

SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY
DISCIPLINARY REVIEW BOARD
Docket No. DRB 25-004
District Docket Nos. XIV-2023-0435E and XIV-2024-0191E

In the Matter of Santo V. Artusa, Jr.
An Attorney at Law

Decided
June 18, 2025

Certification of the Record

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Ethics History.....	1
Artusa I.....	1
Artusa II	3
Artusa III	4
Temporary Suspension Orders	5
Artusa IV	7
Service of Process	8
Facts.....	11
Analysis and Discipline	13
Violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct.....	13
Quantum of Discipline	15
Conclusion	21

Introduction

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

This matter was before us on a certification of the record filed by the Office of Attorney Ethics (the OAE), pursuant to R. 1:20-4(f). The formal ethics complaint charged respondent with having violated RPC 8.1(b) (failing to cooperate with disciplinary authorities) and RPC 8.4(d) (engaging in conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice).

For the reasons set forth below, we determine that a three-month suspension is the appropriate quantum of discipline for respondent's misconduct.

Ethics History

Respondent earned admission to the New Jersey bar in 2009. He previously maintained a practice of law in Jersey City, New Jersey. He has a history of discipline in New Jersey.

Artusa I

On May 6, 2021, the Court censured respondent, on a motion for discipline by consent, for having violated RPC 1.15(d) (failing to comply with the

recordkeeping requirements of R. 1:21-6); RPC 8.1(b); RPC 8.4(b) (committing a criminal act that reflects adversely on the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness as a lawyer); and RPC 8.4(c) (engaging in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation). In re Artusa, 246 N.J. 154 (2021) (Artusa I). In that matter, respondent failed to maintain an attorney trust account from April 2015 through May 2018, and passed to the Superior Court (Hudson vicinage) sixteen bad checks, ranging in amounts from \$50 to \$325, and totaling \$3,353. In the Matter of Santo V. Artusa, Jr., DRB 20-184 (October 21, 2020) at 1. Thirteen of the checks were for amounts that constituted a fourth-degree crime, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2C:21-5(c)(3) (\$200 to \$999.99), and three were for amounts that constituted a disorderly persons offense, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2C:21-5(c)(4) (less than \$200). Id. at 2-3.

In determining the quantum of discipline, we compared respondent's conduct to that of attorneys who had engaged in less serious criminal conduct and had received an admonition or reprimand. Id. at 5-6.

In mitigation, we weighed the fact that respondent's misconduct was not for pecuniary gain or other personal benefit. Id. at 5. He also stipulated to his misconduct, had been a member of the bar for eleven years, and had no prior discipline. Ibid. In aggravation, however, he not only had repeatedly engaged in the passing of bad checks, but he had passed them to the Superior Court. Ibid.

We, thus, determined that the aggravating factors outweighed the mitigating factors, warranting a censure. Ibid. The Court agreed.

Artusa II

On September 13, 2023, the Court censured respondent for having violated RPC 1.15(d) and RPC 8.1(b). In re Artusa, 255 N.J. 355 (2023) (Artusa II). In that matter, which proceeded as a default, respondent failed to comply with his recordkeeping obligations by (1) incurring debit balances in his trust account, (2) failing to prepare three-way monthly reconciliations, and (3) failing to properly maintain client ledger cards and receipts and disbursements journals, in violation of RPC 1.15(d). In the Matter of Santo V. Artusa, Jr., DRB 22-209 (May 2, 2023). Respondent also failed to cooperate with the OAE's investigation and allowed the matter to proceed as a default. Id. at 12-13. In determining that a censure was the appropriate quantum of discipline for misconduct that, typically, is met with an admonition or reprimand, we weighed, in aggravation, respondent's heightened awareness of the significance of his recordkeeping duties and his obligation to cooperate with disciplinary authorities, given the investigation and disciplinary proceedings underlying Artusa I. Id. at 17. We also considered, in aggravation, that he failed to bring his records into

compliance, despite the OAE's instructions and dogged efforts, and had allowed the matter to proceed as a default. Ibid.

As conditions to the discipline, the Court required respondent to (1) complete a recordkeeping course approved by the OAE, (2) bring his records into compliance with the Court Rules, and (3) provide to the OAE monthly reconciliations of his accounts, on a quarterly basis, for a two-year period.

Artusa III

On February 6, 2024, the Court reprimanded respondent for his violation of RPC 1.1(a) (engaging in gross neglect) and RPC 1.3 (lacking diligence). In re Artusa, 256 N.J. 359 (2024) (Artusa III). In that matter, respondent accepted a \$1,500 fee to file an application for guardianship on behalf of his client and his client's adult son, who was incapacitated, and then failed to perform any meaningful work in furtherance of that representation. In the Matter of Santo V. Artusa, Jr., DRB 23-077 (September 27, 2023). In determining that a reprimand was the appropriate quantum of discipline for misconduct that typically is met with admonition, we weighed, in aggravation, the harm respondent's misconduct caused his client. Id. at 24. Although we acknowledged respondent's prior discipline, it was not considered in aggravation because the misconduct preceded and minimally overlapped with the initial stages of the OAE's

investigation in Artusa I. Id. at 24-26. In mitigation, we considered respondent's personal hardships, mental health struggles, and alcohol addiction. Id. at 27. On balance, we determined that the demonstrable harm caused by respondent significantly outweighed any mitigation and, thus, concluded that a reprimand was the appropriate discipline. Id. at 27.

As conditions to the discipline, the Court required respondent to provide to the OAE (1) proof of his fitness to practice law, as attested to by a medical doctor approved by the OAE, and (2) proof of his continued treatment for alcohol addiction.

Temporary Suspension Orders

Relevant to the matter currently before us, the Court entered ten Orders temporarily suspending respondent from the practice of law for his repeated failure to comply with fee arbitration determinations awarded in his clients' favor by the District VI Fee Arbitration Committee. (the FAC). Each Order required him to comply with R. 1:20-20.

Specifically, on August 23, 2023, the Court entered three corrected Orders temporarily suspending respondent from the practice of law, effective August 21, 2023, for his failure to comply with three FAC determinations. In re Artusa,

254 N.J. 525 (2023); In re Artusa, 254 N.J. 526 (2023); In re Artusa, 254 N.J. 528 (2023).

On October 18, 2023, the Court entered two Orders temporarily suspending respondent from the practice of law, effective November 17, 2023, for his failure to comply with two FAC determinations. In re Artusa, ___ N.J. ___ (2023) (District Docket No. VI-2022-0001F, DRB 23-153); In re Artusa, ___ N.J. ___ (2023) (District Docket No. VI-2022-0018F, DRB 23-161).

On January 2, 2024, the Court entered four Orders temporarily suspending respondent from the practice of law, effective February 1, 2024, for his failure to comply with four FAC determinations. In re Artusa, ___ N.J. ___ (2024) (District Docket No. VI-2023-0002F, DRB 23-188); In re Artusa, ___ N.J. ___ (2024) (District Docket No. VI-2022-0017F, DRB 23-198); In re Artusa, ___ N.J. ___ (2024) (District Docket No. VI-2023-0007F, DRB 23-220); In re Artusa, ___ N.J. ___ (2024) (District Docket No. VI-2022-0019F; DRB 23-221).

On February 12, 2024, the Court entered an Order temporarily suspending respondent from the practice of law, effective March 13, 2024, for his failure to comply with an FAC determination. In re Artusa, ___ N.J. ___ (2024) (District Docket No. VI-2023-0004F, DRB 23-275).

Artusa IV

On January 17, 2025, the Court suspended respondent for three months for his violations of RPC 1.3; RPC 1.4(b) (failing to communicate with a client); RPC 1.4(c) (failing to explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions about the representation); RPC 3.2 (failing to expedite litigation); and RPC 8.1(b). In re Artusa, 259 N.J. 523 (2025), (Artusa IV). In that matter, which proceeded as a default, respondent accepted a \$1,500 fee to file a motion in connection with his client's pending divorce action and then failed to take meaningful steps in furtherance of the representation. In the Matter of Santo V. Artusa, Jr., DRB 24-108 (October 23, 2024) at 8-9. Thereafter, he ignored her repeated efforts to obtain updates regarding the status of the matter. Id. at 9-10. He also failed to cooperate with the District Ethics Committee's investigation and allowed the matter to proceed as a default. Id. at 10-11. We concluded that the baseline discipline for respondent's misconduct was a censure. However, we considered that the matter represented his fourth disciplinary matter, and second matter that proceeded as a default and, thus, concluded that a three-month suspension was the appropriate quantum of discipline Id. at 22. As a condition to the discipline, the Court required respondent, upon his reinstatement, to practice law under the supervision of a proctor for a period of two years.

To date, respondent remains suspended pursuant to all ten of his temporary suspensions and his January 17, 2025 disciplinary suspension.

We now turn to the matter currently before us.

Service of Process

Service of process was proper. On July 24, 2024, the OAE sent a copy of the formal ethics complaint, by certified and regular mail, to respondent's home address of record. The certified mail was returned to the OAE, marked "return to sender" and "unable to forward." The regular mail also was returned to the OAE.

On August 26, 2024, the OAE sent a copy of the formal ethics complaint, by certified and regular mail, to an alternate home address located via a national records database search.¹ The certified mail was returned to the OAE, marked "return to sender – unclaimed." The regular mail also was returned to the OAE with a handwritten notation "Return To Sender – Do Not Live Here."

¹ New Jersey attorneys have an affirmative obligation to inform both the New Jersey Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection and the Office of Attorney Ethics of changes to their home and primary law office addresses, "either prior to such change or within thirty days thereafter." R. 1:20-1(c). Respondent's official Court records continue to reflect the home address utilized for service in this matter.

Consequently, on October 16, 2024, the OAE published a disciplinary notice in the Jersey Journal,² in accordance with R. 1:20-7(h),³ informing respondent that a formal ethics complaint had been filed against him, that his answer was due within twenty-one days after the date of the publication, and that his failure to answer would be deemed an admission of the allegations of the complaint and the matter would be certified directly to us for the imposition of discipline. Subsequently, on December 9, 2024, the OAE published a disciplinary notice in the Star Ledger,⁴ again informing him that a formal ethics

² The Jersey Journal is a public newspaper with general circulation in Hudson County, the county in which respondent's home address of record is located.

³ R. 1:20-7(h), governing service of process in disciplinary matters, states that service may be effectuated on respondent of any pleading by personal service, or by certified mail (return receipt requested) and regular mail, at the address listed in the New Jersey Lawyers' Diary and Manual or the address shown on the records of the Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection. Service on a respondent may also be made by serving respondent's counsel, if any, by regular mail or by facsimile transmission.

Although the disciplinary Court Rules do not expressly address service by publication, we and the Court previously have determined that service was proper, via publication notice, when service could not be accomplished via an attorney's address(es) of record. See, e.g., In the Matter of Rasheda Harmon, DRB 21-228 (March 29, 2022) (on a motion for reciprocal discipline, the OAE effectuated service of process via publication in the New Jersey Law Journal and the Philadelphia Inquirer), so ordered, ___ N.J. ___ (2022), 2022 N.J. LEXIS 658; In the Matter of Daniel Ellis, DRB 04-429 (March 15, 2005) at 3-4 (in a default matter, service of the complaint was effectuated via publication notice in the New Jersey Law Journal and Star-Ledger, after the certified letters sent to the attorney's home address of record, as well as another address, were returned to the District Ethics Committee as undeliverable), so ordered, 183 N.J. 227 (2005); In the Matter of Carl C. Bowman, DRB 03-146 (August 27, 2003) at 2 (in a default matter, service of the complaint was effectuated via publication notice in the New Jersey Lawyer and the Press of Atlantic City, after the certified and regular mail addressed to respondent's home address of record were returned as undeliverable), so ordered, 178 N.J. 24 (2003).

⁴ The Star Ledger is a public newspaper with general circulation in multiple counties throughout New Jersey, including Hudson County.

complaint had been filed against him, that his answer was due within twenty-one dates from the date of the publication, and that his failure to answer would be deemed an admission of the allegations of the complaint and the matter would be certified to us for the imposition of discipline.

As of January 2, 2025, respondent had not filed an answer to the complaint and the time within which he was required to do so had expired. Accordingly, the OAE certified this matter to us as a default.

On January 30, 2025, Chief Counsel to the Board sent a letter to respondent, by certified and regular mail, to his home address of record and the alternate home address identified by the OAE, and by electronic mail, to his e-mail address of record and to an additional e-mail address, informing him that this matter was scheduled before us on March 20, 2025, and that any motion to vacate the default (MVD) must be filed by February 17, 2024. On February 19, 2025, the certified mail sent to his home address of record was returned to the Office of Board Counsel (the OBC) marked “return to sender,” “not deliverable as addressed,” and “unable to forward.” On April 23, 2025, the certified mail sent to his alternate home address was returned to the OBC marked “returned to sender,” “unclaimed,” and “unable to forward.” The regular mail was not returned to the OBC. Additionally, the OBC received an e-mail indicating that

the e-mail delivery to his personal e-mail address was complete but no delivery notification was sent by the destination server.

Meanwhile, the OBC published a notice, dated February 3, 2025, in the New Jersey Law Journal and on the Court's website, stating that we would consider this matter on March 20, 2025. The notice informed respondent that, unless he filed a successful MVD by February 17, 2025, his prior failure to answer would remain deemed an admission of the allegations of the complaint.

Respondent did not file an MVD.

Facts

We now turn to the allegations of the complaint.

As detailed above, pursuant to the Court's ten Orders filed on August 23, 2023, October 18, 2023, January 2, 2024, and February 12, 2024, respondent is temporarily suspended from the practice of law. He has not petitioned the Court for relief from those temporary suspension Orders and, thus, remains suspended.

The Court's suspension Orders directed respondent to comply with R. 1:20-20, which requires, among other obligations, that he, "within 30 days after the date of the order of suspension (regardless of the effective date thereof) file with the Director the original of a detailed affidavit specifying by correlatively numbered paragraphs how the disciplined attorney has complied with each of

the provisions of this rule and the Supreme Court’s order.” Further, R. 1:20-20(c) expressly requires that the failure to file the affidavit of compliance constitutes a violation of RPC 8.1(b) and RPC 8.4(d).

Respondent failed to file the required affidavit of compliance. Consequently, on November 15, 2023, the OAE sent respondent a letter, by certified and regular mail, to his office and home addresses of record, as well as an alternate address maintained in the OAE’s records, reminding him of his obligation to file the affidavit, pursuant to R. 1:20-20, and directing that he submit a written reply to the OAE by November 29 2023. The certified mail sent to respondent’s home address was returned to the OAE marked “unclaimed.” The regular mail sent to this address was not returned to the OAE. The certified and regular mail sent to respondent’s office address of record were returned to the OAE as undeliverable. Initially, the signed certified mail receipt was returned to the OAE indicating delivery on November 22, 2023; however, the certified letter later was returned to the OAE marked “not deliverable as addressed.” Both the certified and regular mail addressed to the alternate address were returned to the OAE as undeliverable.

On May 2, 2024, the OAE sent respondent a second letter, by certified and regular mail, to his home address of record, advising him that his failure to file a conforming affidavit by May 16, 2024 may result in the OAE’s filing of a

formal ethics complaint and, further, may preclude consideration of any reinstatement petition for up to six months. The OAE attached its November 15, 2023 letter to this mailing. Neither the certified mail nor regular mail were returned to the OAE; however, the USPS tracking indicated that the certified mail was being returned as “unclaimed.” The OAE also sent a copy of its May 2, 2024 letter to respondent’s e-mail address of record, as well as two additional e-mail addresses identified by the OAE. The OAE received notification that delivery to one e-mail address was complete but that no delivery notification was sent by the destination server, and that delivery to another e-mail address had failed.

As of July 19, 2024, the date of the formal ethics complaint, respondent had failed to file the required affidavit. Consequently, the formal ethics complaint charged respondent with having violated RPC 8.1(b) and RPC 8.4(d) for his willful violation of the Court’s suspension Orders by failing to file the required affidavit, a step required of all suspended attorneys.

Analysis and Discipline

Violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct

Following our review of the record, we find that the facts set forth in the formal ethics complaint support all the charges of unethical conduct.

Respondent's failure to file an answer to the complaint is deemed an admission that the allegations are true and that they provide a sufficient basis for the imposition of discipline. R. 1:20-4(f)(1).

Specifically, R. 1:20-20(b)(15) requires a suspended attorney, within thirty days of the Court's Order of suspension, to "file with the Director [of the OAE] the original of a detailed affidavit specifying by correlatively numbered paragraphs how the disciplined attorney has complied with each of the provisions of this rule and the Supreme Court's order."

As the Appellate Division has observed, "the provisions of R. 1:20-20(b)(1) to (14) are designed to protect clients of the [suspended or] disbarred attorney, as well as any other individuals who might unknowingly seek to retain that attorney during the period of his suspension." Eichen, Levinson & Crutchlow, LLP v. Weiner, 397 N.J. Super. 588, 596 (App. Div. 2008). Non-compliance with R. 1:20-20, therefore, obstructs one of the primary purposes of the disciplinary system, "to protect the public from an untrustworthy lawyer." See In re Rigolosi, 107 N.J. 192, 206 (1987) ("The purpose of a disciplinary proceeding, as distinguished from a criminal prosecution, is not so much to punish a wrongdoer as it is to protect the public from an untrustworthy lawyer.") (citing In re Pennica, 36 N.J. 401, 418-19 (1962)). Non-compliance with R.

1:20-20 may also cause “confusion among . . . clients and an administrative burden for the courts.” In re Kramer, 172 N.J. 609, 626 (2002).

For those reasons, and by operation of Rule, in the absence of an extension granted by the Director of the OAE, failure to file an affidavit of compliance pursuant to R. 1:20-20(b)(15) within the time prescribed “constitute[s] a violation of RPC 8.1(b) . . . and RPC 8.4(d).” R. 1:20-20(c).

Here, respondent willfully violated the Court’s ten temporary suspension Orders, filed on August 21, 2023, October 18, 2023, January 2, 2024, and February 12, 2024, by failing to file the required affidavit, a step required of all suspended attorneys. Respondent, thus, violated R. 1:20-20 and, consequently, RPC 8.1(b) and RPC 8.4(d).

In sum, we determine that respondent violated RPC 8.1(b) and RPC 8.4(d). The sole issue left for our determination is the appropriate quantum of discipline for respondent’s misconduct.

Quantum of Discipline

Generally, attorneys with less serious disciplinary histories have received reprimands, in default matters, for their failure to file the required R. 1:20-20 affidavit. See, e.g., In re Hildebrand, 260 N.J. 20 (2025) (the attorney failed to file the required affidavit of compliance following his six-month disciplinary

suspension, in connection with a motion for reciprocal discipline; his disciplinary history consisted only of the prior six-month suspension); In re Ashton, 257 N.J. 225 (2024) (the attorney failed to file the required affidavit following his disciplinary suspension, in connection with a motion for reciprocal discipline; his disciplinary history consisted only of the prior two-year suspension); In re Cottée, 255 N.J. 439 (2023) (the attorney failed to file the required R. 1:20-20 affidavit of compliance, despite the OAE's specific requests that he do so; his disciplinary history consisted only of a prior three-month suspension, in a 2021 reciprocal discipline matter); In re Spielberg, 255 N.J. 469 (2022), and In re Stack, 255 N.J. 468 (2022) (the attorneys failed to file their respective affidavits of compliance following their 2020 temporary suspensions for failing to cooperate with separate OAE investigations; Spielberg had no prior final discipline and Stack had a prior 2019 admonition, in a non-default matter).

The quantum of discipline for failure to file an R. 1:20-20 affidavit is enhanced, however, if the attorney has a more serious disciplinary history or in the presence of other aggravating factors. See, e.g., In re Coleman, 260 N.J. 99 (2025) (in a default matter, censure for an attorney who failed to file a R. 1:20-20 affidavit of compliance following a three-month disciplinary suspension stemming from his failure to maintain required professional liability insurance; in aggravation, the attorney's disciplinary history consisted of two censures and

a three-month suspension; the matter marked his fifth encounter with the disciplinary system and his fourth default); In re Smith, 258 N.J. 27 (2024) (in a default matter, censure for an attorney who failed to file R. 1:20-20 affidavits of compliance following two suspensions – a one-year suspension based on misconduct in two client matters, and a consecutive six-month suspension, in a default matter, based on his gross mishandling of one client matter; in each disciplinary matter, the attorney ignored the Court’s Order of suspension, directing that he file the affidavit, and also failed to reply to the OAE’s communications attempting to ensure his compliance); In re Ludwig, 252 N.J. 67 (2022) (in a default matter, censure for an attorney who, following his 2021 three-month suspension, failed to file the R. 1:20-20 affidavit of compliance, despite the OAE’s specific requests that he do so; in aggravation, the attorney’s failure to file the affidavit constituted his third disciplinary matter in five years; prior reprimand, in addition to the 2021 disciplinary suspension, in a default matter, that gave rise to his obligation to file the affidavit).

In In re Calpin, 252 N.J. 43 (2022), the Court disbarred an attorney in connection with his failure to file the mandatory affidavit following his (1) May 2020 one-year suspension, in a default matter in which he had lied to disciplinary authorities, and (2) his January and July 2020 temporary suspensions for failing to comply with two separate FAC determinations. In the Matter of Brian LeBon

Calpin, DRB 21-185 (Jan. 25, 2022) at 10. In determining to recommend Calpin's disbarment, we accorded significant aggravating weight to Calpin's decision to wholly ignore his obligations to comply with R. 1:20-20 following three separate Court Orders. Id. at 14. Additionally, we found that Calpin had failed to learn from his past mistakes in light of his extensive disciplinary history consisting of (1) a 2014 reprimand; (2) a 2017 admonition; (3) a 2020 one-year suspension, in a default matter; and (4) our 2021 recommendation, in a default matter, for an eighteen-month suspension. Id. at 5, 14-15. We stressed that Calpin's failure to file the affidavit constituted his fifth disciplinary matter since 2014 and his third consecutive default since 2020, conduct which demonstrated a flagrant disregard for the regulations governing New Jersey attorneys and a disdain for the disciplinary process designed to protect the public. Id. at 14-16. We concluded that Calpin demonstrated no prospect for rehabilitation and, “[g]iven his lengthy disciplinary history and the absence of any hope for improvement,” we fully “expect[ed] that his assault on the Rules of Professional Conduct would continue.” Id. at 16 (quoting In re Vincenti, 152 N.J. 253, 254 (1998)). The Court agreed and disbarred Calpin following his failure to appear for the Court's Order to Show Cause.

Here, between August 23, 2023 and February 12, 2024, the Court issued ten Orders temporarily suspending respondent from the practice of law and

directing him to file the R. 1:20-20 affidavit required of all suspended attorneys in New Jersey. Respondent, however, wholly ignored the Court's Orders, refused to reply to the OAE's communications attempting to ensure his compliance with the Rule, and, subsequently, allowed this matter to proceed as a default. He also has a disciplinary history consisting of two censures (2021 and 2022), a reprimand (2024), and a three-month disciplinary suspension (2025). Thus, based on the above disciplinary precedent, – Coleman, Smith, and Ludwig in particular – respondent's misconduct could be met with a censure. However, to craft the appropriate discipline in this matter, we also consider mitigating and aggravating factors.

There is no mitigation to consider.

We accord significant weight to several compelling aggravating factors. Respondent's total disregard of his obligations as a suspended attorney and his refusal to participate in the disciplinary process represents a continuation of his disturbing trend of ignoring his professional obligations and failing to cooperate with disciplinary authorities that he has exhibited since his misconduct underlying Artusa I.

Indeed, this matter represents respondent's fifth encounter with the disciplinary system. The Court has signaled an inclination toward progressive discipline and the stern treatment of repeat offenders. In such scenarios,

enhanced discipline is appropriate. See In re Kantor, 180 N.J. 226 (2004) (disbarment for abandonment of clients and repeated failure to cooperate with the disciplinary system).

Despite his heightened awareness of his professional obligation to comply with the Court Rules and to participate in the disciplinary process, respondent ignored the Court's ten suspension Orders and failed to file the required affidavit of compliance. Further, he refused to reply to the OAE's communications and allowed this matter to proceed as a default. See In re Kivler, 193 N.J. 332, 342 (2008) (an attorney's "default or failure to cooperate with the investigative authorities acts as an aggravating factor, which is sufficient to permit a penalty that would otherwise be appropriate to be further enhanced").

In further aggravation, this matter not only represents respondent's third default, but is his second consecutive default. In our view, he has failed to utilize his experiences with the disciplinary system as a foundation to reform his conduct. See In re Zeitler, 182 N.J. 389, 398 (2005) ("Despite having received numerous opportunities to reform himself, [the attorney had] continued to display his disregard, indeed contempt, for our disciplinary rules and our ethics system.").

Conclusion

On balance, given respondent's refusal to conform his conduct to that required by the Rules, in conjunction with his repeated defaults, we determine that a three-month suspension is the quantum of discipline necessary to protect the public and preserve confidence in the bar.

Vice-Chair Boyer and Member Rodriguez voted to impose a censure.

Member Menaker voted to recommend to the Court that respondent be disbarred.

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 R. 1:20-17.

Disciplinary Review Board
Hon. Mary Catherine Cuff, P.J.A.D. (Ret.),
Chair

By: /s/ Timothy M. Ellis
Timothy M. Ellis
Chief Counsel

SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY
DISCIPLINARY REVIEW BOARD
VOTING RECORD

In the Matter of Santo V. Arusa, Jr.
Docket No. DRB 25-004

Decided: June 18, 2025

Disposition: Three-month suspension

Members	Three-month suspension	Censure	Disbar
Cuff	X		
Boyer		X	
Campelo	X		
Hoberman	X		
Menaker			X
Modu	X		
Petrou	X		
Rodriguez		X	
Spencer	X		
Total:	6	2	1

/s/ Timothy M. Ellis

Timothy M. Ellis
Chief Counsel