

**IN RE: JUDITH C. KNIGHT**

**BBO # 551896**

**NO. BD-2024-010**

**Order (Term Suspension) entered by Justice Georges on June 3, 2024.<sup>1</sup>**

*The respondent was suspended for two years for varied misconduct in four matters, three involving clients, including intentional misuse of unearned retainers with and without deprivation, and repeated failures to communicate properly with clients.*

**SUMMARY<sup>2</sup>**

The respondent was charged with varied misconduct in a four-count Petition for Discipline. The Hearing Committee Report reflects that it found misconduct in all four areas. First, for over three years, and despite having taken a Trust Account Training Program, the respondent failed to keep IOLTA-compliant records in violation of Mass. R. Prof. C. 1.15. She also failed to cooperate when bar counsel investigated her conduct. Second, in the course of representing a divorce client, the respondent was found to have committed numerous violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct, foremost among them intentionally misusing unearned retainer funds, failing to return the unearned fee, and refusing to send her client an invoice. In the third count, the respondent was found to have again intentionally misused unearned retainer funds, but this time she returned the unearned amount to the client.

Count Four concerned the respondent's representation of a subcontractor enmeshed in a dispute with another subcontractor. The respondent was found to have engaged in extensive misconduct that included routinely ignoring her client's questions about the status of the case and her fees, and intentional misuse of unearned retainer funds without deprivation.

The Hearing Committee found significant aggravation, including the respondent's lack of insight into or appreciation of basic ethical obligations. It specifically noted that she routinely missed deadlines, and failed to follow BBO rules and orders. It recommended a two-year suspension.

The Hearing Committee Report was served August 8, 2023. Neither party appealed. On September 11, 2023, the Board voted to adopt the report and recommendation of the Hearing Committee and to recommend a two-year suspension from practice. Its vote was served on the parties by email on September 21, 2023. On October 11, 2023, the respondent filed a Motion to File Notice of Appeal Late, claiming she had not seen the emailed Hearing Report, and was unaware of the Hearing Committee's decision or the need to file an appeal. The motion was allowed, and the respondent was given until November 13, 2023 to file her brief. She subsequently filed six more requests for additional time, all of which were allowed. The final

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<sup>1</sup> The complete order of the Court is available by contacting the Clerk of the Supreme Judicial Court for Suffolk County.

<sup>2</sup> Compiled by the Massachusetts Board of Bar Overseers' Office of General Counsel based on the record filed with the Supreme Judicial Court.

Order gave her until January 22, 2024 at 5:00 P.M. to file her brief. She missed this deadline, and an Information was filed with the SJC.

The respondent's hearing before the SJC was scheduled for March 29, 2024. She requested additional time and was given until May 31, 2024. On that date, she filed a Motion to Remand to the Board, for its consideration of her appeal. Bar counsel objected. After the hearing, where the respondent appeared and represented herself, Justice Georges denied her request for remand. On June 3, 2024, Justice Georges imposed a two-year suspension, effective immediately.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

SUFFOLK, SS.

SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT FOR  
SUFFOLK COUNTY  
NO: BD-2024-010

IN RE: Judith C. Knight

ORDER OF TERM SUSPENSION

This matter came before the Court, Georges J., on an Information and Record of Proceedings pursuant to S.J.C. Rule 4:01, § 8(6), with the Recommendation and Vote of the Board of Bar Overseers filed by the Board on January 25, 2024.

On April 1, 2024, an Order of Notice issued and was served on the lawyer Judith C. Knight in the manner specified pursuant to S.J.C. Rule 4:01, § 8(6) directing her to appear before this Court on May 31, 2024.<sup>1</sup> After a hearing was held, attended by assistant bar counsel and the lawyer; and

In accordance with the findings entered on the record at the May 31, 2024, hearing, it is ORDERED that:

1. Judith C. Knight is hereby suspended from the practice of law in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a period of two (2) years effective immediately upon the entry of this Order. Within fourteen (14) days of the date of entry of this Order, the lawyer shall

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<sup>1</sup> Previously, on March 11, 2024, an Order of Notice issued and was served on the lawyer pursuant to S.J.C. Rule 4:01, § 8(6) directing her to appear before this Court on March 29, 2024. At the lawyer's request, the Court continued the hearing to May 31, 2024.

immediately take down and remove from the Internet her law firm website and any other digital media, including on any social or professional media platforms, authored or published by the lawyer and holding herself out as a lawyer and/or as offering legal services of any kind to anyone.

It is FURTHER ORDERED that pursuant to S.J.C. Rule 4:01,  
§ 17(1):

2. Within fourteen (14) days of the date of entry of this Order, the lawyer shall:

a) file a notice of withdrawal as of the effective date of the suspension with every court, agency, or tribunal before which a matter is pending, together with a copy of the notices sent pursuant to paragraphs 2(c) and 2(d) of this Order, the client's or clients' place of residence, and the case caption and docket number of the client's or clients' proceedings;

b) resign as of the effective date of the suspension all appointments as guardian, executor, administrator, trustee, attorney-in-fact, or other fiduciary, attaching to the resignation a copy of the notices sent to the wards, heirs, or beneficiaries pursuant to paragraphs 2(c) and 2(d) of this Order, the place of residence of the wards, heirs, or beneficiaries, and the case caption and docket number of the proceedings, if any;

c) provide notice to all clients and to all wards, heirs, and beneficiaries that the lawyer has been suspended; that she

is disqualified from acting as a lawyer after the effective date of the suspension; and that, if not represented by co-counsel, the client, ward, heir, or beneficiary should act promptly to substitute another lawyer or fiduciary or to seek legal advice elsewhere, calling attention to any urgency arising from the circumstances of the case;

d) provide notice to counsel for all parties (or, in the absence of counsel, the parties) in pending matters that the lawyer has been suspended and, as a consequence, is disqualified from acting as a lawyer after the effective date of the suspension;

e) make available to all clients being represented in pending matters any papers or other property to which they are entitled, calling attention to any urgency for obtaining the papers or other property;

f) refund any part of any fees paid in advance that have not been earned; and

g) close every IOLTA, client, trust or other fiduciary account and properly disburse or otherwise transfer all client and fiduciary funds in her possession, custody or control.

All notices required by this paragraph shall be served by certified mail, return receipt requested, in a form approved by the Board.

3. Within twenty-one (21) days after the date of entry of this Order, the lawyer shall file with the Office of the Bar Counsel an affidavit certifying that the lawyer has fully complied with the

provisions of this Order and with bar disciplinary rules. Appended to the affidavit of compliance shall be:

a) a copy of each form of notice, the names and addresses of the clients, wards, heirs, beneficiaries, attorneys, courts and agencies to which notices were sent, and all return receipts or returned mail received up to the date of the affidavit.

Supplemental affidavits shall be filed covering subsequent return receipts and returned mail. Such names and addresses of clients shall remain confidential unless otherwise requested in writing by the lawyer or ordered by the court;

b) a schedule showing the location, title and account number of every bank account designated as an IOLTA, client, trust or other fiduciary account and of every account in which the lawyer holds or held as of the entry date of this Order any client, trust or fiduciary funds;

c) a schedule describing the lawyer's disposition of all client and fiduciary funds in the lawyer's possession, custody or control as of the entry date of this Order or thereafter;

d) such proof of the proper distribution of such funds and the closing of such accounts as has been requested by the bar counsel, including copies of checks and other instruments;

e) a list of all other state, federal and administrative jurisdictions to which the lawyer is admitted to practice;

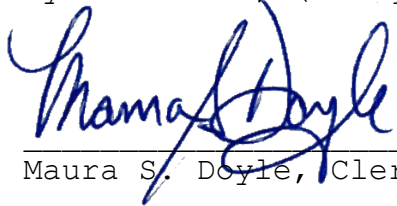
- f) the residence or other street address where communications to the lawyer may thereafter be directed; and
- g) any and all bar registration cards issued to the lawyer by the Board of Bar Overseers.

The lawyer shall retain copies of all notices sent and shall maintain complete records of the steps taken to comply with the notice requirements of S.J.C. Rule 4:01, § 17.

4. Within twenty-one (21) days after the entry date of this Order, the lawyer shall file with the Clerk of the Supreme Judicial Court for Suffolk County:

- a) a copy of the affidavit of compliance required by paragraph 3 of this Order;
- b) a list of all other state, federal and administrative jurisdictions to which the lawyer is admitted to practice; and
- c) the residence or other street address where communications to the lawyer may thereafter be directed.

By the Court, (Georges J.)



Maura S. Doyle, Clerk

Entered: June 3, 2024