

VIRGINIA:

BEFORE THE FIRST DISTRICT SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR

IN THE MATTER OF
ROBERT PAUL STENZHORN

VSB Docket No. 23-010-127593

SUBCOMMITTEE DETERMINATION
(PUBLIC REPRIMAND WITHOUT TERMS)

On April 21, 2026, a meeting in this matter was held before a duly convened First District Subcommittee consisting of Jeannette M. Dodson-O'Connell, Esq, Chair; Ellen Frances Bergren, Esq., Member; and Ann Watkins Templeman, Lay Member. During the meeting, the Subcommittee voted to approve an agreed disposition for a Public Reprimand without Terms pursuant to Part 6, § IV, ¶ 13-15.B.4 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia. The agreed disposition was entered into by the Virginia State Bar, by Shelley L. Spalding, Esq., Senior Assistant Bar Counsel, and Robert Paul Stenzhorn ("Respondent"), *pro se*.

WHEREFORE, the First District Subcommittee of the Virginia State Bar hereby serves upon Respondent the following Public Reprimand without Terms:

I. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Respondent was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2005 and at all relevant times was a member of the Virginia State Bar ("VSB").
2. Respondent qualified as the administrator of the estate of Myrna F. Champ (the "Champ Estate") on January 14, 2021. At the time of his qualification, Respondent was practicing law at the firm Schempf & Ware, PLLC.
3. By letter dated January 25, 2021, the Commissioner for Accounts for the York County – City of Poquoson (the "COA") advised Respondent that the Inventory was due May 14, 2021, and the First Accounting would be due May 14, 2022.
4. Respondent failed to timely file and Inventory for the Champ Estate. By letter dated July 7, 2021, the COA notified Respondent of the missing Inventory and assessed a \$30.00 delinquent fee.

5. The First Accounting was due May 14, 2022. Respondent failed to file a timely First Accounting.
6. On August 23, 2022, Respondent paid the \$30 late fee for the delinquent Inventory and requested an additional fifteen days to complete his reporting, which request was granted by the COA. However, Respondent still did not file an Inventory or First Accounting.
7. On September 3, 2022, Respondent left Schempf & Ware, PLLC and began working at Virginia Legal Aid in Suffolk. Respondent did not advise the COA or any of the beneficiaries of the Champ Estate of his new employer or change in contact information.
8. On September 14, 2022, the COA received a letter from Damion Champ, one of the beneficiaries of the Champ Estate stating that he could not get in touch with Respondent and could not obtain any information regarding the Champ Estate.
9. On September 29, 2022, the COA issued a Summons to Respondent to file an Inventory within 30 days. Respondent did not respond or file an Inventory.
10. In October 2022, the COA attempted multiple times to reach Respondent by telephone and email with no success.
11. On November 21, 2022, the COA filed a bar complaint with the VSB regarding Respondent. By letter dated December 14, 2022, the VSB mailed the bar complaint to Respondent at Virginia Legal Aid in Suffolk. The VSB's cover letter advised Respondent that pursuant to Rule 8.1(c), he had a duty to submit a written answer within 21 days. Respondent did not provide any response to the bar complaint, timely or otherwise.
12. On November 22, 2022, a Report of the COA was issued, notifying the Circuit Court for York County – City of Poquoson (the "Court") of Respondent's delinquencies and requiring Respondent to file an Inventory and Accounting. Respondent did not respond.
13. On February 6, 2023 the COA issued a Summons to Respondent, with a Report of the COA, ordering him to appear on April 5, 2023 to show cause why he should not be held in contempt for failing to file the required Inventory and First Accounting, and seeking to remove Respondent as administrator of the Champ Estate.
14. Respondent did not appear on April 5, 2023 or otherwise respond to the Summons. On April 5, 2023, the Court entered an order finding Respondent failed to file an inventory and annual accountings as required, failed to respond to the COA, failed to appear or otherwise respond to notices, and found Respondent in Contempt of Court. The sanction determination for the Contempt finding was continued since Respondent was not present. The Court also removed Respondent as administrator of the Champ Estate and stated Respondent would be responsible for the cost to the COA and any loss to the Champ Estate as determined by the Court.

15. Respondent later stated in his interview with the VSB's investigator that he did not appear or respond because he did not receive the summons, explaining it was probably served at his Schempf & Ware, PLLC address.
16. On August 10, 2023, Damion Champ, a grandson of Myrna Champ, was appointed as the new administrator of the Champ Estate.
17. On May 1, 2024, Damion Champ, in his capacity as administrator of the Champ Estate, filed a lawsuit in the Court against Daniel Champ, his uncle, alleging among other things that Daniel Champ converted property owned by the Champ Estate ("Initial Suit").
18. On July 11, 2024, the COA issued a report on the Champ Estate to the Court that stated:

Your Commissioner has attempted to determine the disposition of assets by Mr. Stenzhorn and with the help of James C. Smith, Jr., attorney for the new Administrator, has been able to provide some additional details.

The Estate had two parcels of real estate, namely, 38 Little Florida Road, Poquoson, Virginia, assessed in 2020 at \$278,400.00 and 68 Nettles Road, Hampton, Virginia, assessed at \$177,100.0. The numbers support the qualification value from Mr. Stenzhorn of \$456,500.00.

The checking account balance at Old Point Bank was \$120,732.79 which was within \$453.00 of the value at the time of qualification.

Mr. Stenzhorn had an Estate checking account at C&F Bank. The distributions from the account were never accounted for by Mr. Stenzhorn...

A business was being operated at the 60 Nettles Road address. There is no accounting for the business operation and it was not included in the original qualification. Payments were made from the business account for legal services. Note this business account was owned by the Estate and deposits were made to it and payments disbursed from it not from the Estate account.

From the business account \$34,799.13 was disbursed to Daniel Champ but there is no support for the payments. The best information I presently have is that Daniel Champ operated the business owned by the Estate, received the rent and storage payments. Mr. Stenzhorn did not take control of the business as he should have so the assets may be lost. The new Administrator is attempting to trace those assets. Your Commissioner is advised that the business operated as Champs Service Inc. was 100% owned by Ms. Champ, but has no information as to how Ms. Stenzhorn may have been involved beyond payments to Daniel

Champ. Though Daniel Champ appears to have operated the business no receipts flowed to the Estate account. Mr. Stenzhorn failed to take possession of the business operations and protect the business income.

19. On October 25, 2024, Daniel Champ filed a third-party complaint against Respondent, alleging that Respondent breached his fiduciary duties to the Champ Estate by failing to take possession of the assets of the Champ Estate, either through negligence or malfeasance (the “Third-Party Suit”).
20. On January 5, 2026, the Initial Suit and the Third-Party Suit were dismissed with prejudice pursuant to a global settlement. Pursuant to that settlement, without admitting any liability on the part of Respondent, Respondent’s malpractice carrier agreed to pay Daniel Champ \$75,000.00.
21. By Order dated February 5, 2026, in the matter of the Champ Estate, the Court noted that the litigation between the Champ Estate and Respondent had been settled. The Court ordered Respondent to pay the COA his fees and costs. Upon payment of such fees and costs, no further sanctions were imposed upon Respondent pursuant to the Court’s finding Respondent was in contempt. By check dated February 10, 2026, Respondent paid the COA \$3,490.00 pursuant to the Court’s order.
22. Respondent never paid himself any fees for his service as Administrator of the Champ Estate.
23. Between November 2020 and January 2023, Respondent faced some serious health issues, requiring intermittent hospitalizations. However, Respondent’s health problems would not have prevented him from advising Schempf & Ware, PLLC, the Court or the COA that Respondent could no longer serve as administrator of the Champ Estate.

II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT

Such conduct by Respondent¹ constitutes misconduct in violation of the following provisions of the Rules of Professional Conduct:

By failing to file an Inventory for the Champ Estate, failing to file a First Accounting, failing to appear at the April 5, 2023 hearing, failing to respond to the COA, failing to advise the COA of his new contact information upon leaving Schempf & Ware, PLLC, and failing to take possession of the assets of the Champ Estate after qualifying as administrator, Respondent did not act with reasonable diligence in serving as administrator, and violated Rule 1.3(a) as set forth below.

¹ “[W]hen an attorney assumes the responsibility of acting as a fiduciary and violates his or her duty in a manner that would justify disciplinary action had the relationship been that of attorney/client, the attorney may be properly disciplined pursuant to the [Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct.]” LEO 1515 (approved by the Supreme Court of Virginia February 1, 1994).

Rule 1.3 Diligence

(a) A lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client.

By failing to withdraw as administrator of the Champ Estate once Respondent's health prevented him from fulfilling his obligations as administrator, Respondent violated Rule 1.16(a)(2) as set forth below.

By constructively terminating his service as administrator of the Champ Estate by abandoning his duties and failing to give notice to the Court, the COA or the beneficiaries of the Champ Estate, Respondent violated Rule 1.16(d) as set forth below.

Rule 1.16 Declining Or Terminating Representation

(a) Except as stated in paragraph (c), a lawyer shall not represent a client or, where representation has commenced, shall withdraw from the representation of a client if:

(2) the lawyer's physical or mental condition materially impairs the lawyer's ability to represent the client; or

(d) Upon termination of representation, a lawyer shall take steps to the extent reasonably practicable to protect a client's interests, such as giving reasonable notice to the client, allowing time for employment of other counsel, refunding any advance payment of fee that has not been earned and handling records as indicated in paragraph (e).

By failing to respond to the bar complaint, Respondent violated Rule 8.1(c) as set forth below.

Rule 8.1 Bar Admission And Disciplinary Matters

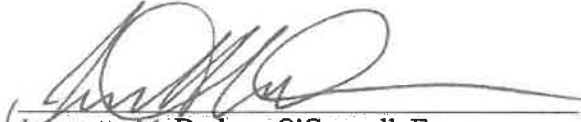
An applicant for admission to the bar, or a lawyer already admitted to the bar, in connection with a bar admission application, any certification required to be filed as a condition of maintaining or renewing a license to practice law, or in connection with a disciplinary matter, shall not:

(c) fail to respond to a lawful demand for information from an admissions or disciplinary authority, except that this Rule does not require disclosure of information otherwise protected by Rule 1.6[.]

III. PUBLIC REPRIMAND WITHOUT TERMS

Accordingly, it is the decision of the Subcommittee to impose a Public Reprimand without Terms, and Robert Paul Stenzhorn is so reprimanded. Pursuant to Part 6, § IV, ¶ 13-9.E of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, the Clerk of the Disciplinary System shall assess costs.

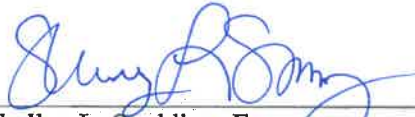
FIRST DISTRICT SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR



Jeannette M. Dodson-O'Connell, Esq.
Subcommittee Chair

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on April 30, 2026, a true and complete copy of the foregoing Subcommittee Determination was sent to Robert Paul Stenzhorn, Respondent, by certified mail at Robert P. Stenzhorn, P.O. Box 6676, Newport News, VA 23606-0676, Respondent's last address of record with the Virginia State Bar, and by email to stenzhorn@msn.com.



Shelley L. Spalding, Esq.
Senior Assistant Bar Counsel

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**AGREED DISPOSITION
PUBLIC REPRIMAND WITHOUT TERMS**

Pursuant to the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-15.B.4, the Virginia State Bar, by Shelley L. Spalding, Senior Assistant Bar Counsel, and Robert Paul Stenzhorn (“Respondent”), *pro se*, enter into the following agreed disposition arising out of this matter.

I. STIPULATIONS OF FACT

1. Respondent was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2005 and at all relevant times was a member of the Virginia State Bar (“VSB”).
2. Respondent qualified as the administrator of the estate of Myrna F. Champ (the “Champ Estate”) on January 14, 2021. At the time of his qualification, Respondent was practicing law at the firm Schempf & Ware, PLLC.
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An applicant for admission to the bar, or a lawyer already admitted to the bar, in connection with a bar admission application, any certification required to be filed as a condition of maintaining or renewing a license to practice law, or in connection with a disciplinary matter, shall not:

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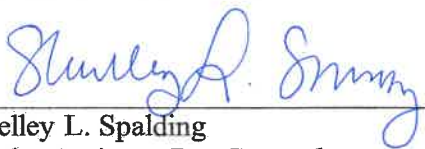
III. PROPOSED DISPOSITION

Accordingly, Senior Assistant Bar Counsel and Respondent tender to a subcommittee of the First District Committee for its approval the agreed disposition of a Public Reprimand without Terms as representing an appropriate sanction if this matter were to be heard through an evidentiary hearing by the First District Committee.


If the agreed disposition is approved, the Clerk of the Disciplinary System shall assess costs.

Pursuant to Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-30.B of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, Respondent's prior disciplinary record shall be furnished to the subcommittee considering this agreed disposition.

VIRGINIA STATE BAR



Shelley L. Spalding
Senior Assistant Bar Counsel



Robert Paul Stenzhorn
Respondent