Supreme Court of New Jersey Disciplinary Review Board Docket No. DRB 19-225 District Docket Nos. IV-2017-0034E and IV-2018-0017E

In the Matter of	:
Michael David Lindner, Jr.	:
An Attorney at Law	:
	:

Decision

Argued: October 17, 2019

Decided: January 21, 2020

Robert N. Feltoon appeared on behalf of the District IV Ethics Committee.

:

Michael D. Lindner, Jr. appeared pro se.

To the Honorable Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of New Jersey.

This matter was before us on a recommendation for a censure filed by the District IV Ethics Committee (DEC). The formal ethics complaint charged respondent with having violated <u>RPC</u> 1.1(a) (gross neglect); <u>RPC</u> 1.3 (lack of diligence); <u>RPC</u> 1.4(b) (failure to communicate with the client); <u>RPC</u> 1.5(c)

(failure to prepare a written fee agreement in a contingent fee case); <u>RPC</u> 5.5(a)(1) (unauthorized practice of law); <u>RPC</u> 8.1(b) (failure to cooperate with disciplinary authorities); and <u>RPC</u> 8.4(c) (conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation).

For the reasons set forth below, we determine to impose a censure.

Respondent was admitted to the New Jersey and Pennsylvania bars in 1995. On September 6, 2019, the Court imposed an admonition on him for his violation of <u>RPC</u> 5.5(a)(1) (unauthorized practice of law – failure to maintain liability insurance while practicing as an LLC). <u>In re Lindner</u>, N.J. (2019).

From October 27, 2014 to April 29, 2016, and from October 20, 2017 to February 12, 2018, respondent was ineligible to practice law due to his failure to comply with the requirements of the Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program. Respondent claimed that he was unaware of the ineligibility and, further, that he did not "actively" practice law during the 2017-2018 period.

This case involves two grievants, Thomas Kelly, III and Arlene Mulvihill. In both matters, respondent admitted having violated <u>RPC</u> 1.4(b), as discussed below. In the <u>Mulvihill</u> matter, he also admitted having violated <u>RPC</u> 8.1(b). Specifically, although respondent had spoken to the DEC investigator on multiple occasions, he never submitted a written reply to Mulvihill's grievance. Despite respondent's denial of the remaining <u>RPC</u> violations, as detailed below, he admitted many of the factual allegations underlying the charges.

The Thomas Kelly, III Matter (IV-2018-0017E)

Respondent testified that, in August 2012, Kelly consulted him regarding a potential medical malpractice case against Kelly's eye doctor, who allegedly had failed to detect a retinal detachment during Kelly's October 2011 eye examination.¹ Respondent and Kelly signed a contingent fee agreement, and Kelly signed medical release forms.

On September 6, 2012, Kelly requested an update on his case. Respondent replied that he would provide one after he had received and reviewed the requested medical records. Yet, as of that date, respondent had not requested any records.

A year later, in September 2013, Kelly went to respondent's office seeking an update. By that point, respondent still had not requested any medical records, but he agreed to do so. Respondent testified that he did not send the medical records requests until late December 2013, because Kelly continued to receive treatment for his injuries, and respondent did not want to put the doctor on notice

¹ Kelly did not testify at the hearing.

that he was going to be sued.

According to respondent, by late 2013/early 2014, he had received and reviewed Kelly's medical records, concluded that Kelly did not have a case against his doctor, and told Kelly that, based on the medical records and the "experts," Kelly did not have a viable case of medical malpractice. Indeed, respondent testified, he had retained an expert witness service, which opined that the medical records "did not come even close to verifying Mr. Kelly's version of the facts."

Kelly disagreed that he had no case, claiming that his doctor had lied and altered the records. Respondent instructed Kelly to provide him with that information prior to the deadline for serving the complaint.

Meanwhile, in January 2014, respondent filed a civil action, in behalf of Kelly, in the Superior Court of New Jersey, Law Division, Gloucester County, for the purpose of meeting the statute of limitations. He did not, however, serve the complaint on the defendants within the time prescribed. Consequently, in August 2014, the court dismissed the complaint for lack of prosecution. Respondent failed to inform Kelly of the dismissal.

In February 2015, respondent requested from Kelly pay stubs and other documents, which Kelly had claimed would change respondent's assessment of the case. Kelly never provided the records to respondent. In a June 4, 2015 e-mail, Kelly, who was experiencing severe financial issues, demanded that respondent provide an update on his case. Respondent, who still had not told Kelly that his case had been dismissed, replied that medical negligence cases are "almost never settled," and that, in those cases that do settle, the settlements do not take place "until almost the day of trial, which could easily be 15 more months away." By raising the issue of delay, respondent hoped that Kelly would "calm down."

More than a year later, in July 2016, Kelly sent two e-mails to respondent, requesting an update and complaining that he had not heard from respondent since June 2015. Respondent did not reply to the e-mails.

In addition to the e-mails, on at least four days in August 2016, Kelly left voicemail messages for respondent. According to respondent, he returned one of the calls and told Kelly that he was looking for another attorney to take his case. Respondent told Kelly that, although no one was interested, he would continue the search.

Respondent testified that, by August 2016, he was a full-time insurance agent and checked his voicemail messages only sporadically. Because he no longer had an office phone, the calls were forwarded to his cell phone. To avoid creditors, respondent allowed his messages to "pile up." Thus, three or four days could have passed before he heard Kelly's messages.

5

At a September 2016 meeting at respondent's office, respondent told Kelly that he would have to retain new counsel, but respondent still did not tell Kelly that his complaint had been dismissed. Respondent defended his failure to disclose the dismissal of the complaint on the ground that he had repeatedly told Kelly that, without "proofs," his case was going "nowhere."

The Mulvihill Matter (IV-2017-0034E)

In April 2014, a few months prior to the expiration of the statute of limitations, Mulvihill retained respondent to represent her in respect of a claim for the wrongful death of her mother, due to nursing home negligence. She had consulted other attorneys, but only respondent agreed to take the case.

Mulvihill understood that respondent would be paid on a contingency basis, but he never provided her with a fee agreement. Although respondent denied that he had failed to provide Mulvihill with a writing memorializing the terms of the fee agreement, he was unable to produce either the original or a copy of any such document.

On June 20, 2014, respondent filed a wrongful death action in the Superior Court of New Jersey, Law Division, Gloucester County. Mulvihill did not see the complaint before it was filed, and, despite her repeated requests, respondent did not provide her with a copy until sometime after October 1, 2014.

6

On January 9, 2015, the court dismissed the complaint for lack of prosecution, because respondent had failed to serve the pleading on the defendants. On February 2, 2015, Mulvihill told respondent that she had learned of the dismissal when she reviewed the court's docket. Respondent, who had been unaware of the dismissal, told Mulvihill that he would seek reinstatement of the complaint.

Respondent claimed that he had intentionally refrained from serving the complaint because he first wanted to determine whether Mulvihill had a viable case. He claimed that he so informed Mulvihill.

On March 9, 2015, Mulvihill sent respondent a MyCase message,² asking him to confirm the reinstatement of the complaint, as the court's docket continued to reflect the dismissal. Respondent replied that he was awaiting the return of proofs of service, at which point he would file a motion for reinstatement.

In April 2015, respondent's firm experienced a data loss, which disrupted operations for six to eight weeks. Respondent claimed that, despite the data loss, his firm had experienced only a temporary loss of internet service, the MyCase

² MyCase is software that permits clients and their attorneys to communicate with each other via a message system similar to e-mail. In addition, clients can access everything related to their case, such as documents and the calendar.

system worked, and no MyCase data were lost, because the software is cloudbased. Indeed, respondent did not tell Mulvihill that there would be an issue handling her case due to the data loss.³

On April 13, 2015, Mulvihill sent a certified letter to respondent, complaining, among other things, that the court had no record that a motion to reinstate the complaint had been filed. Respondent did not reply to Mulvihill's letter. On April 21, 2015, after realizing that she had sent the letter to an old address, Mulvihill re-sent the letter to him. Respondent, who had relocated his office, had not informed her of his new address. Respondent did not reply to this letter, either.

On May 6, 8, 13, and 18, 2015, Mulvihill sent respondent another letter, MyCase messages, and a memo, to no avail. Finally, on May 20, 2015, respondent sent the following message to Mulvihill:

> Arlene – you need to stop and just give [sic] some time. We have had a serious data loss issue here at the office, as well as disruption of our internet. Efforts were made to serve everyone, everyone has been served, we have had contact with the carrier of one of the defendants, we have spoken to the defense attorney for one of the defendants, and a motion will be filed shortly that will be granted by the court. Until complete data recovery has been obtained (or at least recreated), and we are now 3 weeks into the process, we are working and

³ After the data loss, respondent took no action in his clients' matters, unless the client contacted him, at which point he would meet with the client and reconstruct the file.

saving things onto either external hard drives and/or a paper calendar, since the data recovery people have informed me that we cannot save even one document to the server for risk that it copies over and makes completely unrecoverable data. I apologize for this delay, but my priority first and foremost is attempting to get this data back, but in the meantime, when there is time between court and other responsibilities, I have been going through each piece of paper from years of work looking for potential issues. I will upload the documents when complete.

[Ex.P31.]

Mulvihill, who worked in a law firm, replied that she had no knowledge

of recent events in respondent's office, and summarized her unsuccessful

attempts to communicate with respondent.

On May 27, 2015, respondent replied:

sorry, that was my frustration coming out, not at you, but with my current situation. It is difficult to explain, though working in a law office you probably can understand, when everything is gone, panic sets in, Contact information (email addresses, cell phones, phone numbers, addresses) documents, dates for the calendar, upcoming events, emails. Not all of our cases are on this MyCase system, and majority are not. I apologize.

[Ex.P31.]

Meanwhile, on May 20, 2015, Mulvihill had written a letter to the Gloucester County Clerk of the Superior Court, in which she provided the history of the litigation and respondent's conduct, and requested that the court consider reinstating the complaint. She attached a certification and several documents, including the IOLTA Fund's confirmation of respondent's administrative ineligibility from October 27, 2014 through the date of the reply to her inquiry, May 26, 2015.

In early June 2015, respondent filed the motion to reinstate the complaint. Respondent testified that, after two of the defendants had been served with the complaint, their lawyers called him to discuss the matter. One of the attorneys was David P. Brigham, who had been respondent's adversary in a number of cases over the years. The other attorney, David Lumber, was respondent's former law partner. Respondent claimed that neither of them had objected to reinstatement of the case. He acknowledged, however, that he did not serve them with the motion to reinstate the complaint.

On June 26, 2015, the court granted the motion to reinstate the complaint, as unopposed. On September 17, 2015, another defendant's lawyer, whom respondent did not know, filed a motion to vacate the order of reinstatement because the defendants had not been served timely with the complaint, and, further, they were never served with the motion to reinstate the pleading. Upon receipt of the motion to vacate, Brigham called respondent and told him that, even though the motion to vacate "is going no where," he would be joining in the motion because he did not want to be second-guessed. Although the motion to vacate was filed on September 17, 2015, the argument took place the following day. According to respondent, the judge criticized him for not serving the motion on the defendants, but during a conference in chambers, directed respondent to re-serve the motion and brief the issue of exceptional circumstances. The judge instructed defense counsel to prove prejudice. Respondent acknowledged that he failed to comply with the judge's instructions.

On September 18, 2015, Mulvihill requested an update on the hearing. Respondent replied:

> After oral argument, the Judge decided to relist it for another day to give the other side more time to explain and clarify the alleged prejudice they sustained by the delay in serving the complaint. He also wanted to have us argue (through written papers) whether the standard for assessment of my delay in servicing [sic] the was "good cause" or "exceptional complaint circumstances" - though he did say that even if the standard was exceptional circumstances, that he would deny the defendant's motion, but since he needed more information on the alleged prejudice to the defendants - he wanted it to come back for that portion so that the "record was clean". It wont [sic] get heard for at least another 30 days, and as of right now, there is no date set.

[Ex.P44.]

Despite respondent's testimony that the court had directed him to re-serve the motion, he insisted that his report to Mulvihill regarding the court appearance was accurate.

In a letter dated October 8, 2015, Mulvihill informed respondent that, despite his report, the court's docket showed that, as of September 22, 2015, the order reinstating the complaint had been vacated and the case dismissed and closed. She asked respondent a number of questions about the status of the case, but he ignored the letter.

Finally, Mulvihill called the law clerk to the judge to whom the motion was assigned. The law clerk informed her that the judge had directed respondent to file a motion to reinstate the complaint with proof that extraordinary circumstances had delayed service of the complaint. Because the motion that respondent had filed in June 2015 "did not meet the requirement," the reinstatement order was vacated. The law clerk also told Mulvihill that the defendants were not required to submit briefs on the prejudice issue unless respondent filed the motion.

By letter dated November 19, 2015, Mulvihill relayed to respondent the information that she had received from the law clerk. He ignored her letter.

On June 13, 2017, Mulvihill wrote a final letter to respondent, in which she repeated the history of her attempts to communicate with him and renewed her previous requests. He did not acknowledge this letter. Thus, he had completely ignored her from September 2015 through June 2017.

12

In June 2017, Mulvihill consulted attorney Benjamin Falkman about suing respondent for professional liability. Falkman did not take her case because the underlying medical malpractice action was not viable, as respondent had never filed an affidavit of merit or a statement of damages.

On cross-examination by respondent, Mulvihill agreed that a prospective expert in nursing, who also worked at the nursing home where her mother had died, ultimately declined to serve in that role. Mulvihill pointed out, however, that the nurse never talked to respondent because he did not return her phone calls.

Mulvihill disputed that respondent had told her of his difficulty finding an expert. To the contrary, he had informed her that he had located a company that provided experts, that he had sent documents to the company, but that the company had not yet written a report because some of the records were illegible. Respondent never told her that the company opined that her case was not viable.

On the issue of respondent's failure to cooperate with the DEC, he admitted that he had failed to file a written reply to Mulvihill's grievance. Respondent did file an answer to the formal ethics complaint, however.

Respondent admitted the IOLTA periods of ineligibility, although he claimed to be unaware of the first period (October 2014 to April 2016) until the Better Business Bureau had so informed him, as part of its background check

into potential advertisers.

As to the second period, October 2017 to February 2018, respondent stated that, toward the end of 2015, he had closed his law office, and, thus, was no longer representing clients during that timeframe. Respondent failed to notify his clients, including Kelly and Mulvihill, that he intended to stop practicing law. Instead, he waited for the clients to call him. Moreover, although respondent did not tell Kelly, or any of his clients, that he was looking for another attorney to handle their files, once he did find an attorney, he met with the clients and discussed the transfer of their cases with them.

Respondent claimed that, in 2016, he had informed Kelly that his office was closed. Although respondent found attorneys to handle his other clients' matters, he could not find an attorney willing to take either Mulvihill's or Kelly's case. By June 2016, he was working as an insurance agent, "along with three other jobs." He was not handling client matters.

Since February 2018, however, respondent had begun practicing law again, albeit "on an extremely part-time basis." He is current with all attorney regulatory requirements.

Presently, respondent is a full-time insurance agent, a part-time real estate agent, and, since he became eligible again, in February 2018, a part-time lawyer, which "keep[s] the lights on." His legal work was limited to real estate contract reviews and closings, "occasional" court appearances, and small business formations. He does not handle personal injury matters. He claims he will never work full-time as an attorney.

In mitigation of respondent's failure to cooperate with disciplinary authorities, respondent testified that he was experiencing migraines during the summer of 2017, which caused "some delays" in his responding to the DEC investigator. The migraines did not impact his ability to practice law, however.

In the <u>Kelly</u> matter, the DEC found that respondent violated <u>RPC</u> 1.1(a) and <u>RPC</u> 1.3, by failing to file an affidavit of merit and failing to serve the defendant with the complaint, thus resulting in its dismissal. He also violated <u>RPC</u> 1.4(b), by failing to keep Kelly informed about the status of the matter, including the dismissal of his complaint, and by failing to reply to Kelly's requests for information or by replying insufficiently to his requests for information. Finally, respondent violated <u>RPC</u> 8.4(c), by failing to inform Kelly of the dismissal of his complaint, thus, allowing him to believe that his case was progressing in its ordinary course by, for example, requesting pay stubs.

In the <u>Mulvihill</u> matter, the DEC found that respondent violated <u>RPC</u> 1.1(a), by failing to file the complaint within the two-year statute of limitations period, failing to file the motion for reinstatement when ordered to do so, failing to serve the defendants with the motion, and failing to provide documents in a timely manner; <u>RPC</u> 1.3, by allowing the complaint to be dismissed for lack of prosecution, failing to notify the defendants of its reinstatement, and failing to notify Mulvihill of the complaint's ultimate dismissal; <u>RPC</u> 1.4(b), by permitting "an unreasonable amount of time to expire between contacts with . . . Mulvihill;" <u>RPC</u> 8.4(c), ⁴ by failing to keep Mulvihill updated on the status of her case, thus, allowing her to believe that her case was progressing in its ordinary course, even after the court had dismissed the complaint; <u>RPC</u> 1.5(c), by failing to enter into a written fee agreement with Mulvihill; and, finally, <u>RPC</u> 8.1(b), by failing to reply to the DEC's requests for information during its investigation of the Mulvihill grievance.

In both the <u>Mulvihill</u> and <u>Kelly</u> matters, the DEC found that respondent had violated <u>RPC</u> 5.5(a)(1), by representing the clients while he was administratively ineligible to practice law due to non-compliance with the requirements of the IOLTA program.

In mitigation, the DEC acknowledged respondent's unblemished disciplinary history of seventeen years, his admission of wrongdoing, and his remorse. In aggravation, the DEC noted that, at the time of respondent's infractions, he was a full-time insurance agent; that he did not inform his clients

⁴ Although the hearing panel report cites <u>RPC</u> 8.4(a), a <u>Rule</u> that was not charged in the complaint, the context of the statement makes clear that the panel intended to cite <u>RPC</u> 8.4(c).

of his change of address; and that he did not deliver a client's file until after the client had hired another attorney. The DEC cited other aggravating factors, which actually were <u>RPC</u> violations, <u>e.g.</u>, respondent's failure to cooperate with disciplinary authorities and failure to communicate with his clients. For the totality of respondent's ethics infractions, the DEC recommended a censure, citing his pattern of neglect in both matters, an uncharged <u>RPC</u> violation.

Following a <u>de novo</u> review of the record, we are satisfied that the DEC's finding that respondent's conduct was unethical is fully supported by clear and convincing evidence. The clear and convincing evidence supports the DEC's conclusion that respondent violated <u>RPC</u> 1.1(a), <u>RPC</u> 1.3, <u>RPC</u> 1.4(b), and <u>RPC</u> 8.4(c) in the <u>Kelly</u> and <u>Mulvihill</u> matters.

In both cases, respondent agreed to represent the clients in separate medical malpractice cases, yet he did very little work on their matters. He failed to serve the complaints on the defendants, which resulted in dismissal of the complaints for failure to prosecute. Respondent's inaction violated <u>RPC</u> 1.1(a) and <u>RPC</u> 1.3. In the <u>Mulvihill</u> matter, respondent again violated <u>RPC</u> 1.1(a) and <u>RPC</u> 1.3, by failing to serve the defendants with the motion to reinstate the complaint and by failing to follow through on the court's directive that he refile the motion and submit a brief on exceptional circumstances.

Respondent violated <u>RPC</u> 1.4(b) in both matters, by failing to inform his

clients that their complaints had been dismissed, by failing to keep them informed of the status of their matters, and by ignoring their repeated requests for updates on their cases.

In both matters, respondent violated <u>RPC</u> 8.4(c), by failing to inform his clients of the dismissal of their complaints, both initially and throughout the representation, while, at the same time, leading them to believe that their lawsuits remained pending and were being prosecuted. <u>See, e.g., Crispin v.</u> <u>Volkswagenwerk, A.G.</u>, 96 N.J. 336, 347 (1984) (sometimes "silence can be no less a misrepresentation than words"). In respect of the <u>Mulvihill</u> matter, he again violated <u>RPC</u> 8.4(c), by telling her that the judge had scheduled the motion to reinstate the complaint for another day, instead of telling her that the judge had directed him to re-file the motion and brief the issue of exceptional circumstances.

Respondent violated additional <u>RPC</u>s in the <u>Mulvihill</u> matter: <u>RPC</u> 1.5(c), by failing to prepare a written fee agreement in a contingent fee case; <u>RPC</u> 5.5(a)(1), by filing the motion to reinstate the complaint in June 2015, which was during the first period of ineligibility, from October 27, 2014 to April 29, 2016; and <u>RPC</u> 8.1(b), by failing to submit a written reply to the grievance.

In sum, the clear and convincing evidence established that respondent violated <u>RPC</u> 1.1(a), <u>RPC</u> 1.3, <u>RPC</u> 1.4(b), and <u>RPC</u> 8.4(c) in the <u>Kelly</u> and

<u>Mulvihill</u> matters. He also violated <u>RPC</u> 1.5(c), <u>RPC</u> 5.5(a)(1), and <u>RPC</u> 8.1(b) in the <u>Mulvihill</u> matter. There remains for determination the appropriate quantum of discipline to impose for respondent's unethical conduct.

A reprimand is the minimum measure of discipline for a misrepresentation to a client. See, e.g., In re Kasdan, 115 N.J. 472, 488 (1989). At times, a reprimand may be imposed even if the misrepresentation is accompanied by other, non-serious ethics infractions, such as those in this case. See, e.g., In re Watson, 236 N.J. 493 (2019) (attorney failed to inform his clients that their complaint had been dismissed for lack of prosecution, referred the case to another law firm, without the clients' permission, and failed to reply to one of his client's repeated requests for documents; violations of RPC 1.1(a), RPC 1.3, and <u>RPC</u> 1.4(b); the attorney's failure to inform his clients of the dismissal of the complaint was a misrepresentation by silence, a violation of RPC 8.4(c); he committed additional misrepresentations by telling one of his clients that he had filed paperwork to obtain a judgment, and by promising to send to the client documents that did not exist; in mitigation, we noted the attorney's remorse, the remedial measures he had put in place to prevent a recurrence of the misconduct, and his unblemished disciplinary history); In re Ruffolo, 220 N.J. 353 (2015) (attorney exhibited gross neglect and a lack of diligence by allowing his client's case to be dismissed, not working on it after filing the initial claim, and failing

to take any steps to prevent its dismissal or ensure its reinstatement thereafter, violations of RPC 1.1(a) and RPC 1.3; the attorney also violated RPC 1.4(b) by failing to promptly reply to the client's requests for status updates; finally, his assurances that the client's matter was proceeding apace, knowing that the complaint had been dismissed, and that he should expect a monetary award in the near future were false, thereby violating RPC 8.4(c)); and In re Falkenstein, 220 N.J. 110 (2014) (attorney did not comply with his client's request that he seek post-judgment relief, violations of RPC 1.1(a) and RPC 1.3; he also failed to inform the client that he had not complied with the client's request, choosing instead to lead the client to believe that he had filed an appeal and concocting false stories to support his lies, a violation of RPC 8.4(c); because he did not believe the appeal had merit, the attorney's failure to withdraw from the case violated RPC 1.16(b)(4); the attorney also practiced law while ineligible, although not knowingly, a violation of RPC 5.5(a)).

Here, respondent's additional infractions would not serve to enhance the reprimand because they require no greater discipline than an admonition. However, despite the similarity between this case and those cited above, in our view, a reprimand would be insufficient for respondent's misconduct. First, respondent's clients were left without a remedy, as the statute of limitations had expired. Although respondent claimed that both cases lacked merit, the record

lacks clear and convincing evidence to support that finding. Moreover, during his representation of the clients, particularly Mulvihill, respondent appears to have done next to nothing to determine the viability of the cases.

Second, respondent did not tell just one lie to his clients. He lied repeatedly, and his lies compounded his initial deficiencies. For example, in the <u>Kelly</u> matter, respondent allowed the complaint to be dismissed for lack of prosecution, but he did not tell the client. Moreover, he led the client to believe that, if the case settled, that would not occur for another fifteen months. At the same time, he insisted that his actions were not inappropriate because he had informed Kelly that his case lacked merit.

In the <u>Mulvihill</u> matter, respondent allowed the complaint to be dismissed, and withheld the information from his client until she learned of it by contacting the court. He then mishandled the motion to reinstate the complaint, which he brushed off, by misrepresenting that the matter simply needed to be re-argued. Thereafter, he failed to follow through on refiling the motion, as directed by the judge. When the case was dismissed again, and Mulvihill discovered that the reason was respondent's failure to follow he judge's instruction, he simply ignored her.

Finally, were it not for Kelly's and Mulvihill's tenacity, they would have been abandoned by respondent. When respondent stopped practicing law, he did not notify his clients. Rather, he waited for them to contact him and then told them. At the same time, however, he testified that he had shut down his law office telephone and arranged for the forwarding of those calls to his cell phone. Although respondent claimed that he was able to find lawyers to handle most of his clients' cases, he could not find counsel for Kelly and Mulvihill, who would have never known had they not tracked down respondent.

The mitigating factors cited by respondent are wholly insufficient to overcome the havoc he wreaked on Kelly and Mulvihill. Based on the degree of respondent's misconduct, we determine to impose a censure.

Vice-Chair Gallipoli voted to impose a three-month suspension. Member Joseph did not participate.

We further determine to require respondent to reimburse the Disciplinary Oversight Committee for administrative costs and actual expenses incurred in the prosecution of this matter, as provided in <u>R.</u> 1:20-17.

> Disciplinary Review Board Bruce W. Clark, Chair

By: <u>Lillen A Brodsky</u>

Ellen A. Brodsky Chief Counsel

22

SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY DISCIPLINARY REVIEW BOARD VOTING RECORD

In the Matter of Michael David Lindner, Jr. Docket No. DRB 19-225

Argued: October 17, 2019

Decided: January 21, 2020

Disposition: Censure

Members	Censure	Three-Month Suspension	Recused	Did Not Participate
Clark	X			
Gallipoli		X		
Boyer	X			
Hoberman	X			
Joseph				Х
Petrou	X			
Rivera	Х			
Singer	X			
Zmirich	X			
Total:	7	1	0	1

beller & Brull

Èllen A. Brodsky Chief Counsel