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OF THE

SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY

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ASSISTANT COUNSEL

March 28, 2008

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

Karen E. Ruchalski, Esq.

REDACTED - CONFIDENTIAL

Re: In the Matter of Karen E. Ruchalski
Docket No. DRB 07-391
District Docket No. VI-06-023E
LETTER OF ADMONITION

Dear Ms. Ruchalski:

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

In June 2003, Donald Trottier retained you to represent him in connection with a post-judgment matrimonial motion and cross-motion. During the representation, you did not adequately communicate with your client. Specifically, you did not provide him with a copy of documents filed with the court on his behalf, did not inform him of the re-scheduled return date of a motion, and did not notify him of the outcome of the motion. You also failed to reply to two letters from the ethics investigator and practiced law while ineligible for failure to pay the annual attorney assessment to the New Jersey Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection ("the Fund"). Your conduct was unethical and in violation of RPC 1.4(b), RPC 8.1(b), and RPC 5.5(a), respectively.

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In imposing only an admonition, the Board considered several compelling mitigating factors. Specifically, although you may not escape responsibility for your client's lack of awareness of certain events in his case, nothing contradicted your testimony that you had relied on established practice at the law firm in which you were an associate to have office staff copy all pleadings/documents prepared by the attorneys and mail them to the clients.

Also, your failure to reply to the investigator's letters was not intended as a blatant lack of respect for ethics authorities, but the result of your erroneous belief that nothing else was required of you because you had already given a prior investigator all information that was available to you.

Finally, your practicing law while ineligible, although violative of the rules, was mitigated by your unawareness that your law firm, whose established practice was to forward payment of the annual assessment on your behalf, had not done so in this instance. When you discovered that dereliction, you promptly remitted your own payment to the Fund.

The Board also considered that no disciplinary infractions have been sustained against you since your admission to the New Jersey bar in 2001.

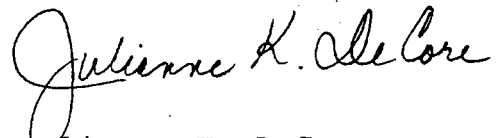
Your conduct adversely reflected not only upon you as an attorney, but also upon all members of the bar. Accordingly, the Board has directed the issuance of this admonition to you. R. 1:20-15(f)(4).

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

/tk

- c. Chief Justice Stuart J. Rabner
Associate Justices
Stephen W. Townsend, Clerk, Supreme Court of New Jersey
Gail G. Haney, Deputy Clerk, Supreme Court of New Jersey
(w/ethics history)
William J. O'Shaughnessy, Chair, Disciplinary Review Board
David E. Johnson, Jr., Director, Office of Attorney Ethics
Charles M. D'Amico, Chair, District VI Ethics Committee
Jack Jay Wind, Secretary, District VI Ethics Committee
Donald Trottier, Grievant