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November 21, 2018

Via Certified Mail, R.R.R., Regular Mail and E-Mail

Steven H. Wolff
94 Diamond Spring Road - Suite 201
Denville, New Jersey 07834
steven@wolfflawnj.com

Re: **In the Matter of Steven Harlan Wolff**
Docket No. DRB 18-327
District Docket No. XA-2015-0014E
LETTER OF ADMONITION

Dear Mr. Wolff:

The Disciplinary Review Board has reviewed your conduct in the above matter and has concluded that it was improper. Following a review of the record, the Board determined to impose an admonition.

Specifically, in April 2013, Ata Jaber retained you for a divorce action. After some time, Jaber retained subsequent counsel and asked you to furnish him with invoices for the legal services you provided. You could not do so, and came to the realization that you could not access any of your attorney books and records, including client invoices, ledgers, and the like. They had been maintained by a bookkeeper who had worked for you as an independent contractor. Unfortunately, the bookkeeper passed away without sharing with you the password for her QuickBooks account. In turn, QuickBooks refused your

requests for access to the account. As a result, you were unable to furnish the ethics investigator with most of the documents in the case.

The Board concluded that your failure to produce required attorney books and records constituted a violation of the recordkeeping requirements of RPC 1.15(d) and R. 1:21-6.

In respect of the charge that you failed to comply with RPC 1.5(b), the Rule required you to provide the client with a written agreement setting forth the basis or rate of the legal fee. It appears that you did so by way of an April 9, 2013 fee agreement signed by Jaber. However, R. 5:3-5(a)(5) further provides that, in civil family actions, such as Jaber's, "[t]he agreement shall have annexed thereto the Statement of Client Rights and Responsibilities in Civil Family Actions," which includes, among other things, a statement specifying "when bills are to be rendered." Your agreement stated that bills would be rendered "monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly (depending upon type of case)," but failed to state which of those methods would be implemented for the representation. In In re Kardash, 210 N.J. 116 (2012), the attorney prepared a written fee agreement in a civil family action that did not comply with the requirements of R. 5:3-5, for which he was found guilty of an RPC 1.5(b) violation. Likewise, here, the Board found that your agreement failed to comply with R. 5:3-5, a violation of RPC 1.5(b).

The Board determined that the DEC had correctly dismissed the charge that you failed to cooperate with the ethics investigation. Rather, you met with the investigator for an interview, replied to the grievance and the investigator's request for documents, albeit without ideal information, and answered the complaint. Thereafter, you appeared and testified at the DEC hearing. Thus, the Board dismissed the RPC 8.1(b) charge.

In mitigation, the Board considered that you have no prior discipline since your 2006 admission to the bar, you took immediate measures to correct your recordkeeping deficiencies, and you expressed genuine remorse for your actions.

Your conduct has adversely reflected not only upon you as an attorney but also upon all members of the bar. Accordingly, the Board has directed the issuance of this admonition to you. R. 1:20-15(f)(4).

I/M/O Steven Harlan Wolff, DRB 18-327

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A permanent record of this occurrence has been filed with the Clerk of the Supreme Court and the Board's office. Should you become the subject of any further discipline, it will be taken into consideration.

The Board has also directed that the costs of the disciplinary proceedings be assessed against you. An invoice of costs will be forwarded under separate cover.

Very truly yours,



Ellen A. Brodsky
Chief Counsel

EAB/paa

c: Chief Justice Stuart Rabner
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