

PRESS RELEASE

From: David A. White
Chief Disciplinary Counsel

Date: March 29, 2022

Re: **Delaware Supreme Court Orders Disbarment of Delaware Lawyer**

On March 29, 2022, the Delaware Supreme Court (the “Court”) ordered the disbarment of Delaware lawyer, Wheeler K. Neff (“Neff”), based upon professional misconduct involving criminal conduct. In November 2017, a jury empaneled by the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania (“District Court”) found Neff guilty of two (2) counts of conspiracy to violate the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act in violation of 18 U.S.C. §1962(d) (“RICO Conspiracy”); one (1) count of Conspiracy to Commit Mail Fraud and Wire Fraud in violation of 18 U.S.C. §1956(a)(2)(A); two (2) counts of Mail Fraud in violation of 18 U.S.C. §1341 & 2; and one (1) count of Wire Fraud in violation of 18 U.S.C. §1341 & 2 (“Federal Criminal Offenses”). The Federal Criminal Offenses stemmed from Neff’s representation of Charles M. Hallinan in an enterprise that collected unlawful debt in violation of the usury laws of several states.

Neff’s misconduct involved a violation of Rule 8.4(b) of the Delaware Lawyers’ Rules of Professional Conduct (the “Rules”), which provides it is misconduct for a Delaware lawyer to “commit a criminal act that reflects adversely on the lawyer’s honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a lawyer in other respects” and Rule 8.4(d), which provides it is misconduct for a Delaware lawyer to “engage in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice.”

On December 19, 2017, the Court suspended Neff from the practice of law on an interim basis, pending Neff's appeal of the Federal Criminal Offenses. *In re: Neff*, 2017 WL 6508849 (Del. Dec. 19, 2017). On May 29, 2018, the District Court sentenced Neff to 96 months incarceration and in June 2019, the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit affirmed Neff's convictions. *U.S. v. Neff*, 787 Fed. App'x 81 (3rd Cir. 2019), *cert. denied*, 140 S. Ct. 2674 (2020).

On June 4, 2021, ODC filed a Petition for Discipline against Neff alleging his criminal conduct violated Rules 8.4(b) and (d) of the Rules (the "Disciplinary Case"). In lieu of proceeding with the Disciplinary Case before the Board on Professional Responsibility, on March 22, 2022, Neff and the Office of Disciplinary Counsel signed and submitted for the Court's approval a Stipulation of Disbarment by Consent, stipulating there is clear and convincing evidence Neff violated Rule 8.4(b) and (d), and seeking Neff's disbarment without further proceedings.

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