

VIRGINIA:

BEFORE THE SECOND DISTRICT, SECTION I SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR

IN THE MATTER OF
JULIA KRISTEN STITELY

VSb Docket No. 26-021-137140

SUBCOMMITTEE DETERMINATION
(PUBLIC ADMONITION WITH TERMS)

On July 15, 2026, a meeting in this matter was held before a duly convened Second District, Section I Subcommittee consisting of Tammy Gershoni, Esq., Chair; Ann Burke Brogan, Esq., Member; and Zoah Scheneman, Lay Member. During the meeting, the Subcommittee voted to approve an agreed disposition for a Public Admonition with Terms pursuant to the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-15.B.4. The agreed disposition was entered into by the Virginia State Bar, by Shelley L. Spalding, Senior Assistant Bar Counsel, Julia Kristen Stitely ("Respondent"), and Prescott Lee Prince, counsel for Respondent.

WHEREFORE, the Second District, Section I Subcommittee of the Virginia State Bar hereby serves upon Respondent the following Public Admonition with Terms:

I. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Respondent was admitted to the Virginia State Bar ("VSB") in 2021 and at all relevant times has been a member of the VSB.
2. On May 29, 2025, Linda Brant ("Complainant") retained Respondent to represent her in an uncontested divorce. Multiple times, Complainant expressed to Respondent her desire for the divorce to be amicable and uncontested.
3. Respondent stated that she met with Complainant on June 19, 2025 and explained to her that filing a divorce would be necessary if they did not agree on a Property Settlement Agreement ("PSA") with Complainant's former spouse, or if Complainant's former spouse stopped paying Complainant's bills. Respondent failed to advise Complainant that

she could have sought support without filing for divorce by filing a petition in the appropriate Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court.

4. Complainant stated that she asked questions of Respondent that were not answered clearly. Complainant stated Respondent talked in circles. Respondent denied this and claimed to have answered Complainant's questions.
5. On June 19, 2025: Complainant emailed Respondent: "What's the timeline for me filing for divorce? Can I do that now, or should I wait? Can you file for me?"
6. On June 20, 2025, Respondent emailed Complainant: "Yes, I would file for you. The timeline for the divorce is whenever you want it to be. I recommend that we file for divorce immediately if he does not cooperate with getting us a draft agreement or he does not give you money that you need to live off of. This is so we can get a temporary spousal support award asap if needed."
7. The same day, Complainant responded: "We've decided not to use a mediator. He's going to call them today to see if he could use the money we both put down for mediation, to instead use for him to retain a lawyer to help him. He was still pushing hard for mediation but finally gave in when he saw I wasn't backing down. What is the cost of you fil[ing] for divorce for me and how long will it take. Will he have to be served or can I just give him the papers."
8. On June 20, 2025, Respondent responded: "The cost of filing divorce depends on how long it takes for me to draft the divorce complaint. It won't take very long. It is just drafting the complaint and submitting it to the court. He does have to be served. You are not able to just give him the papers."
9. On June 24, 2025, Complainant emailed Respondent: "I would like to have you file my divorce for me. Are you still available to do this for me? Please let me know what you need from me in regards to this. Also if you could let me know the cost, when you're able, I'd appreciate it. My husband has a lawyer representing him now too. I asked him to have his lawyer send his property, etc. division documents requests to you for us to review."
10. On July 1, 2025, Complainant emailed Respondent: "I'm still filing for an uncontested divorce. I thought I didn't have to have additional reasons for divorce other than separation for 6 months with our sons no longer being dependent. I shared some background with you because I thought you needed to know why I left. I didn't realize that these other personal details of why I left would be needed to file. Are these private details just for you or will they be shared with a judge. Will these details be shared by my husband? I'm just trying my best to keep this amicable and not have a long drawn out fight."

11. The same day Respondent replied: "We can file for an uncontested divorce based on one year separation. We can't file based on six months separation until separation agreement has been signed. The reason I asked for details is that if we don't come to an agreement (whether its [sic] because he is unreasonable, or whatever reason), then why you left the marriage becomes relevant for purposes of getting you the relief that you want."
12. On July 1, 2025, Complainant responded: "I want to make sure I'm understanding this. So my separation doesn't legally start without that Separation Agreement document signed by both Byron and myself? Even though we've been separated for a while now, not even living together? My separation from him, living at my new residence, can that count towards my separation? If not, what's the process for filing for separation? I'm hoping this can be done quickly. Thank you for your guidance and help with this."
13. Complainant respondent the same day: "I've sent you my written intent for ending my marriage. We have been separated no longer living together. If we have met all of our legal separation requirements, please file my divorce for me so we can start our divorce process."
14. On July 1, 2025, Respondent responded to Complainant: "Your separation has already started. The only thing needed to be 'separated' is for one party to intend for the marriage to end. What I was referencing was how long you have to wait for your divorce to be finalized. You would either have to wait six months or one year. You are able to wait only six months from the separation date if the parties already have a signed agreement. If you do not have an agreement, you have to wait the full year. You have already been separated long enough either way, but we need an agreement to be able to finalize the divorce. However, since you have been separated long enough already: we are able to file for the divorce and start the process. It just won't be able to be finished until we have a signed agreement or a trial has taken place."
15. On July 2, 2025, Complainant advised Respondent that her husband was represented by lawyers with Holcomb Mediation Center. Also on July 2, 2025, Respondent emailed Complainant: "Yes. I am able to take care of the filing for you. I have already prepared the complaint and we are working on getting it filed now."
16. On July 4, 2025, Complainant emailed Respondent: "I'd like to waive the formal service of divorce papers on my husband. I read that this is often done in uncontested divorces."
17. On July 7, 2025, Respondent replied: "We can't waive service on him until a formal agreement has been signed. Otherwise, he has to be served. One alternative is to serve his attorney instead of himself. Is that what you would like to do?"
18. By letter dated July 8, 2025, to the Suffolk Circuit Court, Respondent mailed a divorce complaint on behalf of Complainant. The Clerk's office did not receive it until July 14, 2025, which is the effective filing date. The Civil Cover Sheet filed with the divorce complaint indicated it was a contested divorce:

DOMESTIC/FAMILY

- ☐ Adoption
 - ☐ Adoption – Foreign
- ☐ Adult Protection
- ☐ Annulment
 - ☐ Annulment – Counterclaim/Responsive Pleading
- ☐ Child Abuse and Neglect – Unfounded Complaint
- ☐ Civil Contempt
- ☒ Divorce (select one)
 - ☒ Complaint – Contested*
 - ☐ Complaint – Uncontested*
 - ☐ Counterclaim/Responsive Pleading
 - ☐ Reinstatement – Custody/Visitation/Support/Equitable Distribution
- ☐ Separate Maintenance
 - ☐ Separate Maintenance Counterclaim

19. The form Civil Cover Sheet explains:

*"Contested" divorce means any of the following matters are in dispute: grounds of divorce, spousal support and maintenance, child custody and/or visitation, child support, property distribution or debt allocation. An "Uncontested" divorce is filed on no fault grounds and none of the above issues are in dispute.

20. On July 8, 2025, Complainant emailed Respondent:

I received a call from my husband tonight. He told me that his lawyer is no longer working with him because he would need a lawyer that handles contested divorces. This was in an email so he wasn't given any details. He thought his lawyer may have communicated with you regarding this. It seem[s] like there has been a misunderstanding. Was there any communication between you and my husband's lawyer stating that my divorce would be contested? When we spoke in person, we agreed that it would be best if Byron worked out an asset, property, etc. "agreement" an offer for me to go over without to accept or not. This hasn't changed for me; I still want to handle the financial aspects of my divorce this way. I do not want to go through the courts and have a long expensive drawn out battle. I do not want to file for a contested divorce. I believe my husband and I can agree on a fair division of our assets and financial support for myself. When I asked you to file for my divorce, I didn't know the implications of that. With me now filing for divorce, did that change our divorce from uncontested to contested. If that's the case, I wasn't aware of that. You've mentioned to me several times about a "separation agreement". I'm still not clear on what exactly I need to do for this "agreement" or the timeline of how my divorce will work.

21. On July 9, 2025, Respondent emailed Complainant: "Are you available for a phone call for a meeting? I think that would be easier to explain everything and go over all of your questions than emails."

22. On July 9, 2025, Complainant responded: "Before we talk or meet in person, there are some things I'd like to clarify. Was my divorce filed? If it was, was it filed as contested, or uncontested like I requested? If not, please let me know and do not proceed with any further action until we talk."
23. Later on July 9, 2025, Respondent replied and advised Complainant she had not yet filed the divorce. Respondent acknowledged in her interview with the VSB's investigator that this was an incomplete and therefore inaccurate response. She explained that she had spoken with her paralegal and asked her to remove the complaint from the outgoing mail and assumed that had been done. Respondent explained: "After receiving her email, I verified with my paralegal Ms. Menzer not to file it until I had spoken with client further; and then sent the confirmation to the client that it had not been filed." She further stated "The divorce complaint was printed and signed on July 3rd. The cover letter and cover sheet to the court was signed on July 8th during work hours and sent to my paralegal to finish filing it with the court. At the time of the email sent on July 9th, 2025 at 12:26 pm, while the process had begun to file the divorce in accordance with Ms. Brant's previous instructions, it had not yet gone out in the mail. After that email was sent, but before instruction was received to terminate services, the process to file the divorce complaint was completed."
24. On July 10, 2025, Complainant emailed Respondent to confirm that her services were no longer needed.
25. When confronted with the Civil Cover Sheet in the interview with the VSB's investigator, Respondent stated that she had discussed with Complainant that if her husband did not support her they would have to file a contested divorce, and she also stated that just because you file "contested" does not mean you are not pursuing an "uncontested" divorce.
26. Respondent acknowledged that she never told Complainant that she could not file an uncontested divorce on her behalf without a PSA or a waiver of any property settlement or support.

II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT

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

By failing to explain to Complainant that she could not file an uncontested divorce on Complainant's behalf without either a PSA or a waiver of any property settlement and support, and by failing to advise Complainant that she could also get temporary spousal support without filing for divorce by filing a petition in the Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court to Complainant, and by conflating grounds of divorce with whether or not a divorce was contested in her July 1,

2026 email to Complainant, Respondent failed to provide competent representation to Complainant in violation of Rule 1.1 as set forth below:

Rule 1.1 Competence

A lawyer shall provide competent representation to a client. Competent representation requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.

By filing a contested divorce on behalf of Complainant where Complainant only authorized Respondent to file an uncontested divorce, Respondent failed to abide by Complainant's decisions regarding the objectives of the representation and violated Rule 1.2(a) as set forth below:

RULE 1.2 Scope of Representation

(a) A lawyer shall abide by a client's decisions concerning the objectives of representation, subject to paragraphs (b), (c), and (d), and shall consult with the client as to the means by which they are to be pursued. A lawyer shall abide by a client's decision, after consultation with the lawyer, whether to accept an offer of settlement of a matter. In a criminal case, the lawyer shall abide by the client's decision, after consultation with the lawyer, as to a plea to be entered, whether to waive jury trial and whether the client will testify.

By telling Complainant that she had not yet filed the divorce, and failing to explain to Complainant on July 9, 2025, that she had already signed a divorce complaint and put it in the mail to the court, Respondent violated Rule 1.4(a) as set forth below:

By failing to explain to Complainant that she could not file an uncontested divorce on her behalf without either a PSA or a waiver of any property settlement or support, and by failing to advise Complainant that she could also get temporary spousal support without filing for divorce by filing a petition in the Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court, and by conflating grounds of divorce with whether or not a divorce was contested in her July 1, 2026 email to Complainant, Respondent failed to sufficiently explain the matter to Complainant in violation of Rule 1.4(b) as set forth below:

RULE 1.4 Communication

(a) A lawyer shall keep a client reasonably informed about the status of a matter and promptly comply with reasonable requests for information.

(b) A lawyer shall explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding the representation.

III. PUBLIC ADMONITION WITH TERMS

Accordingly, it is the decision of the Subcommittee to impose a Public Admonition with Terms. The terms shall be met by October 31, 2026 and are as follows:

1. ASSIGNED READING AND CERTIFICATION

Respondent will read in their entirety the Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct and will certify compliance in writing to Bar Counsel.

2. MCLE

Respondent will complete 4 hours of live continuing legal education credits by attending courses approved by the Virginia State Bar in the subject matter of legal ethics. Respondent's Continuing Legal Education attendance obligation set forth in this paragraph will not be applied toward her Mandatory Continuing Legal Education requirement in Virginia or any other jurisdictions in which Respondent may be licensed to practice law. Respondent will certify her compliance with the terms set forth in this paragraph by delivering a fully and properly executed Virginia MCLE Board Certification of Attendance form (Form 2) to Bar Counsel, promptly following his attendance of each such CLE program(s).

If any of the terms are not met by the time specified, pursuant to the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-15.F, the District Committee shall hold a hearing and Respondent shall be required to show cause why a Certification for a Sanction Determination shall not issue. Any proceeding initiated due to failure to comply with terms will be considered a new matter and an administrative fee and costs will be assessed.

Pursuant to the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-9.E, the Clerk of the Disciplinary System shall assess costs.

SECOND DISTRICT, SECTION I SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'T. Gershoni', is written over a horizontal line.

Tammy Gershoni
Subcommittee Chair

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on 7/22/2024, a true and complete copy of the foregoing Subcommittee Determination was sent to Julia Kristen Stitely, Respondent, by certified mail at 1633 Chenier Arch, Apt. 103, Virginia Beach, VA 23451-1690, Respondent's last address of record with the Virginia State Bar, and by email to jstitely3@gmail.com; and to Prescott Lee Prince, counsel for Respondent, by first-class mail at 1901 Huguenot Rd Ste 200, North Chesterfield, VA 23235-4311, and by email to plprince@aol.com.



Shelley L. Spalding
Senior Assistant Bar Counsel

VIRGINIA:

**BEFORE THE SECOND DISTRICT, SECTION I SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR**

**IN THE MATTER OF
JULIA KRISTEN STITELY**

VS **Docket No. 26-021-137140**

AGREED DISPOSITION
PUBLIC ADMONITION WITH 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 Julia Kristen Stitely, (“Respondent”), and Prescott Lee Prince, Respondent’s counsel, enter into the following agreed disposition arising out of this matter.

I. STIPULATIONS OF FACT

1. Respondent was admitted to the Virginia State Bar (“VSB”) in 2021 and at all relevant times has been a member of the VSB.
2. On May 29, 2025, Linda Brant (“Complainant”) retained Respondent to represent her in an uncontested divorce. Multiple times, Complainant expressed to Respondent her desire for the divorce to be amicable and uncontested.
3. Respondent stated that she met with Complainant on June 19, 2025 and explained to her that filing a divorce would be necessary if they did not agree on a Property Settlement Agreement (“PSA”) with Complainant’s former spouse, or if Complainant’s former spouse stopped paying Complainant’s bills. Respondent failed to advise Complainant that she could have sought support without filing for divorce by filing a petition in the appropriate Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court.
4. Complainant stated that she asked questions of Respondent that were not answered clearly. Complainant stated Respondent talked in circles. Respondent denied this and claimed to have answered Complainant’s questions.
5. On June 19, 2025: Complainant emailed Respondent: “What’s the timeline for me filing for divorce? Can I do that now, or should I wait? Can you file for me?”

6. On June 20, 2025, Respondent emailed Complainant: "Yes, I would file for you. The timeline for the divorce is whenever you want it to be. I recommend that we file for divorce immediately if he does not cooperate with getting us a draft agreement or he does not give you money that you need to live off of. This is so that we can get a temporary spousal support award asap if needed."
7. The same day, Complainant responded: "We've decided not to use a mediator. He's going to call them today to see if he could use the money we both put down for mediation, to instead use for him to retain lawyer to help him. He was still pushing hard for mediation but finally gave in when he saw I wasn't backing down. What is the cost of you file for divorce for me and how long will it take. Will he have to be served or can I just give him the papers."
8. On June 20, 2025, Respondent responded: "The cost of filing for divorce depends on how long it takes for me to draft the divorce complaint. It won't take very long. It is just drafting the complaint and submitting it to the court. He does have to be served. You are not able to just give him the papers."
9. On June 24, 2025, Complainant emailed Respondent: "I would like to have you file my divorce for me. Are you still available to do this for me? Please let me know what you need from me in regards to this. Also if you could let me know the cost, when you're able, I'd appreciate it. My husband has a lawyer representing him now too. I asked him to have his lawyer send his property, etc. division document requests to you for us to review."
10. On July 1, 2025, Complainant emailed Respondent: "I'm still filing for an uncontested divorce. I thought I didn't have to have additional reasons for divorce other than separation for 6 months with our sons no longer being dependent. I shared some background with you because I thought you needed to know why I left. I didn't realize that these other personal details of why I left would be needed to file. Are these private details just for you or will they be shared with a judge. Will these details be shared with my husband? I'm just trying my best to keep this amicable and not have a long drawn out fight."
11. The same day Respondent replied: "We can file for an uncontested divorce based on one year separation. We can't file based on six months separation until a separation agreement has been signed. The reason I asked for details is that if we don't come to an agreement (whether its because he is unreasonable, or whatever reason), then why you left the marriage becomes relevant for purposes of getting you the relief that you want."
12. On July 1, 2025, Complainant responded: "I want to make sure I'm understanding this. So my separation doesn't legally start without that Separation Agreement document signed by both Byron and myself? Even though we've been separated for a while now, not even living together? My separation from him, living at my new residence, can that count towards my separation? If not, what's the process for filing

for separation? I'm hoping this can be done quickly. Thank you for your guidance and help with this."

13. Complainant responded the same day: "I've sent you my written intent for ending my marriage. We have been separated, no longer living together. If we have met all of our legal separation requirements, please file my divorce for me so we can start our divorce process."
14. On July 1, 2025, Respondent responded to Complainant: "Your separation has already started. The only thing needed to be 'separated' is for one party to intend for the marriage to end. What I was referencing was how long you have to wait for your divorce to be finalized. You would either have to wait six months or one year. You are able to wait only six months from the separation date if the parties already have a signed agreement. If you do not have an agreement, you have to wait the full year. You have already been separated long enough either way, but we need an agreement to be able to finalize the divorce. However, since you have been separated long enough already: we are able to file for the divorce and start the process. It just won't be able to be finished until we have a signed agreement or a trial has taken place."
15. On July 2, 2025, Complainant advised Respondent that her husband was represented by lawyers with Holcomb Mediation Center. Also on July 2, 2025, Respondent emailed Complainant: "Yes. I am able to take care of the filing for you. I have already prepared the complaint and we are working on getting it filed now."
16. On July 4, 2025, Complainant emailed Respondent: "I'd like to waive the formal service of divorce papers on my husband. I read that this is often done in uncontested divorces."
17. On July 7, 2025, Respondent replied: "We can't waive service on him until a formal agreement has been signed. Otherwise, he has to be served. One alternative is to serve his attorney instead of himself. Is that what you would like to do?"
18. By letter dated July 8, 2025, to the Suffolk Circuit Court, Respondent mailed a divorce complaint on behalf of Complainant. The Clerk's office did not receive it until July 14, 2025, which is the effective filing date. The Civil Cover Sheet filed with the divorce complaint indicated it was a contested divorce:

DOMESTIC/FAMILY

- ☐ Adoption
 - ☐ Adoption - Foreign
- ☐ Adult Protection
- ☐ Annulment
 - ☐ Annulment - Counterclaim/Responsive Pleading
- ☐ Child Abuse and Neglect - Unfounded Complaint
- ☐ Civil Contempt
- ☒ Divorce (select one)
 - ☒ Complaint - Contested*
 - ☐ Complaint - Uncontested*
 - ☐ Counterclaim/Responsive Pleading
 - ☐ Reinstatement - Custody/Visitation/Support/Equitable Distribution
- ☐ Separate Maintenance
 - ☐ Separate Maintenance Counterclaim

19. The form Civil Cover Sheet explains: ,

*"Contested" divorce means any of the following matters are in dispute: grounds of divorce, spousal support and maintenance, child custody and/or visitation, child support, property distribution or debt allocation. An "Uncontested" divorce is filed on no fault grounds and none of the above issues are in dispute.

20. On July 8, 2025, Complainant emailed Respondent:

I received a call from my husband tonight. He told me that his lawyer is no longer working with him because he would need a lawyer that handles contested divorces. This was in an email so he wasn't given any details. He thought his lawyer may have communicated with you regarding this. It seem like there has been a misunderstanding. Was there any communication between you and my husband's lawyer stating that my divorce would be contested? When we spoke in person, we agreed that it would be best if Byron worked out an asset, property, etc. "agreement" an offer for me to go over without to accept or not. This hasn't changed for me; I still want to handle the financial aspects of my divorce this way. I do not want to go through the courts and have a long expensive drawn out battle. I do not want to file for a contested divorce. I believe my husband and I can agree on a fair division of our assets and financial support for myself. When I asked you to file for my divorce I didn't know the implications of that. With me now filing for divorce, did that change our divorce from uncontested to contested. If that's the case, I wasn't aware of that. You've mentioned to me several times about a "separation agreement". I'm still not clear on what exactly I need to do for this "agreement" or the timeline of how my divorce will work.

21. On July 9, 2025, Respondent emailed Complainant: "Are you available for a phone call or a meeting? I think that would be easier to explain everything and go over all of your questions than emails."

22. On July 9, 2025, Complainant responded: "Before we talk or meet in person, there are some things I'd like to clarify. Was my divorce filed? If it was, was it filed as contested, or uncontested like I requested? If not, please let me know and do not proceed with any further action until we talk."
23. Later on July 9, 2025, Respondent replied and advised Complainant she had not yet filed the divorce. Respondent acknowledged in her interview with the VSB's investigator that this was an incomplete and therefore inaccurate response. She explained that she had spoken with her paralegal and asked her to remove the complaint from the outgoing mail and assumed that had been done. Respondent explained: "After receiving her email, I verified with my paralegal Ms. Menzer not to file it until I had spoken with client further; and then sent the confirmation to the client that it had not been filed." She further stated "The divorce complaint was printed and signed on July 3rd. The cover letter and cover sheet to the court was signed on July 8th during work hours and sent to my paralegal to finish filing it with the court. At the time of the email sent on July 9th, 2025 at 12:26 pm, while the process had begun to file the divorce in accordance with Ms. Brant's previous instructions, it had not yet gone out in the mail. After that email was sent, but before instruction was received to terminate services, the process to file the divorce complaint was completed."
24. On July 10, 2025, Complainant emailed Respondent to confirm that her services were no longer needed.
25. When confronted with the Civil Cover Sheet in the interview with the VSB's investigator, Respondent stated that she had discussed with Complainant that if her husband did not support her they would have to file a contested divorce, and she also stated that just because you file "contested" does not mean you are not pursuing an "uncontested" divorce.
26. Respondent acknowledged that she failed to communicate to Complainant that she could not file an uncontested divorce on her behalf without a PSA or a waiver of any property settlement or support.

II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT

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

By failing to explain to Complainant that she could not file an uncontested divorce on her behalf without either a PSA or a waiver of any property settlement or support, and by failing to advise Complainant that she could also get temporary spousal support without filing for divorce by filing a petition in the Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court, and by conflating grounds of

divorce with whether or not a divorce was contested in her July 1, 2026 email to Complainant, Respondent failed to provide competent representation to Complainant in violation of Rule 1.1 as set forth below:

RULE 1.1 Competence

A lawyer shall provide competent representation to a client. Competent representation requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.

By filing a contested divorce on behalf of Complainant where Complainant only authorized Respondent to file an uncontested divorce, Respondent failed to abide by Complainant's decisions regarding the objectives of the representation and violated Rule 1.2(a) as set forth below:

RULE 1.2 Scope of Representation

(a) A lawyer shall abide by a client's decisions concerning the objectives of representation, subject to paragraphs (b), (c), and (d), and shall consult with the client as to the means by which they are to be pursued. A lawyer shall abide by a client's decision, after consultation with the lawyer, whether to accept an offer of settlement of a matter. In a criminal case, the lawyer shall abide by the client's decision, after consultation with the lawyer, as to a plea to be entered, whether to waive jury trial and whether the client will testify.

By telling Complainant that she had not yet filed the divorce, and failing to explain to Complainant on July 9, 2025, that she had signed a divorce complaint and put it in the mail to the court, Respondent violated Rule 1.4(a) as set forth below:

By failing to explain to Complainant that she could not file an uncontested divorce on her behalf without either a PSA or a waiver of any property settlement or support, and by failing to advise Complainant that she could also get temporary spousal support without filing for divorce by filing a petition in the Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court, and by conflating grounds of divorce with whether or not a divorce was contested in her July 1, 2026 email to Complainant, Respondent failed to sufficiently explain the matter to Complainant in violation of Rule 1.4(b) as set forth below:

RULE 1.4 Communication

(a) A lawyer shall keep a client reasonably informed about the status of a matter and promptly comply with reasonable requests for information.

(b) A lawyer shall explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding the representation.

III. PROPOSED DISPOSITION

Accordingly, Senior Assistant Bar Counsel and Respondent tender to a subcommittee of the Second District, Section I Committee for its approval the agreed disposition of a Public Admonition with Terms as representing an appropriate sanction if this matter were to be heard through an evidentiary hearing by the Second District, Section I Committee. The terms shall be met by October 31, 2026 and are as follows:

1. ASSIGNED READING AND CERTIFICATION

Respondent will read in their entirety the Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct and will certify compliance in writing to Bar Counsel.

2. MCLE

Respondent will complete 4 hours of live continuing legal education credits by attending courses approved by the Virginia State Bar in the subject matter of legal ethics. Respondent's Continuing Legal Education attendance obligation set forth in this paragraph will not be applied toward her Mandatory Continuing Legal Education requirement in Virginia or any other jurisdictions in which Respondent may be licensed to practice law. Respondent will certify her compliance with the terms set forth in this paragraph by delivering a fully and properly executed Virginia MCLE Board Certification of Attendance form (Form 2) to Bar Counsel, promptly following his attendance of each such CLE program(s).

If any of the terms are not met by October 31, 2026, Respondent agrees that the District Committee shall impose a Certification for a Sanction Determination pursuant to Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-15.F of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia. Any proceeding initiated due to failure to comply with terms will be considered a new matter, and an administrative fee and costs will be assessed pursuant to Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-9.E of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia.

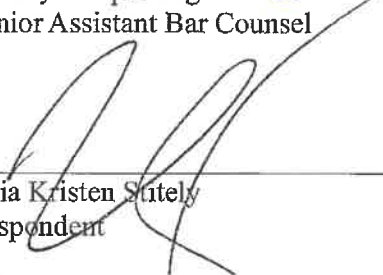
If the agreed disposition is approved, the Clerk of the Disciplinary System shall assess costs.

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



Julia Kristen Stitely
Respondent



Prescott Lee Prince
Respondent Counsel