

# DISCIPLINARY REVIEW BOARD

OF THE

SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY

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July 25, 2012

**VIA CERTIFIED MAIL, R.R.R. & REGULAR MAIL**

Steve Hallett, Esq.  
916 West State Street  
Trenton, New Jersey 08618

**Re: In the Matter of Steve Hallett**  
Docket No. DRB 12-140  
District Docket Nos. XIV-2011-0459E, XIV-2011-526E,  
XIV-2011-584E, XIV-2011-612E, and XIV-2011-646E  
**LETTER OF ADMONITION**

Dear Mr. Hallett:

The Disciplinary Review Board has reviewed the motion for discipline by consent (reprimand or such lesser discipline as the Board deems appropriate), filed by the Office of Attorney Ethics in the above matter, pursuant to R. 1:20-10. Following a review of the record, the Board determined to grant the motion and to impose an admonition.

Specifically, from May 2006 through May 2011, you kept a \$9,500.37 balance in your trust account because you were unable to identify its rightful owners. There were no deposits or withdrawals during that period. You failed to apply for permission to transfer those funds to the Superior Court Trust Fund, as provided in R. 1:21-6(j). Nevertheless, you regularly reviewed your trust account bank statements to confirm that the \$9,500.37 remained in the account.

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From July 2010 through July 2011, however, you were hospitalized for serious medical conditions that ultimately caused you to be in a coma for four months. This incapacity prevented you from working and attending to your trust account. In May 2011, a trustee was appointed to take whatever action was necessary to protect the interests and property of your clients during your incapacity.

From June 2011 through November 2011, the \$9,500.37 did not remain intact in your trust account, which became overdrawn as a result of disbursements that you had not authorized. The overdrafts were caused by ACH debits and bill payments for rent, utility or cell phone expenses for individuals unknown to you. These unauthorized disbursements were made possible by your failure to properly disburse the inactive funds or to deposit them with the Superior Court Trust Fund. Your conduct was unethical and a violation of R. 1:21-6 and RPC 1.15(d).

In imposing only an admonition, the Board noted that, although you have been reprimanded in 2001 and 2002, the conduct in those matters was unrelated to the present case. The Board also considered several mitigating factors. Specifically, prior to your incapacity, you regularly monitored the trust account statements to ensure that the funds remained untouched in the account; you are making monthly payments to remedy the deficiency caused by the improper disbursements; and you will apply for permission to deposit the funds with the Superior Court Trust Fund, when the account is fully replenished. By way of this letter, the Board directs that you make that application. Your conduct was unethical and a violation of RPC 1.15(d) and R. 1:21-6 (recordkeeping).

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).

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.

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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,



Julianne K. DeCore  
Chief Counsel

JKD/paa

c: Chief Justice Stuart Rabner  
Associate Justices  
Louis Pashman, Chair  
Disciplinary Review Board  
Mark Neary, Clerk  
Supreme Court of New Jersey  
Gail G. Haney, Deputy Clerk  
Supreme Court of New Jersey (w/ethics history)  
Charles Centinaro, Director  
Office of Attorney Ethics  
Melissa Czartoryski, Deputy Ethics Counsel  
Office of Attorney Ethics