstrate the mandatory compliance with Rule 1.5(e)(1) of the RPC. Mr. Spears also failed to show that he ‘render[ed] meaningful legal services’ for the Port as mandated by Rule 1.5(e)(3).”

Moreover, Rule 7.2(c)(13) of the RPC prohibits referral fees, so “any attempt to exchange or share fees purely for referrals violates the ethical obligations imposed on all attorneys.”

Dupont, J., concurs to highlight the adversarial relationship between Spears and the Port (the Port had an ongoing malpractice suit against Spears) that would have prevented Spears’ participation in a joint venture representing the Port.

In re Benjamin John Barrow Klein, 2025-00927 (La. 09/16/25), 418 So. 3d 885.

In this case, Respondent’s client complained to the ODC after being unable to communicate with Respondent. Respondent failed to communicate with his client, even after several letters from the ODC, and failed to inform his client of his potential malpractice. Respondent admitted to letting the cases become abandoned. The committee recommended a one year and one day suspension, with restitution to his client, and the board submitted the committee’s report directly to the Court for review. (1.3, 1.4, 8.1(b), 8.1(c), 8.4(c), and 8.4(d)).

Action: The Court **suspended respondent for one year and one day, requiring formal application for reinstatement.** The Court concluded that the “respondent neglected legal matters, failed to communicate with a client, engaged in dishonest conduct, engaged in conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice, and failed to cooperate with the ODC’s investigation,” violating

Rules 1.3, 1.4, 8.1(b), 8.1(c), 8.4(c), and 8.4(d). Respondent violated Rules 1.3 and 1.4 by allowing three collection matters to become abandoned after accepting \$2,000 retainers for each, and by failing to respond to his client's communications for extended periods, with no substantive communication for over a year at one point. Respondent violated Rules 8.1(b) and 8.1(c) by repeatedly failing to respond to the ODC's requests for information, necessitating multiple follow-up letters and eventually a subpoena for his sworn statement.

The Court found the misconduct was “negligent, knowing, and intentional,” causing actual harm to his client, thus “baseline sanction for this misconduct is suspension.” The Court identified aggravating factors including prior discipline (2015 admonition for neglect), dishonest motive, substantial experience, and indifference to making restitution, with no mitigating factors. In accordance with former judicial decisions of neglect causing actual injury, the court determined a one year and one day suspension was appropriate.

In re Barzare, 2025-01343 (La. 01/21/26):

This case consists of a complaint from Daniel Barzara’ client Geraldine Stilley in 2022. Ms. Stilley alleged that he asked her for multiple loans after she hired him. She also alleged he was withholding her community property documents and that he suffered a gambling addiction. In November 2022, he gave a sworn statement to ODC admitting he borrowed \$25,000 from his client. In March 2024, the ODC filed formal charges against respondent, alleging violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct: Rules 1.8, 8.4(a), and 8.4(c). The committee found that “[n]o part of the transaction between respondent and Ms. Stilley was reduced to writing, as required by Rule 1.8(a),” and “Respondent also failed to repay the loans to Ms. Stilley, which was dishonest and fraudulent, in violation of Rules 8.4(a) and 8.4(c).” The committee recommended a three-year suspension and the board recommended a sanction of one year and one day, relying on *In re Young*, 24-0248 (La. 6/28/24), 388 So. 3d 319.

Action: The Court imposed a one year and one day suspension conditioned on respondent attending the Louisiana State Bar Association’s Ethics School before being reinstated to practice law. The Court agreed with the board that Barzare violated Rule 1.8 based on respondent receiving three loans from his client without a written agreement, without advising his client of seeking independent legal advice, and without receiving her informed written consent. However, the Court did not find that ODC proved a violation of Rule 8.4(c), noting that “[a]t best, the evidence reveals a significant miscommunication or misunderstanding between the parties as to the loan(s) terms and conditions.” The Court determined a one year and one day suspension was appropriate given the aggravating factors (selfish motive, pattern of misconduct, substantial experience) and single mitigating factor (no prior discipline).

In re Knox, 2025-01422 (La. 01/28/26), 2026 WL 220791

This case consists of several allegations of misconduct in August 2022-October 2023 which occurred during the same timeframe as prior disciplinary violations. “Respondent [] served the period of suspension imposed in *Knox I* (one year and one day); however, he has not filed a petition for reinstatement, and thus he remain[ed] suspended from the practice of law” when this instant case was before the Court. In the instant case, Respondent failed to answer formal charges, thus

the facts alleged were deemed admitted. Respondent failed to advance a client's child support case for over four years, missed scheduled meetings, failed to communicate with the client, retained a \$5,000 unearned fee, failed to cooperate with disciplinary investigations, and failed to answer formal charges. The committee found that he violated duties owed to his client, public, and legal profession, caused harm to his client, and caused actual harm to discipline system by failing to cooperate. "The committee found the following aggravating factors are present: a prior disciplinary record, a dishonest or selfish motive, a pattern of misconduct, multiple offenses, bad faith obstruction of the disciplinary process by intentionally failing to comply with rules or orders of the disciplinary agency, refusal to acknowledge the wrongful nature of the conduct, and substantial experience in the practice of law;" they found no mitigating factors. The committee concluded that because the misconduct occurred during the same time period as the conduct addressed in *Knox I*, the discipline should be assessed as though both matters had been charged together, and due to the breadth and repeated nature of the misconduct, it recommended imposing a lengthy period of actual suspension. The committee recommended a three-year suspension retroactive to December 21, 2023, accounting, restitution to client, costs, and expenses and the board submitted the committee's report directly to Court for review. (Rules 1.1(a), 1.1(c), 1.3, 1.4(a)(2)(3)(4), 1.5(f)(5), and 8.1(c))

Action: The Court adopted the hearing committee's recommendation and **imposed a three-year suspension, retroactive to December 21, 2023**, and ordered accounting and restitution of unearned fees, payment of costs and expenses.

The Court concluded that "respondent failed to provide competent representation to a client, failed to comply with his professional obligations, neglected a legal matter, failed to communicate with a client, failed to refund an unearned fee, and failed to cooperate with the ODC in its investigation," warranting sanction. Because respondent violated duties owed to client, public and legal profession, acted knowingly, and caused actual harm, the Court found that the "baseline sanction is suspension." The Court agreed with the committee's finding of aggravating factors, lack of mitigating factors, and "that the approach set forth in *Chatelain* is applicable here," i.e. consider Respondent's combined misconduct in instant matter and *Knox I*.

In re: Steel, 24-1471 (La. 6/3/25), 410 So. 3d 755:

The case consists of multiple formal charges dating back to occurrences in 2016. Among other serious issues, respondent neglected legal matters, failed to communicate with clients, failed to refund unearned fees, failed to obtain consent to settle, converted client funds, entered into a prohibited business transaction with a client by borrowing thousands of dollars and ignoring requests to refund the loan (including ignoring a lawsuit brought against him), knowingly made a false statement of material fact in connection with a disciplinary investigation, and failed to cooperate with the ODC. The hearing committee recommended disbarment and the disciplinary board recommended permanent disbarment. (Rules 1.3, 1.4(a)(3), 1.5(f)(5), 1.8(k), 1.15(d), 1.18(a), 8.1(a), 8.4(a), and 8.4(c))

Action: The Court imposed permanent disbarment. The Court considered "whether the gravity of respondent's misconduct warrants" permanent or regular disbarment. LASC Rule XIX, § 10(A)(1) provides that "the court shall only impose permanent disbarment upon an express finding of the presence of the following factors: (1) the lawyer's misconduct is so egregious as to

demonstrate a convincing lack of ethical and moral fitness to practice law; and (2) there is no reasonable expectation of significant rehabilitation in the lawyer's character in the future." The Court found both factors satisfied here: "A review of the voluminous record of these proceedings plainly demonstrates the first factor is satisfied. Respondent victimized multiple clients and third parties, causing actual harm by converting at least \$45,000 in funds which did not belong to him. He acted with deceit and dishonestly, repeatedly failing to respond to requests for information from his clients. We have recognized such conduct warrants permanent disbarment. . . . The record further establishes there is no reasonable expectation that respondent's character may be rehabilitated in the future. Respondent's disciplinary history dates back over twenty years to his first admonition in 2004."

Griffin, J., dissents and would impose regular disbarment.

In re: Leavoy, 24-1444 (La. 6/3/25), 410 So. 3d 769:

Respondent's brother was hired to handle a personal injury claim on a contingency fee basis, but the client never signed a written contingency fee agreement. The brother subsequently associated respondent as co-counsel in the matter. Respondent did not work at the same firm as his brother. The client did not agree in writing to respondent's representation, nor was he advised in writing as to the share of the attorney's fees that respondent and his brother would each receive. Respondent met with the client's healthcare providers, took a deposition, and participated in an unsuccessful mediation in 2020, but he failed to file a motion to set the case for trial. Respondent suffered a heart attack in June 2022 and underwent surgery the following year, and the defendants filed a motion to dismiss the case as abandoned, which was granted. Respondent failed to answer the formal charges. (Rules 1.3, 1.4, 1.5(c), 1.5(e))

Action: The Court imposed a 12-month suspension with all but six months deferred.

In re: Williams, 25-0200 (La. 4/23/25), 406 So. 3d 1151:

Respondent neglected a matter, failed to communicate with a client, failed to safeguard and remit client funds amounting to over \$9000 resulting in conversion, and engaged in dishonest conduct. (Rules 1.3, 1.4, 1.15(a), 1.15(d), 8.1(c), 8.4(c))

Action: The Court imposed a suspension of one year and one day. Of note, the Court rejected the hearing committee finding of a Rule 8.1(c) violation. The Court stated: "The record reveals that respondent appeared for the sworn statement, provided the ODC with multiple, written responses, and returned the money owed to Mr. Banks. While there is some evidence in the record that respondent initially failed to timely respond to the ODC, it does not rise to the level of clear and convincing proof of a violation of Rule 8.1(c)." The Court also noted the mitigating factor of a delay in disciplinary proceedings.

Griffin, J., dissented, and would impose a lesser sanction.

In re: Hjortsberg, 24-0149 (La. 6/28/24), 388 So. 3d 382:

This matter involves two counts. Count I related to respondent's self-report that he would plead guilty to a federal misdemeanor related to a tax violation. Count II relates to respondent's representation of a client in a first-degree murder trial. During the trial, the client left the courthouse and did not return. Respondent moved for a continuance and a mistrial, but the trial court denied the motions. Respondent then advised the court that he would not participate in the trial and would simply sit at the counsel table, taking no role in the defense. The hearing committee found ODC did not carry its burden of proof as to Count II. The disciplinary board did find a violation but due to the unique circumstances it did not recommend any suspension above and beyond that imposed for Count I. (Rules 1.3, 8.4(a), 8.4(d))

Action: The Court imposed a suspension of six months, with all but 30 days deferred. The Court did find a violation on Count II, but imposed no additional period of suspension for this violation, noting the "unique circumstances of this case."

Crichton, J., additionally concurred: Because of the *res nova* nature of the issue, he agreed there should be no additional suspension imposed: "This rare situation occurred without warning and presents to the Court as a *res nova* issue in the professional responsibility context. Though respondent's initial confusion over the situation was understandable, a lawyer in this situation cannot opt to be the proverbial potted plant. The effect of respondent's decision was that, by absconding the courthouse during trial, his client was permitted a retrial due to respondent's choice to sit entirely mute---a result the justice system cannot condone."

Crain, J., dissents in part: He would not find a Rule 1.3 violation, noting that respondent "had no one to assist because the defendant absconded. Through this act, the respondent's ethical obligation to the defendant also disappeared. Further, a defendant must be competent to assist in his defense, or it is a violation of his rights to proceed. La. Code Crim. Proc. art. 641. Here, there was no competent defendant to assist counsel. Under these facts, counsel was not obligated to do anything."

In re: Fields, 23-0343 (La. 11/17/23), 374 So. 3d 95:

The matter involves multiple counts, including failure supervise non-lawyer staff, resulting in the conversion of approximately \$4.2 million belonging to third parties; intentionally continuing to convert third-party funds totaling approximately \$1.8 million to pay older third-party debts; failing to maintain a trust account for several years; lying on trust account disclosure statements that he did not handle client funds; allowing non-lawyers to sign trust account checks; charging clients for inappropriate office expenses; settling a client's personal injury claim without the client's knowledge or consent; and lying to the ODC during its investigation. The hearing committee recommended disbarment and the disciplinary board recommended permanent disbarment. (Rules 1.1(c), 1.2, 1.8(e)(3), 1.8(k), 1.15(a), 1.15(d), 1.15(f), 1.15(g), 5.3, 8.1(b), 8.1(c), 8.4(a), 8.4(d))

Action: Court imposed a three year suspension. Despite the presence of numerous aggravating factors, the Court downwardly deviated from the baseline sanction. The Court noted the mitigating

factors present, "in particular the significant restitution respondent has already made and continues to make."

Weimer, C.J., concurred in part and dissented in part, and would have imposed disbarment "based on respondent's prolonged and egregious course of misconduct."

Crichton, J., concurred in part and dissented in part, and would have imposed disbarment.

RULE 2: COUNSELOR

2.1, Advisor

In re Casey, 2026-00374 (La. 5/27/26), 2026 WL 1480811

Respondent was licensed only in Florida but was admitted pro hac vice in the Western District of Louisiana to represent an elderly couple in Hurricane Ida property damage litigation. The clients became dissatisfied with the representation, and the wife fired respondent by text message on August 3, 2023. Respondent refused to recognize the termination or withdraw. He later claimed the termination was ineffective because the notice had not been sent to his law firm as required by the contingency fee contract. The clients then sent a letter to the firm confirming that respondent had been fired and directing him to remove himself from the case. He still refused to withdraw. Louisiana co-counsel ultimately moved to withdraw respondent's pro hac vice admission, and the federal district court granted the motion. Respondent also failed to respond to the ODC complaint despite receiving two extensions. His failure to answer the formal charges caused the factual allegations to be deemed admitted. (Rules 1.2(a), 1.16(a)(3), 1.16(d), 8.1(c), and 8.4(d)).

Action: The Court determined that respondent's conduct would warrant a one-year-and-one-day suspension if he were a member of the Louisiana bar. Because respondent was not licensed in Louisiana, the Court explained that it could sanction him by preventing him from seeking the benefits of full or limited admission in the state. The Court enjoined him for one year and one day from seeking full admission or any temporary or limited Louisiana admission, including pro hac vice admission and limited admission as in-house counsel. The ODC was also directed to report the judgment to every jurisdiction in which respondent was admitted.

In re Christiansen, 2025-00602 (La. 06/17/25), 411 So. 3d 625

The ODC "commenced an investigation into allegations that respondent engaged in a consensual sexual relationship with a client." Before ODC filed formal charges, Respondent "admitted that his conduct violated Rules 1.7(a)(2), 1.16(a)(1), 2.1, and 8.4(d)." ODC and Respondent submitted a joint petition.

Action: The Court accepted the joint petition. The Court **suspended Respondent for 90 days, with the suspension deferred in its entirety.**

In re: Pierson, 22-B-1439 (La. 5/5/23), 362 So. 3d 371:

The underlying facts here are complex and involve three separate instances of respondent entering into business transactions with clients. (1) Respondent persuaded his client to provide a \$500,000 loan to an LLC of which he was part owner, without fully disclosing the terms of the transaction and without advising her to seek the advice of independent counsel. Respondent benefited from the loan and was partly responsible for the LLC's default, to his client's detriment. The client is owed \$790,255. (2) Respondent obtained a personal loan from a client in the amount of \$5,000. He failed to pay interest, took years to repay the loan, did not reduce it to writing, and did not inform the client to seek the advice of independent counsel before agreeing to the loan. (3) Respondent obtained a personal loan from a client for over \$27,000. The loan was reduced to writing and the client obtained a lien on the vehicle to secure the loan, but at the time of the loan, respondent represented the client and never advised him to seek the advice of independent counsel before providing the loan. (Rules 1.8(a), 2.1, 8.4(a), 8.4(c))

Action: The Court imposed **disbarment** and ordered restitution. The Court particularly noted the "numerous aggravating factors" and absence of mitigating factors.

RULE 3: ADVOCATE

3.1, Meritorious Claims and Contentions

3.2, Expediting Litigation

3.3, Candor to the Tribunal

3.4, Fairness to Opposing Party and Counsel

3.5, Impartiality and Decorum of the Tribunal

3.6, Trial Publicity

3.8, Special Responsibilities of a Prosecutor

In re Burns, 2026-00166 (La. 4/9/26), 431 So. 3d 366

Respondent represented a husband in a divorce proceeding. After the sheriff could not serve the wife, a waiver of service and a verification bearing the wife's purported signatures were filed into the record. Both signatures were forged. A default judgment of divorce was later obtained. After the wife discovered the forgeries, her attorney contacted respondent in an effort to resolve the problem without additional litigation. Despite knowing or learning that the waiver and verification were forged, respondent initially refused to withdraw the documents and have the judgment vacated. At a later hearing on the motion to vacate, respondent falsely told the trial court that he had represented the husband pro bono. After remand from the court of appeal, the trial court found that the signatures were forged and that respondent, his paralegal, and his client committed perjury, which resulted in the default judgment being obtained by fraud and ill practices. The ODC charged respondent with violating Rules 3.3(a)(1), 3.3(a)(3), 3.4(b), 4.1, 5.3, 8.4(c), and 8.4(d).

Action: The Court permanently disbarred respondent. The Court found that respondent knowingly failed to disclose the forgeries, made false material statements, failed to supervise a nonlawyer assistant, engaged in dishonest and fraudulent conduct, and acted in a manner prejudicial to the

administration of justice. In describing the seriousness of the misconduct, the Court stated that by “perpetrating, and then concealing, a fraud upon the court,” respondent “undermined the administration of justice, wasted judicial resources, and eroded confidence in the reliability of court proceedings.” The Court also relied on respondent’s lengthy disciplinary history in concluding that there was no reasonable expectation of significant rehabilitation.

Griffin, J., dissented and viewed the sanction as too harsh. **Guidry, J.**, also dissented and believed the Court should have ordered additional briefing on whether permanent disbarment should have been issued.

In re Randazzo, 2025-00772 (La. 09/10/25), 418 So. 3d 348

This case involves three disciplinary complaints filed against Respondent by Judge Darren Roy. His misconduct included leaving rambling voicemails, engaging in one-way legal arguments with staff, asking staff what the judge would do, even after being ordered to communicate by email only, filing pleadings falsely accusing Judge Roy of purposely withholding service of court orders, making numerous unsubstantiated attacks on the integrity of numerous judges, and filing pleadings with discourteous language attacking the integrity of lower courts. The committee found ODC proved violations of Rules 3.5(a), 3.5(b), 8.2(a), 8.4(a), and 8.4(d), and recommended a three-year suspension with 18 months deferred. The board submitted the committee’s report to the Court for review. (3.5(a), 3.5(b), 8.2(a), 8.4(a), and 8.4(d)).

Action: The Court adopted the hearing committee’s recommendation and imposed a three-year suspension with 18 months deferred.

The Court concluded the record established by “that respondent filed pleadings containing statements about a judge which he knew were false, or showed reckless disregard of the truth, and engaged in inappropriate communications with a judge’s office” in violation of Rules (3.5(a), 3.5(b), 8.2(a), 8.4(a), and 8.4(d)). The Court found that Respondent’s conduct was intentional and caused actual harm, thus the baseline sanction for such misconduct is disbarment. The Court noted that one only case with similar misconduct resulted in disbarment, and that most of the time suspensions of one year and one day to three years were imposed. Accordingly, the Court adopted the hearing committee’s recommendation for a three-year suspension with partial deferral. The court noted aggravating factors including dishonest motive, obstruction of disciplinary proceedings, refusal to acknowledge wrongdoing, and substantial experience in practice, with no mitigating factors present.

In re Perricone, 18-B-1233 (La. 12/5/18), 263 So. 3d 309:

Respondent, an Assistant United States Attorney, posted over 2600 comments on nola.com, including 100-200 comments on cases he and/or his colleagues were prosecuting. The ODC alleged the comments constituted extrajudicial statements about the guilt or innocence of defendants and/or others under investigation or prosecution that had a substantial likelihood of materially prejudicing proceedings and heightening public condemnation of the accused. Respondent admitted the factual allegations, and offered testimony from a psychologist that he suffered from PTSD and his postings were the result of his PTSD. He testified that he thought his

online activities would help him deal with the stress of his work as an AUSA. (Rules 1.7(a)(2), 3.6, 3.8(f), 8.4(d), 8.4(a))

Action: The Court imposed disbarment. The Court found respondent knew his postings were forbidden, and caused serious, actual harm in two cases, and "profound" harm to the reputation of the USAO. The Court noted that "any mental disability from which respondent suffered did not prevent him from knowing his actions were wrong," and found "no support for the conclusion that respondent has proven his mental condition caused the misconduct." The Court stated: "[C]onsidering respondent's position of public trust as a prosecutor, his knowing and intentional decision to post these comments despite his acknowledgment that it was improper to do so, and the serious harm respondent's conduct has caused both to individual litigants and to the legal profession as a whole, we must conclude he has failed to comply with the high ethical standards we require of lawyers who are granted the privilege to practice law in this state. The only appropriate sanction under these facts is disbarment."

Crichton, J., additionally concurred, noting the case "highlights the difference between disbarment and permanent disbarment in attorney disciplinary proceedings." Had respondent agreed to interim suspension and received disbarment upon conclusion of disciplinary proceedings, he would be entitled to file a petition for reinstatement sooner. "In other words, the sanction of disbarment imposed at this point in respondent's profession, at the age of 67, is arguably akin to permanent disbarment and essentially a legal profession death sentence. Whether respondent would ever be readmitted -- even conditionally readmitted -- is a question for another day, but the sanction of disbarment now precludes any consideration of it for five years from the date of this opinion."

RULE 5: LAW FIRMS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Rule 5.1, Responsibilities of Partners, Managers, and Supervisory Lawyers

Rule 5.3, Responsibilities Regarding Nonlawyer Assistance

Rule 5.5(a), Engaging in the Unauthorized Practice of Law

Rule 5.5(b), Assisting a person in the unauthorized practice of law

***In re Gbalazeh*, 2025-00684 (La. 10/01/25), 420 So. 3d 15 (*Gbalazeh II*)**

In 2008, Respondent became ineligible to practice law, and during that time she accepted \$1,300 from a client for services and failed the unearned fee. In response, the client filed a complaint in 2023. Respondent did not respond to the ODC, and has prior discipline history including suspension (*Gbalazeh I*) and disbarment (*Gbalazeh II*), the second of which also involved unlawful practice of law. The committee determined that Respondent violated Rules 1.1(c), 1.5(f)(5), 5.5(a)(e), 8.1(c), and 8.4(a) and recommended "respondent's disbarment be extended for an additional five years, such that she would not be permitted to apply for readmission until November 24, 2030." The board sent the committee's report directly to the Court. (Rules 1.1(c), 1.5(f)(5), 5.5(a)(e), 8.1(c), and 8.4(a)).

Action: The Court adopted the committee’s recommendation and **extended Gbalazeh’s disbarment for an additional five years beyond her original readmission eligibility date of November 24, 2025, ordered her to make full restitution to client.**

The Court concluded that “[R]espondent accepted a fee for legal services while she was ineligible to practice law, failed to return the unearned fee, and failed to cooperate with the ODC in its investigation,” and that she violated Rules 1.1(c), 1.5(f)(5), 5.5(a)(e), 8.1(c), and 8.4(a). Because the misconduct was “knowing, if not intentional, and caused actual and serious harm to the client, [t]he applicable baseline sanction is disbarment.” The Court considered the nature and amount of misconduct. The Court stated “[a]lthough respondent is currently disbarred as a result of her misconduct in *Gbalazeh II*, our jurisprudence permits additional sanctions in the form of an extension of the five-year minimum period which must elapse before a disbarred lawyer may seek readmission.”

In re: Walsh, 24-0026 (La. 3/5/24), 379 So. 3d 1251:

Respondent had a disciplinary history dating back to 2018. He had not yet sought reinstatement from his 2018 suspension when he engaged in the unauthorized practice of law, failed to advise his client of his suspension, and fraudulently filed pleadings under his father's name and bar roll number to conceal his unauthorized practice of law. He was disbarred for this in 2021; he was later adjudged guilty of additional rule violations for first offense DWI. In the instant case, respondent informed an investigator from the East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's Office that he was an attorney representing a client attempting to obtain reports related to her daughter's death. The investigator discovered respondent was disbarred and filed a disciplinary complaint. The client later confirmed she had hired respondent and paid him \$500. (Rules 1.16(a)(1), 5.5(a), 8.1(b), 8.1(c), 8.4(b), 8.4(c))

Action: Court permanently disbarred respondent. The Court found this case met the standards for permanent disbarment in Supreme Court Rule XIX. Respondent's disregard of the already-existing disbarment order "demonstrates a convincing lack of ethical and moral fitness to practice law. Respondent has demonstrated multiple times that, given the chance, he will continue to engage in the unauthorized practice of law in defiance of our orders." Further, "given respondent's defiance of previous court orders and his complete lack of cooperation in this proceeding, there is no reasonable expectation of significant rehabilitation in the future."

Crain, J., concurred: "I doubt that permanent disbarment will stop someone who was unfazed by his disbarment. The unauthorized practice of law is a crime. La. R.S. 37:213."

RULE 7: INFORMATION ABOUT LEGAL SERVICES

7.2, Communications Concerning a Lawyer's Services

7.7, Evaluation of Advertisements

7.10, Firm Names

In re: Hall, 23-0935 (La. 12/5/23), 373 So. 3d 692:

This case relates to two separate charges. In the first, respondent engaged with a web development company for an advertising campaign with his law firm. He authorized his law firm staff to send a letter engaging the media firm under his signature. Later, respondent refused to pay for additional services and terminated the relationship. After the law firm was sued for this failure to pay, respondent made false statements in legal proceedings, stating that he and his law firm were "completely unaware of the existence of" the web development company. During ODC's investigation, respondent testified that contrary to his representation in the legal filing, he was aware of the existence of the company.

In the second count, respondent violated advertising rules by not submitting an advertisement for LSBA review, failing to disclose his office location and omitting required disclaimers in the advertisement. (Rules 3.3(a)(1), 3.3(a)(3), 7.2(a)(2), 7.2(c)(1)(i), 7.7(c), 8.4(c), 8.4(d))

Action: The Court imposed a suspension of four months, fully deferred. Though there were several aggravating factors (prior disciplinary record, dishonest or selfish motive, multiple offenses, and substantial experience in the practice of law), the Court also recognized certain mitigating factors, including good faith effort to rectify the consequences of the misconduct, good character and reputation, and remorse.

In re: Eugene P. Redmann, 21-0955 (La. 10/5/21), 325 So. 3d 366; In re: John W. Redmann, 21-1060 (La. 10/5/21), 325 So. 3d 364:

In these cases, both respondents advertised on billboards without presenting the advertisements to the LSBA prior to or concurrently with dissemination of the advertisements. The content of the ads was not false, misleading, or deceptive, but it failed to include one or more bona fide office locations of the lawyer to perform the advertised services in accordance with Rule 7.2(a)(2). (Rules 7.2, 7.7.) Both cases involved petitions for consent discipline; in both cases, the parties agree that respondents acted negligently, causing no actual harm but creating the potential for harm.

The Court imposed a public reprimand on both respondents, noting that each previously received private discipline for failure to comply with the advertising rules (private admonishments in 2013).

McCallum, J., concurred in both cases, and noted that no actual harm was caused and the infractions are minor, but reflect the Court's "continuing efforts to address widespread abuses in lawyer advertising."

RULE 8: MAINTAINING THE INTEGRITY OF THE PROFESSION

Rule 8.4(b), Misconduct (Criminal Act)

In re: Neal, 23-0344 (La. 11/17/23) 374 So. 3d 125:

Respondent was arrested for battery of his son's employer. After the employer notified respondent that his son was late for work and asked for his phone number, respondent replied with an abusive and racially improper text message. He then showed up at the restaurant in a rage, grabbed the victim's ankles, and pulled him the length of and off the preparation counter, causing the victim to fall on his back and head to the concrete floor. From there, respondent dragged the victim into the kitchen and knelt on his upper chest and neck. Respondent then grabbed the victim's head, which he repeatedly pounded into the floor, and was heard to say, "I will kill you." The attack ended when a female employee, in an effort to pull the victim free from respondent, reached out and grabbed the victim as he lay on the kitchen floor. Other employees who witnessed the attack called 911 and summoned police. Respondent disengaged and left the premises. During the disciplinary investigation, the ODC obtained text messages sent by respondent to the victim on the day after the event. In the messages, respondent asked the victim to provide false information to police and suggest to police that the attack was all a big misunderstanding. (Rules 8.4(a), 8.4(b))

Action: Court imposed a suspension of one year and one day, with six months deferred and two years probation.

Weimer, C.J., concurred in part and dissented in part. He found the respondent's "lack of candor" related to the text message sent to the victim to merit a lengthier period of actual suspension.

Crain, J., dissented, finding the suspension imposed too lenient.

In re: Soileau, 22-1764 (La. 3/7/23), 356 So. 3d 1012:

Respondent's disciplinary history dates back to 1985 as an attorney. He was disciplined and suspended for six months without pay in 1987, while serving as a judge. In 1997 he pleaded guilty to federal crimes and was suspended from the practice of law for two years. In 2013, he was admonished for further violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct. This case consists of two counts. In the first, respondent was booked with third offense DWI after a traffic accident. In the second, respondent was arrested on charges of letting premises for prostitution, obstruction of justice, and prostitution. He was apparently financing illegal activities of a known crystal methamphetamine dealer, encouraging her to "get rid of whatever you have" when he knew police were nearby, thereby counseling a client engaged in criminal conduct. Respondent failed to answer the charges or otherwise cooperate in the investigation. (Rules 1.2(d), 8.4(a), 8.4(b), 8.4(c))

Action: The Court imposed permanent disbarment, stating in part: "Respondent's misconduct was undoubtedly egregious. By interfering with a police investigation and counseling a client to

destroy evidence, respondent has demonstrated a convincing lack of ethical and moral fitness to practice law. Furthermore, respondent's long prior disciplinary history, both as an attorney and a judge, demonstrates that there is no reasonable expectation of significant rehabilitation in his character in the future."

Hughes, J., dissents, and would impose regular disbarment.

Rule 8.4(b) -- Special Section on DWIs

In re: Baer, 09-B-1795 (La. 11/20/09), 21 So. 3d 941

This Court noted in a case involving multiple DWI charges: "Respondent caused tangible harm in the form of property damage; however, the committee felt the more serious harm results when members of the legal profession engage in criminal acts, which give rise to a ***lack of confidence by members of the public in those who are officers of the court.***" (Emphasis added.) The Court further explained:

We have imposed sanctions ranging from actual periods of suspension to fully deferred suspensions in prior cases involving attorneys who drive while under the influence of alcohol. However, as a general rule, we tend to impose an actual suspension in those instances in which multiple DWI offenses are at issue, as well as in cases in which the DWI stems from a substance abuse problem that appears to remain unresolved.

In re: Wilson, 2020-1488 (La. 5/13/21), 320 So. 3d 1064:

Respondent was arrested on charges of DWI, driving left of center, and having an expired registration certificate. She enrolled in a pre-trial diversion program to resolve the criminal charges. She self-reported to the ODC and was referred to JLAP. Upon being recommended for long-term inpatient treatment, respondent declined to do so on the basis that she contended it would cause her financial difficulty and she does not have a substance abuse issue. (8.4(b).)

Action: Court imposed a suspension of one year and one day, with all but 90 days deferred, subject to the condition that before being reinstated, respondent shall produce evidence that she is in compliance with all treatment recommendations of JLAP and has entered into an appropriate monitoring contract.

Weimer, C.J., concurred, noting that while *Baer* forms a "useful starting point for analysis of the appropriate discipline in cases arising from substance abuse issues, we do not and should not apply it in a purely mechanical fashion. Rather, each case must be evaluated to determine the unique facts and circumstances bearing on the attorney's condition. An important component of this analysis is the willingness or unwillingness of the attorney to submit to appropriate evaluation by the professionals at JLAP and to avail himself or herself of suitable treatment as recommended by these professionals. While the primary aim of the court is not to punish attorneys for their substance abuse problems, the overarching duty of this court to protect the public may justify imposition of different types of sanctions depending on the attorney's level of cooperation in addressing any substance abuse issues."

DWI -- First Offense

In re: Bensabat, 23-0620 (La. 12/8/23), 381 So. 3d 36:

Respondent was arrested on charges of DWI and pleaded guilty to first offense DWI. He self-reported to the ODC. The majority imposed a suspension of three years, deferred in its entirety.

Chief Justice Weimer and Justice Crichton dissented. Justice Weimer wrote that "the discipline imposed by the opinion problematic and ineffective," noting that it departed from the standard set forth in *In re: Baer*. He explained: "Since 2009, this court has continued to adhere to the *Baer* standards, imposing an actual period of suspension in cases in which attorneys with substance use disorders are not participating in JLAP or otherwise able to prove their substance abuse problems have been resolved. . . . Although respondent only had one conviction for DWI, the record indicates he has a significant unresolved substance abuse issue. . . . In his testimony before the committee, respondent explained that he has been drinking alcohol on a regular basis since the age of fifteen. He acknowledged that alcohol played a part in the failure of his marriage. Nevertheless, he admitted that he continues to consume alcohol 'just about every day.' . . . The majority opinion's complete deferral of the suspension is unjustified in this case, where respondent has not fully cooperated with JLAP, and has otherwise refused to obtain treatment and delayed this matter by being evaluated and re-evaluated, while appearing at the re-evaluation under the influence. The sanction imposed does nothing to help respondent, does nothing to protect respondent's clients, and fails to adequately protect the public. There is no question respondent's untreated alcoholism impairs his practice, regardless of respondent's naive belief otherwise."

On rehearing, Justice Crichton noted he would grant the application and order that respondent be suspended for one year and one day in adherence with *Baer*.

In re: Fontenot, 23-0759 (La. 9/19/23), 370 So. 3d 450:

Court imposed suspension for one year and one day for one DWI arrest and noted respondent failed to answer the formal charges. The Court stated: "Respondent committed a single DWI offense. However, due to his lack of cooperation with the disciplinary investigation, we do not know whether he suffers from a substance abuse problem. An actual suspension is therefore warranted."

In re: Crawford, 20-0691 (La. 7/2/20), 297 So. 3d 732:

Court imposed suspension for one year and one day for one DWI arrest and no compliance with JLAP recommendation.

DWI -- Multiple Offenses

In re: Meche, 2024-0262 (La. 6/28/24), 388 So. 3d 325:

Court imposed two year suspension for third offense DWI. The Court noted that this will require respondent to "file a formal application for reinstatement if he wishes to return to the practice of law."

In re: Radziewicz, 20-0641 (La. 8/5/20), 300 So. 3d 840:

Court imposed suspension for one year and one day, fully deferred, subject to a period of probation coinciding with a two-year JLAP agreement, for two DWI arrests.

In re: Bopp, 20-0070 (La. 2/26/20), 290 So. 3d 172:

Court imposed suspension of one year and one day, with all but ninety days deferred, followed by a period of probation coinciding with a five-year JLAP agreement, for two DWI arrests.

In re: Chadwick, 18-0691 (La. 6/15/18), 245 So. 3d 1041:

Court imposed suspension of one year and one day, with all but six months deferred, followed by two years of unsupervised probation, for two DWI arrests; No JLAP agreement required.

Rule 8.4(c), Conduct Involving Dishonesty, Fraud, Deceit or Misrepresentation; Rule 8.4(d), Conduct Prejudicial to the Administration of Justice

In re Meche, 25-0229 (La. 4/29/25), 407 So. 3d 611 (Meche II)

In *Meche I*, the Court suspended Respondent for two years (June 28, 2024-26) based on multiple DWIs and fleeing the scene of car accident. In this matter, Complainant alleged Respondent did not diligently represent his client or communicate in 2022. Additionally, “the ODC received information that a warrant was issued ... for respondent's arrest after he leased a vehicle by false representation and failed to return the vehicle.” The committee found that Respondent violated only Rules 8.1(c), 8.4(a), and 8.4(d) and recommendation a 60-day suspension, fully deferred. The board submitted the committee's report to the Court for review. (Rules 1.3, 1.4, 1.5(a), 1.5(f), 8.1(c), 8.4(a- d))

Action: The Court adopted the committee's recommendation and **suspended Respondent for 60 days, with the suspension fully deferred.**

The Court concluded that “[R]espondent failed to cooperate with the ODC in two disciplinary investigations,” and agreed with the committees' findings of Rules 8.1(c), 8.4(a), and 8.4(d) violations. The Court explained that “held that an attorney's failure to cooperate with the ODC, standing alone, is sufficient to warrant discipline,” and that [t]he sanctions imposed typically have been in the range of a public reprimand to a six-month suspension from the practice of law.”

Crain, J., and Cole, J., dissented as to sanction imposed, finding it was too lenient.

RECENT JUDICIAL DISCIPLINE CASES

In re Reeves, 2025-01587 (La. 5/1/26), 432 So. 3d 137

Judge John C. Reeves of the Seventh Judicial District Court received a call from a person he knew in the community who asked him to sign documents in a succession matter. The petition and proposed judgment of possession had not yet been filed with the clerk of court and had not been allotted to Judge Reeves when he signed the judgment. After Judge Reeves signed it, the litigant handed him a folded \$100 bill and told him to use the money to take his family to lunch. Judge Reeves accepted the money in the presence of a judicial assistant. The parties stipulated that Judge Reeves violated Canons 1, 2, 2(A), 2(B), and 6(B)(1) of the Code of Judicial Conduct and LA. CONST. art. V, § 25(C). The Court found no quid pro quo, but it concluded that accepting money from a litigant for performing judicial duties caused serious damage to public confidence in the judiciary.

Action: The Court suspended Judge Reeves from office without salary for twenty days and ordered him to pay \$3,121.53 in Commission costs. The Court rejected the Judiciary Commission’s recommendation of a thirty-day suspension. It described the payment as a “hundred-dollar handshake” and said the conduct “perpetuated the pervasive negative stereotype of a corrupt judiciary.”

Weimer, C.J., concurred in part and dissented in part. He agreed that the conduct reflected poorly on the judiciary but favored a lesser sanction.

In re: Sims, 2025-1449 (La. 03/06/26), 2026 WL 632413:

This case consists of multiple complaints filed by litigants, anonymous persons, and retired Justice E. Joseph Bleich. The allegations against Respondent, Judge Sheva Sims, assert that the judge was rude and discourteous to a property manager and improperly denied an eviction, failed to remain patient and courteous in another eviction proceeding, misused a court-owned vehicle for personal commuting and had city marshals purchase gasoline for it, independently obtained and introduced documents into evidence in an eviction case and used them to question and discredit a witness creating the appearance of advocacy, failed to follow the Code of Criminal Procedure when issuing certain bond and release orders, and generally displayed “rude, abrasive, and demeaning behavior toward litigants, court staff, and colleagues” while failing to cooperate with other court officials in the administration of court business.

The Judiciary Commission of Louisiana recommended that Judge Sheva Sims be suspended without pay for nine months. The Court imposed a suspension of nine months without pay. Judge Sims had been suspended previously in 2015. (Canons 1, 2, 2(A), 2(B), 3(A)(1), 3(A)(2), 3(A)(3), 3(A)(4), 3(A)(6), and 3(B)(1) of the Code of Judicial Conduct; Article V, § 25(C) of the Louisiana Constitution).

Action: The Court **imposed a suspension of nine months without pay**, rejecting the Commission’s recommendation for a one year suspension.

The Court found that she violated Canons 1, 2(A), and 3(A)(3) of the Code of Judicial Conduct by “fail[ing] to maintain ‘high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary may be preserved,’ ‘respect and comply with the law ... in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary,’ and ‘be patient, dignified, and courteous to all litigants’ with whom she interacts in an official capacity.” The Court disagreed with the Commission regarding Count 3 (misuse of court-owned vehicle), finding it was not proven. The Court concluded that she “failed to perform her duties as an unbiased and neutral arbiter undermining the integrity of the judicial system” by independently obtaining evidence and presenting it. The Court concluded that she “demonstrated a repeated practice of failing to follow the clear language of La. C.Cr.P. arts. 321(C), 880(C), and 320(C).” The Court stated “[a] common thread which runs through the gamut of Judge Sims’ violations is a persistent lapse into informalities, overreach, and lack of decorum ostensibly rooted in her frustrations with managing a sizeable docket.”

Based on the aforementioned violation, the Court stated that “discipline is required.” Next, “[i]n imposing discipline, [the Court is] [] guided by the following: (a) whether the misconduct is an isolated instance or evidences a pattern of misconduct; (b) the nature, extent, and frequency of occurrence of the acts of the misconduct; (c) whether the misconduct occurred in or out of the courtroom; (d) whether the misconduct occurred in the judge’s official capacity or in her private life; (e) whether the judge has acknowledged or recognized that the acts occurred; (f) whether the judge has evidenced an effort to change or modify her conduct; (g) the length of service on the bench; (h) whether there have been prior complaints about this judge; (i) the effect the misconduct has upon the integrity of and respect for the judiciary; and (j) the extent to which the judge exploited her position to satisfy his personal desires.” The Court discussed each factor, finding that all factors indicated that Judge Sims should be disciplined except factor (j) because the Court did not find that she exploited her position for personal gain. The Court concluded that Judge Sims repeatedly failed to “adhere to the high standards of the Code of Judicial Conduct” and that “her subsequent responses seeking to evade, rationalize, or obfuscate the issues — undermined the integrity of the judicial system and violated the public trust.” The Court “impose[d] a suspension of nine months without pay and reimbursement of costs to the Commission in the amount of \$5,801.28.”

Weimer, C.J., concurred in part and dissented in part; and would have adopted the Judiciary Commission’s recommendation for a one-year suspension. He stated that Judge Sims “demonstrated a lack of credibility before the Commission, evidencing an unwillingness or inability to recognize her misconduct in any meaningful manner.”

McCallum, J., dissented in part, and would have imposed an even stricter sanction

Penzato, Justice Pro Tempore, dissented in part, and disagreed with the Court’s finding that Count 3 (misuse of court-owned vehicle) was not proven.

In re: Judge Eboni Johnson Rose, 2025-00390 (La. 4/23/25), 406 So. 3d 1163:

In 2024, the Judiciary Commission received complaints and media reports regarding alleged misconduct by Judge Rose in four separate criminal matters. This consisted of three cases involving serious legal errors regarding relatively straightforward issues of criminal procedure, and one case in which her comments in court indicative of bias against the District Attorney’s Office. She used profane and offensive language, including a racial slur, in doing so. After an interim disqualification, Judge Rose and the Commission submitted a joint petition for consent

discipline in which Judge Rose admitted that her conduct violated the Code of Judicial Conduct and La. Const. art. V, § 25(C).

The Court imposed a six-month suspension, without pay, with all but two months deferred, and a two-year period of probation. The Court did so upon consideration of a joint petition for consent discipline.

In re: Judge Vercell Fiffie, 2024-O-0976 (La. 10/25/2024) 395 So. 3d 738:

The allegations against Judge Fiffie involved myriad violations, including: (1) engaging in a practice of asking or requiring law enforcement to seek consent before issuing a search warrant, which is not required by law and gives an appearance of bias against law enforcement or in favor of criminal suspects; (2) failing to take timely action on pending warrant requests; (3) failing to comply with a fellow judge's request not to recall her bench warrants without first consulting her; (4) violating an appellate court order, which necessitated a second writ application and an order threatening contempt; (5) requesting that his name not be included in the Sheriff's database as the issuing judge on bond orders; and (6) displaying indifference and being uncooperative with other judges and the Sheriff's office after they made attempts to address his conduct or practices.

The Judiciary Commission recommended he be suspended for six months without pay, with three months deferred. The Commission also recommended two-years of probation during which Judge Fiffie must obtain additional judicial education. (Canons 1, 2, 2A, 2B, 3A(1), 3A(4), 3A(7), 3B(1), and La. Const. art. V, § 25)

Crichton, J., additionally concurred noting that the judge's "flagrant conduct in this case ran the gamut of canon violations that demonstrated persistent conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice." He explained that "most troubling" was Judge Fiffie's conduct before the Commission, including that he "did not appear to appreciate the gravity of the allegations against him" and was unable "to recognize the role of a judge within the judicial system or meaningfully acknowledge his errors."

McCallum, J., concurred, stating: "I join the majority in this result only because I was unable to gain a majority to impose a heavier sanction."

Weimer, C.J., concurred in part and dissented in part. He wrote that as to the discipline imposed, he would have agreed with the Commission's recommendation of a lesser sanction than the majority imposed. He stated: "There was no evidence Judge Fiffie wished to harm anyone or that he exploited his position as a judge for personal gain. Based on the record, I would accept the discipline recommended by the Commission, whose members viewed and heard Judge Fiffie's testimony live and in person."

Griffin, J., dissented, stating: "Considering his inexperience as a judge, I would impose a less severe sanction than the majority imposes."

In re: Judge Donald “Chick” Foret, 2025-O-320 (La. 10/15/25)

The Judiciary Commission received complaints regarding Judge Foret’s inappropriate judicial demeanor and failing to self-recuse. The hearing officer found that Judge Foret:

Displayed an inappropriate temperament and demeanor, failed to maintain order and decorum, manifested or created an appearance of bias, failed to be patient and courteous to others, including the family of a victim, and failed to recuse himself after creating a substantial and objective basis to reasonably question his ability to be impartial; and

By engaging in such conduct, violated Canons 1, 2, 2A, 3A(1), 3A(2), 3A(3), 3A(4) and 3C of the Code of Judicial Conduct, as well as Article V, Section 25(C) of the Louisiana Constitution (1974).

However, upon review the Louisiana Supreme Court found that while Judge Foret exhibited intemperate words and actions in connection with the recusal issue, he did refer the matter to an ad hoc judge to address the motion, following La. C.C.P. art. 154. The Court concluded there was no violation of Canon 3C on that issue.

Thus, two complaints involving inappropriate temperament and demeanor remained:

During a criminal jury trial, when the prosecutor requested a brief recess to get a table to distribute the physical evidence, Judge Foret became angry, loudly voicing his disapproval of not requesting the table in advance, and to his minute clerk, who became visibly upset and immediately left the courtroom. While he then adjourned court for the day, he instructed that closing arguments would commence at 9:00 AM the following day. Notwithstanding the announced start time, he began closing arguments earlier, the result of which was that the family of the victims, who had been sequestered to that point, were not present for the initial number of minutes. Regarding the table incident, Deputy Chief Judge Lee Faulkner called Judge Foret to discuss the subject; Judge Foret raised his voice and used profane language directed at Judge Faulkner, overheard by court staff.

During a break in another case, the lawyers remained in the courtroom, to discuss jury charges. Judge Foret returned to the courtroom and inquired about the settlement posture of the case. Upon being informed of the respective offers made by each side, Judge Foret advised plaintiff counsel to tell his defense counsel to “go f___ himself if he did not raise his settlement offer”.

Wrote the Supreme Court:

Judge Foret’s display of temper reflected a lack of courtesy and patience and is illustrative of a theme in Judge Foret’s conduct – difficulty balancing the need for efficiency and eliminating disruption with recognizing that the individuals responsible for making a courtroom operate well are human, and therefore fallible. He further used profanity when addressing his minute clerk regarding the request for the table and when discussing the incident with Deputy Chief Judge Faulkner. Judge Foret likewise displayed an inappropriate temperament and demeanor and gave the impression that he was not a neutral arbiter during an informal settlement discussion when he

used an expletive to describe how plaintiff's counsel should respond to defense counsel's settlement offer.

All of the foregoing incidents constituted a failure to observe a high standard of conduct so as to preserve the integrity and independence of the judiciary; a failure to avoid impropriety in all activities; a failure to maintain order and decorum in judicial proceedings; and a failure to be patient, dignified, and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers, and others with whom Judge Foret dealt with in his official capacity, in violation of Canons 1, 2, 2A, 3A(2) and 3A(3).

Judge Foret's decision to start proceedings earlier than the time he previously indicated they would start in the criminal jury case demonstrated his failure to recognize the family's right to be present for closing arguments. He further wrongly blamed the attorneys and the family for the family's failure to be present when closing arguments began based on his erroneous assumption that the attorneys would have "extrapolated" his instruction to counsel to arrive at 8:30 AM as a directive to advise the family to arrive at that time as well. Judge Foret's refusal to accommodate the victim's family by starting court at the time he had announced and after being told that the family members were on their way constituted a failure to be patient, dignified and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers and others with whom the judge deals in an official capacity in violation of Canons 1 and 3A(3).

Regarding demeanor before the Commission:

The Court noted that the Commission was left with concerns about the extent to which he is able to change his "old-school temperament" and understand what constitutes an appropriate judicial demeanor or the necessity of exhibiting one. For example, when Judge Foret appeared before the Commission he became heated in response to certain questions and appeared as if he was struggling to keep his composure. The fact that this was evident in his appearance before the Commission caused some reservation about his ability to remain patient and dignified with staff and in the courtroom on a daily basis.

Following the guidelines set forth in *In re: Chaisson*, 549 So.2d 259 (La. 1989), the Court unanimously ordered suspension for 30 days without pay and reimbursement for costs incurred by the Commission in the amount of \$7,488.67.

In re: Judge Jennifer M. Medley, 2025-O-879 (La. 10/24/25)

Two counts with which the Commission and the Court found to be violations:

Judge Medley's campaign created a video advertisement accusing Judge Bruno of being "called a judge by some and a deadbeat dad by others," refusing to pay child support for thirteen years, and refusing to provide his ex-wife with discovery regarding his income. Although Judge Bruno obtained a Temporary Restraining Order to stop Judge Medley from airing the ad, Judge Medley's campaign Facebook page repeated statements from the advertisement. The commission found that Judge Medley's statements in this advertisement were false and/or misleading in violation of Canons 7A(9) and 7B(1), and 7B(3) of the Code of Judicial Conduct and La. Const. art. V, §25(C) of the Louisiana Constitution.

In connection with the production video in Count I, Judge Medley made two separate payments from her personal bank account via the Zelle application to the plaintiff in *Doe v Lewis*: one for \$700 on September 28, 2020, and another for \$500 on October 28, 2020. Because Judge Medley stated these payments were intended to reimburse travel expense incurred as a part of production of the campaign video, they were campaign expenditures that were required to have been reported on her campaign finance report pursuant to La. R.S. 18:1483(9) and 18:1495.4-1495.5. Judge Medley failed to list these payments as campaign expenditures and failed to properly record the payments as electronic funds transfers pursuant to La. R.S. 18:1495.2(D)(2). Thus, Judge Medley violated Canon 7B(1) of the Code of Judicial Conduct and La. Const. art. V, §25(C) of the Louisiana Constitution.

The Court agreed with the Commission findings that:

Judge Medley's misconduct appears to have been motivated by a desire to win the election to judicial office and was troubled by Judge Medley's misconduct and its effect upon the integrity and respect for the judiciary, noting that judicial candidates should exercise restraint and rise above indecorous behavior that has become all too common in campaigns for non-judicial office.

Sanction: Suspension for 30 days without pay and an order of reimbursement to the Commission of \$2,747.41.

From the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Ethics and Professional Responsibility. Issued: 10/15/25:

A lawyer-mediator does not represent any party to a mediation. Lawyer-mediators must explain their role to mediation parties who are not represented or who do not appear to understand the mediator's function and, where necessary, inform all parties of the difference between the role of a mediator and that of a lawyer representing a party. Unless the parties are sophisticated consumers of mediation services, it is prudent for the lawyer-mediator not only to inform all parties that the lawyer-mediator does not represent them but also to afford them an opportunity to discuss what this means. In addition to the other rules governing the duties of a mediator, the Model Rules require the lawyer-mediator to avoid communications that are dishonest, fraudulent, deceitful, or misrepresentative in violation of Rule 8.4(c).



A SHARED DREAM, NOW A MEMORY - AND A TRIBUTE TO A COLLEAGUE

by Scott Crichton, scott@justicecrichton.com

While attending a funeral for a friend on July 10, 2026, I was handed an 8 × 10 photograph taken 36 years ago. Still reflecting on the powerful eulogies I had just heard, I found myself reliving for a few minutes one of the most impactful periods of my life.

It was the fall of 1990. And, in our sliver of the world, a large number of retirements on the Caddo District Court bench were unexpectedly announced – meaning there would be four parishwide seats opening for new judges – and for each of those seats, there would be contested elections. Ultimately, four lawyers emerged, all in our mid-30s: Frank Thaxton and Gary Bowers, both seasoned civil practitioners; James Stewart, First Assistant District Attorney for Caddo Parish, who had extensive prosecutorial and administrative experience; and me, a civil practitioner and part-time assistant district attorney. Full of vitality, a vision of hope and idealism, we promised big changes.

After hard-fought campaigns, Caddo Parish granted us the opportunity to serve; it was time to deliver.

We did not waste any time modernizing and streamlining the court to promote a more orderly and effective system of justice in Caddo Parish. Bowers was assigned to the family division and began employing cutting-edge techniques to mediate family matters that were amenable to agreed-upon resolutions and to fully litigate those that were not.

Stewart and I were assigned to the criminal division. Having been colleagues serving under District Attorney Paul Carmouche, we knew where the court functioned well and where it needed improvements. We therefore immediately began to establish procedures to more swiftly and efficiently adjudicate criminal cases, assigning priority to the growing number of cases involving crimes of violence.



Front row left to right: Judge Carl Stewart, Judge Eugene Bryson, Judge Gayle Hamilton, Judge Charles Scott
Back row left to right: Judge James Stewart, Judge Frank Thaxton, Judge Robert Waddell, Judge Gary Bowers and Judge Scott Crichton

But it was Frank Thaxton who established and implemented significant and enduring structural changes to the civil division. He was quick and diligent and yet thoughtful and methodical in his approach to the administration of his duties. With the enthusiastic support of a cross section of civil litigators, by the end of our first year, Frank had established a number of procedural rules designed to enhance the administration of civil justice, several of which merit mention and all of which remain in place to this day.

First, he streamlined the method of getting a civil case on the trial docket. While one might think obtaining a civil trial setting to be an easy matter, it was not. The law allows for pretrial discovery and the handling of various pretrial motions and exceptions, but the pre-1991 method of setting a case for trial in Caddo Parish was antiquated, confusing and needlessly time-consuming. Understanding that lawyers are motivated by deadlines, Frank set mandatory pretrial scheduling conferences at which time lawyers must accept deadlines for certain pretrial activities, including completion of discovery and the filing of pretrial motions and briefs. In all cases, that conference was to be followed by a scheduling order and, importantly, a trial date. The rule was so effective at improving judicial administration and so well received by practitioners that it later was adopted by the entire state and currently has its place as Louisiana District Court Rule 9.14.

Indeed, halfway through his first term, Frank and his civil section became known as the “rocket docket.” That was a credit to his belief that – for the good of the parties and an attentiveness to judicial resources – cases should not linger and disputes should be adjudicated and resolved in an expeditious manner. Being assigned to the civil bench during my second year, I sought to compete with his “rocket docket” but was unable to match his ability to so efficiently handle a multitude of cases to conclusion.

Another proposal of Frank’s was to establish a central jury pool to be managed by a jury coordinator. The purpose was to make jury service, which typically included hundreds of citizens reporting for service to the courthouse each week, more efficient, such that citizens could complete their civic obligation with relative ease and return to their lives in a reasonable time and

with a sense of accomplishment. This concept was also recognized by the entire state and is presently embodied in Louisiana District Court Rule 12.1. Moreover, during his second term Frank was elected to serve as president of the statewide Louisiana District Judges Association, a recognition which enhanced his ability to promote his rocket docket procedures and jury trial measures throughout the state.

As the years passed, Frank completed two six-year terms and, with mission accomplished, returned to the private sector and built an extremely successful mediation practice. Gary also returned to private practice, becoming one of the most knowledgeable and tenacious family law practitioners in the state. Without opposition, James was elected to the Second Circuit Court of Appeal and, after 20 years, retired from the appellate bench to be elected Caddo Parish District Attorney – a position he holds today and one in which he has received extensive statewide recognition. And after 24 years on the district court, I was elected without opposition to the Louisiana Supreme Court and have now completed my ten-year term, returning to civil practice.

Frank fought a near-decadelong courageous and intense battle with cancer. He was the colleague and friend whose life I celebrated on July 10. The photograph – an uncharacteristically teary-eyed Gary Bowers handed me the picture of us – is to my knowledge the only one taken of the court during our tenure.

Against the backdrop of a dear friend's funeral, I also found myself tearfully and sharply reliving the events of 1990 and the bond we shared. Looking back so many years ago, I am immensely proud to have been one of the four young lawyers who had a vision to enhance the administration of justice for parties, jurors and practitioners in Caddo Parish. Though the needs of our ever-changing society inevitably require us to remain vigilant to the demands of our justice system and make changes to improve our effectiveness, I value the memory that endures and stand proud of the work the four of us accomplished in improving the Caddo Parish system of justice.

PRAYER TO ST. THOMAS MORE

St. Thomas More, scholar of the Law, chancellor of charity, jurist of justice, counsellor of the powerful, advocate of the weak, merry martyr, and saint, may the Lord of all law and of all lawyers, help me this day to be a little more like you.

For the greater glory of God and the pursuit of justice, help me to be accurate in analysis, strict in study, correct in conclusion, candid with clients, honest with adversaries, able in argument and steadfast in faith.

Sit with me at my desk and listen with me to my client, read with me in my library, and stand beside me in court, so that today I shall not lose my soul in order to win a point.

Help me to live in such a way that my spouse and my children may find in me what they have a right to seek – humor and humility, cheerfulness and charity, wisdom and wit, counsel and consolation.

Brother lawyer, who proved our profession can be both honorable and compatible with sanctity, pray for me, now engaged in the struggle to understand and live the Law of God.

Lord Chancellor, stand with me when I plead my cause before the infinite Lord of Justice, who will preside at my final trial.
Amen.