

The Supreme Court of the State of Louisiana

IN RE: DREW M. LOUVIERE

No. 2025-B-00225

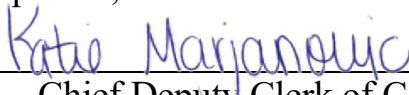
IN RE: Disciplinary Counsel - Applicant Other; Findings and Recommendations
(Formal Charges);

April 29, 2025

Suspension imposed. See per curiam.

WJC
JLW
JDH
JBM
PDG
JMG
CRC

Supreme Court of Louisiana
April 29, 2025



Chief Deputy Clerk of Court
For the Court

SUPREME COURT OF LOUISIANA

NO. 2025-B-0225

IN RE: DREW M. LOUVIERE

ATTORNEY DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDING

PER CURIAM

This disciplinary matter arises from formal charges filed by the Office of Disciplinary Counsel (“ODC”) against respondent, Drew M. Louviere, an attorney licensed to practice law in Louisiana.

FORMAL CHARGES

In December 2021, Steve Derozal Williams was convicted in Caddo Parish of second-degree murder in connection with the shooting death of a romantic rival. In January 2022, Mr. Williams’ family retained respondent to represent Mr. Williams at sentencing and in connection with any post-conviction relief and/or appeals. The family paid respondent \$15,000 in connection with the representation. However, respondent did little to no work on the case, filing only a few short motions.¹ Respondent was granted a motion for appeal, but despite reminders from the clerk’s office, he never paid the appeal costs, and the appeal was never perfected. Respondent failed to respond to numerous messages asking for an update on the matter and specifically whether he had obtained the trial transcript as he had promised. Respondent did not obtain the transcript or otherwise move the case

¹ In January 2022, respondent filed a motion to enroll as counsel and to continue sentencing. In March 2022, respondent filed two motions to continue sentencing and for a new trial. Mr. Williams was sentenced to life in prison and his new trial motion was denied. In April 2022, respondent filed a motion for appeal, which he never perfected.

forward. Further, respondent failed to terminate the representation or return any fees despite admitting he had not completed the matter.

In January 2024, Mr. Williams filed a complaint against respondent seeking a return of the fee paid and return of his client file.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS

In August 2024, the ODC filed formal charges against respondent, alleging his conduct as set forth above violated Rules 1.3 (failure to act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client), 1.4 (failure to communicate with a client), 1.5(f) (failure to refund an unearned fee), 3.2 (failure to make reasonable efforts to expedite litigation), 8.4(a) (violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct), and 8.4(c) (engaging in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation) of the Rules of Professional Conduct.

Respondent failed to answer the formal charges.² Accordingly, the factual allegations contained therein were deemed admitted and proven by clear and convincing evidence pursuant to Supreme Court Rule XIX, § 11(E)(3). No formal hearing was held, but the parties were given an opportunity to file with the hearing committee written arguments and documentary evidence on the issue of sanctions. Respondent filed nothing for the hearing committee's consideration.

Hearing Committee Report

After considering the ODC's deemed admitted submission and the exhibits in the record, the hearing committee adopted the formal charges as its findings of fact and determined that the facts establish by clear and convincing evidence that respondent violated the Rules of Professional Conduct as charged.

² In its motion to have the factual allegations deemed admitted, the ODC represents that respondent appeared in the ODC's offices on September 5, 2024 regarding an unrelated matter, and acknowledged he had received the formal charges in the instant matter and failed to answer.

The committee determined respondent violated duties owed to the public, the legal system, and the legal profession. Respondent acted negligently or knowingly, causing actual harm to Mr. Williams and his family. Relying on the ABA's *Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions*, the committee determined the baseline sanction is suspension.

The committee determined the following aggravating factors are present: a prior disciplinary record (although remote in time),³ vulnerability of the victim, and substantial experience in the practice of law (admitted 1982). The committee determined that no mitigating factors are present.

After further considering the court's prior jurisprudence addressing similar misconduct, the committee recommended respondent be suspended from the practice of law for one year and one day.⁴ The committee further recommended that respondent be assessed with all costs and expenses of this proceeding. Lastly, the committee recommended that respondent be ordered to refund the fee paid on behalf of Mr. Williams, with interest from the date of the filing of the complaint.

Neither respondent nor the ODC filed an objection to the hearing committee's report. Therefore, pursuant to Supreme Court Rule XIX, § 11(G), the disciplinary board submitted the committee's report to the court for review.

³ Respondent was admonished by the disciplinary board in 1993 for failing to fulfill the requirements concerning his client trust account and failing to fulfill his obligations upon termination of a representation. Respondent was also admonished in 1998 for neglecting a legal matter, failing to communicate with a client, and failing to refund an unearned fee.

⁴ The committee adopted the ODC's sanction brief analysis as its own, citing: *In re: Lagarde*, 24-0646 (La. 10/1/24), 393 So. 3d 315, wherein an attorney was suspended from the practice of law for one year and one day after he failed to take any action after being retained to represent a client in a community property issue, failed to communicate with the client, and failed to properly withdraw from the representation, and *In re: Robertson*, 17-1169 (La. 11/28/17), 230 So. 3d 193, wherein an attorney was suspended from the practice of law for one year and one day after he failed to provide competent representation to a client, neglected a legal matter, failed to communicate with his client, and failed to participate in the disciplinary proceedings.

DISCUSSION

Bar disciplinary matters fall within the original jurisdiction of this court. La. Const. art. V, § 5(B). Consequently, we act as triers of fact and conduct an independent review of the record to determine whether the alleged misconduct has been proven by clear and convincing evidence. *In re: Banks*, 09-1212 (La. 10/2/09), 18 So. 3d 57.

In cases in which the lawyer does not answer the formal charges, the factual allegations of those charges are deemed admitted. Supreme Court Rule XIX, § 11(E)(3). Thus, the ODC bears no additional burden to prove the factual allegations contained in the formal charges after those charges have been deemed admitted. However, the language of § 11(E)(3) does not encompass legal conclusions that flow from the factual allegations. If the legal conclusion the ODC seeks to prove (i.e., a violation of a specific rule) is not readily apparent from the deemed admitted facts, additional evidence may need to be submitted in order to prove the legal conclusions that flow from the admitted factual allegations. *In re: Donnan*, 01-3058 (La. 1/10/03), 838 So. 2d 715.

The record in this deemed admitted matter supports a finding that respondent neglected a matter, failed to communicate with a client, failed to return an unearned fee, and engaged in dishonest conduct, in violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct, as charged.

Having found evidence of professional misconduct, we now turn to a determination of the appropriate sanction for respondent's actions. In determining a sanction, we are mindful that disciplinary proceedings are designed to maintain high standards of conduct, protect the public, preserve the integrity of the profession, and deter future misconduct. *Louisiana State Bar Ass'n v. Reis*, 513 So. 2d 1173 (La. 1987). The discipline to be imposed depends upon the facts of each case and the seriousness of the offenses involved considered in light of any aggravating and

mitigating circumstances. *Louisiana State Bar Ass’n v. Whittington*, 459 So. 2d 520 (La. 1984).

The record supports a finding that respondent violated duties owed to the public, the legal system, and the legal profession. Respondent’s conduct was knowing and caused actual harm to Mr. Williams, who was denied a meaningful appeal. Moreover, Mr. Williams’ family was deprived of the funds they paid to respondent to represent Mr. Williams. The baseline sanction is suspension. The aggravating factors found by the hearing committee are supported by the record, and there are no mitigating factors present.

Based upon our review of the record, we cannot say that the imposition of a one year and one day suspension is inappropriate. This sanction will require respondent to file a formal petition for reinstatement and abide by any further conditions ordered. Accordingly, we will adopt the committee’s recommendation and suspend respondent from the practice of law for one year and one day.

The committee also recommends that respondent be ordered to return the fee paid to him in connection with his representation of Mr. Williams. Because there is evidence that respondent did some (albeit little) legal work, and is entitled to some of the fee paid, we will not order respondent to return the entire \$15,000 fee. Instead, we will require that respondent submit to fee dispute arbitration and refund any unearned fees as determined by the arbitrator. Participation in fee dispute arbitration and payment of the refund to the Williams family shall be completed prior to respondent’s submission of any application for reinstatement to the practice of law.

DECREE

Upon review of the findings and recommendations of the hearing committee, and considering the record, it is ordered that Drew Michael Louviere, Louisiana Bar Roll number 8826, be and he hereby is suspended from the practice of law for one

year and one day. Prior to seeking reinstatement to the practice of law, respondent shall participate in fee dispute arbitration and refund any unearned fees to the Williams family as determined by the arbitrator. All costs and expenses in the matter are assessed against respondent in accordance with Supreme Court Rule XIX, § 10.1, with legal interest to commence thirty days from the date of finality of this court's judgment until paid.